

EARLY YEARS EDUCATOR

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In association with



EYE Guide to... **Communication and Connection**

Key content

- Working in partnership with families
- Monitoring children's learning and development
- Building your curriculum and adapting your provision
- Supporting your team and their professional learning

GUIDE TO...

Communication and Connection: creating and maintaining effective relationships in the EYFS

What does effective communication look like, and how does it support relationships within your setting?

High quality relationships connect all the participants in a child's learning journey, informing your provision to support development and progress. These relationships are nurtured and sustained through effective communication.

High quality communication requires

- Clear, sensitive and professional exchanges of information
- An understanding and appreciation of the feelings and intentions behind the information
- Strong, empathetic listening skills - the speaker feels they are being heard and understood
- Sufficient time and space for the interaction to occur- whether this is verbal or written

Who are you building relationships with?

Children

Giving children your full attention ensures they feel acknowledged. Responding to what children are telling you with positive nonverbal communication, making comments, or asking relevant questions, all model the communication skills that we want children to learn. We increase children's vocabulary through introducing new words or phrases. Sharing children's learning journals with them and talking about their photographs and

videos, helps them to think about, and gives agency to, their own learning. Valuing all forms of communication, not just speech, fosters an inclusive environment.

Parents and carers

Effective communication between educators and families builds trust, helping parents and carers to feel reassured. It enables and encourages them to be active co-participants in their child's learning, sharing experiences and interests, ensuring continuity between home and setting. Parents and carers should be kept up to date with progress, while their child's Key Person supports them in guiding development at home. Think about the barriers to engagement your families may experience and how you can reduce these. Every setting should consider their anti-racist practice and make efforts to reflect and learn as a team. Respectful, detailed communication between settings and families will support all children to make good progress and develop a love of learning.

Colleagues

Discussing observations of children as a staff team helps to adapt your curriculum and provision to support the progress of each child. Staff should be included in the setting's development plan and an effective communication system will ensure all staff feel that their ideas, feelings and suggestions are valued. Connections outwards to other

Parental engagement

Educators at the setting are building a warm and respectful relationship with Akin's family. They seek ways to reduce barriers to engagement, considering what they can do to be inclusive. Parents' input is truly valued, and this is apparent in the provision which reflects Akin's interests and represents him, his family and community. Akin's Key Person shares support for playful learning at home.

Educators and families build a child's learning journal together on Tapestry, sharing the learning that happens at home and in the setting. Suggestions for play to support development at home are shared via the Activities feature. Families stay connected to their child's daily care through the Care Diary, and to news and info with Memos.

Building your curriculum

The team reflect on what they want their children to learn. The building blocks for their ambitious curriculum are knowledge of child development, learning through play in a rich, inclusive environment, partnership with families, and understanding their community. Akin's Key Person knows him and his family well, and ensures Akin accesses the curriculum through his interests, adapting plans as required.

Supportive relationships within the team enable managers to respond to professional learning needs, further strengthening curriculum development.

Monitoring the child's progress

Child-centred assessment is central to monitoring each child's progress at the setting. Educators around Akin notice what he can do and what knowledge he already has to inform current and future planning. Akin's Key Person takes every opportunity to learn more about him so they can speak confidently about his progress and their input in supporting him.

Tapestry's Areas of Concern screen enables educators to document whether a child needs more support in an area. They can then collaborate on how to adapt their provision for a child, facilitated by Tapestry Reflections.

Monitoring your provision

The provision for Akin is centred around and adapted to his development and interests. Knowledge of what Akin knows and what he can do forms the basis of this provision. The question 'What do we need to do next to our provision to support Akin's progress?' is reflected on frequently by his Key Person. Guidance materials are used to supplement monitoring and planning if needed. Quality interactions, fostering positive relationships, and play are at the heart of provision.

Reflective Practice

Managers at Akin's setting recognise the value of reflective practice. From everyday conversations to deeper dives in staff meetings, the team reflect together on their setting's ethos and provision. Educators understand how they help children to learn, and develop their pedagogy through observing colleagues, reading and listening – and sharing their discoveries.

Tapestry Reflections facilitates and supports reflective practice by providing a space for educators to discuss thoughts, experiences, and actions.

Professional Learning

Educators at Akin's setting are aware of the importance of regular, high quality CPD; sound knowledge of child development is pivotal to their practice. Managers create an environment for ongoing professional learning, supporting all staff to access CPD. Managers get to know their team well, enabling them to identify what professional learning is needed.

Tapestry CPD provides free access to a growing collection of courses.

Weaving Akin's Story



Observations

Educators create observations to help them understand Akin's unique learning story. His Key Person considers carefully why they are creating an observation. Is it to inform future provision? To remember an important milestone? To celebrate and share with his family? An observation is only necessary if it will have a direct positive impact on Akin.

Educators can quickly add observations in Tapestry, assigning custom flags and/or assessments. Observations can be linked with Reflections and Activities to tell a child's story.



professionals involved in a child's learning and care must also be tended, with positive two-way communication holding the child in the centre.

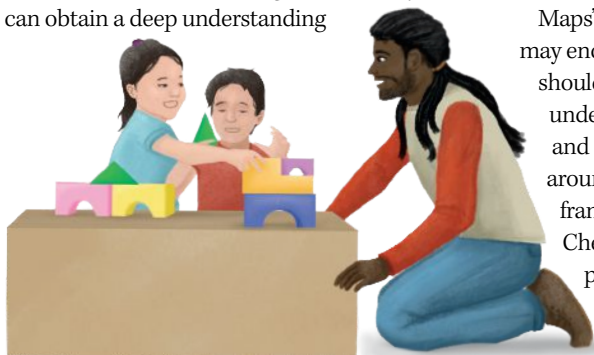
Leaders

Develop your setting's ethos and reflective practice through conversations around curriculum, provision and children's progress, sharing experience and knowledge of child development. Creating a supportive centre of learning for staff will encourage colleagues to learn from each other; sharing a knowledge and understanding of child development will support those less experienced or qualified and will build strong foundations within your team.

How can I show progress without data?

With the shift in Early Years assessment guidance, we may be wondering how we can monitor children's learning and development effectively. We are no longer required to show evidence of progress in the form of data to Ofsted. We can now collect rich information to inform us of children's progress and influence adjustments in our provision.

Using videos, photos and voice notes recorded through Tapestry, you can capture children's learning in real time to reflect on later – giving you more time to engage with the children. Rather than ticking statements, you can obtain a deep understanding



of each child's development through your observations, reflections and the Areas of Concern screen. Review the information you've collected as a team, considering any concerns or questions you might have and how you can develop your provision to meet a child's developmental needs. The two-way sharing of observations between setting and home enables educators to have a full picture of the child, and families to stay updated with their child's progress. If a child has a wider network of professionals involved in their learning, they too can be incorporated into the process.

What about children with learning differences and disabilities?

It is important that we embrace child-centred assessment for all children in our settings and schools – not just those who are developing typically. The Areas of Concern screen is a supportive monitoring solution for every child. This screen is intended for educators to make judgements based on their knowledge of the individual child - if they are making good progress, it should be recognised as good progress, regardless of whether it is in line with typical development.

For those settings who require additional guidance when assessing children with learning differences and disabilities, Tapestry is the exclusive home of the Cherry Garden framework. The system is based on 6 'Branch Maps' which detail milestones that children may encounter on their journey. The maps should be used in a flexible way to support understanding of a child's development and encourage appropriate discussions around next steps. The Cherry Garden framework comes with an interactive Cherry Orchard graphic – leaves and petals grow on trees and flowers as a child secures learning, whether in a linear or lateral way.

But my leadership are looking for data...

It is understandable that the removal of measurable 'data' in the EYFS has led to a level of anxiety for our assessment leads. The most straightforward way to engage in this change of direction, and reassure, is to point the relevant parties towards Ofsted's messaging that they will no longer ask to see data when they visit. But how do we show that the children are making outstanding progress without the data as evidence? The significant mindset shift is knowing that children will make outstanding progress if the provision is outstanding. Invest time and energy in ensuring that what you offer the children is the best it can possibly be. Establish processes that help you to identify if children are struggling to access what you



have provided – starting with a combination of informal and formal conversations. Use the Areas of Concern screen and Reflections tool on Tapestry to help you to monitor your input and actions.

For free further support:

Articles

- The Power of Parent Observations by Dr Kate Cowan and Professor Rosie Flewitt <https://bit.ly/PowerOfParentObs>
- Child development – the key to early years practice? By Annie Richardson <https://bit.ly/ChildDevKey>

YouTube

- Looking at what's at the heart of the DMs and busting some data myths <https://bit.ly/EYFSHeart>
- A conversation with Ofsted on the EYFS <https://bit.ly/OfstedConversation>

Podcasts

- Reflecting on the Early Years with David Wright <https://bit.ly/ReflectingEYFS>
- The Early Years is the jewel in our community's crown with Jamel C Campbell <https://bit.ly/JamelCCampbellPodcast>

Tapestry settings often tell us what they think...

"We are absolutely loving Tapestry and have used it since 2016! I have found all your webinars so helpful and we have now designed our own curriculum and added this into our own personalised set of flags! Tapestry has really helped us to progress as a setting. Thank you so much for your ongoing help and support."

"As a setting we really like the Areas of Concern screen and find it useful being able to add the reflections and access the observations."

To discover how Tapestry can support you, please visit us at www.tapestry.info or contact the team at customer.service@eyfs.info

This guide was created by the Tapestry Education Team in collaboration with EYE.