

## **Reflective practice and peer observations**

All childcare professionals strive to provide the best possible care and learning opportunities for the children in their setting. Reflective practice can be supported by undertaking peer observations which help to maintain and continually improve practitioners' working practices; both for those observing and for those being observed. It is the process of thinking about and analysing your own practice, whilst challenging yourself to develop your working practice further that supports effective teaching and learning practices in being maintained.

### **Peer observations should:**

- Celebrate your strengths, skills and knowledge.
- Support you in identifying areas for personal development.
- Give you professional responsibility to improve your practice.
- Enable you to consider why you work with children and families in a certain way.
- Enable you to introduce new ways of working.
- Enable you to develop professional relationships with your colleagues (if you are a childminder, you can ask another childminder to observe you).
- Enable you to develop your working practices.
- Be embedded into systems for staff supervision and mentoring.
- Support managers to identify common themes for strengths of the staff team and areas for development. These can be further explored during staff meetings and training or mentoring identified.
- Provide good evidence for Ofsted and the setting's Self-Evaluation processes.

### **Peer observations help you to:**

- Meet all the children's needs.
- Increase children's self-esteem.
- Provide an enabling environment (In a group setting of 2 or more professionals the observations can be reviewed to support the development of a particular area of practice)
- Increase your confidence and self-esteem.
- Identify your strengths and areas for development.
- Set personal targets, whilst identifying any training requirements.

### **What is a peer observation?**

- A colleague observes you and your interactions during a nominated activity (usually planned but it can be unplanned) for a short period of time.
- A shared and equal approach between observer and person being observed.
- An opportunity for the person being observed to identify a specific area of their practice and ask the observer to comment on it.
- The observer should be discreet and objective.
- The observer offers feedback at an elected time as soon as possible after the observation.

- Through the feedback discussion or written report you both reflect upon the observation and agree any identified development areas.
- An opportunity for the observer to share what they have learnt from observing their colleague and how this will influence their own practice.
- Observations should be carried out at different times of the day and during the range of different activities available to gain a balanced overview of the setting.
- Peer observations should be undertaken using a set format (to ensure consistency).
- It is a learning process; different people observe the same thing differently.

Ofsted documents:

**The Statutory framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage (2021):**

Point 3.22 page 26 'Providers must put appropriate arrangements in place for the supervision of staff who have contact with children and families. Effective supervision provides support, coaching and training for the practitioner and promotes the interests of the children'

Point 3.23 page 26 'supervisions should provide opportunities for staff to, receive coaching to improve their personal effectiveness'

**Early years inspection handbook Sept 2021:**

98. Inspectors must spend most of the inspection time gathering first-hand evidence by observing the quality of the daily routines and activities of children and staff. These observations enable inspectors to judge the contribution practitioners make to children's learning, progress, safety and well-being. The observations should also enable them to collect sufficient evidence to support detailed and specific recommendations about improvements needed to the quality of education, behaviour and attitudes, personal development, and leadership and management.

99. In group settings, inspectors should observe as many staff as possible to ensure that an accurate picture of the overall quality of interactions between practitioners and children can be gained.

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