

A new employee



Professional Development

Professional development is effective when there is a clear focus on developing practice resulting in a greater impact on children's learning and development.

Leaders and managers need to understand their setting's 'vision and culture' in other words, 'where you're going and how you will get there'. Once you have clear aims, you're ready to plan a professional development programme. This should be based on the best available evidence and clearly focused on improving children's experiences.



The [Early Intervention Foundations' 2018 report](#), into teaching, pedagogy and practice in early years suggests a professional development programme should run over a whole year and practitioners should engage in at least 20 hours of training in total. The 20 hours could include any of options in the hexagons above.

[The Early Years Inspection handbook](#) states:

"Inspectors will gather evidence of the effectiveness of staff supervision, performance management, training and continuing professional development, and the impact of these on the children's well-being, learning and development"

"Inspectors should consider how effectively senior leaders use performance management and their assessment of strengths and areas for improvement within the setting to provide a focus for professional development activities, particularly in relation to increasing children's vocabulary and cultural capital."



It is important to identify practitioners' strengths and weaknesses. This is often done through peer to peer observations, supervisions, appraisals and discussions with practitioners about what training they would like to do or reflect on what training may be best for them.

[Suffolk Learning - supervision, peer observation and learning walks](#)

There are many ways you can provide professional development for practitioners. Below are some ideas for consideration:

- Using other practitioners' strengths – As leaders and managers it is important you spend time tuning in to practitioners' strengths and using these to benefit the organisation. Consider asking a staff member to lead your next staff meeting. This will contribute to their own professional development and that of the rest of the staff team. Often this form of training is often overlooked when in fact it is one of the easiest ways to get all practitioners up to speed on one area of training.
- Consider inviting other professionals in – As an early year setting you are frequently working with a wide range of professionals. By developing good working relationships with professionals, you are then in a position to approach them and ask if they would lead a session on a particular topic for your staff for example, speech and language, dental care.
- Developing professional relationships with other childcare settings – If you have a good relationship with nearby settings why not contact them and share training or even visit them in operation to learn and reflect what they do well and identify areas for development within your own setting?
- Cascade training – childcare organisation budgets are often tight and paying out for all staff to attend external training can be costly. Why not consider sending one practitioner on each of these courses then cascade the training back to the setting? This is often an easy way of sharing best practice to the whole team
- Having regular conversations – Consider setting aside 20 minutes to talk to a staff member about a particular subject. This can be seen as a form of training as they are learning and reflecting on practice. This should be documented in their training records.



The impact of unconscious bias on improving quality

Unconscious bias affects everyone and leaders and managers within the early years sector are no different. Leaders and managers must be reflective about this as part of their role. Leaders, managers and all staff have a role to promote equality and this fundamental when planning for professional development.

You need to consider:

- Is it the same members of staff that are chosen to attend courses?
- Do all staff have opportunities to participate or lead projects?
- Is coaching and mentoring consistent?
- Do less confident members of staff have a voice within the setting?
- Are all practitioners' ideas and questions listened to in a respectful way or are they "shut down"?
- Are staff who struggle with their own learning supported to access professional development?
- Do you draw on the knowledge and skills of all staff effectively?

How the Early Years and Childcare Service can support you with professional development

[Early Years Broadcasts](#) – The Early Years and Childcare service frequently send out Early Years Broadcasts. The alerts are full of reminders and useful information and often signpost to training updates and network opportunities as well as projects childcare settings can participate in.

[The Learning Wall](#) - The Early Years and Childcare Service is launching a new termly resource page for our providers – The Learning Wall is designed to share and support quality of practice.

Early Years Workforce Development Factsheet – [Getting the most from continued professional development](#)

You access a wide range of eLearning, face to face and virtual and training from Early Years Workforce Development. All early year's practitioners can register. Further information about our training offer can be found in the [Training and Qualifications](#) section of Suffolk Learning.

Bespoke targeted support - Your Quality and Access Advisor or Worker would be happy to discuss areas for development and work be you to develop and package of support focusing on specific areas. You can request support by completing an [IAA referral](#) or contacting your named Advisor or Worker directly.

