



Child Development Resource

30-50 months

Introduction

Small Steps Big Changes (SSBC) in collaboration with colleagues from Health, Early Years Education, and the Local Authority across Nottingham City, have created this resource to provide key child development information to support practitioners working with families. This resource aims to provide a quick reference aide memoire for practitioners who can then use it as a starting point to:

- develop knowledge of the key developmental milestones from birth to five years
- access additional support signposting
- support with making informed judgements on age related progress

This resource will also provide practitioners with an opportunity to reflect on their own practice; this will help them to support parents and carers by sharing ideas on how they can support their child to access learning opportunities to promote development and well-being, and enhance opportunities for improved outcomes during the child's early years and later life.

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Personal, Social and Emotional Development

Young children are developing their ability to understand that other people have different needs and thoughts to them and are starting to consider other people more. They are becoming more aware of their unique characteristics, their home culture and how they are viewed by others.





Personal, Social and Emotional Development

Making Relationships

Key ideas about development

- Young children continue to depend on their close relationships with caring adults to feel secure and to be independent. They use their relationships with close adults to guide their expectations about themselves and their relationships with others and to support them in their social interactions.
- Young children learn to 'read' the behaviours of others. They start to understand that they have different needs and thoughts to others and respond appropriately. They gradually start to show more impulse control in favourable conditions but will still have difficulty taking turns and sharing objects, so need adult support in resolving conflict with peers.



Diverse paths of development

Looked after children may have had to make many significant relationships in their life. This may have impacted on their understanding of what makes a consistent and stable relationship.

Shy children or some with social and emotional difficulties may be anxious when interacting with peers. One-to-one or smaller group encounters in a familiar, cosy space can help a child to build confidence.



Consider

How you communicate with families and work with a range of agencies when life and social conditions threaten a child's well-being.

To support development

Offer a warm and consistent presence; spending time playing and being with young children, modelling key skills, providing constructive feedback during play and using different resources such as emotions cards to help children to develop strategies for building and maintaining relationships.



Look, listen and note

Notice the way in which young children invite others to play with them or enter into other children's games. Look out for those who find this difficult and devise ways to help them develop these skills.



Personal, Social and Emotional Development

Being Self-aware

Key ideas about development

- Young children show increasing awareness of themselves as someone with particular qualities, and who is capable of many things. They are also increasingly aware of how others see them and begin to develop ideas about themselves as good, bad, pretty, ugly etc according to what they hear about themselves from others.
- Young children show their confidence and self-esteem by being outgoing towards people, taking risks and trying new things or new social situations and being able to express their needs and ask adults for help.

Diverse paths of development

Young children may at times be acutely aware of their differences and may sometimes view their differences negatively. It is important that adults show genuine interest in and value all children's contributions through providing opportunities so they can fully be themselves, for example, *"Tell me more about that."*

Consider

How you talk with young children about the similarities and differences of ethnicity, gender, ability and family.

How confident you feel to talk openly about these issues. If not what can you do to support you?

To support development

- Show trust in young children's abilities by letting them try and noticing when they need help without taking over.
- In childcare settings or school, plan the environment so that storage for coats, nappies, shoes and comforters are labelled with individual children's photographs and names so children can access them independently.



Look, listen and note

Listen carefully to a young child's 'self-talk'. Do they express positive ideas about themselves or can you hear negative views they may have heard from someone?



Personal, Social and Emotional Development

Emotional Understanding

Key ideas about development

- Young children openly express a wide range of feelings in their interactions with others, including loneliness, excitement and anxiety, guilt and self-doubt. They show affection towards friends as well as close adults and express their feelings in the way they behave and through their play, as well as vocally.
- Young children are gradually more able to adapt their behaviour to different events, social situations and changes in routine. However, rapid changes in themselves and the environment may result in confusions that lead to increased fearfulness of things like the dark or monsters etc.



Diverse paths of development

Young children with developmental differences such as Autism Spectrum Disorders may need additional support in understanding empathy. Using role play opportunities, social stories and providing feedback can help a child to recognise their feelings of empathy.



Consider

The way adults relate to a young child; their health, social contexts, life experiences, etc. before labelling a young child as having difficult behaviour.

Think about the possible impact of these things on the child's emotional states and subsequent behaviour.

To support development

- Provide young children with spaces which are calm, caring and interesting, so they feel able to express their emotions.
- Give role-play opportunities, play props and resources such as books, stories and music to support young children in exploring and making sense of feelings such as fear, anxiety and anger.



Look, listen and note

Notice young children's behaviours, the possible underlying emotion and what seems to trigger them. Be alert to the signs of overstimulation or boredom.



Communication and Language Development

Young children communicate in a range of ways and use (spoken or signed) language throughout the day. They need to be in an environment where there are plenty of opportunities to be a listener and to be listened to.





Communication and Language Development

Listening and Understanding

Key ideas about development

- Young children listen to others one to one or in small groups, when conversations interest them. They still either listen or do, but are beginning to be able to shift their own attention.
- Young children show increasing understanding of questions and instructions and may begin to follow more complex sentences, such as *“put your toys away and then we’ll read a book.”*



Diverse paths of development

Young children with attention differences or difficulties need more time to process information. Try breaking instructions into more manageable chunks or allow more time for children to process information.



Consider

How structures and routines expect too much of young children in terms of how long they have to maintain attention in groups.

To support development

- Environments that support young children’s listening, attention and understanding are quieter and less bright and busy. They are places where adults listen with their full attention, wait for children to respond and take account of what children have said in their response to them.
- Adults speak slowly and clearly and use language within the young child’s understanding but also use non-verbal communication to support understanding of new language.



Look, listen and note

Observe a young child and note down what they seem to enjoy listening to most; other children, stories, music?



Communication and Language Development

Responding and Expressing Myself

Key ideas about development

- Young children's language and vocabulary continue to expand at a rapid rate. The number of words they know, understand and use will reflect their experience and will be focused on words for objects and people that are of particular importance to them.
- Young children are beginning to be able to explain and recall past experiences; retelling a simple past event in the correct order (e.g. 'went down slide, hurt finger') and to use sentences that help them to link their thoughts through using words such as using 'and' / 'because'.
- Young children's speech sounds continue to develop in primary school.



Diverse paths of development

Some young children with learning difficulties may have trouble waiting their turn in conversations. This may be related to eagerness or to not wanting to forget what is in their mind.



Consider

How you respond to a young child who talks about something that makes you feel uncomfortable.

- How can you still show that you are listening and accepting them as a person?

To support development

- Introduce new resources, play opportunities and activities which will stimulate interest and provide something to talk about. Create opportunities for young children to communicate through all of their senses by using music, songs, dance, rhyme, painting, building etc.
- Support the communications of bilingual children through the use of visual prompts and asking families to record words and phrases, songs and stories in home languages.



Look, listen and note

Listen to a young child, what do the words they know tell you about what they are interested in and their experience?



Physical Development

Young children are growing rapidly but at various rates: Some may grow as much as 12cm, others only 5cm or 6cm but most children become less 'top-heavy' as their trunks and legs lengthen and physical activity strengthens muscles.

For better health children 2-4 years of age should have:



Physical Activity



At least

180

MINUTES

at least 60mins moderate to vigorous

Sedentary Screen Time



No more than

60

MINUTES

Good Quality Sleep



10-13

HOURS



Physical Development

Moving My Body

Key ideas about development

- As they practice moving and their bones and tendons mature, young children strengthen their muscles and refine their movements, thereby becoming more physically skilled. They climb and jump and can usually shift their balance from one foot to another.
- Increased coordination of large and small muscles means that young children can usually coordinate their movements together, such as using arms and legs to ride a trike or climb.



Diverse paths of development

Talk to the families of young children with hyper-mobility and find out which types of movement could put them at more risk of injury and which types they need to strengthen and improve their condition.



Consider

What a young child's behaviour is telling you about their need to move. If children are climbing on furniture, do they generally need more opportunities to climb?

To support development

- Provide opportunities for young children to repeat and practice physical skills many times so they can master them.
- Young children experience inside and outside environments in which they can move and which offer challenges of height, level, and different surfaces.



Look, listen and note

Notice how a young child uses space, furniture and play equipment to move their body.

Consider a child's earliest starting points. A child who was premature at birth could still be at an earlier stage of development.



Physical Development

Handling Objects

Key ideas about development

- As muscle, nerve and bone strength extends from the core trunk outwards, young children are further developing their small muscles, hand, finger and wrist movements which enable them to use tools more skilfully, fit things together, construct and build in different ways.
- When young children's hand, finger and wrist movements develop in coordination with their eye movements and visual development, young children become more able to judge distance and speed of objects such as a ball.



Diverse paths of development

Young children with physical differences and disabilities may have weaker muscle control or strength when using their arms and hands. Recognise signs of fatigue or discomfort but also provide a broad range of activities to use different malleable materials such as play dough, clay and 'gloop'.



Consider

Some young children may have physical difficulties for a period of time after an injury or hospital treatment, for example. Think about how you could adapt the provision of and access to tools and equipment for them.

To support development

- Provide young children with many opportunities to practise using a range of different, appropriately sized tools regularly and in different contexts.
- Mark-making/writing and drawing help a young child to gain pencil control (fine motor skills); gross motor skills are also supported through the development of shoulder, arm, wrist and tummy muscles.
- Observe closely to see where young children need more support to improve their dexterity, for example when putting on their shoes and coat and give children plenty of time to practise with gentle encouragement.



Look, listen and note

Notice if young children are struggling with small movements. This could be that they need more time to use and develop their muscles. For example, children who have difficulty handling tools might need to spend more time focusing on larger arm movements to help develop their muscles.



Physical Development

Being Healthy and Safe

Key ideas about development

- Increasing awareness of their bodily needs means young children can usually tell adults when they are tired or hungry and will notice the effects of activity on their bodies.
- Young children are usually gaining more bowel and bladder control and start using the toilet or potty, usually with assistance. They are developing more independence in feeding, washing and undressing, and beginning to dress themselves with some assistance.



Diverse paths of development

Some young children may have little understanding of risk or may have trouble navigating space. If, for example a child has Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), they may move at speed and intensity. Having markers in the environment to indicate different speeds or ways of moving can help children's awareness.



Consider

How you would respond to a young child who starts to wet themselves again after having gained bladder control. Why do you think that might happen?

To support development

- Develop relationships with young children in which the child feels confident to approach parents/caregivers for help with their self-care needs and remind children who become very involved in play to go to the toilet or get a drink as needed.
- Talk openly to young children about how their bodies work and use accurate terms for all body parts, so that children are able to communicate clearly any physical difficulties or worries they have.



Look, listen and note

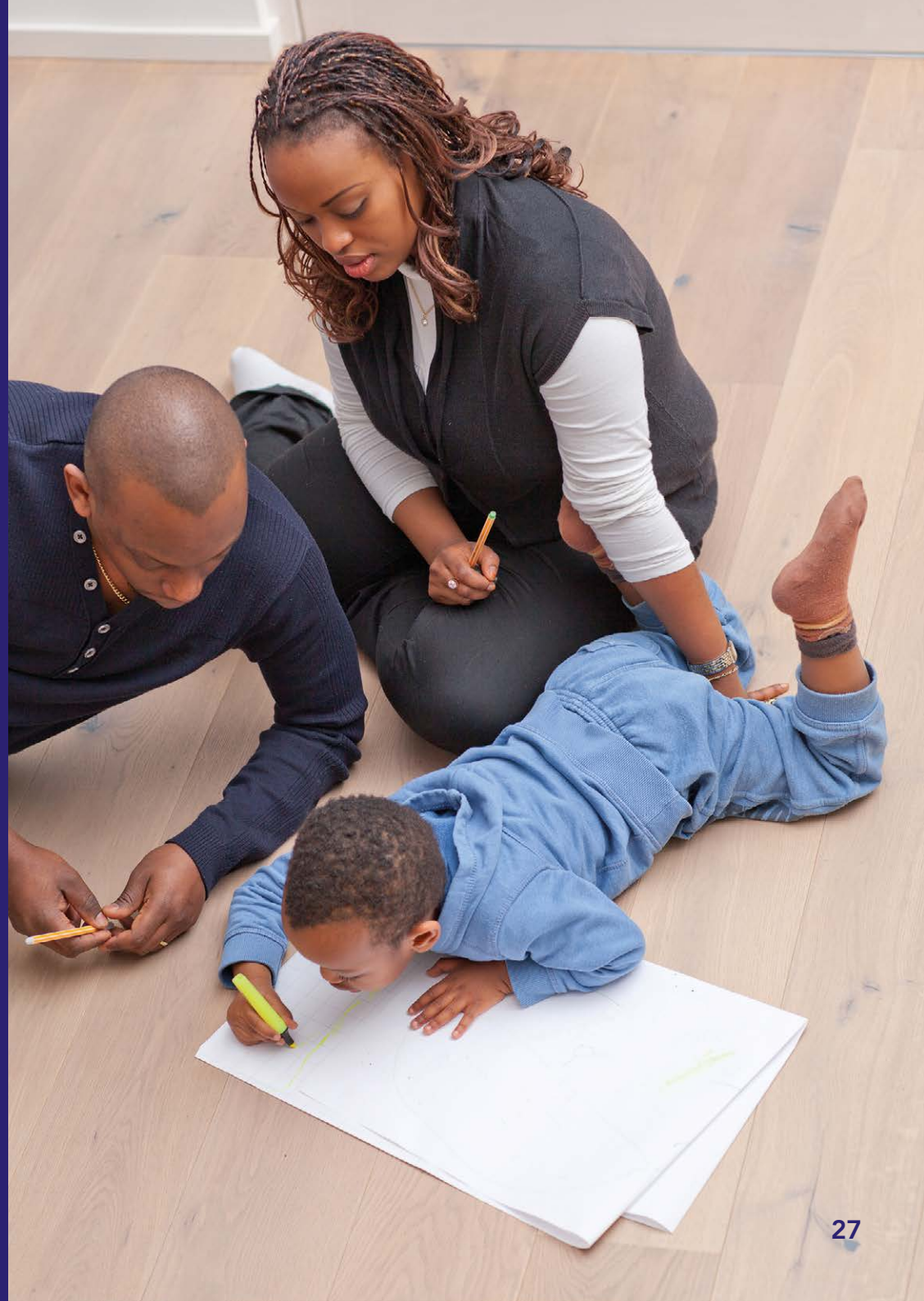
Note down what a young child knows about how their body works.

- What body parts can they name?
- Do they use the correct words or family terms for body parts?



Cognitive Development

Young children are developing their ability to think. Their growing ability to use symbols enables them to start to create and experiment with symbols and marks to represent ideas and to engage in more complex imaginative play.





Cognitive Development

Thinking and Understanding

Key ideas about development

- Young children show increasing understanding of objects and materials; how they work, their purpose and how they correspond to each other. They classify, label and sort objects according to properties such as shape or size, define the use of many household items and fit objects together such as the rings on a stacking toy or the lid on a teapot.
- Young children make sense of and understand ideas through physical experience; they show an interest in shape and space by making arrangements with objects and exploring space with their bodies.



Diverse paths of development

Young children with developmental issues such as ADHD will have different thinking patterns (neuro-diversity) to typically developing children (neuro-typical), and will often demonstrate their learning in different ways. It is important to recognise this, to be curious and to follow their lead. Regular observations and discussions with other adults in their life will help you to understand the child better.



Consider

How the environment and routines either help or hinder young children in exploring and investigating during play.

- Can they use tools and resources independently?
- Are they continually asked to stop what they are doing to move on to another activity?

To support development

- Talk and model behaviours that support a young child's thinking. Remembering shared events together, think together about 'what might happen if...' and 'I wonder how...' Plan activities that are linked to things children are really interested in.
- Young children can explore materials and resources which transform (such as ice melting) and that make a noise, move or change when an action is taken.



Look, listen and note

Observe a young child at play. What examples of them sorting and classifying objects or fitting objects together can you see?



Cognitive Development

Exploring, Playing and Imagining

Key ideas about development

- Young children move to play and play to move, they use their bodies in a wide range of ways as they play; swinging, reaching, rolling, spinning, crouching, running and standing. They often focus on the natural world and can be fascinated by animals, plants and stones; showing care and concern for living things.
- In play, young children develop their thinking skills, their social skills and their self-awareness. They increasingly use imagination in their play, alone and with others; to support this they need first hand experiences which will inspire them.



Diverse paths of development

Young children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) will at times need support with play skills including imagination and pretend play.

Children with language delays, however, may benefit from different ways of expression such as dance and acting out stories. Take a multi-sensory approach using a range of materials e.g. story sacks with props to arouse interest and curiosity.



Consider

How you can introduce young children to new experiences and environments without spending too much money.

To support development

- Expand young children's experiences with interesting outings. Provide play opportunities that relate to real life events and materials that encourage children to recreate their daily life experiences.
- Help young children to hear a range of music that is both familiar and new to them and artistic expression from a range of different cultures. Help them to access a wide range of books: Books with photographic and drawn illustrations, simple and with detail; with rhyme, rhythm and repetition.



Look, listen and note

Notice, value and encourage the marks young children make and the meanings that they give to them.