



# Child Development Resource

40-60 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.

# Contents

## Young Children 40-60 months

<b>Personal, Social and Emotional Development</b>	<b>4</b>
Making Relationships	6
Being Self-aware	8
Emotional Understanding	10
<b>Communication and Language Development</b>	<b>12</b>
Listening and Understanding	14
Responding and Expressing Myself	16
<b>Physical Development</b>	<b>18</b>
Moving My Body	20
Handling Objects	22
Being Healthy and Safe	24
<b>Cognitive Development</b>	<b>26</b>
Thinking and Understanding	28
Exploring, Playing and Imagining	30



# Personal, Social and Emotional Development

Young children are social beings; they enjoy being part of the give and take of relationships with caring adults, family members and friends. In these relationships they need to be accepted socially and culturally for who they are; their abilities, ethnicity, class and gender.





Personal, Social and Emotional Development

## Making Relationships

### Key ideas about development

- Young children develop their social relationships with others based on what they learn in their relationships with their close caring adults. They begin to develop special friendships with certain children, which help them to understand different points of view and to challenge their own and others' thinking.
- Young children are increasingly cooperative with others; sharing materials and taking turns. They may have very different ideas about their play but will take steps to resolve conflicts by negotiation and compromise; sometimes by themselves, sometimes with support.

### Diverse paths of development

Young children who are finding it hard to make relationships in the classroom or playground may find other situations such as a forest school or creative arts project more encouraging.

### Consider

How you support a child who finds it difficult to assert themselves and always gives in to their peers.

### To support development

As children play together, conflicts can arise. Allow children time to resolve issues if they can and then offer calm and considered support, using a problem-solving approach, e.g. *'You are fighting because you both want the blue bike, what can we do about this?'*



### Look, listen and note

Observe the child's friendships. Note how they look forward to being with their friend and miss them when apart. Watch their interactions, how they share ideas and negotiate in their play.



Personal, Social and Emotional Development

## Being Self-aware

### Key ideas about development

- Young children are beginning to recognise that they belong to different communities and social groups and will communicate freely about their own home and community. As they develop awareness of their abilities, ethnicity, class and gender, they need to feel accepted and respected for who they are.
- In familiar groups young children show confidence in speaking to others about their own needs, wants, interests and opinions. They will describe themselves in positive terms and talk about what they can do. They choose, plan and make decisions about what, where and how they play and persevere with challenging activities of their choice.

### Diverse paths of development

Young children with disabilities or learning difficulties may need additional support in making choices and decisions.

### Consider

How you can help children to have a positive attitude to differences between people.

Think about your own biases and how they influence your responses to some children and families and how that can affect a child's own self view.

### To support development

- The environment includes mirrors, and photographs of the child and their families and friends, displayed at child height. The environment, play opportunities and resources available reflect a child's cultural and ethnic background and those in the wider community; without stereotyping.
- Listen carefully to young children, taking their ideas and opinions into account and involving them in making decisions about daily events.



### Look, listen and note

Listen to how a young child talks about their home, family and community. If they don't, is there something you need to do to make them feel safe to do so?



Personal, Social and Emotional Development

## Emotional Understanding

### Key ideas about development

- Young children show a growing ability to understand their own and other people's feelings, offering empathy and comfort to friends. They understand that their actions can affect and hurt others and may become worried when they realise they have upset them.
- Young children are more able to manage their feelings and situations in which their wishes cannot be met. They will talk about their own and others' feelings and behaviour, and its consequences.

### Diverse paths of development

Some development disorders, such as ADHD may result in a young child finding it difficult to fully interact with their peers. It is important in these moments that they are offered (and can ask for) help.

### Consider

How you can offer time and patience to support the emotional well-being of young children with no previous experience of the routines and boundaries of pre-school or school.

### To support development

- Offer environments for young children that include both stimulating / challenging spaces and calm / comfortable spaces.
- Provide clear boundaries but be flexible when necessary. Discuss rules and fairness with young children and show positive appreciation of young children's pro-social behaviours.



### Look, listen and note

Notice when children are worried or upset; how are they expressing what they feel?



# Communication and Language Development

Children communicate in a range of ways and use (spoken or signed) language throughout the day. They show an individual linguistic culture which is an important part of their identity.





## Listening and Understanding

### Key ideas about development

- Young children are active listeners in their play and social activities with adults and other children. They are increasingly able to listen and do something at the same time and can move their attention and focus between an activity and their interaction with others.
- Young children begin to understand and use prepositions in language such as 'under', 'on top', 'behind', 'next to'; they understand these better when they can physically put themselves into those positions. They also begin to understand more complex sentences and more abstract questions such as 'why' and 'how'.

### Diverse paths of development

Some children have sensory difficulties which can make it very difficult to listen to stories and follow group discussions. There are aids which can help such as chewable toys, fidget devices and weighted blankets.

### Consider

How large groups and noisy environments can inhibit a child's ability to hear and express themselves.

### To support development

- Engage in longer conversations in small groups and one to one situations.
- Share rhymes, books and stories using languages other than English, particularly with children who are learning English as an additional language.



### Look, listen and note

Observe a young child in a group.

- How much are they engaged in the discussion?
- Do they show that they understand what is being said?
- How do they make themselves heard?





Communication and Language Development

## Responding and Expressing Myself

### Key ideas about development

- Young children talk and interact with others in everyday situations; listening to what others say, understanding what words mean, speaking, asking questions and talking about what they are doing and interested in. An important part of their identity is the individual way in which they speak.
- Young children frequently talk about their experiences, ideas and plans to adults and other children, participating in discussions and using 'how' and 'why' to reflect on and clarify their understanding. They develop their own narratives and explanations by connecting ideas or events and enjoy telling, as well as listening to stories, making up nonsense words, rhymes and jokes in their play.

### Diverse paths of development

Young children who are learning more than one language are learning more sounds and meanings than mono-lingual children. They are gaining a better understanding of how language works, but this does not mean that they will take longer to use spoken language. We should expect a bilingual child's language skills to develop at the same rate as a mono-lingual child's when you consider their skills in both languages.

### Consider

How young children are valued for their home languages and ways of speaking. Reflect on any bias you may have about children who speak differently.

### To support development

- Listen attentively to young children; their ideas, opinions and concerns.
- Provide a wide range of stories, books, rhymes and poems and encourage young children to join in, respond and make up their own.



### Look, listen and note

Listen to a young child's questions.

What do they tell you about the child's interests or concerns?



# Physical Development

Young children become more confident in their physical abilities as they develop greater bodily control, coordination, mobility and dexterity. They need space and varied opportunities to use their bodies in ways that appeal to them and in which they can find challenge.

For better health children 3-5 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

- Young children show physical confidence and vigour; experimenting with different ways of moving, running, jumping, climbing and skipping. This helps them to develop balance, coordination and an understanding of space, speed and distance.
- Young children's main focus is now on refining and coordinating movements together; running at an even pace and adjusting speed or changing direction to avoid obstacles. They may walk without watching their feet, walk backwards and walk upstairs, one foot on each step.

### Diverse paths of development

Regular physical programmes can be of great benefit to children with learning difficulties in a wide range of other areas. Do not underestimate the positive value of physical development across the whole curriculum.

### Consider

How changes to the environment can enable all children to join in with movement-based experiences.

### To support development

- Model physical activity and skills and support young children in refining their skills related to throwing, catching, rolling, jumping, kicking a ball, hopping and skipping.
- As young children begin to be directed towards more structured PE lessons, ensure that they still have access to free movement, exploration and challenge outdoors.



### Look, listen and note

Observe a young child playing freely and note down how confidently they use different movements.

If there are signs of difficulty, how can you help?



Physical Development

## Handling Objects

### Key ideas about development

- Young children's increased manual skills lead to greater confidence and skill in using items such as pencils, scissors, staplers, hammers, knives and forks. They usually show a preference for their left or right hand.
- Young children show increasing control over an object and are refining their manual skills to be precise in their actions, to use tools to achieve their desired effects, such as when drawing or using a screwdriver.

### Diverse paths of development

Sometimes children may find it difficult to assess risk. For example, children with sensory processing difficulties can find it hard to identify the properties of surfaces and may misjudge situations. Having discussions about risk and supervising them closely can support with this.

### Consider

How to overcome fears and anxieties that you or other adults might have about young children using more risky tools. How do you do your risk assessment?

### To support development

Introduce young children to more complex tools such as woodworking or sewing tools and support their understanding of how to use them safely.



### Look, listen and note

Notice which hand each child prefers to use and ensure that there are sufficient left-handed tools as needed.



Physical Development

## Being Healthy and Safe

### Key ideas about development

- Young children begin to show more understanding of their own safety and physical well-being and that good practice around exercise, eating, sleeping and hygiene can contribute to good health. They have an increasing awareness of what is and isn't safe, which enables them to use, transport and store equipment more independently.
- Young children can usually manage their own basic hygiene and personal needs successfully, including dressing, doing up buttons and buckles and going to the toilet independently.

### Diverse paths of development

Great sensitivity needs to be shown when handling children who, for medical reasons, cannot manage their own personal hygiene; guarding against embarrassment and discrimination.

### Consider

Different family expectations, and contexts such as housing when considering a child's health.

### To support development

Model safe use of tools and equipment and create safe environments for young children to develop their skills and understanding of the use and storage of tools.



### Look, listen and note

Be alert to a child who seems to feel unsafe around certain people or any other signals of concern.

Always discuss your concerns with a knowledgeable safeguarding professional.



# Cognitive Development

Young children's increasing ability to use language and mental representations along with their increased memory and reasoning abilities combine to make their thinking processes more flexible. They are gradually moving from concrete thinking (that relies on what they see and observe) to more abstract thinking (understanding concepts that are real but which are not directly tied to concrete physical objects).





Cognitive Development

## Thinking and Understanding

### Key ideas about development

- Young children are developing their capacity to think through hands-on experience and through real-life experiences. They show curiosity about things around them and will ask 'why', 'what' and 'when' questions.
- Young children are increasingly developing their abstract thinking, to use symbolic representation and to understand that symbols such as letters and numbers stand for words, objects and ideas.

### Diverse paths of development

Young children with developmental delays may need additional time to master skills and understanding. Caring adults provide just enough support to enable independent thinking.

### Consider

Encouraging children to think more imaginatively or pose questions such as, "What if...?"

You need to gauge what they know already and if they are ready to challenge their own thinking.

### To support development

- Respond positively and authentically to children's questions, modelling how to find out answers if they don't know. Use statements like "I wonder why / how..." to invite thoughts, but also know when to keep quiet and listen.'
- Young children have access to plentiful resources to make marks and symbols within their play, rather than as a formal activity.



### Look, listen and note

Watch and listen to children playing together.

- What abstract ideas do they talk about?  
e.g. Fairness often comes up
- How can you support children's explorations of ideas?



Cognitive Development

## Exploring, Playing and Imagining

### Key ideas about development

- Young children's increasing ability to use mental representations in more complex ways enables them to use symbols more and more in their thinking, enabling them to create and imagine. They show their creativity and imagination through dance and movement, singing and creating stories, mark making and building with a wide range of materials and props.
- Young children are developing their reasoning and problem-solving skills in play and also integrating their feelings and experiences. They increasingly engage in pretend play with others, which enables them to develop relationships, manage their own wishes and urges and communicate.

### Diverse paths of development

Children who do not appear to be achieving generally set goals often achieve in different ways. Observe carefully to identify their strengths and creativity.

### Consider

How you can build in enough time for child led, imaginative and movement play in a school or childcare setting and also out of school times.

### To support development

- Provide opportunities for young children to explore ideas and concepts through many ways: Movement, dance, music, painting, drawing, building etc.
- Young children have opportunities to extend their creative and social skills with long periods of uninterrupted play.



### Look, listen and note

- Notice how children begin to add rules and structures to the games they create.
- Notice children who are less confident in expressing themselves and find ideas and resources that they are interested in to encourage this.