

learning stories in southampton

Observing and assessing the learning and development of
babies and young children in the early years foundation stage



An Overview

introduction to learning stories in Southampton

‘Learning Stories’ is Southampton’s response to the requirements of the Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage (2012)

It embodies and embeds the principles and practice of good observational assessment and record keeping which is vital to the health, wellbeing and development of all our children.

The child, supported by their family, is at the heart of the stories and their stories inform provision made by the early years setting they are attending and the support given to the setting by the Local Authority.

‘The Big Picture’ shows how careful analysis, using the documents in this guidance, informs planning in the setting for children’s learning and development and how, through support for the setting, the Local Authority will accomplish its duty to raise outcomes for children in Southampton.

Creating the Stories

These Guidance Notes for practitioners outline the processes involved in creating effective Learning Stories. Each section is introduced with an overview statement and then gives guidance on how to complete the associated part of the stories.



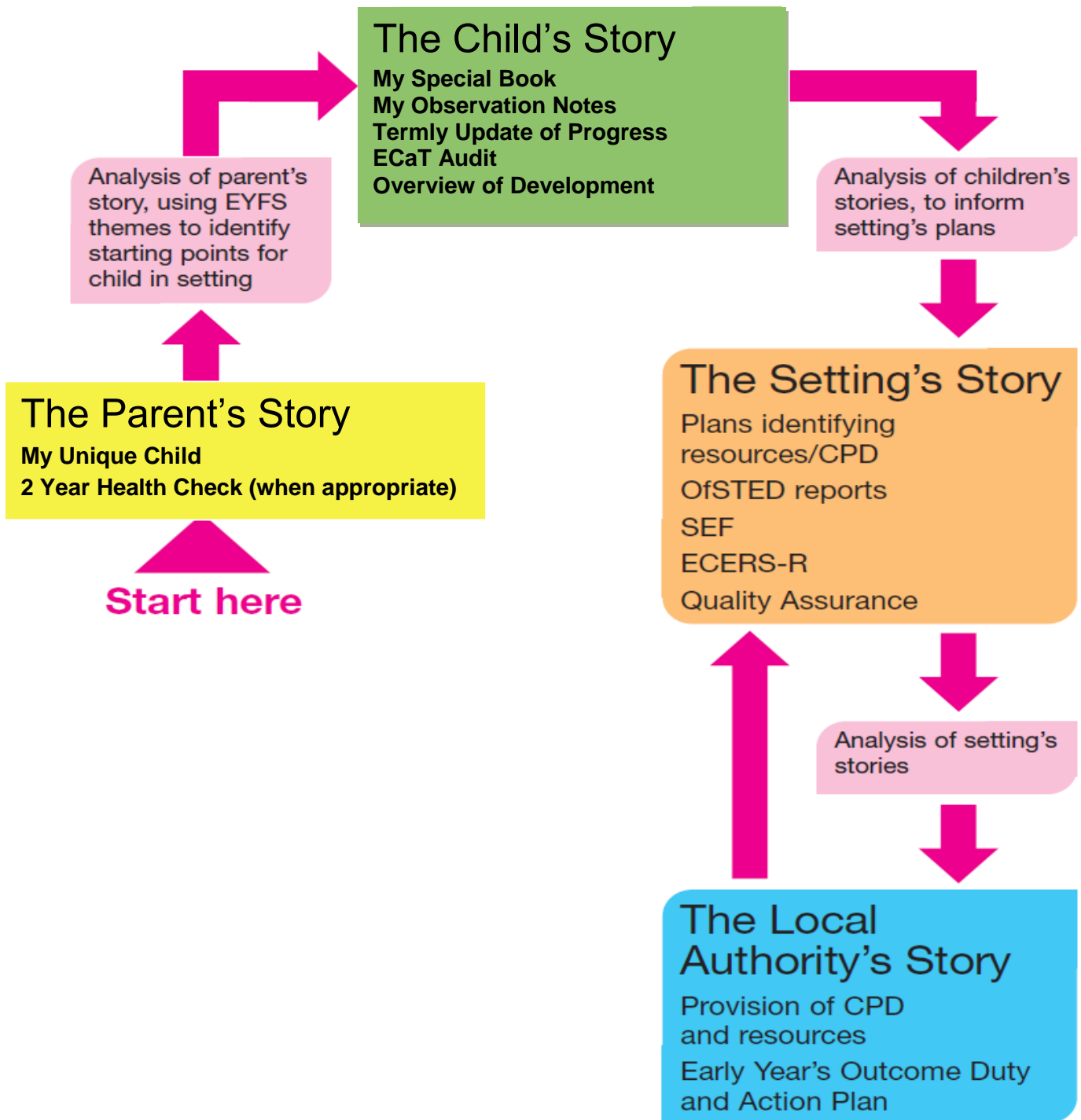
Assessment **must** be based on observations of children engaged in appropriate activities or provision for their age/stage of development. It is also **vital** that practitioners are fully aware of the stages of development of their children in order to plan and provide appropriate activities and experiences that will meet their needs.

The processes and skills involved in producing Learning Stories are supported by both targeted and continuous training and professional development from the Early Years Support Team including setting based support from Early Years Support Teachers and Development Workers.

The Early Years Support Team

September 2012

the big picture



Southampton learning stories

Parent/Carer Consent

To be completed when a child starts in an early years setting

I/We understand that this setting will collect observations about my/our child and use them to help support their learning and development.

I/We understand that their Learning Story will be regularly shared with me/us and I/we will be able to contribute to it.

I/We consent to these records being kept:

Parent/Carer Name/s

Signature.....Date

Signature.....Date

To be completed before transfer to Infant/Primary School

I/We understand that their Learning Story and relevant information will be passed on to school in order to help plan for them as they start.

I/We consent to these records being passed on to school:

Parent/Carer Name/s

Signature.....Date

Signature.....Date

Receiving School

the parent's story



My Unique Child

This booklet is designed to enable the practitioner to gain an overview of the child's learning and development so far, as seen by their parent/carer, by using a selection of information gathering questions. It can be used when a child starts at a setting whatever their age.

Some information may already be gathered on a settings' admission form, in which case this can be filled in by the practitioner before talking with the parent.

My Unique child is an important first step in the building of relationships with families, and practitioners should work alongside parents. Parents will probably want to see the booklet beforehand so that they know the sort of information that is needed in order to get a picture of their child

The following pages are a copy of 'My Unique Child'. Questioning needs to be sensitive and must take into account the age and stage of development of the child.

When appropriate, settings should ask Parents/Carers to share their child's two year health check.



my unique child



*Please attach a photo
either one supplied by the parent
or one you take on entry*

Photo

This book is all about

Child's name

“Every child is a competent learner from birth who can be resilient, capable, confident and self assured.”



This book
is all about

Date of birth

It has been
completed by

to help
care for my child and provide for
their future learning

I understand that this book will be the start of my child's Learning Story and I am happy for this information to be shared with other people involved in their care and education. Any additional information will only be added with my consent.

Signature/s

Date

This book...

- Celebrates your child's learning journey so far.
- Values you as your child's prime educator.
- Indicates the starting point for the setting and where early years practitioners can begin to make a contribution to your child's learning.

Please feel free to add any photos, especially of your child growing up.

all about my child

Our family

Please let us know about the important people in your child's life.

This could include brothers and sisters, grandparents, childminder or your friends.

What is your child's position in the family?

Please let us know about any pets, favourite toys, games or activities or interests.

Are there any important celebrations, festivals or events that you share as a family?

Photos of my child and family



Photos of my child and family





My child's birth

Please let us know if there were any complications or difficulties – e.g. low birth weight or significant prematurity.

My child's physical development

Please let us know when your child sat, crawled, walked etc

What opportunities does your child have to be physically active?

e.g. going to the park/play area, walking to the shops, swimming etc.

My child's health and habits

Please let us know whether your child sleeps well, has a good appetite and is in generally good health.



My child's moods and feelings

Please let us know how your child shows their emotions such as happiness, sadness, anger, excitement, frustration, love and affection.

Is there anything that worries your child or that they are sensitive about?

My Child's speech, language and communication

Please let us know things like whether your baby/child babbles or talks.

Do you understand what they say?

Do they use any special words we need to know?

Do they communicate using signs/gestures?

Do other people understand what they say/are trying to communicate?



What is/are the language(s) your family speak in your home and that your child uses/understands?

If your child is learning English as an additional language, would you describe him/her as:

(please circle)

- New to English
- Becoming familiar with English
- Becoming a confident user of English
- A fluent user of English

Playing and Learning

Please let us know what your child enjoys most

Playing with an adult, playing alone, with other children or playing alongside others – this will depend on the age and stage of development of your child.

Do they like to be active? Stretching, rolling, walking, running, jumping etc.



Do they play outside? What sort of things do they do?

What are their favourite books, songs or rhymes?

**What do they like to explore and investigate?
Does this sometimes lead them into “mischief”?**

**Have you and your child attended, or are you currently attending any groups,
such as Sure Start, Stay and Play, Parent and Toddlers etc.**

Please tell us which ones.



My Children's behaviour

At different ages and stages all children have times when they can be difficult or get frustrated or angry because they cannot make you understand what they want. Apart from these times is there anything that worries you or we need to know about your child's behaviour.

Are they developing an awareness of danger?

Do they understand simple rules for safety?



Is there anything else you would like us to know about your child and/or family?

Thank you for completing this book.

This important information will be used to continue all the learning your child has done at home whilst they are in an early years setting. We look forward to working with you!

Please talk to us and tell us if any information changes at any time. This may include things about family/home circumstances as well as talking to us about things that your child can do or is interested in.



Additional notes/ideas for provision

case studies of good practice - my unique child

Barn Owls Pre School - a setting that makes home visits

Between 3-4 months before a child starts at the setting the Lead and Deputy Practitioner contact individual parents/carers to arrange a mutually convenient time to complete a Home Visit.

At this visit we take an information pack about Barn Owls and the My Unique Child booklet. We talk through the information pack and the booklet with the parents/carers. At this point parents/carers have the opportunity to ask questions about completing My Unique Child. We then leave the booklet, along with a sheet of 'tips for completing the My Unique Child' and our contact details. We reassure parents/carers that if they have any further queries then they can contact us for further advice. At this visit we arrange a second Home Visit for 1-2 weeks later. At the second visit we go through the completed My Unique Child booklet with the parents/carers and discuss the contents and any issues or concerns that may have arisen.

Once the Home Visits are completed and the booklets have been collected the Lead and Deputy Practitioner allocate children to the key person. The My Unique Child booklets are given to each key person a few weeks before the child starts pre school. This enables them to familiarize themselves with the child and the information in order to prepare for the child and follow up any actions. Finally the staff team meet together to share a summary of each child.

The staff believe this process helps both the child and his/her family feel part of the setting from an early stage and this in turn helps the transition from home to pre-school go smoothly.



Kim Phillipson - Childminder

As a childminder I show the parent the booklet and explain about it – I then add post-it notes giving a clearer indication of what is needed with examples. I give it to the parent to take away and look at – some of my parents have added lots of info and photo's – others not much.

When it comes back I look at it and ask the parents about anything that I feel I would like more information on; this would be over a cup of tea (informally) and so far this has worked well.

If I had a parent with English as a second language or seemed to have difficulties (reading or writing) I would arrange a time or times to go through it together and do it in a relaxed and unhurried way, probably at a weekend or an evening – this is a good way to help establish good and open relationships with a parent.

Also I ask the parent if they mind me adding things I notice about their child during the settling in visits.

For all the parents I have at present I have used this method and it appears to work well – it is good to give them a timescale to get it back to you though, as you need the information when the child starts – not some months later! I feel it is important for the parent and me to work on it together and ensure we have as much information about the child's needs as possible.

Recently a parent requested theirs back to help them to complete the pre-school setting one as the child will be starting pre-school in September. However, this may not be necessary if you are working closely with the pre school and the parent is happy for you to pass on information.

I am working on a helpful hints sheet to give to the parents which will explain to the parent a bit more about the sort of information which would be useful.



Other ideas that may help you review your practice....

Some **Day Nurseries** build the Unique Child booklet into their settling in process. During the first few visits, where a parent stays with the child, the Key Person explains the booklet and begins to work with the parent to fill in the information. By the end of the settling in period, all information is recorded and then used as the child starts at the setting.

Some **settings that do not home visit** spend time talking through the booklet with the parent at a pre visit, prior to the child starting, or at the first session where they ask the parent to stay. The information is then either added with the Key Person or the parent takes the booklet home to add the information. If taken home, it is recommended that you give the parent a timescale for returning the booklet. It is really useful to have the information ready for the child starting in the setting so you can use it effectively to help them settle.

Settings working with families who have English as an additional language have tried various ways of supporting them to share information through My Unique Child. One setting put two families with the same home language in the same session and introduced them to each other. The parents were able to help each other with the booklet and supported each other in talking with the Key Person about their child when sharing the booklet. Where settings have Key Persons who speak the same language as families, they have used this person to translate and support the gathering of information. Some settings have encouraged other family members who speak English to support the parent with the process and to come along and talk with the practitioners when looking through the information.

Where families have **issues relating to literacy skills**, settings have supported them by giving more individual time to go through the booklet and complete it with the parent, writing the information in for them.

Key messages

- Review your induction policy to see how you can incorporate My Unique Child information gathering.
- Ensure the process is a shared one, ensuring that at some point you actually discuss the information with the parent.
- Where possible, try to obtain as much information **in advance** of the child starting.

key person



summary sheet for my unique child

Setting:

Key Person:

Date:

Children's names	Key information from My Unique Child	Implications for provision

the  child's story

**My Special
Book**

**My Observation
Notes**

the child's story



'From the earliest age, the children should be involved and this is part of the assessment for learning process. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child Article 12 states the right of the child to express an opinion and to have that opinion taken into account, in any matter or procedure affecting the child. Sharing the child's record together provides an ideal opportunity for celebrating achievements and discussing future plans. Even with babies it is a valuable chance to delight together in their achievements.'

Good Practice Guidance, EYFS

My Special Book

'My Special Book' is a collection of photos and/or things the child does, selected by the child and/or practitioner and annotated to give context. The child and practitioner create the book together and the child is encouraged to take an active part in selecting things for the book and the practitioner shares the process with the child.

The practitioner also selects contributions for the book that show **significant learning/development**. The child has opportunities to look through and talk about the book with the practitioner and their parent /carer. The parent/carer has access to the child's 'Special Book' on a regular basis and can add contributions to the book if they want to.

When working with babies and very young children, the process will obviously be more practitioner and parent led. As children are more able to become involved, then the practitioner needs to involve them at the appropriate level. It is important however to involve the child as much as possible, whatever the age.

'My Special Book' has no specific format and could be contained in a file or scrapbook etc. Many early years settings already have successful formats which they can continue to use.

However, the page inserts which will need to be included are at the end of this section. These should be photocopied and inserted into your setting's 'My Special Book' format.

The following pages are the inserts for 'My Special Book' but have been annotated to provide notes and prompts for practitioners in *red*.

NB – Appendix 1 - Gathering Evidence of Children's Learning throughout each child's time in the Foundation Stage, may be useful to practitioners when thinking about issues related to My Special Book and My Observation Notes.

my special book



Add a current photo of the child

A photo of me

A book about..... *Child's name*.....

This book was made between

Date book started.....and..... *Date book finished*.....



My name is *Child's name*

This is my special book.

It's all about me.

It's about things I do and things I say.

I can help make this book.

I can help put things in it like photos or special things I do that I think are good or interesting.

Sometimes adults will put things in
My Special Book.

They might write about the things I do or say.

Sometimes my family and friends might share
My Special Book and see all the great things I've
been doing and learning about.

*But best of all, this is My Special Book,
and it's all about **ME!***

THESE ARE SUMMARY SHEETS THAT MUST BE COMPLETED AND ADDED TO THE CHILD'S SPECIAL BOOK AT LEAST THREE TIMES A YEAR. PRACTITIONERS WILL COMPLETE THIS **WITH THE CHILD** (OR, IN THE CASE OF VERY YOUNG CHILDREN/BABIES, BASED ON THEIR KNOWLEDGE OF THE CHILD AND IN DISCUSSION WITH PARENTS/CARERS).



Things I like/am interested in at the moment:

This is where you write what the child tells you about the things they like at the moment

Who I like to play/be with:

This is where you write what the child tells you about who they like to play with or be with at the moment



This is what I think about My Special Book:

Write here what the child says or how they react to their special book when you share it with them. Sharing the special book with the child should happen regularly as they should be involved in selecting things for it on an on-going basis.

This section - 'This is what I think about My Special Book' - can have notes added as part of the ongoing sharing process if desired, but should definitely be completed three times a year (at the end of a term, if appropriate to your setting) with the child (if appropriate to age) in a one to one sharing time.

If a child expresses a desire to write something themselves, then this should be encouraged and then annotated to aid meaning.

This is what..... *Parent/Carer's name*
thinks about My Special Book:

e.g. mummy, daddy, nanny - whichever family member has looked at the book

This is where the parent/carers writes a message to their child to say what they think about the book. Some parents/carers may prefer the Key Person to scribe for them.

*Encourage the parent/carers to write the comment as a message to the child
e.g. 'I think your special book is really fantastic. I like the photo of you in the puddles.
You are having a great time at nursery! You are so clever at making paintings too'.*

This is what..... *Key Person's name*
thinks about My Special Book:

This is where the Key Person writes a message to the child to say what they think about the book.

my special book



A photo of me

A book about

This book was made between

.....and



My name is

This is my special book.

It's all about me.

It's about things I do and things I say.

I can help make this book.

I can help put things in it like photos or special things I do that I think are good or interesting.

Sometimes adults will put things in My Special Book.

They might write about the things I do or say.

Sometimes my family and friends might share My Special Book and see all the great things I've been doing and learning about.

*But best of all, this is My Special Book,
and it's all about **ME!***



Things I like/am interested in at the moment:

Who I like to play/be with:



This is what I think about My Special Book:

This is what.....
thinks about My Special Book:

This is what.....
thinks about My Special Book:

Assessment plays an important part in helping parents, carers and practitioners to recognise children's progress, understand their needs, and to plan activities and support. Ongoing assessment (also known as formative assessment) is an integral part of the learning and development process. It involves practitioners observing children to understand their level of achievement, interests and learning styles, and to then shape learning experiences for each child reflecting those observations. In their interactions with children, practitioners should respond to their own day-to-day observations about children's progress, and observations that parents and carers share.

My Observation Notes

'My Observation Notes' are the Key Person's observation notes, collected over a period of time, three times a year, based on significant things that the child does and says.

These comprise of ongoing, informal observations collected and ordered chronologically and annotated to show Areas of Learning & Development by the Key Person and at least two focussed Learning Story observations. You may need to make many more for children about whom you have any concerns.

These notes may also include an Individual Education Plan for a child with Additional Needs and dated notes to refer to information from any other professionals involved with supporting the child.

Parents/carers should be encouraged to contribute by providing observations and information about changes to the child's interests and developing skills.

NB. Observations and assessments need to be used on a day to day/week to week basis, to inform and influence what you provide and plan for your children. See APPENDIX 1 for information to support you with using observations and assessments to feed into Short Term planning.

Southampton Learning Stories

Autumn Spring Summer

2 Yr Progress Check



My Observation Notes

Child's name

Date of birth>>>.....

Notes collected from to

Setting name

Key person(s)

Attendance pattern

Date _____ Registered for _____ hours per week

Actual attendance (please circle most applicable)

Always attends

Mostly attends

Rarely attends

Arrives on time (please circle most applicable)

Always

Mostly

Rarely

Attending other settings?

Setting name:

Contact number:

Key Person at other Setting:

Permission given to share information with other setting:

Parent/Carer Signature:

Date:.....

Ongoing significant observations	Links to areas of learning and development/notes

Ongoing significant observations	Links to areas of learning and development/notes

focussed observation 1

(Approx 5 minutes)

Date _____ Observer _____

Context for learning

What did they do/say (PTO to continue writing)

Links to EYFS

Prime:

PSED C&L PD

Specific:

L M UW

EA&D

Continuation sheet

Links to EYFS

Prime:

PSED C&L

PD

Specific:

L M UW

EA&D

Next steps in provision

“What will you provide as a setting to help me make further progress?”

Additional focussed observation template

(Approx 5 minutes)

Date _____ Observer _____

Context for learning

What did they do/say (PTO to continue writing)

Links to EYFS

Prime:
PSED C&L
PD

Specific:
L M UW
EA&D

Continuation sheet

Links to EYFS

Prime:

PSED C&L

PD

Specific:

L M UW

EA&D

Next steps in provision

“What will you provide as a setting to help me make further progress?”

my observation notes



Update of Progress

‘Update of Progress’ provides a summary of the child’s progress at least three times a year using all the evidence contained in ‘My Special Book’ and ‘My Observation Notes’ and the practitioner’s knowledge of the child.

The practitioner uses the summary to suggest ‘Next Steps’ in planning provision for the child to encourage continued learning and development.

This process/update is shared with the parent/carer at a planned ‘parent/carer chat’ held three times a year. This will help to further develop the ‘positive relationships’ with them and enable the practitioner to put learning and development in context for the family. It is up to settings to organise how they will achieve these meetings.

When families become more used to learning stories, practitioners may find that the families may wish to look at ‘My Special Book’ and ‘My Observation Notes’ more often and informally too, as part of their general practice e.g. When dropping off or picking up their child they may spend a few moments looking at things in the book/notes by themselves.

My Update of Progress includes all seven areas of learning and the three ‘Characteristics of Effective Learning’.

It also includes an overview of current development.

Southampton Learning Stories



My update of progress

Significant progress within the Areas of Learning and Development (with reference to *Development Matters in the Early Years Foundation Stage*)

This box only to be completed if **2 Year Check**

If this Learning Story forms part of the Statutory 2 Year Check, you must copy **THIS** section and **give a copy to Parents/Carers.**

Child's name: Date of birth:

Date completed:

A copy of this section has been shared and given to parents/carers and it has been explained that it can and should be shared with Health Visitors and other Professionals.

Key Worker: Date:

Parent/Carer: Date:

This sheet should be started when a child has settled in and added to as characteristics are identified and developed. This could be at any appropriate time and it should finally form part of the Learning Stories information shared with their next setting/school.

Characteristics of Effective Learning	How _____ learns	Date
		<p>By playing and exploring – ENGAGEMENT</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Finding out and exploring • Playing with what they know • Being willing “to have a go”
<p>Through active learning – MOTIVATION</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Being involved and concentrating • Keeping on trying • Enjoying achieving what they set out to do 		
<p>By creating and thinking critically THINKING</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Having their own ideas • Making links – using what they already know to learn new things • Choosing ways to do things 		

Based on *My Special Book*, *My Observation Notes*, discussions with parents/carers, other agencies and practitioners' professional judgement, our observations show that now I can ...

PRIME AREAS

Personal, Social & Emotional Development

Making relationships

Self-confidence and self awareness

Managing feelings and behaviour

Communication and Language

Listening and attention

Understanding

Speaking

Physical Development

Moving and handling

Health and self-care

SPECIFIC AREAS

Literacy

Reading

Writing

Mathematics

Numbers

Shape, space and
measure

Understanding the world

People and
communities

The World

Technology

Expressive arts and design

Exploring and using
media and materials

Being imaginative

Next steps future opportunities

“What will you provide as a setting to help me make further progress?”

This sheet should be used as an ongoing monitoring tool to track a child's progress each term. It should also be completed and shared with other professionals at times of transition. eg. moving to a new room, changing setting, and moving into Year R.

EYFS - Overview of current development

Current age in months

Area of learning	Aspect	Best fit age/stage band
Personal, social and emotional development	Self confidence and self-awareness	
	Managing feelings and behaviour	
	Making relationships	
Communication and language	Listening and attention	
	Understanding	
	Speaking	
Physical development	Moving and handling	
	Health and self-care	
Literacy	Reading	
	Writing	
Mathematics	Numbers	
	Shape, space and measures	
Understanding the world	People and communities	
	The world	
	Technology	
Expressive arts and design	Exploring and using media and materials	
	Being imaginative	

Parent/Carer comment:

Signed – Parent/Carer **Date**

Signed – Key Person **Date**

**Signed – Manager/
Lead Practitioner** **Date**

**Thank you for contributing to
My Learning Story**

key person

summary sheet - next steps in provision for key group

Key Person:

Autumn 20....

Spring 20....

Summer 20....

Key Children (names)	Next steps in provision (from My Update of Progress)	Links to Areas of Learning and Development/ Characteristics of Effective Learning (please circle)
		Prime: PSED C&L PD Specific: L M UW EA&D Characteristics: P&E AL C&TC
		Prime: PSED C&L PD Specific: L M UW EA&D Characteristics: P&E AL C&TC
		Prime: PSED C&L PD Specific: L M UW EA&D Characteristics: P&E AL C&TC
		Prime: PSED C&L PD Specific: L M UW EA&D Characteristics: P&E AL C&TC
		Prime: PSED C&L PD Specific: L M UW EA&D Characteristics: P&E AL C&TC
		Prime: PSED C&L PD Specific: L M UW EA&D Characteristics: P&E AL C&TC

the setting's story



Next Steps in Provision

The focus now moves to using the information from the children's stories to inform next steps in provision for the setting or individual age group room/unit within a day nursery, where these groups are separate (e.g. baby room, toddler room, pre school room).

The planning needs to link into the four themes of the EYFS. Settings should highlight actions required to develop their practice/provision based on the knowledge of the needs of the children gained from their Learning Stories.

This should include implications for:

- **environment**
- **activities/experiences**
- **adult deployment**
- **adult/child interaction**
- **additional resources**
- **and staff training needs**

Information related to OfSTED reports, Self Evaluation, ECERS-R/ITERS and Quality Assurance, where applicable, will also help inform planning for next steps in provision.

The leader(s)/manager(s) of each setting need to lead and manage this task. This will include leaders of different age groups/units within a day nursery (e.g. baby leader, toddler leader, pre-school leader).

The process should involve the whole team feeding information from their key children's Learning Stories into the planning needs for the whole setting/individual age groups/units.

the local authority's story



Early Years Outcomes Duty

The Childcare Act 2006 places a duty on Local Authorities to improve outcomes for young children and reduce inequalities between those with the poorest outcomes and their peers.

Closing the gap

'The improvements of the past decade have not delivered equal chances of success for all children and young people. So we must do much more to ensure that under-achieving groups..., who are most often left behind, make better progress.'

Guidance for Local Authorities on Setting Education Performance Targets

the local authority's story



To support settings in developing their practice of using Learning Stories to assess children's learning and development, the Local Authority will:

- Provide materials, guidance and training.
- Use Early Years Support Teachers and Development Workers to assist settings with all aspects of the Learning Stories process.
- Monitor settings' practice of observation, assessment and planning through Learning Stories.
- Evaluate the effectiveness of the Learning Stories approach and review/adapt elements of the process in the light of the evaluations.

Through analysis of the setting's plans the Local Authority will be able to:

- Plan for Continued Professional Development, support and training.
- Focus and plan the work of the Early Years Support Team in supporting and advising settings.
- Inform progress towards Southampton's Early Years Outcomes Duty.
- Develop strategies for the Local Authority Action Plan.

The Local Authority working alongside settings, which in turn, are working in partnership with families and their children, will provide the best possible opportunity for children to achieve an excellent foundation in their early years for their future learning and development.



appendices

- 1. Gathering Evidence of Children's Learning**
- 2. Linking observation and assessment to Short Term Planning**
- 3. Liaison between settings and transitions**
- 4. Sample transition to school letter**
- 5. Underpinning information that supports observation and assessment, taken from Creating the Picture**
- 6. Process Overview Sheet**



appendix 1

Gathering Evidence of Children's Learning throughout each child's time in the Foundation Stage

Observations:

- Participant observations when practitioner is involved in play with children
- Participant observations when practitioner is involved in planned adult led activities
- Incidental observations when practitioner notices something significant he or she is not involved in
- Planned 'focussed observations when practitioner stands back to observe children in independent child initiated activities

Conversations with the children

- Informal conversations and discussions
- Talking one to one with children about their learning
- Information from parents

Samples

- Drawings, mark making
- Photos of models, paintings etc
- Photos of children carrying out a particular activity, showing the learning process

Evidence of learning and achievement collected by others involved with the child e.g therapists

Evidence of learning and achievement collected in other settings that the child attends e.g childminder, day nursery



appendix 2

How do my observations and assessments influence my SHORT TERM planning?

Use these statements/questions to assist you...

In order to meet the needs of my group of children are there any changes, extensions or improvements that I need to plan for....

- **environment or routine?**
- **organisation/deployment of adults?**
- **activities/experiences?**
- **adult/child interactions?**
- **training and/resources?**

IMPORTANT NOTE

It is vital when planning that you are fully aware of the stages of development of your children in order to provide appropriate activities and experiences that will meet their needs.

Practitioners must consider the individual needs, interests, and stage of development of each child in their care, and must use this information to plan a challenging and enjoyable experience for each child in all of the areas of learning and development.

1.7 Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage (2012)

You must be able to use the information in A Unique Child, Positive Relationships and Enabling Environments, to guide what you are providing and ensure it is suited to the stages and needs of your children.



appendix 3

Liaison Between Settings and Transitions

Transitions and Continuity

- Children may move between several different settings in the course of a day, a week, a month or a year.
- Children's social, emotional and educational needs are central to any transition between one setting and another or within one setting.
- Some children and their parents will find transition times stressful while others will enjoy the experience.
- Effective communication between settings is key to ensuring that children's needs are met and there is continuity in their learning.

What are the implications for our practice and Learning Stories?

Liaison between Settings

Children may attend one or more settings. It is important to know which settings these are and to have a record of them, with contact numbers and names. My Observation Notes has a box on the front cover to record this information each term.

You must ensure that where children attend another setting you regularly discuss the children's development and learning records and any other relevant information.

If a child transfers from one setting to another then all of their Learning Stories information needs to transfer with them. In best practice, the setting sending on the information would arrange to talk through the child's records and share information face to face with the new setting, to ensure the best continuity.



appendix 3

Transitions within Settings

Children in Day Nurseries may transfer between different age groups e.g. babies to toddlers, toddlers to pre-school. It is vital that practitioners share information and discuss the child using Learning Stories as part of this process. When a child moves to a new age group, the most recent Learning Stories for the child should transfer with them. This will assist in planning for their needs as they move on. At such points of transition the setting should consider whether previous Learning Story materials like My Special Book and My Observation Notes should be retained by the setting or passed on to the child's parents/carers.

Transition to School

In September, settings should remind parents/carers to apply for school places. The poster from the Local Authority should be displayed and brought to the attention of parents/carers.

In March settings should ask parents/carers where children have been allocated a school place. The setting should then inform the school – see example letter Appendix 3.

In the Summer Term, settings must attend Liaison Groups where transitions will be discussed further with the receiving schools.

By mid July, settings should ensure that the following information is passed on to the school:

My Unique Child	If completed within the past twelve months, pass this on to school.
My Observation Notes	Pass on the last 2 copies of these notes i.e. Spring & Summer
My Special Book	This should go to parents/carers. Ask them to share this with the school as their child starts at school.
SEN Information	If a child has an IEP or support strategy notes, pass copies of these on to the school.



appendix 4

Example letter for transitions to school

**A Southampton Early Years Setting
10 A Street
Southampton
Tel – 023 8033 3333**

20th March 2013

Dear Headteacher,

We have been informed by parents/carers that the following children will be starting at your school in September:

Add children's names and dates of birth here

We would be very pleased for your staff to visit them here at our setting as part of the transition process. We would also like to find out about your school's plan for induction.

During July, we will send information about the children to you in order to assist with planning for their needs as they start at school. This consists of Observation Notes and an Update of Progress. Additionally, we will give a record called 'My Special Book' which contains photos and pieces of 'work', to the parents/carers. We will ask them to show this to you as their child starts in their new class. This is a more visual record of children's progress which should be read as part of their observation notes.

Please do not hesitate to contact us should you require any further information. We look forward to hearing from you and working with you as the children move on to school.

Yours faithfully,

Mrs A Practitioner
Leader of a Southampton Early Years Setting



appendix 5

The 'Big Ideas' Underpinning Effective Observation and Assessment in the EYFS

Taken from '**Creating the picture**' - Primary National Strategy
Produced by the Department for Education and Skills
www.dfes.gov.uk

There are four key themes in the EYFS (Early Years Foundation Stage) Framework for improving the outcomes for children from birth to five:

- **A Unique Child**
- **Positive Relationships**
- **Enabling Environments**
- **Learning and Development**

These themes have important implications for assessment and record-keeping and consequent planning for each child's needs. They inform the principles that underpin effective assessment practice.

They require practitioners to:

- Recognise children as competent and influential individuals who need to be involved in their own assessment;
- Work with other adults who are important to the child;
- Recognise each child's individual route to learning;
- Build a broad picture of the child which ranges widely, incorporating and interconnecting all the areas of Learning and Development and the three Characteristics of Effective Learning.

The EYFS states that practitioners should:

- make systematic observations and assessments of each child's achievements, interests and learning styles;
- use these observations and assessments to identify learning priorities and plan relevant and motivating learning experiences for each child;
- match their observations to the expectations of the early learning goals.

This means that practitioners must implement clear, principled approaches and a seamless continuum of assessment from the child's first days in a setting to the end of the EYFS. These approaches should take into account the transitions that children make from setting to setting.



A description of the principles for observational assessment and record-keeping

Observational assessment and record-keeping involve building up a manageable picture of what a child knows, understands, feels and can do in order to:

- plan the next steps in development and learning;
- plan the provision to enable these next steps to be successful (formative assessment);
- help children as they are learning (assessment for learning);
- mark staging posts in a child's and groups of children's development and learning (summative assessment);
- evaluate the impact of the quality of provision, environment and the level of practitioner training on development and learning (assessment of the conditions for learning).

The impact of observational assessment is not measurable by its weight. It is the use to which the practitioner puts their observations that is important. Ongoing observation, carried out in a range of contexts and across the areas of Learning and Development, will be the key way of assessing children's needs in EYFS. The approaches used for young children should align with what is required by the EYFSP (formative assessment during the final year of the EYFS, often a reception class). The systems and approaches used must grow from the needs of the very youngest children; they should not be watered-down versions of approaches appropriate for older children.

- The principles are divided into three sub-sections:
- eight principles for observational assessment;
- six principles for record-keeping;
- four principles for demonstrating progress.

A description of the eight principles for early childhood observational assessment

1. Assessment must have a purpose. It will enable practitioners to intervene, support and extend a child's learning as it is happening. It will inform planning for the next steps in learning for each child, deepening and extending the child's learning. Assessment captures the impact of provision on a child's development and learning and so helps practitioners review and evaluate their provision.

2. Ongoing observation of children participating in everyday activities is the most reliable way of building up an accurate picture of what children know, understand, feel, are interested in and can do. These individual pictures will be built up over time and in a range of contexts.



- 3. Practitioners should both plan observations and be ready to capture the spontaneous but important moments.** Everyday experiences and activities will provide an almost complete picture of the child's learning, but particular planning is needed to capture important aspects of learning that may not arise every day. Other opportunities may occur that are unplanned but nevertheless should not be missed.
- 4. Judgements of children's development and learning must be based on skills, knowledge, understanding and behaviour that are demonstrated consistently and independently.** Assessments cannot be reliable or accurate if they are based on one-off instances or information gleaned solely from adult-directed activities. Observational assessment should be a balance between child-initiated and adult-led activities.
- 5. Effective assessment takes equal account of all aspects of the child's development and learning.** A holistic approach to assessment is necessary in order to reflect accurately the nature of children's development and to acknowledge the interrelationship between different aspects of learning.
- 6. Accurate assessments are reliant upon taking account of contributions from a range of perspectives.** These will include all adults who have contact with the child in a range of contexts: the home, health professionals and so on.
- 7. Assessments must actively engage parents in developing an accurate picture of the child's development.** Effective partnership, working with parents, will ensure that their vital perspective contributes to the overall description of children's development and learning.
- 8. Children must be fully involved in their own assessment.** Children should be involved in discussing their activities and how they feel about them from the beginning of their time in a setting and from whatever age they start. Encouraging children to respond (using the communication method with which they are most comfortable, including where appropriate their non-verbal response), ask questions, make comments and share their own judgements about what they are learning enables them to take true ownership of their development. It also gives practitioners an invaluable insight into the patterns and process of their learning.



Putting these observational assessment principles into practice

The following section sets out the common features of good practice that will result from these principles and weaves in straightforward guidance on how to achieve this.

1. Assessment must have a purpose. Assessment for its own sake has no intrinsic value.

What it looks like

This principle is evident when these criteria may be observed:

- Practitioners listen to and note children's reactions to and involvement in their learning and respond in ways which support that learning there and then.
- Assessment provides an insight into how best to help a child develop and learn. What practitioners look at, listen to and note is fully considered to plan the next steps in learning.
- The effect of provision on children's development and learning is examined carefully. Practitioners use this information to investigate whether what they are doing is having a positive impact.

2. Ongoing observation of children participating in everyday activities is the most reliable way of building up an accurate picture of what children know, understand, feel, are interested in and can do. These individual pictures will be built up over time and in a range of contexts.

What it looks like

This is demonstrated when these criteria may be observed:

- Practitioners make systematic observations and reflect upon their interactions with children to understand each child's achievement, interests and learning styles.
- Observations and reflections capture the broad picture of children's development and learning, rather than narrow aspects.
- Observations are made in a range of contexts, for example, when children are applying their knowledge, when they are playing, eating together, going on outings, when they are engaged on their own and with others.

The only accurate – and therefore acceptable – way of assessing young children's learning is through gathering evidence from observations and information from parents, the child's own views and those of other professionals involved with the child.



3. Practitioners should both plan observations and be ready to capture the spontaneous but important moments. Everyday experiences and activities will provide an almost complete picture of the child's learning, but particular planning is needed to capture important aspects of learning that may not arise every day. Other opportunities may occur that are unplanned but nevertheless should not be missed.

What it looks like

This is demonstrated when these criteria may be observed:

- Practitioners organise resources and their time so they can capture the planned and the spontaneous.
- Staff, especially the Key person, are deployed to carry out good-quality observations.
- Staff realise every interaction with children is an opportunity to learn about them and to influence the quality of their learning at that moment.
- Practitioners are well trained and recognise important moments in children's development and learning.

4. Judgements of children's development and learning must be based on skills, knowledge, understanding and behaviour that are demonstrated consistently and independently. Assessments cannot be reliable or accurate if they are based on one-off instances or information gleaned solely from adult-directed activities.

What it looks like

This principle is demonstrated when these criteria may be observed:

- Practitioners make judgements about children's learning and plan for their next steps after considering a range of evidence displayed in different contexts and across areas of Learning and Development.
- Children are observed in adult-directed activities and in those they have initiated themselves.

5. Effective assessment takes equal account of all aspects of the child's development and learning. A holistic approach to assessment is necessary in order to reflect accurately the nature of children's development and acknowledge the interrelationship between different aspects of learning.

What it looks like

This principle is demonstrated when these criteria may be observed:

- Practitioners tune into the different skills children are developing. These can be linguistic, interpersonal, physical, creative, mathematical and so on.
- Assessment opportunities are exploited where these skills overlap, for example, physical, interpersonal, creative and linguistic in role-play.
- Practitioners do not set up assessments that dissect individual skills but instead reflect on all the dimensions revealed by the normal activities in the setting.



6. Accurate assessments are reliant upon taking account of contributions from a range of perspectives. As judgements are based on observational evidence and knowledge of the child, all adults who interact with the child, in the setting, will contribute to the process.

What it looks like

This is demonstrated when practitioners and other adults adopt these strategies:

- Understand that all their interactions with children influence their development and learning.
- Respect the range of perspectives that adults in different roles will gain about children.
- Allocate time to discuss what they know about individual children and consider the implications for the children's development and learning.

7. Assessments must actively engage parents in developing an accurate picture of the child's development. Effective partnership, working with parents, will ensure that their vital perspective contributes to the overall description of children's development and learning.

What it looks like

This principle is demonstrated when practitioners adopt these strategies:

- Acknowledge parents to be the prime and first educators of children.
- Engage in a two-way flow of information between family and setting, in order to meet children's needs effectively and agree next steps in learning.
- Support parents in describing their children's individual attainment.
- Talk with parents and involve them in reviews of their children's achievements, including those demonstrated at home.

8. Children must be fully involved in their own assessment. Encouraging children to respond, ask questions, make comments and share their own judgements about what they are learning enables them to take true ownership of their development. It also gives practitioners an invaluable insight into the patterns and processes of their learning.

What it looks like

This principle is demonstrated when these criteria are observed:

- Practitioners and children are involved in conversations about learning, which help children when they are involved in an activity, as well as when they review outcomes together.
- Adults model ways of working and discuss with children what they are trying to do in order to explore the learning.
- Children ask their own questions, talk about their thoughts and how they want to tackle a problem.
- Practitioners ask questions that encourage children to consider quality and processes of work and what to do next.



Principles for record-keeping

These principles are drawn from, and are evident in, good and effective practice in early years settings.

Record-keeping must be meaningful and have a purpose. 'Records are about getting to know the child and what the child needs.' They should be shared and used to support the growth and development of the child. They must be understandable to partners in the child's development including parents and other practitioners.

The task of keeping records must be manageable and sustainable.

Practitioners should be realistic about the amount of information they collect and the systems they create. These need to be manageable as part of day-to-day practice.

Records must capture the range of children's attainment, achievement and progress. They will show the starting points and development points across the areas of learning.

Records will reflect the individuality of every child and the diversity of their backgrounds. Children have different capacities, interests and competencies and it is necessary to reflect this diversity in the type of records kept. Greater detail will be evident for one child in a particular aspect that is not necessary for another.

All significant participants in children's development and learning should contribute to the information-gathering. This will involve a wide range of people, including parents and children.

Records should be shared with the child. This is a statutory requirement of the FSP and will continue to be so for the EYFSP.



Principles for demonstrating progress

Demonstrating progress during the EYFS involves analysing a broad range of information, which is captured by ongoing assessment of children, in a range of contexts, to illustrate their progress over time and across the areas of Learning and Development. Contributions from a range of other contributors, children and their parents as well as health professionals, for example, should also be part of the information considered.

These principles are drawn from, and are evident in, good and effective practice in early years settings.

Effective practitioners will be able to identify how individuals and groups of children in their setting have developed and progressed in their learning.

Effective approaches to assessment will generate information or data that can be used for a range of purposes.

Children's progress must be identified and analysed through a range of appropriate evidence, the majority of this will be drawn from observation of child-initiated activity.

The complexity of young children's development requires practitioners and managers to be able to understand a range of information in order to draw conclusions about children's progress and the effectiveness of their provision.

Summary

Assessment, record-keeping and demonstrating progress are inextricably linked: each is dependent on the effectiveness of the others. Recurrent themes of good practice across all settings and sectors collected by the participating LAs relate to ensuring that processes of assessment, record-keeping and demonstrating progress are effective.

This is evident when the processes:

- are focused on enhancing the learning of individual and groups of children;
- involve all concerned parties, including parents and children;
- are undertaken by contributors informed about early childhood learning and development;
- create a well-rounded picture of a child's attainment;
- provide judgements based on observation-led evidence;
- recognise the individuality of each child and the diversity of children.

Work in this field should be underpinned by the values of honesty and integrity. It concerns itself with the welfare of children and is focused on helping them develop and learn as effectively as possible.



appendix 6

The Eight Point Learning Story Process		Check Your Practice
1. My Unique Child is completed prior to the child starting in the setting and discussed with the parent/carer as part of the process.	➔	Do you have a procedure in place for completing My Unique Child and drawing out significant information? Does this process involve discussion with the parents/carers? Where appropriate this should include information the parents/carers have from their child's two year health check.
2. Information from My Unique Child is used to help plan as a child starts.	➔	Do you use this information to assist provision and planning on entry?
3. My Observation Notes and My Special Book are started. Ongoing collection of observations, photos, samples over the term, including one focussed observation each half term.	➔	Do you have agreed systems for collecting and collating observations, photos etc for My Special Book/My Observation Notes with time set aside for Key Persons to regularly (weekly? fortnightly? monthly?) update/collate their Key Children's Learning Stories?
4. Key Person and child reviews My Special Book.	➔	Do you have agreed procedures for the Key Person and child to share My Special Book and talk about likes/dislikes etc?
5. Key Person reviews My Special Book and My Observation notes in order to complete My Update of Progress.	➔	Do you have a system for Key Persons to review their Key Children's Learning Stories and complete My Update of Progress?
6. Key Person shares Learning Story with child's parent/carer.	➔	Do you have planned termly meetings with parents/carers to share their child's Learning Story?
7. Next Steps in Provision are used to support planning and provision for the coming term.	➔	Do you have a way of using the information from Next Steps in Provision to inform and influence your planning for the coming term?
8. Return to point 3 and repeat process.		