

A Healthy Child

Focuses on

independence

Look, listen, note

- Observe and note the sounds and facial expressions young babies make in response to affectionate attention from their parent or their key person.
- Note verbal and non-verbal expressions of feelings which take place when babies are changed, fed, cuddled etc.
- Observe sounds and facial expressions as young children express feelings of frustration, anger or as they separate from a carer.
- Note examples of healthy independence; e.g. a child playing happily with building blocks, or looking through a window.

Emotional Well-being

Effective practice

- Key person and parent handing the young baby directly to each other at the beginning and end of each day.
- Establish shared understandings between home and setting about ways of responding to babies' emotions.
- Flexible routines which allow young children to pursue their interests can reduce incidents of frustration and conflict.
- Recognition that children need a predictable environment in which to feel safe and that their independence may be affected temporarily by changes of staff or by moving to another room.

Birth to three matters

Development matters

Young babies are social beings. They crave close attachments with a special person within their setting.

Warm, mutual, affirmative relationships give babies the courage to express their feelings.

When young children have a close relationship with a caring and responsive adult, they explore from a safe place to which they can return.

As children learn to do things for themselves they gain confidence, knowing that the adult is close by, ready to support

and help if needed.

“Physical care and loving attention is required in

Play and practical support

- Introduce baby massage sessions to reduce stress and make young babies feel nurtured and valued.
- Collect and share stories and songs which parents and babies use at home.
- Through play, young children can explore emotions beyond their normal range. Even reading about ‘going on a bear hunt’ can benefit a timid child.
- Provide stories, pictures and puppets, which allow children to experience and talk about feelings.

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Meeting diverse needs

- Ensure that, when children move between settings, a key person in each setting welcomes them on arrival.
- Babies can sometimes become attached to an older child as their special person in mixed age groups and can get value from this relationship. A relationship with a key adult remains important.
- Valuing children’s race, cultural identity and gender by choosing appropriate resources, activities and experiences, increases their sense of belonging and contributes positively to their emotional well-being.
- Key persons need to be able to work with any family, not just those who speak the same home language.
- Activities which provide small steps to be achieved will support all children, including those with disabilities, thus reducing frustration and supporting them to become independent.

Case study

7.30 a.m. Christine hurries into the day care centre with 18 month old Jon, still in pyjamas. She sits on the sofa provided at the entrance and begins to dress Jon in clothes she has brought with her. Leyla, Jon’s key person, comes to welcome them and Jon beams at Leyla, putting out his arms for the milk she has brought. Leyla pours Christine a cup of coffee, gives her a piece of toast (Christine has not had time for breakfast) and sits to talk with them both. Christine, happy, leaves and Jon goes with Leyla into his room to start the day.

Challenges and dilemmas

- Ensuring that there is always a person who is special to them supports children’s sense of well-being. See CD-ROM
- Some children find it hard to cope with the inevitable staff absences. They need

extra support and, if possible, preparation to deal with these.

- Children inevitably experience anger and frustration. How might you change provision and practice in order to reduce outbursts and support them?
- When a child's independence is developing, they may reject offers of help. Try not to see this as personal rejection but as progress.

A Healthy Child Emotional Well-being

Planning and resourcing

- Provide a sofa or comfy chair in the room or entrance so that parents, practitioners and babies can sit together.
- A photograph board is a useful way to show parents and children who will be working in the group today.
- Keep toys and comforters in areas which are important to each child.
- Plan times when staff can talk together about children's expressions of feelings.
- Plan specific times when babies and children of different ages are together with their key person.

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A Healthy Child Growing and Developing

Focuses on control of the body

- Acquiring physical skills

Look, listen, note

- Note young babies' hunger patterns and how they regulate the speed and intensity with which they suck.
- Observe how babies' behaviour changes as they get tired and require sleep.
- Note how young children develop large motor skills for walking, climbing or jumping.
- Look for ways in which children begin to develop fine motor skills; e.g. the way they use their fingers in trying to do up buttons on a coat, pull up a zip, pour a drink, use a watering can.

Growing and Developing

Effective practice

- Encourage and facilitate mothers to breastfeed their babies.
- Treat mealtimes as an opportunity to help children to enjoy their food and become independent in feeding themselves.
- Learn to recognise the signs of tiredness

in babies, children and adults.

- Support, supervise and become involved as babies and children try out their developing skills.
- Support children's growing independence as they strive to gain control of their bladders and bowels by offering flexible routines, and by encouraging and valuing effort.

Birth to three matters

Development matters

Young babies thrive when both their nutritional and emotional needs are met.

For babies and children, rest and sleep are as important as food.

Young children have a biological drive to use their bodies and develop their physical skills.

Children only gradually gain control of their whole bodies.

Play and practical support

- Encourage the young baby to gradually share control of the bottle. This provides opportunities for sensory learning and increased independence.
- Provide a comfortable, accessible place where babies can rest or sleep when they want to.
- Make opportunities for young children to feed themselves using fingers, forks and spoons.
- Offer choices for children in terms of potties, small toilets, trainer seats, steps and recognise and support their fascination with bodily functions.

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Meeting diverse needs

- Mealtimes which are inclusive and culturally relevant value all children and respect their individual needs and differences.
- Provision of furniture which enables a child with physical disabilities to eat with other children recognises the importance of mealtimes as a social occasion for everyone.
- If the baby cannot see the bottle, shaking it before touching the baby's lips helps the baby to anticipate it is coming.
- Outdoor exploration and testing of physical abilities is important for all children. A sensitive, supportive adult can help children experience and achieve pleasure and control in sensations and movement.

Case study

One nursery provides opportunities for parents, staff and children, some with disabilities, to eat together. Meals and snacks are well balanced and nourishing and include: carrot, pieces of fruit, raisins, sultanas, bread to be eaten with the fingers alongside mashed potato, rice, stewed fruit, ice cream and other food to be eaten with a spoon. Adapted from Lindon, Helman & Sharp (2001)

Bruce & Meggitt (2002) suggest that mealtimes can also provide a valuable opportunity to further the child's social development by promoting:

- Listening and other conversational skills.
- Independence and confidence in eating and serving food.
- Courtesy towards each other and turn taking.
- A shared experience which provides a social focus for the child's day.
- Self-esteem – the child's family and cultural background are valued through their mealtime traditions.

Challenges and dilemmas

- Although it is important to allow babies and young children, including those with complex needs, to feed themselves, mess and experimentation are inevitable consequences of this.
- Manipulating spoons and chewing food is tiring, though rewarding for babies and small children. Some may give up too soon, remain hungry and require extra support.
- For busy adults it is often tempting to talk over the heads of babies at feeding times. Try to involve children in conversations.
- Achieving a balance between a baby's need for sleep and what adults have planned for them requires practitioners and parents to work closely together.

A Healthy Child Growing and Developing

Planning and resourcing

- Plan feeding times which take account of the individual cultural and feeding needs of babies and children in your group, e.g; discuss with parents ways in which they would like the weaning phase to be handled.
- Plan alternative activities for babies and children who do not need sleep when others do.
- Provide a range of everyday objects to be sucked, pulled, squeezed and held, to encourage exploration and development of physical skills.
- Provide safe outdoor experiences which challenge and support the development of both large and small movements.

* Lindon, J. Helman, K. & Sharp, A. (2001) Play and Learning for the Under Threes. London: TSL Education Ltd.
Bruce, T. & Meggitt, C. (2002) Child Care & Education. 3rd Edition. London: Hodder & Stoughton.

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A Healthy Child

Focuses on

Look, listen, note

- Observe the strategies young babies use to demonstrate their likes and dislikes.
- Note how the environment (setting and adults) supports or might limit babies in expressing preferences and making choices.
- Note how you react when a young child makes a choice you do not consider to be healthy; e.g. a child making a gun from building blocks, children always bringing sweet things to eat at snack time.
- Watch the way children choose not to do things, as well as choose to do them. Note any patterns in what children consistently choose to do.

Healthy Choices

Effective practice

- Provide opportunities for babies and children to make choices without overwhelming them.
- Value and support the decisions children make and then go on to encourage them to try something else, recognising that one decision leads to another.
- Create time to discuss options so that children really do have choices; e.g. whether they will drink water, juice or milk.
- Engage with parents in discussions about the choices offered within the setting.

Birth to three matters

Development matters

From birth, young babies show preferences for people and for what they want to see, hear and taste.

Babies continually discover more about what they like and dislike.

As young children become more mobile and their boundaries widen, they make choices that can involve real risk. Adults need to ensure their safety, whilst not inhibiting the risk-taking.

Children become more aware that choices have consequences.

Play and practical support

- Allow time to observe what babies and children do when presented with several options.
- Talk to children about the choices they have made and encourage them to find new areas to discover.
- Support children in accepting choices made by other children and adults, even when this limits their own choice.
- Provide non-specific play materials such as boxes and blankets so that play can move in different directions.

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Meeting diverse needs

- Supporting parents to recognise that children with sensory impairment or learning difficulties, like all children, will have a favourite place, activity or toy.
- Consider ways in which you provide for children with disabilities to make choices and express preferences about their carers and activities.
- Discussion and information-sharing with parents whose home language is not English takes time but is essential.

Case study

Laura, a two and a half year old with severe learning difficulties, explores a length of chain during heuristic play. See CD-ROM. She repeatedly pulls it back and forwards across her mouth, constantly watching the adult and checking her response. When viewing this sequence on video, Laura's mum explained "I know why she keeps on looking at you, she's waiting to see if you will react like I do, and say 'stop putting things in your mouth!'"

By viewing the video sequence with the parent, the adult was able to share this experience with the parent and to talk about what Laura enjoyed doing and her responses and choices.

Challenges and dilemmas

- Health and safety may sometimes be seen as a block to the provision of wide choices.
- Providing opportunities for choice and decision-making may involve finding time for team discussions and agreements.
- Consider when and where children have to share or are allowed to play in parallel and when it is appropriate for them not to have to share.
- Accepting that children have the right to express choices, even when this conflicts with adults' views of what is appropriate; e.g. not feeling rejected by the child who chooses to be with a particular adult other than their key worker, a boy who persistently chooses to wear a dress, a girl who seldom chooses to go outdoors.

A Healthy Child Healthy Choices

Planning and resourcing

- Provide stimulating, accessible materials which minimise risk and maximise opportunity; e.g. tactile surfaces for young children to explore.
- Recognise that outdoor provision presents rich choices for babies and children and include this opportunity in your planning; e.g. streamers, bubbles and windmills in a windy day box.
- Duplicate materials and resources to reduce conflict; e.g. two bikes, two copies of the same book, two watering cans.
- Provide natural resources for children to choose and explore the properties of the materials and their own developing skill in using them.

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A Healthy Child

Focuses on

Look, listen, note

- Observe the ways in which young babies show determination in going for what they want.
- Note the ways in which babies indicate what they need, including help from the adults.
- Note anything which tells you about a young child's concerns and preoccupations.
- Note the way in which children respond to different people. Always listen to what they tell adults about their experiences.

Keeping Safe

Effective practice

- Provide opportunities for babies and children to have choice in an environment kept safe by knowledgeable adults who know there should be a balance between freedom and safe limits.
- Demonstrate clear and consistent boundaries and reasonable yet challenging expectations.
- Have agreed procedures outlining how to respond to changes in children's behaviour. Be aware of current information regarding child protection and know how to implement procedures when necessary.
- Maintain regular, informal communication with parents which develops strong partnerships between all those involved in keeping children safe.

Birth to three matters

Development matters

Young babies make strong and purposeful movements. They tend not to stay in the position in which they were placed.

Beginning to walk, climb and run with little sense of danger, babies focus on what they want.

Given opportunities to practise what they can do in safe surroundings, young children learn some sense of danger.

Children's need for affection, attention and being special in some way makes them particularly vulnerable in relation to keeping safe.

Play and practical support

- For young babies, provide different arrangements of toys and soft play materials to encourage crawling, hiding, peeping.
- Provide puppets, role-play materials and songs and rhymes which help babies and children focus on who they can trust. Let them know the importance of sharing their fears with an adult.
- Have transparent boxes, clearly labelled with a picture outline of the object, or the real object stuck on, so children can see where things belong and can return them safely.
- Talk with parents about a consistent approach when responding to challenging behaviour such as scratching and biting.

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Meeting diverse needs

- When other children are climbing, exploring and running, a child with a physical disability may become frustrated and will require sensitive adult support, additional resources or adaptations to equipment.
- Children who have limited opportunity to play, particularly outdoors, may lack a sense of danger.
- Children with a hearing or visual impairment and children who are learning English as an additional language will require cues, signs or pictures in the environment (indoors and outdoors) to be safe and to know what is available.
- Liaising with others where there are concerns about children's development, protection or welfare is crucial.

Case study

Two year old Mary is from a large family where her older brothers and sisters always help her, whether she is playing, getting dressed or eating. Since she is never allowed to express her needs she has become very passive. She is very small and the older children at nursery love to try to pick her up. On Monday morning, after the children have been playing in the outdoor area, some marks on her legs become apparent to Elsie, her key person, when she is changing her nappy. Elsie asks Mary about the bruises, and because she is in a hurry, rather than wait for an answer, she says to Mary “Did they do it, when you were outside?” to which Mary turns her head away. On reflection, Elsie decided to pursue this with other staff. She talked to them to try to discover whether the marks on Mary’s shins had happened in the nursery. No one had seen anything happen. Elsie noted the conversations and her concerns and, following child protection procedures, consulted the named person in her setting responsible for child protection issues.

Challenges and dilemmas

- Following the children’s lead is not the same as losing control – adults always remain responsible for setting boundaries and keeping children safe.
- Over protectiveness can limit children’s capacity to learn how to protect themselves from harm.
- Speaking out about concerns is important, even if they prove to be groundless.
- Recognising and acting on non-verbal signals from children, especially those who are unable to voice their anxieties, feelings and concerns whilst maintaining sensitivity to others involved.

A Healthy Child Keeping Safe

Planning and resourcing

- Plan flexible arrangements of equipment and materials for babies and children that can be used in a variety of ways to maintain interest and challenge.
- Plan to involve children in helping to tidy away and be involved in the preparation of snacks and food.
- Plan activities to enable children to learn who to ask for help.
- Meet with others to discuss ways of helping children to understand the need for boundaries.