

A framework to support children in their earliest years  
*Birth to three matters*

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## The Framework pack

The materials comprise:

- This **introductory booklet** which explains the Framework.
- A **poster** which identifies the four Aspects and the Components into which each Aspect is subdivided. Photographs of babies and young children engaged in a range of activities support the headings used.
- **Component cards** – sixteen cards, relating to each of the four Aspects of the Framework. These are intended to be used flexibly and offer information, support and challenge. The headings used are consistent for each Component.
- A **video** brings the Framework to life by showing children and adults in a wide range of contexts living, loving, learning and interacting.
- A **CD-ROM** provides additional information, suggested reading, articles, book chapters, papers, a Literature Review, video footage, discussion and case studies, together with useful contact addresses. It is intended to be easily accessible and supportive of all those working with and for babies and young children.

A relationship with a key person at home and in the setting is essential to young children's well-being.

- Babies and young children are social beings, they are competent learners from birth.
- Learning is a shared process and children learn most effectively when, with the support of a knowledgeable and trusted adult, they are actively involved and interested.
- Caring adults count more than resources and equipment.
- Schedules and routines must flow with the child's needs.
- Children learn when they are given appropriate responsibility, allowed to make errors, decisions and choices, and respected as autonomous and competent learners.
- Children learn by doing rather than by being told.
- Young children are vulnerable. They learn to be independent by having someone they can depend upon.

The purpose of the Framework is to provide support, information, guidance and challenge for all those with responsibility for the care and education of babies and children from birth to three years. The Framework:

- values and celebrates babies and children,
- recognises their individuality, efforts and achievements,
- recognises that all children have from birth a need to develop, learning through interaction with people and exploration of the world around them. For some children, this development may be at risk because of difficulties with communication and interaction, cognition and learning, behavioural, emotional and social development or sensory and physical development,
- recognises the 'holistic' nature of development and learning,
- acknowledges, values and supports the adults that work with babies and young children,
- provides opportunities for reflection on practice,
- informs and develops practice whilst acknowledging that working with babies and children is a complex, challenging and demanding task and that often there are no easy answers.

It is important that the Framework is considered within the context of the National Standards for Under Eights Day Care and Childminding (DfES, 2001) together with the Curriculum Guidance for the Foundation Stage (DfES/QCA, 2000). More detailed information about the nature of these links can be found on the CD-ROM.

This Framework is for all those who work with, and care for children aged birth to three, including those children with SEN and/or disability. It is intended to be used flexibly by practitioners, individually and in groups. Although it is not a training package, the material can be used to support training. The principles which underpin the Framework come from a number of sources including representative organisations, leading child care writers, experts and practitioners. They are as follows:

- Parents and families are central to the well-being of the child.
- Relationships with other people (both adults and children) are of crucial importance in a child's life.

### **Purpose of the Framework**

### **The Framework in context**

### **Who is the Framework for?**

### **Principles which underpin the Framework**

### **How the Framework is organized**

The Framework of effective practice

The Framework takes as its focus **the child** and steers away from subjects, specific areas of experience and distinct curriculum headings. It identifies four Aspects, which celebrate the skill and competence of babies and young children and highlights the interrelationship between growth, learning, development and the environment in which they are cared for and educated.

These four 'Aspects' are:

- **A Strong Child**
- **A Skilful Communicator**
- **A Competent Learner**
- **A Healthy Child**

Each Aspect is divided into four Components

### **Aspects Components**

Me, Myself and I Being Acknowledged Developing A Sense of Belonging and Affirmed Self-assurance

Being Together Finding a Voice Listening Making Meaning and Responding

Making Connections Being Imaginative Being Creative Representing Emotional Growing and Developing Keeping Safe Healthy Choices

**The Framework below identifies what is included in each Aspect and Component**

**A Strong Child – Me, Myself and I**

*Realisation of own individuality*

Including: • Growing awareness of self

- Realising s/he is separate and different from others
- Recognising personal characteristics and preferences
- Finding out what s/he can do

**Being Acknowledged and Affirmed**

*Experiencing and seeking closeness*

Including: • Needing recognition, acceptance and comfort

- Being able to contribute to secure relationships
- Understanding that s/he can be valued and important to someone
- Exploring emotional boundaries

**Developing Self-assurance**

*Becoming able to trust and rely on own abilities*

Including: • Gaining self assurance through a close relationship

- Becoming confident in what s/he can do
- Valuing and appreciating his/her own abilities
- Feeling self-assured and supported.

**A Sense of Belonging**

*Acquiring social confidence and competence*

Including: • Being able to snuggle in

- Enjoying being with familiar and trusted others
- Valuing individuality and contributions of self and others
- Having a role and identity within a group

**A Skilful Communicator**

**Being Together**

*Being a sociable and effective communicator*

Including: • Gaining attention and making contact

- Positive relationships
- Being with others
- Encouraging conversation

**Finding a Voice**

*Being a confident and competent language user*

Including: • The impulse to communicate

- Exploring, experimenting, labelling and expressing
- Describing, questioning, representing and predicting
- Sharing thoughts, feelings and ideas

## **Listening and Responding**

*Listening and responding appropriately to the language of others*

Including: • Listening and paying attention to what others say

- Making playful and serious responses
- Enjoying and sharing stories, songs, rhymes and games
- Learning about words and meanings

## **Making Meaning**

*Understanding and being understood*

Including: • Communicating meaning

- Influencing others
- Negotiating and making choices
- Understanding each other

## **A Competent Learner – Making Connections**

*Connecting ideas and understanding the world*

Including:

- Making connections through the senses and movement
- Finding out about the environment and other people
- Becoming playfully engaged and involved
- Making patterns, comparing, categorising, classifying

## **Being Imaginative**

*Responding to the world imaginatively*

Including: • Imitating, mirroring, moving, imagining

- Exploring and re-enacting
- Playing imaginatively with materials using all the senses
- Pretend play with gestures and actions, feelings and relationships, ideas and words

## **Being Creative**

*Responding to the world creatively*

Including: • Exploring and discovering

- Experimenting with sound, other media and movement
- Developing competence and creativity
- Being resourceful

## **Representing**

*Responding to the world with marks and symbols*

Including: • Exploring, experimenting and playing

- Discovering that one thing can stand for another
- Creating and experimenting with one's own symbols and marks
- Recognising that others may use marks differently

## **A Healthy Child – Emotional Well-being**

*Emotional stability and resilience*

Including:

- Being special to someone
- Being able to express feelings
- Developing healthy dependence
- Developing healthy independence

## **Growing and Developing**

*Physical well-being*

Including: • Being well nourished

- Being active, rested and protected
- Gaining control of the body
- Acquiring physical skills

## **Keeping Safe**

*Being safe and protected*

Including: • Discovering boundaries and limits

- Learning about rules
- Knowing when and how to ask for help
- Learning when to say no and anticipating when others will do so

## **Healthy Choices**

*Being able to make choices*

Including:

- Discovering and learning about his/her body
- Demonstrating individual preferences
- Making decisions
- Becoming aware of others and their needs

## **The Components which make up A Strong Child are:**

- Me, Myself and I
- Being Acknowledged and Affirmed
- Developing Self-assurance
- A Sense of Belonging

The concept of A Strong Child is one which runs throughout the Framework. We all want children to be strong, capable, confident and self-assured. The very early years are extremely important in this respect. Babies and young children need support as they begin a journey of self-discovery from a base of loving and secure relationships with parents and/or a key person. The beginnings of autonomy can be seen in the relationships which exist as babies and young children play and explore alongside a close, attentive, warm and sensitive adult. In order to become strong, the baby needs a nurturing

environment in which their key person plays an essential role. By encouraging and supporting decision-making, empathising and providing opportunities for children, the key person helps them grow emotionally, so that they are able to respond to successes and challenges.

**Me, myself and I** is about helping young children to get to know themselves and their own capabilities. The respect, care, love and emotional support experienced by babies and children helps them to develop emotional safety, trust and a positive self image. **Being acknowledged and affirmed** by important people in their lives leads children to gain confidence and inner strength. Exploration within close relationships leads to the growth of **self-assurance**, promoting **a sense of belonging** which allows the young child to explore the world from a secure base.

A Strong Child explores the ways in which both significant adults and the physical environment have an impact upon children's developing sense of themselves and their group identity, emotional worlds and their relationships with others. The four Components which make up A Skilful Communicator are:

- Being Together
- Finding a Voice
- Listening and Responding
- Making Meaning

To become skilful communicators babies and children need to be together with a key person and others in warm and loving relationships. **Being together** leads to the wider development of social relations which include friendship, empathy, sharing emotions and experiences and becoming a competent language user. Early attempts at **finding a voice** are rewarded in a variety of ways, increasing confidence and encouraging children both to extend their range and increase their skills. Learning to make sense of the sounds around is not a simple task. Babies respond differently to some sounds over others and, from an early age, are able to distinguish sound patterns. They use their voices to make contact and to let people know what they need and how they feel. In these very early years, babies and young children do not merely begin to make sense of what is going on around them and express themselves, they start to learn about 'conversation'. This requires **listening and responding** appropriately, understanding the importance of paying attention to sounds and language, interpreting non-verbal signals, imitating, repeating and mirroring others.

They learn the 'rules' of communication through **making meaning** with their key person and with other supportive adults and older children. It is in these relationships that their early attempts to converse are interpreted, responded to and valued.

The four Components that make up A Competent Learner are:

- Making Connections
- Being Imaginative
- Being Creative
- Representing

Competent learners from birth, babies only a few hours old gaze at patterns which resemble the human face in preference to others. They are able to distinguish between things, and show that they like some things better than others. In this way young children learn to discriminate and **make connections** between different objects and experiences. Children make increasing sense of the world as connections are made.

As babies explore the world through touch, sight, sound, taste, smell and movement, their sensory and physical explorations affect the patterns that are laid down in the brain. Through repeated experience of people, objects and materials, young children begin to form mental images which lead them to imitate, explore and re-enact as they play imaginatively with materials and resources, using all the senses. As they engage in pretend play with gestures and actions, feelings and relationships, ideas and words, they become increasingly **imaginative**. Children become **creative** through exploration and discovery as they experiment with sound, media and movement.

Creativity, imagination and **representation** allow children to share their thoughts, feelings, understandings and identities with others, using drawings, words, movement, music, dance and imaginative play.

### **A Competent Learner**

The four Components which make up A Healthy Child are:

- Emotional Well-being
- Growing and Developing
- Keeping Safe
- Healthy Choices

Being healthy means much more than having nutritious food and being free from illness. For babies and young children,

being special to someone and cared for is vital for their physical, social and emotional health and well-being. Health and social well-being underpin and determine children's responses to their environment, to people and to new experiences. **Emotional well-being** includes relationships, which are close, warm and supportive; being able to express feelings such as joy, sadness, frustration and fear, leading to the development of strategies to cope with new, challenging or stressful situations.

Meeting children's physical needs is fundamental to their well-being. **Growing and developing** children who are physically well will have the energy and enthusiasm to benefit from the range of activities on offer to them. Equally, children who are hungry, tired or uncomfortable will not enjoy the company of adults and other children, nor will they benefit fully if choice of activities is limited or provision inappropriate to their needs.

Knowing when to ask for help, being protected and **keeping safe** with adult support, ensures that babies and young children quickly become skilful in a range of movements involving both large and fine motor control. In time, they make **healthy choices** as they learn about their bodies and what they can do.

### **A Healthy Child**

Understanding the Component cards

Each section of the cards has a specific purpose as illustrated below:

#### **Framework title**

The title 'Birth to three matters' appears on every card emphasising the importance of the first three years.

#### **Aspect title**

Identifies one of the four broad areas of children's development referred to in the Framework.

#### **Component title**

Identifies one part of each Aspect.

#### **Focuses on**

Explains the main features of the Component.

#### **Quote**

Highlights something significant relating to the Component.

#### **Development matters**

Provides developmental information. Symbols indicate stages of development. This section will allow practitioners to identify relevant characteristics and developmental stages of the children in their setting.

#### **Look, listen, note**

Things to be aware of. This section suggests a focus for observations of children and alerts practitioners to important things to look for.

**Play and practical support**

Suggestions for activities and things adults and children might do. This section gives ideas to extend play activities and offers practical advice that can be used to develop play and learning.

**Effective practice**

Provides relevant information and examples of things adults might do. This section supports and develops the work of practitioners. It can be used to guide planning so that the component can be achieved in practice.

**Planning and resourcing**

Ideas to support organisation and practice. This section can be used to focus on the environment and resources so that they work to support development of the component.

**Meeting diverse needs**

Identifies practice in relation to wider issues including special needs, equal opportunities and relationships with parents.

**Challenges and dilemmas**

Poses questions and presents some answers to problems practitioners may face.

**Case study**

To illustrate in practice some of the points made in relation to each of the sixteen Components.

The Framework uses headings to describe children at four developmental stages. The stages identified in the Framework relate to significant shifts in children's growing and changing capacities to become social beings who are healthy, self-aware, skilful communicators and competent learners.\*

The categories and symbols used, emerged from a consideration of the growing and developing child, in recognition of the impact that children themselves have upon their learning and environment.

The following table shows the symbols and headings used in the Development matters section on each Component card. Growth and development are less predictable for some children than for others and this issue is addressed on the cards in the section 'Meeting diverse needs', as well as on the CD-ROM.

**The four broad areas of development are: Heads Up, Lookers and Communicators**

(0 – 8 months)

During the first eight months, **young babies** react to people and situations with their whole

bodies. They are also competent in observing and responding to their immediate environment and communicating with those around them.

### **Sitters, Standers and Explorers**

(8 – 18 months)

During the period from eight to eighteen months **babies'** exploration of the environment becomes more intentional. Increasing mobility and language development enable them to find out and understand more about their world.

### **Movers, Shakers and Players**

(18 – 24 months)

From eighteen to twenty four months, **young children** begin to show increasing independence and obvious pleasure in moving, communicating and learning through play.

### **Walkers, Talkers and Pretenders**

(24 – 36 months)

From twenty four to thirty six months, **children's** competence at moving, talking and pretending is more and more evident and they show increasing confidence in themselves and skill in making relationships.

\*Numerous publications on child development contain charts for those who wish to see them broken down more fully

### **Development matters, Meeting diverse needs, Look, listen, note**

'Development matters' is a heading used on each Component card, and it is here that the symbols referred to on the previous page, rather than the headings, are used to indicate the four stages of development. It is important to recognise that children's development is uneven and, in many cases, all four symbols can apply to one statement.

This section highlights things to observe and note. When we plan for children we base our ideas for activities and experiences on our knowledge of the children in our care. We notice one child's interest in water, another's curiosity about snails or their pleasure at listening to a story. This is where our planning begins.

When you have used the development matters section to identify characteristics of children in your group you will need to think about activities and experiences to support the children's play and learning. These three sections contain examples of the sorts of activities, interactions and resources that might be included in practice.

The cards are not meant to give definitive lists of activities or resources but are intended to highlight ways of

### **Effective practice, Planning and resourcing, Play and practical support**

responding appropriately to the developmental needs of the children observed. In order to help you to think about providing for the very different needs of children, examples have been included throughout the **Component** cards. In addition, this section identifies some of the particular needs that you may need to address. It is important that appropriate expert advice is sought if you or the child's parents have concerns about his/her development.

Challenges and dilemmas occur in all settings, some of which are explored on the cards. Some of these you will identify with, whilst others may be specific to particular situations.

They are intended to provide a focus for thinking about your own dilemmas and for discussion of these.

For ease of understanding, the needs and characteristics of children have been presented in separate **Aspects** and **Components**. However, in reality, children's learning does not fit neatly into separate compartments. As children are strong, competent at learning and playing and skilful communicators at the same time, you will need to consider all aspects and draw from several cards to plan effectively for the children in

your care.

The CD-ROM and video will help you to further explore the Framework and ways in which the cards can be used.

Blank cards are included on the CD-ROM for you to use in planning, observing and thinking about your provision and practice. This is intended to support your work and give you an opportunity to make the Framework personal to your own needs and those of the children, their families and the setting in which you work.

### **Beyond the cards Challenges and dilemmas Flexible use of cards**

Suggested reading  
and resources

- Abbott, L. & Moylett, H (1997) *Working With Under-3s: Responding to Children's Needs*. Open University Press
- Abbott, L. & Moylett, H (1997) *Working With Under-3s: Training & Professional Development*. Open University Press
- Bruce, T. (2001) *Learning Through Play: Babies, Toddlers and the Foundation Years*. Hodder & Stoughton
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- Edwards, A. (2002) *Relationships and Learning: Caring for Children From Birth to Three*. National Children's Bureau/Peers Early Education Partnership
- Lindon, J. (2000) *Helping Babies and Toddlers Learn – A Guide to Good Practice with Under Threes*. National Early Years Network
- Lindon, J. (1998) *Child Protection in Practice*. Hodder & Stoughton
- Manning-Morton, J. & Thorp, M. (2001) *Key Times – A Framework for Developing High Quality Provision for Children Under Three Years Old*. Camden Under Threes Development Group & The University of North London
- Open University Press/Manchester Metropolitan University (2000) *Shaping the Future Working with the Under-Threes, Professional Development Pack*. Open University Press
- Pugh, G. (ed) (2001) *Contemporary Issues in the Early Years (3rd Edition)* Paul Chapman Publishing
- Post, J. and Hohmann, M. (2000) *Tender Care and Early Learning, Supporting Families and Toddlers in Childcare Settings*. High/Scope Press

Further references and literature can be found on the CD-ROM under individual Components and in the Literature Review.

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- Benchill Children's Centre, Wythenshawe, Manchester
- Bridgwater College Early Years Centre, Somerset
- Charnwood Nursery, Stockport, Cheshire
- Cruddas Park Early Years Centre, Newcastle Upon Tyne
- Family Action Benchill Playgroup, Wythenshawe
- The Jesmond Nursery, Jesmond, Newcastle Upon Tyne
- Martenscroft Early Excellence Centre, Hulme, Manchester
- Moss Side Children's Centre, Moss Side, Manchester
- Reddish Vale Early Years Centre, Stockport, Cheshire
- St. Gabriel's Children's Day Nursery, Heaton, Newcastle Upon Tyne
- Shieldfield's Community Childcare Project, Newcastle Upon Tyne
- Sure Start Benchill, Wythenshawe, Manchester
- Tamworth Early Years Centre, Staffordshire
- The Thomas Coram Early Excellence Centre, Camden, London
- University of Northumbria, City Nursery, Newcastle Upon Tyne

### **Project Team**

Professor Lesley Abbott, Project Director.

Janet Ackers

Ian Barron

Caroline Bradbury

Tricia David

Kathy Goouch

Rachel Holmes

Mike Johnson

Ann Langston

Sacha Powell