



**Brentry & Henbury
Children's Centres**



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Under 3s Planning Support Pack

1. Rationale & Principles

Rationale:

Our planning has come about as part of a process, what kind of planning do we need to provide? What are our principles, and what are the challenges?

Principles:

- Child centred, with the child at starting point.
- Individualised planning for under 2's
- Based on high quality observations, which are attuned to children
- Use of characteristics of effective learning to underpin thinking and ethos
- Respectful communication and understanding of language development
- The child's voice within the OAP cycle
- Effective relationships between every member of the setting
- Meaningful repetition (for consolidation, a sense of security and belonging) to provide opportunities for learners as well as observers
- Valuing process and not product
- Flexibility in planning and supporting indoor/outdoor learning, different settings or mixed age groups
- High expectations of learners and observers
- Time to reflect and evaluate

"For each child, what is significant will be different, as it depends on previous learning and what is significant for that child's progress...what may seem a small step for one child could be a significant leap for another."

-Hutchin (2005)

What should our Under 3's planning look like?

- Potentially used for one child or a group of children
- Used from birth to 3
- Contains previous learning
- Contains elements of observations
- Contains characteristics of effective learning, unique child, positive relationships and enabling environments
- Contains next steps
- Potentially refers to the Bristol Standard



2. Observations

To truly promote learning, practitioners need not only to observe children at play, but to understand what they are seeing and use it to extend opportunities. It is a process of watching and listening carefully. We need to be able to describe how a child is communicating and capture the language that he/she uses.

Observation helps us to open our eyes to the astonishing capacity of young children to learn. Elinor Goldschmied's observations of babies using treasure baskets, gave her valuable insights into their learning and interactions with each other.

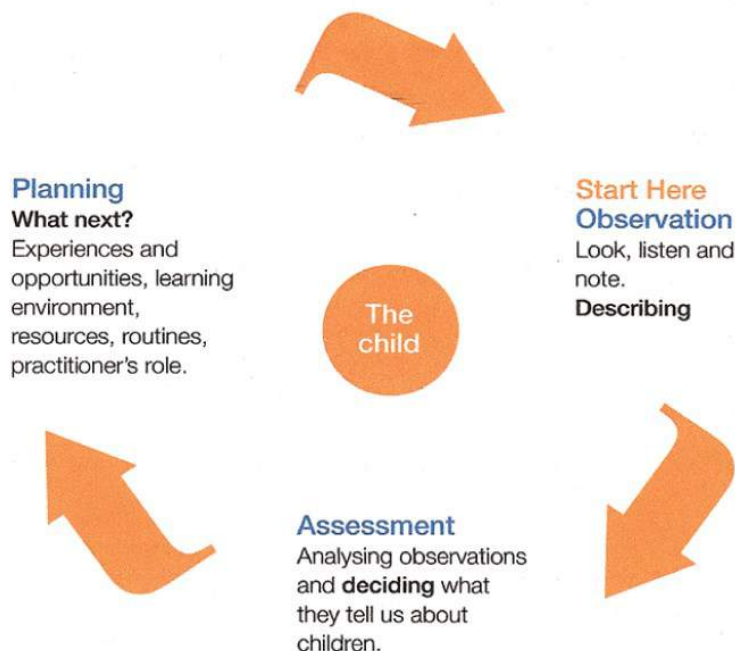
"Observation of children participating in everyday activities is the most reliable way to build up an accurate picture of what children know, understand, feel, are interested in and can do." Qualifications, Curriculum Authority, Foundation Stage Profile Handbook (2008:4)

Observations can be long or short, anecdotal or descriptive. They might be written about the child or addressed to the child.

Ideally teams should have time to meet when they can reflect on the observations and wonder about what is going on so that they can plan together.

Observations also provide records of children's learning journeys. Discussing observations with parents/carers can also help us to interpret what is going on so that we can plan effectively.

"Stand aside for a while and leave room for learning, observe carefully what children do, and then, if you have understood well, then perhaps teaching will be different" Loris Malaguzzi (1998)



3. Looking at Learning in the Under 3's

Heuristic Play

"Heuristic play 'consists of offering a group of children, for a defined period of time in a controlled environment, a large number of different kinds of objects and receptacles with which they play freely without adult intervention'. It is particularly useful for children in their second year who often seem unwilling to engage in any activity for more than a few minutes. According to the Oxford Dictionary, 'heuristic' means helping to find out or discover; proceeding by trial and error. It stems from the same root as Eureka – 'I found it!'

Clare Crowther of Bridgwater College describes heuristic play as 'an activity we use with one-year-olds, two-year-olds, and young threes, giving them the opportunity to experiment spontaneously with a wide range of non-commercial objects.' Whilst the heuristic play session is in process, adults need to remain seated and quiet. This supports children in making their own choices and discoveries.

To provide for heuristic play, practitioners collect natural materials like fir cones, conkers, seashells, and pebbles, as well as ribbons, short lengths of chain, and 'found' objects like curtain rings, jar lids, sturdy cardboard tubes, the circles from inside sellotape, and empty cotton reels."

-Helen Huleatt

Schemas

"It is best to think of Schemas as being a cluster of pieces, which fit together"

-Tina Bruce

Schemas are patterns of repeatable behaviour that children demonstrate when they are exploring the world and trying to find how things work. By identifying a child's schemas it makes it possible for the practitioner to plan and extend their learning in ways that most interest them. Children motivated by a particular schema will go to great lengths to explore the interest that is driving them. Chris Athey identified five main schemas:

- Rotation
- Enveloping
- Connecting
- Transporting
- Trajectory



A Broad and Balanced Curriculum

When planning for children, bear in mind that every child is unique. Provision also needs to take into account different styles of learning: some children are visual learners; some may be auditory and respond more to sound or music; some may be kinaesthetic & learn through movement (these learners tend to prefer to learn outdoors.)

The EYFS document gives guidance and suggestions to support planning, observation and assessment; it helps us to ensure that we offer learning opportunities that support a wide range of learning through the prime and specific areas.

When we tune in to young children however, we notice that what they do is so much more, planning can be used to extend their learning, by changing the scale or introducing different resources. It can also be used to explore a fascination in greater depth, researching alongside the children to find out more.

It is not only about planning for resources, but planning with the potential learning in mind and the adult's role in supporting that. We do not always know which direction the children might take something (often there are several different ones) so it helps if our planning can respond to that. It is also about being aware of the process of learning (characteristics of effective learning) the end product is often not important.



The Prime Areas

Using the EYFS guidance enables us to provide breadth in our planning. The Prime areas of learning have a strong relationship to early brain development so it is crucial that we plan effectively for Personal Social & Emotional Development, Language & Communication and Physical Development.

Planning a responsive nurturing environment which enables children to feel contained and safe and a sense of belonging is important. We need to plan opportunities for children to form relationships, play collaboratively and learn social skills. In order to learn about taking turns and sharing, there needs to be more than one or collections of resources so that they can learn strategies with success. We need to understand the developmental stage of each child so that our expectations are realistic.

Our planning should enable the children to do things with increasing independence. Their ideas need to be valued and supported rather than having ours imposed on them.

"Reflecting upon how we maximise opportunities for young children to become effective communicators is essential" BECAT

We need to plan for children to talk, to ensure that their communication styles are valued and supported. We must plan opportunities to develop their language skills and explore new vocabulary. It is often helpful to identify new vocabulary and questions to encourage critical thinking in the planning. Planning interesting realistic opportunities with a responsive and enthusiastic adult will result in meaningful conversations that really benefit the children.

Stories should be planned and often read repeatedly throughout the week, young children enjoy the repetition and gives them more opportunity to really understand the story. Planning a selection of songs for each week also enables children to learn them. Using props for songs and stories helps to enhance their understanding and often ensures greater participation.

It is helpful to plan resources and props carefully to ensure that children with EAL can access the learning and their language skills should be recognised and valued too. Identifying language needs of children with SEN should also be included in planning as well as extending the thinking of more articulate learners.

"Young children take information about the external world by physically and bodily interacting with it and build understanding by moving through it and manipulating it." Jan White 2008

Planning should take account of a whole range of physical movements as well their developmental stage. It needs to provide risk and challenge in a safe environment. Babies need opportunities to crawl in, out, under, over and through. They need to be able to pull themselves up and cruise around the room. Children need to be able to push, pull, carry, throw, catch, dig, pour, fill, climb, swing, jump etc. etc.

Different settings have different challenges so planning for children's physical needs is important. If outdoor space is limited, then creative planning is essential. (Forest Experience, Outings, dance etc.)

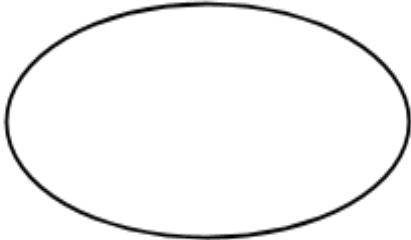
Health and well-being is really important and we have a duty to help children learn to make healthy choices through growing and preparing healthy meals and snacks and talking about the benefits of healthy habits: eating, hygiene and exercise.

Planning for the specific areas should also be taken into account in response to the needs and interests of the child. Real, meaningful experiences are the best way to learn about number, space and shape, letters and sounds and the world around them. Creative experiences should also be threaded through to enable children to interpret their world in a wide variety of ways.

4. An Example of Planning Documentation

The example below is **not** going to be **your** planning document, but it might give you an idea for a starting point. It could be individual planning for a baby, a small group, or even a specific area of your environment. The middle circle may contain a child, a key group or an room. What is important is that you have used observations and previous learning to start working out where a child's interests might take them next. This can be complex, deep and will constantly change, so be prepared to be flexible!

Planning for _____ Week Beginning _____

Interests & Ideas	
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PSED	CLLD
PD	Mathematics/Understanding of the World/Expressive Arts & Design/Letters & Sounds

Evaluation

Unique Child What learning took place?	Positive Relationships How else can the adults help the children learn? What learning has taken place at home?	Enabling Environments How can we make the learning more challenging or complex?

Playing & Exploring- Engagement Finding out and exploring Playing with what they know Being willing to have a go	Active Learning- Motivation Being involved and concentrating Keeping trying Enjoying achieving what they set out to do	Creating & Thinking Critically Having their own ideas Making links Choosing ways to do things

Next Steps

The evaluation would ideally be immediate or daily, but even if you can't manage to do it often as often as this, it is vital to record your assessment when you can. Remember, planning before you assess and evaluate is putting the cart before the horse!

5. Evaluation and Planning Support Notes

This planning document provides a framework for 'kick-starting' conversations between practitioners. The document can be made your own, as you explore the best ways to make it work for your practitioners, children and their families. At Brenty & Henbury Children's Centre we have been using the document to support and extend our planning; the format has developed over the year and we still consider it to be a 'work in progress'.

Over time we have found it useful to have both pages side-by-side as we reflect and make future plans. We have used the document to plan for larger groups of children and it can also be used for individuals; completed examples are included within these support notes.

What is it useful to have with me as I use the document?

Encourage the team to bring along their observations to discuss and any contributions from parents. Room leaders need to bring along overviews of the period of time you are discussing, including children's 'Next Steps' or individual targets; as well as lists of children and their key people to ensure that all children are discussed. If you are leading the meeting: do you have access to the Characteristics of Effective Learning, Development Matters and Early Years Outcomes that everyone can access during the meeting? Child-minders may want to bring these documents to their Children's Centre Child-minder group to share their reflections.

Using the Document:

The document has several different sections for Evaluation, the Characteristic of Effective Learning, Next Steps, Planning for Interests and Ideas and Links to the Prime and Specific Areas of the EYFS. You can use the different sections to record the conversations you have based around your observations and knowledge of the children's progress towards their next steps.

Evaluation Section:

As you reflect upon the learning and development you have seen taking place, consider the headings: **A Unique Child, Positive Relationships** and **Enabling Environments**.

Unique Child What learning took place?	Positive Relationships How else can the adults help the children learn? What learning has taken place at home?	Enabling Environments How have we made the learning more challenging or complex?





The Unique Child

Consider the learning and development that has taken place for individuals, have you noticed new skills developing? How have the skills and competencies of individuals been promoted or supported? What has been the impact of specific activities you have planned for the children's development? Can practitioners describe progress made by individuals or groups they have been working with? Consider the ways in which the children are making choices and how they are growing and developing. It will be useful for them to have access to Development Matters or Early Years Outcomes to support and enable these conversations.



Positive Relationships

What have the adults done to support, consolidate or extend the learning and development that has taken place? Can the practitioners reflect upon their role as a key person and how this has impacted upon children settling, attachments developing and friendships building? Can practitioners share learning from home? What have been their successes when working with parents? If some approaches are not working what will be done as a result?





Enabling Environments

What has been the impact of the emotional and physical environment, both indoor and outdoor, on children's learning and development? Is the environment supporting the children's needs?

Share and reflect upon work that may have been carried out with the involvement of other agencies in a wider context e.g. the impact of working with a Speech Therapist.

Use the following section to encourage the practitioners to consider the

'**Characteristics of Effective Learning**'; the ways in which the children are becoming 'learners for life.'

<p>Playing & Exploring-Engagement Finding out and exploring Playing with what they know Being willing to have a go</p>	<p>Active Learning- Motivation Being involved and concentrating Keeping trying Enjoying achieving what they set out to do</p>	<p>Creating & Thinking Critically Having their own ideas Making links Choosing ways to do things</p>





Playing and Exploring- Engagement

How have the children been finding out and exploring, what opportunities have been provided for them to show they are willing to have a go, or play with what they know?

When is the child asking: "Can I do this?"



Active Learning- Motivation

How have the children been showing their involvement and concentration? Have they had opportunities to keep trying or show their enjoyment when they have achieved something they have set out to do?

When is the child asking: "Do I want to do this?"



Creating and Thinking Critically

What opportunities have the children had to demonstrate their own ideas and make links between them? How are they being encouraged to think about and decide their own ways of doing things?

When is the child asking: "How will I do this?"

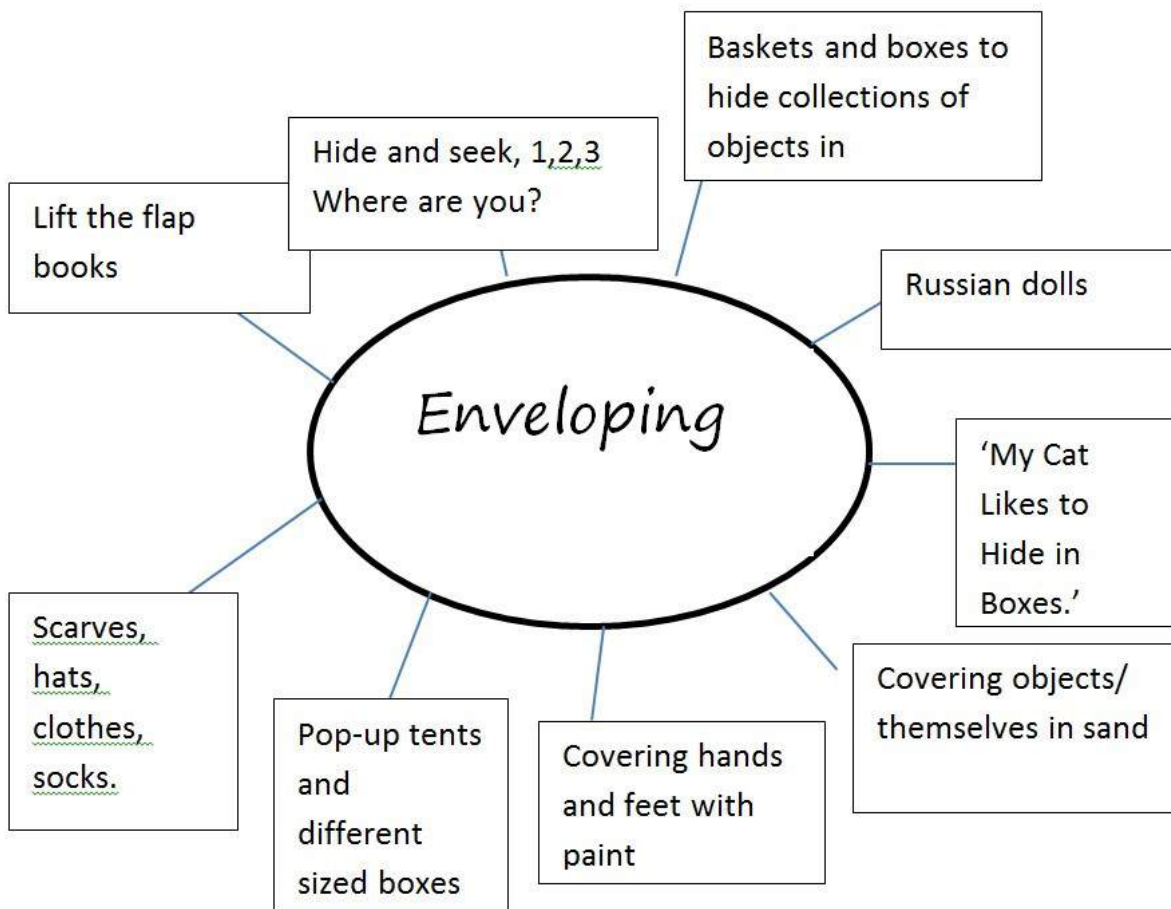


Next Steps

Discuss ways in which children may have met their Next Steps or will need continued support, consolidation or extension.

Interests and Ideas

Use this section to 'mind map' the children's current fascinations; this may be for a group of children or individuals e.g. the child (aged approximately 18-26 months) has taken an interest in covering themselves, wrapping objects or hiding things or themselves.



Links to the Prime and Specific areas of the EYFS:

Encourage the practitioners to think about how the activities they suggest will support, consolidate and extend learning and development in the 'prime' and 'specific' areas. You may want to add headings specific to your setting or that relate to a child's particular need e.g. Makaton or 'Songs, rhymes and stories.'

<p>PSED</p> <p><i>Making relationships- gaining attention in a variety of ways/ building relationships with special people/ exploring new situations</i></p> <p><i>Managing and containing emotions</i></p>	<p>C&L</p> <p><i>Turn-taking in interactions</i></p> <p><i>Show a strong exploratory impulse</i></p> <p><i>Selecting and finding familiar objects that may be hidden</i></p>
<p>PD</p> <p><i>Spatial awareness</i></p> <p><i>Wrapping objects in material</i></p> <p><i>Fine motor skills- using pincer grip to pick things up</i></p>	<p>Mathematics/Understanding of the World/ Expressive Arts & Design/Letters & Sounds</p> <p><i>Knowing that things exist, even when out of sight</i></p> <p><i>Watching toys being hidden and trying to find them</i></p> <p><i>Opening and closing books</i></p> <p><i>Expressing themselves through physical action/ using whole bodies to explore and experiment</i></p>

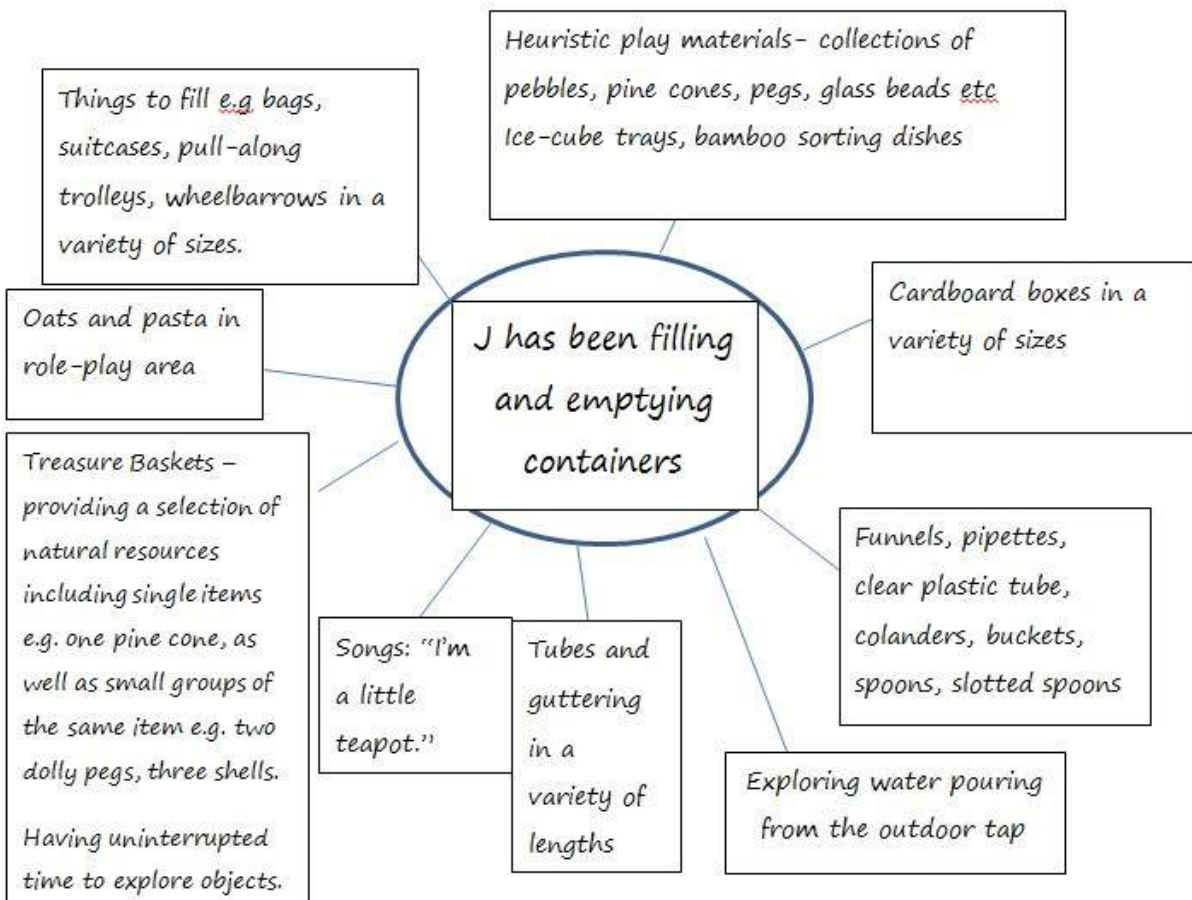
You may want to explore using the format with individuals, as well as groups of children e.g. J who is between 9 and 20 months has been putting objects in containers repeatedly; he also likes to pour them out e.g



Evaluation:

Unique Child What learning took place?	Positive Relationships How have the adults helped the children learn? What learning has taken place at home?	Enabling Environments How have we made the learning more challenging or complex?
<p><i>J has been filling the tubes with ping pong balls. He is very keen to place other objects in the tubes and returns to the tubes each session.</i></p>	<p><i>At home J has been really keen to take socks out of the washing basket and put them back in again. At nursery AK has stayed close by to provide support and encouragement when the balls get stuck in the tubes.</i></p>	<p><i>AK has provided different sized balls for J to explore putting in the tubes.</i></p>

Next Steps: Use the 'Interests and Ideas' section to 'mind map' ways to develop and extend these interests e.g.



Use 'Development Matters' and the 'Early Years Outcomes' to consider how these activities will extend the child's learning and development e.g.

<p>PSED</p> <p><i>Interacts with others and explores new situations when supported by a familiar person.</i></p> <p><i>Uses pointing with eye gaze to make requests, and to share an interest.</i></p>	<p>C&L</p> <p><i>Has a strong exploratory impulse.</i></p> <p><i>Concentrates intently on an object or activity of own choosing for short periods.</i></p>
<p>PD</p> <p><i>Passing toys from one hand to another</i></p> <p><i>Holding objects in each hand and bringing them together.</i></p> <p><i>Picking up small objects between thumb and fingers.</i></p>	<p>Mathematics/Understanding of the World/ Expressive Arts & Design/Letters & Sounds</p> <p><i>Mathematics: Recognises big things and small things in meaningful contexts e.g. big and small pine cones in a treasure basket</i></p> <p><i>Notice changes in number of objects in groups of up to 3 e.g. collections of the same object in a treasure basket (one, two or three dolly pegs)</i></p> <p><i>Understanding the World: Becomes absorbed in combining objects .e.g banging two objects or placing objects in containers</i></p> <p><i>Knowing things are used in different ways e.g. pushing (exploring a variety of objects in a Treasure Basket)</i></p>

Continue to monitor the interests using the evaluation section and use your observations to pick up new fascinations the children may develop.

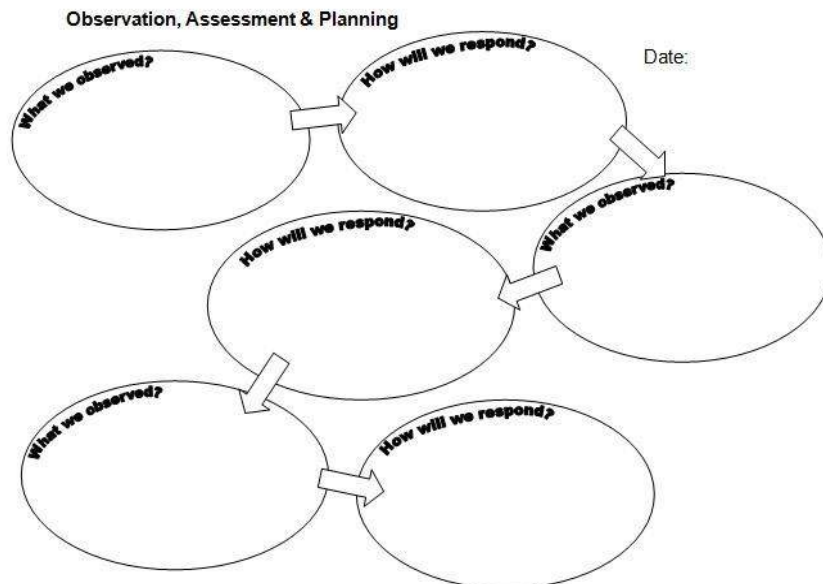


6. Making it work for you

"Planning is bringing the future into the present so that you can do something about it now."

-Alan Lakein

The planning ideas and examples in this document are a springboard for your own planning which needs to be adaptable to your children, your setting and yourselves. Planning should be fluid and dynamic and mirror your own reflective practice. At the heart of all good planning is good observation and assessment, first and foremost.



While experimenting with planning we decided to see if we could come up with a format which was a mixture of observation, assessment and planning. The plan above is being used in the 2-3's and there are separate plans for malleable/water, construction/problem solving, outside and creative/imaginative. This format might capture a week or more of observation and planning.

The point is, that we might further adapt and change the planning to the principles we outlined at the beginning of this document so that it suits our children, our setting and our team. Flexibility and the need to embrace permanent change is the key to truly innovative planning. Well? What are you waiting for?

"Bite off more than you can chew, then chew it. Plan more than you can do, then do it."

-Anonymous



7. Further Support

As leaders in Centres of Excellence, we are here to support, encourage and inspire you! If you would like to know more then contact:

East Central: Carol Keane (based at Redcliffe Children's Centre) or Rachel Pirie (based at St Pauls Children's Centre)

North: Claire Yiasoumi and Rosie McCallum (based at Braintree and Henbury Children's Centre)

South: Matt Caldwell (Based at Knowle West Children's Centre)

8. Further Reading

Nancy Stewart 'The Characteristics of Effective Early Learning' 2011 Early Education

Heuristic Play

People under Three, Young Children in Day Care, Elinor Goldschmied & Sonia Jackson

Heuristic Play : Sheila Ridall-Leech

Developing Play for the Under 3s :Anita M. Hughes

The Little Book of Treasure Baskets: Little Books with Big Ideas (Little Books) : Ann Roberts

Schemas

Again, Again!: Understanding Schemas in Young Children by Sally Featherstone, Clare Beswick, Stella Louis

Extending Thought in Young Children: A Parent Teacher Partnership by Ms Chris Athey

Threads of Thinking: Young Children Learning and The Role of Education by Cathy Nutbrown

Understanding Schemas and Emotion in Early Childhood by Dr Cath Arnold

Like Bees, Not Butterflies: Child Initiated Learning in the Early Years by Sally Featherstone



