

Role of the practitioner



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Early years practitioners have a role to play in quality improvement by developing their personal and professional skills as reflective practitioners.

Linda Thornton and Pat Brunton discuss what you can do. The quality of provision in any early years settings is dependent on the skills, attitudes, knowledge and experience of everyone who works there. Reflective practice is the key to quality improvement as it helps to identify the strengths and weaknesses of different aspects of a setting's provision.

Being a reflective practitioner involves thinking about how you currently work and evaluating what you do in order to improve your practice. The reflective practitioner stands back, takes a balanced view and recognises what works well, but is also able to acknowledge what could be changed. To be a reflective practitioner you need to be self aware and able to look as objectively and honestly as possible at how you work with children, colleagues and parents.

This is not easy, but taking a proactive role, reflecting on and analysing your own practice is far more rewarding than relying on someone in a more senior position to do this for you. Evaluating your own practice helps to put you in control of the changes that should be made, enables you to identify your professional development needs and will increase your confidence and feelings of job satisfaction. Reflective practice and self evaluation are fundamental to the Ofsted inspection process.

By completing the Self Evaluation Form (SEF) managers and setting leaders are able to provide a snapshot of what happens in a setting. Through the SEF they can clearly identify the setting's strengths and highlight what it does well. At the same time they can acknowledge any weaknesses in provision

and plan the changes and improvements to be made. However, managers cannot achieve this alone. They are reliant on all practitioners in the setting taking responsibility for the quality of their individual practice and aiming for continuous improvement.

The reflective practitioner in action Being a good role model Reflect on how enthusiastic, positive and optimistic you are and how you demonstrate this in your work from day to day. Think about how you treat colleagues, how well you listen to them and to what extent you are prepared to help out if needed. Consider the way to talk to children and how good you are at listening to what they have to say and following up on their ideas. How good are you at making parents feel welcome and at valuing what they can tell you about what is important for their individual child?

Do you help the setting to run smoothly by thinking ahead and being proactive in solving problems as they arise? Do you take responsibility for your own professional development? Understanding the SEF By understanding the structure of the SEF and looking at the questions it asks you can become more aware of how your individual practice contributes to the overall provision of the setting. The SEF is in three parts that look at different aspects of how a setting functions.

Part A: The details of the setting and the views of those who use it As a reflective practitioner, consider the contribution you make to the vision and values of the setting and what it aims to achieve for children and families. Think about how well you help parents and children to feel a part of the setting. How do you enable them to express opinions and have their views

listened to? How good are you at contributing your ideas and opinions and listening to the views of others?