

Early childhood play, learning and care: Developmental pathways 0 to 3



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Introduction

This guidance sets out a framework for ensuring quality provision for all children from birth to age 3. It focuses on what is important for children's development and how we can best support them to grow and develop in ways that suit their stage of development. It has been co-constructed with practitioners and specialists across the education and childcare sectors.

We know that the quality of the interplay between enabling adults, engaging experiences and effective environments is fundamental to supporting all children to make progress. When we consider children's learning, we need to be constantly mindful of the fact that our role as observant enabling adults impacts directly on the quality of engaging experiences and effective environments.

In this section, we introduce five developmental pathways. These developmental pathways should ensure that babies and young children learn and develop in ways that are appropriate for them. The developmental pathways should be used alongside [A Quality Framework for Early Childhood Play, Learning and Care in Wales \(Quality Framework\)](#) to support us when we plan meaningful experiences that are responsive to children's developing needs and interests. These developmental pathways are child-centred, interdependent and of equal importance. They focus on what is important for the child and link closely to the key principles of child development. They have been developed to ensure children can be supported to make progress at their own pace and in their preferred learning environment.

The five developmental pathways are:

- belonging
- communication
- exploration
- physical development
- well-being

Children have different needs at different stages of development. Accordingly, the birth to age 3 developmental pathways are presented broadly in 12-month periods. However, individual children's holistic progress may not fit neatly into only one developmental pathway. This means that as practitioners we should be aware of what comes before and after a particular stage as defined in this document:

- Here I am! (birth to 12 months)
- I'm exploring! (1 to 2 years)
- Look at me now! (2 to 3 years)

These are expressed from the child's perspective to ensure that children are at the forefront of all decision making. We know that children develop at their own pace and we should provide developmentally appropriate practice, within nurturing relationships, to meet the needs of all children. Children should be allowed time, space, and freedom to explore. Enabling adults should notice the small changes and growing capabilities children show through their communication, actions and movements as they grow and develop.

The developmental pathways represent a child's right to experience an environment where play is valued, both in itself and as part of learning. Each of the developmental pathways contains:

- a clear rationale that captures the essence of what is important to children's holistic development at each stage
- statements that begin with and expand on the following:
 - 'I need to ... '
 - 'I am learning to ... '
 - 'My ... is enhanced by ... '

The 'I need to ... ' statements articulate the biological and social drives that children cannot and should not ignore. These statements frame the fundamental opportunities that babies and young children require to thrive. It is our responsibility to recognise and understand these drives, so that we provide purposeful play opportunities for all children to fulfil these fundamental needs. The 'I need to ... ' statements should be used to support our understanding of what we need to provide in terms of loving relationships, experiences and environments.

The 'I am learning to ... ' statements demonstrate the capabilities and dispositions that children are developing. We know that progress for individual children is likely to be uneven within and across the developmental pathways; it is therefore important that we use our observations to inform our interactions and guide our planning with children.

The 'My ... is enhanced by ... ' statements describe the ideal conditions that can have a positive impact on the social, emotional, cognitive and physical development of the child. How well we respond to and plan for these developing needs will be the foundation of success.

The five developmental pathways

Belonging

Belonging is essential to our sense of happiness and well-being. For babies, this begins with secure attachments with key caregivers. Strong, secure relationships are vital to this sense of belonging. As they develop, children begin to develop a sense of how they fit in to the many groups to which they belong, and of their importance within them.

Having a sense of *cynefin* can bring positive feelings of connection with the home and the setting and as children get older this can expand to the community, Wales and the wider world. Settings that value, celebrate and build upon children's past and present experiences from home and their community can strengthen a sense of belonging. It is our responsibility to ensure children feel safe and secure within the setting environment, and to show genuine care and emotional support to help build a firm sense of belonging.

Belonging is important to shaping children's sense of who they are and who they can become and as such should underpin the ethos of all settings in Wales.

Communication

Communication, both verbal and nonverbal, is fundamental to children's development. Communication development will relate to whatever language a child uses and is vital to the foundation of relationships and essential for play, learning and social interaction. Children's strong drive to communicate through gesture, movement and voice supports them to make themselves understood. As they develop their communication skills of attention, listening and understanding, they also develop expressive language, which includes verbal and nonverbal communication.

The amount and kind of communication children experience in their early years has a marked effect on their communication. We should recognise that children develop skills at different rates, and we can support their communication development by engaging in genuine responsive interactions.

A communication-rich environment should provide children with opportunities to express and communicate their needs, thoughts and feelings and for them to know that they will be responded to appropriately. As new skills are learned, children should have opportunities to use them in a variety of contexts with each other, with adults, on a one-to-one basis or in small groups. Regular and frequent opportunities to participate in stories, songs and rhymes supports communication development. Developing effective communication skills is important to self-expression, to the

development of strong social relationships and to a child's learning more generally. Communication also includes children's mark-making, which develops from random marks to more purposeful marks, to which children begin to assign meaning. These marks should be encouraged and valued as part of children's desire to communicate through drawings, 'writing' or mathematical marks.

Exploration

From birth, children's natural curiosity about the world around them is a strong motivator for exploration. Children are curious problem-solvers who often experience awe and wonder in everyday occurrences. They enjoy exploring and investigating by themselves and with others. They develop a need to share their delight in new knowledge or skills and learn from each other.

Learning involves gradual development of play, skills, knowledge and competencies in increasingly complex ways. Children thrive in inclusive environments, both indoors and outdoors, and where there are open-ended opportunities to play, explore and investigate. Adults who are attuned to children's interests, responses and nonverbal cues can support positive dispositions to learning as well as increasing knowledge and skills. From birth, children need quality interactions and time with an adult who can support them in their exploration. It is important that adults allow children the time to be inquisitive and to safely explore the environment around them.

Physical development

Physical activity has multiple benefits for the developing child. Movement is strongly linked to cognition and learning. Engaging children in physical experiences and activities at the earliest opportunity can also enhance their sense of belonging and well-being. It can support greater levels of concentration, motivation and memory, as well as support healthy bone and muscle development. For this reason, physical development skills are woven into the other four developmental pathways, as well as being a separate developmental pathway in and of itself.

Well-being

Children are influenced by the adults, experiences and environments they encounter. When these three work together successfully, they create a strong sense of well-being for all.

Feeling connected, secure and safe are key elements to developing a strong sense of well-being. Adults who create emotionally safe environments can support children to begin to recognise and manage their feelings and behaviour in positive ways. They can also help children begin to understand that actions have consequences.

Children with secure attachments and relationships can feel confident in themselves and are therefore better able to make choices, show greater resilience and independence, and participate positively in everyday activities.

Stages of development

Here I am! (birth to 12 months)

Belonging

Belonging is essential to our sense of happiness and well-being. Belonging is central to shaping who babies are and who they can become. Babies who feel loved, nurtured and valued by adults are more likely to build positive relationships now and in the future. As soon as they are born, babies seek attachments. Developing strong, secure relationships with family members and keyworkers is crucial for babies to form positive attachments. These secure attachments can support babies to know with whom and where they belong, and to develop an awareness of their own identity within these relationships.

Here I am! (birth to 12 months)

I need to:	I am learning to:	My sense of belonging is enhanced by adults who:
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• feel safe and secure• feel loved and valued, and be respected• make connections and form attachments• be understood and responded to	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• show how I am feeling• recognise familiar and unfamiliar people and things• react and interact using verbal and nonverbal cues• trust and form attachments with a significant person• respond to familiar adults• show who I like to be with• show how I like to be held	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• recognise and support my uniqueness• perceive me as capable and support me in my early development• provide consistent care and respect for me• use observation to tune into my cues and needs• enjoy caring for me, and show me love and affection• engage in responsive interactions• communicate face-to-face with me

Here I am! (birth to 12 months)

I need to:	I am learning to:	My sense of belonging is enhanced by adults who:
		<ul style="list-style-type: none">• are patient and take time to get to know me and what my needs, likes and dislikes are• know and respect my family as my first educators by building strong relationships with them• recognise that familiar things from home comfort me• allow sufficient time for the many transitions that happen on a day-to-day basis• provide welcoming, inviting and relaxed environments• provide experiences that meet my developmental needs• ensure that I experience my outdoor and indoor environments• use songs and rhymes that value my home language and culture• introduce me to Welsh language songs and rhymes

Communication

Communication, both verbal and nonverbal, is fundamental to development. It is vital to the foundation of relationships and essential for play and social interaction. Babies express their needs and wants through crying, body movements and eye-contact, as well as simple sounds and gestures. As babies' communication progresses from smiles and cries to babbles and gurgles, they may begin to imitate intonation and sounds to communicate their needs and wants. Supportive adults notice and intentionally respond to these vocalisations in positive ways. Developing these early communication skills is important for building strong attachments and for overall development and well-being.

Adults can support babies' development by tuning in to their communication, using a gentle and reassuring tone of voice, repeating and responding in turn. Communicating with and responding to babies in this way helps them to develop their communication skills and is the beginning of turn-taking in conversation. Careful observation of verbal and nonverbal communication can support adults to attune to individual babies. Consistent and loving adults are essential for ensuring that needs and signals are responded to, sending babies the message that they are successful communicators.

An environment that is communication rich should provide babies with opportunities to recognise familiar voices, gestures or signs, which should promote babble. Daily routines provide valuable repeated opportunities for babies to experience a variety of communication, including songs and rhymes, with familiar adults.

Here I am! (birth to 12 months)

I need to:	I am learning to:	My communication is enhanced by adults who:
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• play and interact with responsive adults• develop relationships• interact with interesting objects and materials• engage in 'serve and return' interactions• be responded to	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• respond, turning my head towards sounds, gestures or signs• respond to my own name• focus on things in my environment• recognise familiar adults, signs, sounds and gestures• recognise familiar songs and rhymes• understand or respond to frequently used words in context	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• listen and respond to me attentively and value my communication• engage in face-to-face interactions with me• give me time to process and respond in our interactions• copy the sounds I make and introduce new ones

Here I am! (birth to 12 months)

I need to:	I am learning to:	My communication is enhanced by adults who:
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• communicate with others by interacting with and reacting to them verbally and nonverbally• use, during my own babble, the sounds I have previously heard• use my sounds and gestures to attract attention	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• respond to my babble with words to help me make connections between sounds and words• view me as a capable communicator• initiate interactions, sing, read and play with me throughout the day• play games to develop my attention, for example 'peekaboo'• provide appropriate spaces, both indoors and outdoors, with resources to introduce new vocabulary• introduce me to a range of stories, songs and rhymes, including those from my own culture, from Welsh culture and the Welsh language as well as from other cultures• provide suitable books for me to explore• share favourite songs and stories with me as I settle to sleep or at other quiet times• provide a communication-rich environment

Exploration

Babies are naturally curious about the environment and are keen to explore. They are fascinated by themselves, others and the world around them. As babies explore through play, they experiment with new sounds, sights, objects and activities. They explore who they are and what they can do by using their body. They can focus on things that have caught their attention for brief periods of time. They begin to repeat and refine movements as their exploration develops. As children develop, the adult has an important role in increasing children's opportunities for exploration.

Here I am! (birth to 12 months)

I need to:	I am learning to:	My exploration is enhanced by adults who:
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• explore and discover, using my senses• make connections through repetition• move my body• play• be curious	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• focus my attention on things that interest me• investigate and manipulate objects• experiment with cause and effect• control my body and what it can do• explore both indoors and outdoors• explore movement• explore with my mouth, hands and feet• use my hand-eye co-ordination• make connections as I engage in repeated actions	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• provide opportunities for me to experience a range of play types• provide a safe environment that allows me to explore the world around me, both indoors and outdoors• provide experiences that stimulate my interest and curiosity and share the interest and curiosity with me• recognise and support my schematic play• provide time and opportunities to repeat my play• provide me with space and opportunities for rolling and stretching to explore my own movements and my immediate environment• provide me with an interesting range of objects and spaces to explore

Here I am! (birth to 12 months)

I need to:	I am learning to:	My exploration is enhanced by adults who:
		<ul style="list-style-type: none">• introduce me to places and spaces beyond my setting• support my efforts to be curious• use music, from my own culture, Welsh culture and other cultures, to help me explore movement• share in my joy and enthusiasm and see the potential for awe and wonder• recognise and celebrate my determination and effort

Physical development

As their bodies grow, babies progressively strengthen their muscles and can become better able to control their bodies. Adults should stimulate and encourage the development of gross and fine motor skills. Physical development consumes the interests of babies as they practise learned skills and seek to develop new ones.

Here I am! (birth to 12 months)

I need to:	I am learning to:	My physical development is enhanced by adults who:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • explore what I can do with my body • move to develop my strength and co-ordination • move things and play with things that move • express myself through movement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • track with my eyes • begin to control my body and what it can do • test out my capabilities and persevere • develop my motor movements • explore objects in and out of reach • explore the indoor and outdoor environment • interact physically with the world around me • move with intention 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • understand the stages of physical development and how to support me • provide a range of spaces for me to move in and around, both indoors and outdoors • observe how I use the spaces, notice my increasing control and respond to my developing needs • provide uncluttered safe environments and stimulating resources and spaces for me to explore • give me short periods of tummy time where appropriate, supporting and encouraging me to move my body • provide opportunities that encourage me to reach out, grasp, kick, move my legs and head

Here I am! (birth to 12 months)

I need to:	I am learning to:	My physical development is enhanced by adults who:
		<ul style="list-style-type: none">• provide safe and stimulating environments that encourage me to hold on, balance against or pull up and to make my first steps• involve me in games, songs and rhymes, using body movements

Well-being

Babies with secure attachments and relationships are relaxed and have a strong sense of well-being, which enables them to show their preferences in relation to rest, care, comfort and nourishment. They are reliant on adults to meet their physical and emotional needs and to feel safe and secure within their environment.

Adults or keyworkers who acknowledge and respond in sensitive, nurturing and timely ways can ensure babies develop a strong sense of well-being. The well-being of the baby is enhanced when the adult tunes in and responds to the baby as they express their feelings, needs and wants. Babies' well-being is enhanced by effective transitions from home to the setting. It is crucial that good lines of communication are in place to secure smooth transitions. Babies who are physically, socially, emotionally and cognitively engaged in play will have higher levels of confidence and well-being. Babies who enjoy good health and well-being are innately curious; they have a zest for life which results in their taking advantages of opportunities to grow and develop.

Here I am! (birth to 12 months)

I need to:	I am learning to:	My well-being is enhanced by adults who:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • feel safe and secure • show my emotions • feel connected to others • feel warmth, compassion and love • have time for rest and sleep • form strong positive attachments • be healthy and well nourished 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • interact with responsive others • communicate my needs and wants • see myself as an individual • recognise familiar people • show my preferences, including likes and dislikes • choose objects that can offer comfort to me • show emotions through my interactions with others • be soothed and begin to self-regulate • respond to the routines of my day 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • understand me and share information about me with my family • sensitively help me deal with unfamiliar situations and experiences • are emotionally available and support me to feel safe and secure • respond sensitively to how I like to be fed, held, changed and settled to sleep • give me choices to encourage my independence • share in my focus of attention • observe what I like and dislike

Here I am! (birth to 12 months)

I need to:	I am learning to:	My well-being is enhanced by adults who:
		<ul style="list-style-type: none">• validate my feelings and name them• know what comforts me• provide a varied and balanced diet and ensure I experience the health benefits of being outdoors

I'm exploring! (1 to 2 years)

Belonging

As children become more self-aware, they begin to develop a stronger sense of who they are and what they can do. When they feel loved, nurtured and valued, they begin to feel important within the different groups to which they belong. The quality of relationships they are part of impacts on children's sense of identity and autonomy. Familiar routines and objects from home help children to feel safe and can ease transition, which may enhance their sense of belonging.

I'm exploring! (1 to 2 years)

I need to:	I am learning to:	My sense of belonging is enhanced by adults who:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • feel safe and secure • feel loved and valued and be respected • make connections and form attachments • be understood and responded to • feel connected to others • see myself and people like me represented in my setting • play on my own and alongside others 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • develop my understanding of who I am • show how I am feeling • see that I am important to others • communicate my likes and dislikes • feel secure within my daily routines and with familiar people, places and objects • play with support, alongside and with others • express enjoyment • interact with others • seek reassurance from familiar adults 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • provide consistent care and respect • see me as capable of learning and having a strong desire to explore the world around me • enjoy being in my company and show me love and affection • communicate with me about what's happening during care routines • use observation effectively to know all about me • genuinely respond to my interests, likes and dislikes • engage me in joyful and curious play • value and respect my family and build strong connections with my home and local community

I'm exploring! (1 to 2 years)

I need to:	I am learning to:	My sense of belonging is enhanced by adults who:
		<ul style="list-style-type: none">• promote an inclusive ethos that values the diverse culture of Wales• prioritise my needs when making decisions that may impact on me• create outdoor and indoor environments that provide wide and varied play experiences• provide familiar resources that reflect my culture and community• use visits and visitors to support my connections and enhance my interests• ensure that I see myself and people like me represented in my setting

Communication

Communication, both verbal and nonverbal, is fundamental to development; it is vital to the foundation of relationships and essential for play, learning and social interaction.

As children's communication progresses, adults should recognise that children may understand more than they can communicate. The relationships within the setting should support children to make connections to realise that their verbal and nonverbal communication attempts will be valued and responded to. Being able to experiment with making marks is valuable to the journey of written communication.

An environment that is communication rich should provide children with opportunities to notice things and use simple words, gestures or signs and some short phrases. Adults should provide familiar objects and add a word when children recognise the object. Adults should introduce a range of different words, signs or gestures to improve children's understanding of communication. They should foster a love of reading through sharing books and telling stories. Daily routines, such as eating together and nappy changing, provide valuable repeated opportunities for conversations. It is important that throughout the day children experience and join in with a variety of songs and rhymes. As new skills are learned, children should have opportunities to use them in a variety of contexts with each other, or with adults.

Developing these early communication skills is important to self-expression, building strong attachments and to children's overall development and well-being.

I'm exploring! (1 to 2 years)

I need to:	I am learning to:	My communication is enhanced by adults who:
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• play and interact with responsive adults• communicate• express a range of emotions• develop relationships• interact with interesting objects and materials• notice things in my environment• engage in 'serve and return' interactions	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• focus on sounds or signs and objects in my environment• focus my attention on things that interest me• recognise and respond to music and singing• recognise and respond to familiar and unfamiliar voices	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• view me as a capable communicator• use my name to gain my attention• engage in face-to-face interactions with me• give me time in our interactions• initiate interactions when playing with me

I'm exploring! (1 to 2 years)

I need to:	I am learning to:	My communication is enhanced by adults who:
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• understand or respond to familiar words that are used in context• respond to simple phrases• use my sounds and gestures to attract attention and communicate• supplement my babble with single familiar words• use intonation, pitch and change in volume when communicating• express my likes and dislikes• engage in social interaction, including responsive interaction• engage in simple, symbolic pretend play• explore books	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• value my communication and respond sensitively• show genuine interest in our 'serve and return' interactions• extend my vocabulary through commenting, repeating and expanding• create outdoor and indoor environments that provide wide and varied experiences to express myself• provide access to a range of suitable books to enrich my vocabulary and foster a love of books• actively engage me in stories, songs, and rhymes from Welsh culture and the Welsh language, as well as from my own and other cultures, using a range of resources• encourage my pretend play with appropriate resources

Exploration

At this stage, children actively seek exploration further afield as they develop. Adults should be partners in children's play, delighting in and celebrating children's curiosity and exploration. Children are natural problem solvers, testing boundaries and taking risks. Skilful adults know when to intervene and when to encourage independent exploration. As children engage in repetitive play (schema), adults should provide opportunities for children to experience, discover, experiment and create.

I'm exploring! (1 to 2 years)

I need to:	I am learning to:	My exploration is enhanced by adults who:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • explore and discover using my senses • make connections • move my body • play alone and with others • explore a range of different spaces • inquire and be curious about my world 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • focus my attention on things that interest me • investigate and manipulate objects and investigate spaces • experiment with cause and effect • make connections as I engage in repeated actions • control my body and what it can do with increasing confidence • explore with purpose, both indoors and outdoors • engage in a range of play types • use my fine motor movements with more purpose • communicate and express myself creatively • share my curiosity with others 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • provide opportunities for me to experience a range of play types • provide a safe environment that allows me to explore the world around me, both indoors and outdoors • provide and share experiences that stimulate my interest and curiosity • recognise and support my schematic play • provide time and opportunities to repeat my play • provide me with an interesting range of objects and spaces to explore • introduce me to places and spaces beyond my setting • notice and support my curiosity and see my play as valuable learning • view me as confident and capable

I'm exploring! (1 to 2 years)

I need to:	I am learning to:	My exploration is enhanced by adults who:
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• find out how things work• make sense of the world around me through my repeated patterns of behaviour• explore a range of tools and materials• use my senses to explore the world around me	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• empower me to discover my limits• allow me time and space to learn by myself and not intervene when I am intensely occupied• observe, notice and use my fascinations to deepen learning• share in my joy and enthusiasm and see the potential for awe and wonder• use the outdoors as a learning space• provide opportunities for me to become curious about, and explore aspects of, Wales and Welsh culture• support me in constructing understanding through responsive interactions• use music to help me explore rhythm and movement• recognise and celebrate my determination and effort

Physical development

As children grow, their determination to master movement, balance and gross and fine motor skills develops. At this stage, children may like and need to be on the move. Adults should support children to move, providing places and spaces where they can do this safely. Their natural inquisitiveness is now extended and they begin to make connections with the world around them.

I'm exploring! (1 to 2 years)

I need to:	I am learning to:	My physical development is enhanced by adults who:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • explore what I can do with my body • move to develop my strength and co-ordination • express myself through movement • be active • have choice over how and when I move 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • increase my range and control of my physical movements • test out my capabilities and persevere • interact physically with the world around me, both indoors and outdoors • further develop my fine motor control • respond to music and sound • master physical skills through repetition • become spatially aware and negotiate obstacles 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • understand the stages of physical development and how to support me • provide authentic experiences in the natural world • provide uncluttered safe environments • provide a range of spaces and places for me to move in and around, both indoors and outdoors • involve me in games, songs and rhymes, using body movements • provide resources to develop my manipulative skills • recognise my need to be physical • provide experiences to develop my co-ordination and core strength • give me physical support in my efforts to move • encourage me to challenge myself • give me space and time for repetition

Well-being

Children with secure attachments and relationships are relaxed, and have a strong sense of well-being, which enables them to show their preferences in relation to rest, care, comfort and nourishment and, with adult support, begin to make their own choices.

Children are influenced by the adults, experiences and environments they encounter. When these three work together successfully, they create a strong sense of well-being for children.

Feeling connected, safe and secure are key elements to developing a strong sense of well-being. Adults who create emotionally safe environments can support children to feel safe to express their feelings and support them to co-regulate what may be sometimes overwhelming feelings. Children's well-being is enhanced by effective transitions from home to the setting. It is crucial that good lines of communication are in place to secure smooth transitions.

Children who are physically, socially, emotionally and cognitively engaged in play will have higher levels of confidence and well-being. Children who enjoy good health and well-being are innately curious. They have a zest for life that results in their taking advantage of opportunities to grow and develop.

I'm exploring! (1 to 2 years)

I need to:	I am learning to:	My well-being is enhanced by adults who:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • feel safe and secure • show preferences • show my emotions • feel connected to others • feel warmth, compassion and love • have time for rest and sleep • form strong, positive attachments • be healthy and well nourished 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • interact with responsive others • communicate my needs and wants • see myself as an individual • recognise familiar people • show my preferences, including likes and dislikes • choose objects that can offer comfort to me • show emotions through my interactions with others • be soothed and begin to self-regulate 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • understand me and share information about me with my family • show warmth and kindness to support me to feel safe and secure • promote my increasing independence • notice my preferences and give me opportunities to make choices • use observations to know me well and recognise my nonverbal cues and needs • validate my feelings and name them • know what comforts me

I'm exploring! (1 to 2 years)

I need to:	I am learning to:	My well-being is enhanced by adults who:
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • respond to the routines of my day • make choices • express a range of emotions through actions and gestures • participate in daily routines • build relationships • seek support and comfort from familiar adults • be increasingly independent • begin to regulate my feelings through seeking comfort 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • provide me with a varied, balanced and nourishing diet • ensure I experience the health benefits of being outdoors • understand I need a healthy body and healthy mind • provide dignity and respect in my care • are patient, calm and responsive to help me regulate my emotions • respect and value my play and provide me with a range of experiences • give me time, space and freedom to explore and discover, both indoors and outdoors • provide support and reassurance during changes that affect me • work together to meet my needs and respect my likes and dislikes • respect, value and support my culture and heritage, and ensure that the environment reflects me and my unique family • encourage my awareness of others

Look at me now! (2 to 3 years)

Belonging

Belonging is essential to our sense of happiness and well-being. When they are young, children begin to develop a sense of how they fit in to the many groups to which they belong, and of their importance within them. Strong, secure relationships are vital to this sense of belonging.

A sense of belonging can bring positive feelings of connection with the home and the setting and can expand to the community, Wales and the wider world. Settings that value, celebrate and build upon children's past and present experiences from home and their community can strengthen a sense of belonging. It is our responsibility to ensure children feel safe and secure within the setting environment, and to show genuine care and emotional support to help build a firm sense of belonging.

Belonging is important to shaping children's sense of who they are and who they can become and, as such, should underpin the ethos of all settings in Wales.

Look at me now! (2 to 3 years)

I need to:	I am learning to:	My sense of belonging is enhanced by adults who:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • feel loved, valued and respected • feel safe and secure • play on my own, alongside or with others • make connections with people, familiar places and things • be understood and responded to • see myself and people like me represented in my setting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • recognise who I am • recognise that I am important to those around me • take part in daily routines • follow some rules and respect boundaries • recognise my own needs and begin to notice the needs of others • take care of living and non-living things in my environment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • treat me as a capable learner • provide consistent care and respect for me • enjoy being in my company and show me love and affection • make time for me and respond genuinely to my interests, likes and dislikes • model a joyful and curious approach to learning • provide resources that support co-operation

Look at me now! (2 to 3 years)

I need to:	I am learning to:	My sense of belonging is enhanced by adults who:
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• recognise similarities between things and that I have things in common with others• seek reassurance from familiar adults	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• plan meaningful experiences as a result of observation of my play choices and preferences• prioritise my needs when making decisions that impact on me• support me to play by myself, alongside or with others• provide familiar and predictable routines with opportunities for me to help in daily tasks• provide familiar resources that reflect my culture and community• ensure that the environment and resources are fully inclusive so that I see myself represented• promote an inclusive ethos that values the diverse culture of Wales• provide appropriate opportunities to experience my own culture and the different cultures of others in authentic contexts• have strong connections with my home and local community

Look at me now! (2 to 3 years)

I need to:	I am learning to:	My sense of belonging is enhanced by adults who:
		<ul style="list-style-type: none">• use visits and visitors to support connections and enhance interests• create outdoor and indoor environments that provide a wide variety of play experiences

Communication

Communication, both verbal and nonverbal, is fundamental to children’s development. It is vital to the foundation of relationships and essential for learning, play and social interaction. As children are growing, they develop their ability to understand and make themselves understood, which supports them to learn more effectively. Communication involves developing listening, attention and understanding skills alongside the development of expressive language, both verbal and nonverbal.

The amount and type of communication children experience can have a marked effect on their communication development. Children acquire and develop skills at different rates, and we can support their communication development by modelling active responding and communicating for different purposes. Adults should use communication to introduce a range of words to improve children’s increasing understanding of language. An environment that is communication rich should provide children with opportunities to express and communicate their needs, thoughts and feelings verbally and nonverbally. As new skills are learned, children should have opportunities to use them in a variety of contexts with each other, with adults, in very small groups or on a one-to-one basis. Regular and frequent opportunities to participate in stories, songs and rhymes support communication development. Developing effective communication skills is important to self-expression, to the development of strong social relationships and to a child’s learning more generally. Being able to assign meaning to marks is a creative endeavour that enables children to begin the journey of written communication, be that in drawings, writing or early mathematical marks.

Look at me now! (2 to 3 years)

I need to:	I am learning to:	My communication is enhanced by adults who:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • communicate • notice things in my environment • have enough time to process and respond within interactions • express a range of emotions • develop social relationships • be listened to, understood and responded to 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • develop my attention in my play • take notice of others • show my understanding of phrases, comments and instructions • show my understanding of simple concepts such as ‘in’, ‘on’ and ‘under’, or ‘big’ and ‘little’ • express my needs and feelings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • model good communication skills, including thinking aloud • follow my lead and give me time to communicate about my interests • support and respond sensitively to my verbal and nonverbal communication • support me to share my ideas in my play • give me plenty of time to process and respond to questions or instructions

Look at me now! (2 to 3 years)

I need to:	I am learning to:	My communication is enhanced by adults who:
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• recall very recent or familiar events• make marks• recognise and sometimes respond to verbal and nonverbal communication• show my thinking through play• act out familiar routines and begin to imitate familiar roles and scenarios in my play• join in with familiar stories, songs and rhymes	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• expand on what I say, adding a word or words when I communicate a short phrase or sentence• read books and encourage me to join in with repeated phrases and predictable rhyme• share stories, songs and rhymes from my own and other cultures• use puppets, props and digital media to support me to begin to retell familiar stories and rhymes• extend and enrich my vocabulary in meaningful play contexts• provide opportunities for me to develop my understanding of concepts• provide authentic opportunities for mark-making• create environments, both indoors and outdoors, that provide a wide variety of experiences to express myself physically, creatively and imaginatively• provide opportunities for authentic and familiar role play

Exploration

At this stage, children are beginning to communicate and engage others in their exploration. As children develop and their skills increase, their opportunities to explore and investigate purposefully expands. Children can be absorbed in their exploration as their perseverance and resilience develops. Play becomes more complex and meaningful. The opportunities to repeat, return and revisit become increasingly more important to the child. As a child's confidence increases, they may lead the play and adults should facilitate this and share in the children's joy and excitement.

Look at me now! (2 to 3 years)

I need to:	I am learning to:	My exploration is enhanced by adults who:
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• explore and discover, using my senses• make connections• move my body• take risks• play• communicate and express myself creatively• inquire and be curious about the world around me	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• focus my attention on things that interest me• develop my understanding of how things work• share my discoveries• show my thinking through my exploration• play with quantities, for example sorting and gathering• transfer my learning to new situations• notice similarities and differences in people, places and things• use my senses and body to explore the world around me• recognise cause and effect• explore and experiment with purpose, both indoors and outdoors	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• provide authentic opportunities to play and experiment with a variety of materials, textures and tools, both indoors and outdoors• share in my joy and enthusiasm and see the potential for awe and wonder• observe, notice and use my fascinations to deepen learning• view me as confident, capable and curious and support, celebrate and encourage my curiosity• notice and support my repeated patterns of schematic play• recognise and celebrate my determination and effort• give me time for uninterrupted play

Look at me now! (2 to 3 years)

I need to:	I am learning to:	My exploration is enhanced by adults who:
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• create and experiment using a range of tools and materials• share my curiosity with others• communicate and express myself creatively	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• understand the importance of, and give me opportunities to return to or repeat, my play• recognise and value a range of play types• value the process rather than the creation of an end product• enrich the outdoor and indoor environments with open-ended resources that enliven my curiosity• use the outdoors as a learning space• provide opportunities for me to become curious about, and explore aspects of, Wales and Welsh culture• support me in constructing understanding through responsive interactions• support and develop mathematical and scientific concepts and language in meaningful ways• support my wondering as I experiment and explore, allowing me to make mistakes

Look at me now! (2 to 3 years)

I need to:	I am learning to:	My exploration is enhanced by adults who:
		<ul style="list-style-type: none">• use authentic resources to bring stories, rhymes and poems to life• provide me with a range of books, including non-fiction, and appropriate digital resources to help me investigate• use music and dance to engage me

Physical development

All children need to move, or be moved, and to move or manipulate objects, often repeatedly, as part of their development. This involves both gross motor and fine motor manipulation. These motor movements can become more refined and smoothly co-ordinated with time and opportunity. Repetition and variety are critical to development as children begin to explore their increasing physical capabilities.

Physical activity has multiple benefits for the developing child. Movement is linked to cognition and learning, and engaging in physical activities can enhance children's sense of belonging and well-being. It can support greater levels of concentration, motivation and memory as well as support healthy bone and muscle development. For this reason, physical development skills are woven into the other four developmental pathways as well as being a separate developmental pathway in and of itself.

Look at me now! (2 to 3 years)

I need to:	I am learning to:	My physical development is enhanced by adults who:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • develop my strength, balance and co-ordination • explore what I can do with my body • express myself through movement • be curious about how I can interact physically with the world around me • develop my gross and fine motor skills • be active and challenge myself physically • have choice over how and when I move 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • co-ordinate my movements • move safely • maintain balance • move on a variety of surfaces • co-ordinate my hands and eyes • take physical risks • manipulate and explore smaller objects • develop and refine my gross and fine motor skills • respond to music and rhythm • become spatially aware and negotiate obstacles, both indoors and outdoors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • understand the stages of physical development and how to help me • provide authentic experiences in the natural world • provide opportunities to develop my co-ordination and core strength, using a variety of surfaces and structures • observe how I use spaces, notice my increasing control and respond to my developing needs • provide daily opportunities to develop both my gross and fine motor skills

Look at me now! (2 to 3 years)

I need to:	I am learning to:	My physical development is enhanced by adults who:
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• move things and play with things that move• express myself in large and small spaces	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• offer inclusive outdoor and indoor environments that support me to move and be active• provide uncluttered play spaces• recognise my need to be physical most of my day• share joy in my physical activity• encourage me to gauge and manage risks and challenge myself• offer opportunities to experience and participate in a range of music, sound and movement• give me space and time for repetition

Well-being

Children are influenced by the adults, experiences and environments they encounter. When these three work together successfully, they create a strong sense of well-being for all. Feeling connected, secure and safe are key elements to developing a strong sense of well-being. Adults who create emotionally safe environments can support children to begin to recognise and manage their feelings and behaviour in positive ways. They can also help children begin to understand that actions have consequences. Children with secure attachments and relationships can feel confident in themselves and are therefore better able to make choices, show greater resilience and independence and participate positively in everyday activities.

Children who are physically, socially, emotionally and cognitively engaged and involved in play will have higher levels of well-being and will develop their feelings of self-worth and confidence.

Look at me now! (2 to 3 years)

I need to:	I am learning to:	My well-being is enhanced by adults who:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • feel safe and secure • make choices • follow my own interests • show my emotions • feel connected to others • feel warmth, compassion and love • feel that I am loved • see myself and my world reflected in the environment • have time for rest and sleep • feel cared for and comforted • be healthy and well nourished 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • indicate preferences and make choices • interact with others • take turns and share, with support • show my likes and dislikes • be kind • recognise my feelings • recognise the feelings of others • regulate my responses with support • recognise how I am the same as and different from others • recognise that my actions and those of others have consequences 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • respect and value my play • provide a range of choice within my play • are calm, patient, consistent and understanding • give me time, space and freedom to explore and discover, both indoors and outdoors • promote my increasing independence • support me to manage uncertainty and change • recognise and respect my feelings by showing compassion and warmth

Look at me now! (2 to 3 years)

I need to:	I am learning to:	My well-being is enhanced by adults who:
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• become independent in my personal hygiene• give care and comfort to others• participate and follow daily routines• build relationships	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• validate my feelings and help me begin to regulate my emotions• encourage me to be actively involved in my learning• listen, observe and notice my developing understanding• work together to meet my needs and respect my likes and dislikes• enjoy being in my company and show love and affection towards me• respect, value and support my culture and heritage, and ensure that the environment reflects me and my unique family• provide me with healthy and nourishing food and drink

