

A Know How Guide: Working with Under 2's (September 2025)

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Introduction:

High-quality early years environments provide much more than just a safe space—they offer a foundation where the youngest children can explore, develop, and thrive. For children under three, the environment must be thoughtfully designed to address their unique developmental needs and foster a sense of security and belonging. This includes areas for active play, calm spaces for rest and reflection, and opportunities for sensory exploration.

Crucially, every detail of the environment should be intentional. Soft furnishings and accessible materials invite physical exploration, while displays at child level and cosy corners encourage children to feel at home. Outdoor spaces, too, play an essential role: natural elements, varied surfaces, and open-ended resources provide opportunities for movement, discovery, and connection with nature.

Practitioners act as key facilitators within these environments. Their presence, responsiveness, and understanding of each child's cues are fundamental in supporting well-being and early learning. By offering warm interactions and consistent routines, practitioners help children feel safe to express themselves, try new things, and form trusting relationships.

Moreover, the partnership between practitioners and families is central to fostering a sense of continuity and trust. When families feel welcomed and engaged, children are more likely to settle confidently and build secure attachments. Regular communication, opportunities for parental involvement, and shared celebrations enrich the experience for everyone, reinforcing the idea that early years' environments thrive best when they are truly inclusive and responsive to the whole community.



<https://www.communityplaythings.co.uk>

Creating an enabling emotional environment:

	Key points
The people	• Within each room, nurturing, calming, sympathetic and caring staff always keep the children in mind. • Well-qualified and reflective staff (including a mixture of newly qualified and experienced staff) actively engage in their own learning to further improve the outcomes for the children. • A strong, well-established Key Person approach and buddy system is evident. • Leaders and staff understand the importance of attachment and so where possible, the child's Key Person undertakes most of the child's care routines. • Regular opportunities for the parents / carers as well as the young children to meet each other and the staff, are organised prior to the child starting the setting. • The parents / carers are introduced to their child's Key Person during a home visit, as well as in the setting, before the child starts at the setting.
The space	• Neutral, soft coloured walls and soft furnishings create a calming environment, with small cosy spaces for the young children to watch from, relax and play. Suggestions include a tepee, a den, large cushions and beanbags, a low futon, or mats of different textures. • A mixture of natural light and soft lighting such as fairy lights, create a cosy and homely environment. • A large, carpeted floor offers space for the adults and babies to play together, along with a settee for the adults to share stories and bottle feed the babies.
The resources	• Neutral coloured display boards celebrate the children's learning and development. • Photographs of the children's families are displayed at the child's height, along with a selection of mirrors, to ensure the young children can see themselves and their families within the environment. • A cosy and inviting nappy changing area and sleep room is inviting for both babies and adults. • Babies' comforters are stored and offered when required. • Collect stories for and make books about the babies and toddlers' interests.

[Birth To 5 Matters – Guidance by the sector, for the sector](#)

To further enrich this nurturing atmosphere, practitioners can thoughtfully curate accessible baskets of natural and sensory materials—such as wooden rings, soft fabrics, and objects from nature—encouraging babies to explore through all their senses at their own pace. By providing low shelves to display stimulating yet simple toys and books, the youngest children can choose what intrigues them. Familiar scents, perhaps lavender or chamomile, wafting gently through the air could signal comfort and continuity between home and nursery.



<https://www.communityplaythings.co.uk>

Creating a physical environment:

	Key points
The people	• Create an environment which invites responses from babies and adults e.g., touching, smiling, smelling, feeling, listening. • Share favourite stories, songs, rhymes, or music as babies are settling to sleep or at other quiet times. • Enable and allow babies to sleep when they need to and wake up from naps naturally. • Keep the environment quiet and calm, so that babies can attend to the voices and natural sounds around them. • Plan to take account of the individual cultural and feeding needs of young babies in their group. • Ensure mealtime seating allows young children to have their feet firmly on the floor or footrest. This aids stability and upper trunk control supporting hand-to-mouth co-ordination.
The space	• Make the nappy changing and dressing area pleasant to be in for both babies and adults and relationship building. • Create cosy, quiet place for babies to be calm both indoors and outdoors. • Provide low adult chairs or a settee that support practitioners when they are bottle feeding babies and which also allow children to climb up onto their laps. • Create sufficient safe space for babies to move, roll, stretch and explore.
The resources	• Limit the time young babies spend in seats and other “containers” as this prevents physical development. • Make play resources accessible on shelves and open containers for children to reach and fetch independently. • Provide resources including picture books and stories that focus on a range of emotions. • Place mirrors where babies can see their own reflection. Talk with them about what they see. • Provide resources and spaces that stimulate babies’ interests and reflect their home. • Provide toys and open-ended play experiences that match the play interests and styles of individual babies. • Provide large cushions, tunnels, slopes and low-level steps or platforms to stimulate and challenge toddlers. • Provide sturdy push-along carts, wheeled toys and pull-along toys indoors and out for pushing and pulling.

[Birth To 5 Matters – Guidance by the sector, for the sector](#)

Encourage movement by allowing plenty of time for babies and toddlers to explore freely in safe, open spaces both indoors and outdoors. Create cosy corners with soft lighting, interesting textures, and gentle sounds to invite quiet discovery as well as energetic play. Rotate play materials regularly to spark curiosity and encourage new types of exploration. Arrange spaces so children can choose where and how they wish to play, fostering a sense of autonomy and confidence. Make sure there are opportunities for both solitary and group play, allowing children to develop social skills at their own pace. Above all, be present and attentive, watching and listening for cues to extend and enrich their play experiences.

<https://www.communityplaythings.co.uk>



Creating a creative environment:

	Key points
The people	• Attend to how babies and young children are using their whole body in sensing, exploring, and experimenting with space, texture, sounds, rhythms, materials, and tools. • Welcome the ways in which babies and children arrange, combine, transform, group, and sequence materials that are both natural and manmade. • Notice the ways in which babies react to other babies and adults and the world that surrounds them. • Tune into and sensitively respond to babies and children's expressive and communicative actions. • Make marks together with babies and toddlers using a range of appropriate materials and tools.
The space	• Ensure that babies experience the natural world around them. Provide spaces that give young babies different views of their surroundings e.g., under a tree, looking at flowers and bushes. • Create a rich environment that enables babies and children to use all their senses. • Choose and select with intention the materials and tools available to young children.
The resources	• Create the time and the space that will ensure that children can engage in depth with a diverse range of materials. • Provide opportunities for children to explore sound with drums, other instruments, kitchen pans and wooden spoons or upcycled resources. • Provide a range of everyday and natural objects to explore such as in treasure baskets, for sitting babies. • Offer 'heuristic'* play with sets of simple natural and household objects for toddlers to manipulate, investigate, explore, and find out what they can make them do. • Provide babies and children with a range of experiences to feed their imaginative potential e.g. stories, images, music, natural and urban experiences, social encounters (mealtimes, shopping, visitors). • Give children large sheets of paper, trays of gloop, paint, soil etc. to make marks collaboratively. <i>*Exploratory play with everyday items, often arranged for mobile babies and toddlers to freely explore groups of objects.</i>

[Birth To 5 Matters – Guidance by the sector, for the sector](#)

By fostering an environment rich in sensory and creative opportunities, adults can nurture children's natural curiosity and support early brain development. Responsive interactions, where adults observe closely and join in children's explorations, help to deepen learning and build strong relationships.

Consider the sensory richness of the environment, offering materials that invite not only touch but also sound, scent, and sight. Simple objects like scarves, musical shakers, or textured balls can become gateways to discovery. Celebrate children's ordinary moments of invention—how a baby might stack two cups, or a toddler might use a wooden spoon to tap a rhythm on a box. Foster opportunities for children to move, rest, experiment, and repeat actions, recognising these patterns as meaningful explorations of their world. Thoughtfully curate the atmosphere so that children feel both secure and inspired, knowing that every corner offers something new to experience, whether it's the soft glow of a lamp, the gentle rustle of leaves just outside, or the shifting patterns of light on the wall.

<https://www.communityplaythings.co.uk>



The characteristics of effective learning:

“In planning and guiding what children learn, practitioners **must** reflect on the different rates at which children are developing and adjust their practice appropriately. Three characteristics of effective teaching and learning are: **play and exploring** – children investigate and experience things and ‘have-a-go’; **active learning** – children concentrate and keep on trying if they encounter difficulties and enjoy achievements; **creating and thinking critically** – children have and develop their own ideas, make links between ideas, and develop strategies for doing things.”

[Statutory framework for the early years foundation stage for childminders \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk)

[Statutory framework for the early years foundation stage for group and school providers \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk)

6-month-old baby	Playing & exploring	Active learning	Creating & thinking critically
Babies will be learning to:	Realise that their actions have an effect on the world, so they want to keep repeating them.	Show goal related behaviour. For example, reaching out and keep trying to grasp a favourite toy.	Concentrate on achieving something that is important to them.
Examples of how to support this:	Encourage babies’ exploration of the world around them. Suggestions: investigating the feel of their key person’s hair or reaching for a blanket in their cot. Offer treasure baskets for babies to explore, outdoors and inside.	Provide resources to encourage babies to reach for and explore objects. <i>At 6 months the baby will reach with one hand for an object, then pass the object from hand to hand, and take everything to their mouth.*</i>	Provide adequate, clean floor space for babies to experience tummy-time and to practice rolling over. <i>For example, rolling from their front to their back (5-6 months) and usually back to front (around 6-7 months).*</i> *Sheridan. M., Sharma, A. and Cockerill, H. (2014) From birth to five years – children’s developmental progress (4th edition)

[Development Matters - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk)

The characteristics of effective learning (cont.):

12-month-old baby	Playing & exploring	Active learning	Creating & thinking critically
Babies will be learning to:	Realise that their actions have an effect on the world, so they want to keep repeating them.	Show goal related behaviour. For example, babies may pull themselves up by using the edges of a low table to reach for a toy on top of the table.	Concentrate on achieving something that is important to them. <i>Points with index finger at objects of interest. Holds two toy bricks, one in each hand with tripod grasp, and bangs together to make noise.*</i>
Examples of how to support this:	Offer open-ended resources [heuristic play] like large smooth shells and pebbles etc. for babies to play freely with, outdoors and inside.	Provide furniture and boxes at the right height to encourage babies to pull themselves up and reach for objects. <i>Walks around furniture lifting one foot and stepping sideways.*</i>	Help babies to find their own ideas by providing open-ended resources that can be used in many ways. Children need consistent routines and time so that play is not constantly interrupted.

18-month-old toddler	Playing & exploring	Active learning	Creating & thinking critically
Babies will be learning to:	Realise that their actions have an effect on the world, so they want to keep repeating them.	Show goal related behaviour. For example, toddlers might turn a storage box upside down so they can stand on it and reach for an object.	Concentrate on achieving something that is important to them. They are increasingly able to control their attention and ignore distractions.
Examples of how to support this:	Offer open-ended resources [heuristic play] like large smooth shells, pebbles, blocks and lengths of fabric for toddlers to play freely with, outdoors and inside.	Opportunities to play and explore freely, indoors, and outside, are fun. They also help young children to develop their self-regulation as they enjoy hands-on learning and sometimes talk about what they are doing.	Offer children many different experiences and opportunities to play freely and to explore and investigate. Make time and space for children to become deeply involved in imaginative play, indoors and outside.

[Development Matters - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](http://www.gov.uk)

Learning and development:

1.3/1.4 There are seven areas of learning and development that set out what childminders / *providers* **must** teach the children in their settings. All areas of learning and development are important and inter-connected.

1.4/1.5 Three prime areas are particularly important for learning and forming relationships. They build a foundation for children to thrive and provide the basis for learning in all areas. These are the prime areas: • Communication and language • Physical development • Personal, social and emotional development.

1.5/1.6 Childminders / *providers* **must** also support children in four specific areas, which help strengthen and develop the three prime areas, and ignite children's curiosity and enthusiasm. The specific areas are: • Literacy • Mathematics • Understanding the world • Expressive arts and design.

1.6/1.7 The educational programmes are high level curriculum summaries which set out what should be taught in settings for each area of learning. They **must** involve activities and experiences that enable children to learn and develop, as set out under each of the seven areas of learning.

1.7/1.8 Childminders / *providers* should be ambitious for all children. To do this, they **must** consider the individual needs, interests, and development of each child in their care. They **must** use this information to plan a challenging and enjoyable experience for each child in all areas of learning and development. Childminders / *providers* working with the youngest children are expected to ensure a strong foundation for children's development in the three prime areas. The specific areas of learning provide children with a broad curriculum and with opportunities to strengthen and apply the prime areas of learning. This is particularly important in developing language and extending vocabulary.

[Statutory framework for the early years foundation stage for childminders \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/672222/statutory-framework-early-years-foundation-stage-2017.pdf)

[Statutory framework for the early years foundation stage for group and school providers \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/672222/statutory-framework-early-years-foundation-stage-2017.pdf)

Prime area: personal, social and emotional development:

EYFS statutory educational programme:

Children's personal, social and emotional development (PSED) is crucial for children to lead healthy and happy lives and is fundamental to their cognitive development. Underpinning their personal development are the important attachments that shape their social world. Strong, warm, and supportive relationships with adults enable children to learn how to understand their own feelings and those of others. Children should be supported to manage emotions, develop a positive sense of self, set themselves simple goals, have confidence in their own abilities, to persist and wait for what they want and direct attention as necessary. Through adult modelling and guidance, they will learn how to look after their bodies, including healthy eating, and manage personal needs independently. Through supported interaction with other children, they learn how to make good friendships, co-operate, and resolve conflicts peaceably. These attributes will provide a secure platform from which children can achieve at school and in later life.

Babies and toddlers will be learning to:	Examples of how to support this:
Find ways to calm themselves, through being calmed and comforted by their key person.	When settling a baby or toddler into nursery, the top priority is for the key person to develop a strong and loving relationship with the young child. Learn from the family about what they do to soothe their child and what to look out for – for example, a baby who scratches at their head when they are getting tired. Find out what calms a baby – rocking, cuddling or singing. Make sure babies and toddlers can get hold of their comfort object when they need it. Explain to parents that once babies establish 'object permanence' they become more aware of the presence or a absence of their parents. This makes separations much more distressing and difficult between 6-24 months. Development Matters - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

Prime area: personal, social and emotional development:

Babies and toddlers will be learning to:	Examples of how to support this:
Establish their sense of self. Express preferences and decisions. Engage with others through gestures, gaze and talk. Use that engagement to achieve a goal. E.g. gesture towards their cup to say they want a drink.	Babies develop a sense of self by interacting with others, and by exploring their bodies and objects around them, inside and outdoors. Respond and build on babies' expressions and gestures, playfully exploring the idea of self/other. Suggestion: point to your own nose/eyes/mouth, point to the baby's. Be positive and interested in what babies do as they develop their confidence in trying new things. Help toddlers and young children to make informed choices from a limited range of options. Suggestion: enable children to choose which song to sing from a set of four song cards, by pointing. Enable children to choose whether they want milk or water at snack time. Development Matters - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

Prime area: personal, social and emotional development:

Babies and toddlers will be learning to:	Examples of how to support this:
Find ways of managing transitions, for example from their parent to their key person.	Support children as they find their own different ways to manage feelings of sadness when their parents leave them. Some children may need to hold onto a special object from home to feel strong and confident in the setting. Some might need to snuggle in and be comforted by their key person. Some might get busy straight away in their favourite play or with another child they feel close to.
Thrive as they develop self-assurance.	Young children need to feel secure as they manage difficult emotions. Provide consistent and predictable routines, with flexibility when needed.
Look back as they crawl or walk away from their key person. Look for clues about how to respond to something interesting.	Provide consistent, warm, and responsive care. At first centre this on the key person. In time, children can develop positive relationships with other adults. When the key person is not available, make sure that someone familiar provides comfort and support, and carries out intimate care routines.
	Acknowledge babies' and toddlers' brief need for reassurance as they move away from their key person. Encourage babies and toddlers to explore, indoors and outdoors. Help them to become more independent by smiling and looking encouraging, for example when a baby keeps crawling towards a rattle.

[Development Matters - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/development-matters)

Prime area: personal, social and emotional development:

Babies and toddlers will be learning to:	Examples of how to support this:
Play with increasing confidence on their own and alongside other children, because they know their key person is nearby and available.	Arrange resources inside and outdoors to encourage babies' and toddler's growing independence and self-confidence. Suggestion: Treasure Basket play allows babies who can sit up to choose what to play with.
Feel confident when taken out around and enjoy exploring new places with their key person.	Store resources [age and stage appropriate] so that babies and toddlers can access them freely, without always needing help.
Feel strong enough to express a range of emotions.	Help children to feel emotionally safe with a key person and, gradually, with other members of staff.
Grow in independence, rejecting help ("me do it"). Sometimes this leads to feelings of frustration and tantrums.	Show warmth and affection, combined with clear and appropriate boundaries and routines. Encourage young children to express their feelings through words like 'sad', 'upset' or 'angry'. Help all children to feel they are valued, and they belong. Support children to find ways into the play and friendship groups of others. For example, encourage them to stand and watch from the side with you. Talk about what you see, and suggest ways for the child to join in.
	Development Matters - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

Prime area: communication and language:

EYFS statutory educational programme:

The development of children’s spoken language underpins all seven areas of learning and development. Children’s back-and-forth interactions from an early age form the foundations for language and cognitive development. The number and quality of the conversations they have with adults and peers throughout the day in a language-rich environment is crucial. By commenting on what children are interested in or doing, and echoing back what they say with new vocabulary added, practitioners will build children’s language effectively. Reading frequently to children, and engaging them actively in stories, non-fiction, rhymes, and poems, and then providing them with extensive opportunities to use and embed new words in a range of contexts, will give children the opportunity to thrive. Through conversation, storytelling and role play, where children share their ideas with support and modelling from their teacher, and sensitive questioning that invites them to elaborate, children become comfortable using a rich range of vocabulary and language structures.

Babies and toddlers will be learning to:	Examples of how to support this:
Turn towards familiar sounds. They are startled by loud noises and accurately locate the source of a familiar person’s voice, such as their key person or parent. Gaze at faces, copying facial expressions and movements like sticking out their tongue. Make eye contact for longer periods. Watch someone’s face as they talk.	Babies and toddlers thrive when you show a genuine interest in them, join in and respond warmly. Using exaggerated intonation and a sing-song voice (infant -directed speech) helps babies to tune in to language. Regularly using the babies and toddlers’ names helps them to pay attention to what the practitioner is saying for example: “Chloe, have some milk.” It is important to minimise background noise, so do not have music playing all the time. Development Matters - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

Prime area: communication and language:

Babies and toddlers will be learning to:	Examples of how to support this:
Copy what adults do, taking 'turns in' conversations (through babbling) and activities. Tries to copy adult speech and lip movements. Enjoy singing, music and toys that make sounds. Recognise and are calmed by a familiar and friendly voice. Listen and respond to a simple instruction. Make sounds to get attention in different ways (for example, crying when hungry or unhappy, making gurgling sounds, laughing, cooing or babbling). Babble, using sounds like 'baba', 'mamama'. Use gesture like waving and pointing to communicate. Reach or point to something they want while making sounds.	Babies love singing and music. Sing a range of songs and play a wide range of different types of music. Move with babies to music. Babies and toddlers love action rhymes and games like 'Peepo'. As they begin to join in with the words and the actions, they are developing their attention and listening. Allow babies time to anticipate words and actions in favourite songs. Take time and 'tune in' to the messages babies are giving you through their vocalisations, body language and gestures. When babies and toddlers are holding and playing with objects, say what they are doing for example, "You've got a ball," and "Shake the rattle." Where you can, give meaning to the baby's gestures and pointing for example: "Oh, I see, you want the teddy." Development Matters - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

Prime area: communication and language:

Babies and toddlers will be learning to:	Examples of how to support this:
Copy your gestures and words. Constantly babble and use single words during play. Use intonation, pitch and changing volume when 'talking'. Understand single words in context – 'cup', 'milk', 'daddy'. Understand frequently used words such as 'all gone', 'no' and 'byebye'. Understand single instructions like "give to nanny" or "stop". Recognise and point to objects if asked about them. Generally focus on an activity of their own choice and find it difficult to be directed by an adult.	Chat with babies and toddlers all the time but be careful not to overwhelm them with talk. Allow babies and toddlers to take the lead and then respond to their communications. Wait for the baby to speak or communicate with a sound or a look first – so that they are leading the conversation. When responding, expand on what has been said (for example, add a word). If a baby says "bottle", you could say "milk bottle." In a natural way, use the same word repeatedly in different contexts: "Look, a bottle of milk – oh you have finished your bottle." Adding a word while a toddler is playing gives them the model of an expanded phrase. It also keeps the conversation on their topic of interest. Suggestion: if they say "bag", you could say: "Yes, daddy's bag." You can help babies with their understanding by using gestures and context. Suggestion: point to the cup and say "cup". Talking about what you are doing helps babies learn language in context. Suggestion: "I'm pouring out your milk into the cup". Singing, action rhymes and sharing books give children rich opportunities to understand new words. Play with groups of objects [age / stage appropriate]. Make sure you name things whilst playing and talk about what you are doing. Help toddlers to focus their attention by using their name: "Fatima, put your coat on". Development Matters - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

Prime area: communication and language:

Babies and toddlers will be learning to:	Examples of how to support this:
Listen to other people's talk with interest but can easily be distracted by other things. Make themselves understood and can become frustrated when they cannot. Start to say how they are feeling, using words as well as actions. Start to develop conversation, often jumping from topic to topic. Developing pretend play: 'putting the baby to sleep' or 'driving the car to the shops'. Use the speech sounds p,b,m,w Listen to simple stories and understand what is happening, with the help of the pictures.	You can help toddlers listen and pay attention by using gestures like pointing and facial expressions. You can help toddlers who are having tantrums by being calm and reassuring. Help toddlers to express what's angering them by suggesting words to describe their emotions, like 'sad' or 'angry'. You can help further by explaining in simple terms why you think they may be feeling that emotion. Make time to connect with babies, toddlers and young children. Tune in and listen to them and join in with their play, indoors and outdoors. Allow plenty of time to have conversations together, rather than busily rushing from one activity to the next. When you know a young child well, it is easier to understand them and talk about family life. Toddlers will pronounce some words incorrectly. Reply to what they say and use the words they have mispronounced. Using four comments to every question is a useful guide. Share picture books every day with children. Books with just pictures and no words can especially encourage conversations. Development Matters - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

Prime area: physical development:

EYFS statutory educational programme:

Physical activity is vital in children's all-round development, enabling them to pursue happy, healthy, and active lives. Gross and fine motor experiences develop incrementally throughout early childhood, starting with sensory explorations and the development of a child's strength, co-ordination, and positional awareness through tummy time**, crawling and play movement with both objects and adults. By creating games and providing opportunities for play both indoors and outdoors, adults can support children to develop their core strength, stability, balance, spatial awareness, co-ordination, and agility. Gross motor skills provide the foundation for developing healthy bodies and social and emotional well-being. Fine motor control and precision helps with hand-eye co-ordination, which is later linked to early literacy. Repeated and varied opportunities to explore and play with small world activities, puzzles, arts and crafts and the practice of using small tools, with feedback and support from adults, allow children to develop proficiency, control and confidence.

[Development Matters - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/development-matters)

Babies and toddlers will be learning to:	Examples of how to support this:
Lift their head while lying on their front. Push their chest up with straight arms. Roll over: from front to back, then back to front. Enjoy moving when outdoors and inside. Sit without support. Begin to crawl in different ways and directions. Pull themselves upright and bouncing in preparation for walking.	Some babies need constant physical contact, attention, and physical intimacy. Respond warmly and patiently to them. Provide adequate, clean floor space for babies to experience tummy time and back time. Offer this frequently throughout the day so that they can develop their gross motor skills (kicking, waving, rolling, and reaching). Encourage babies to sit on you, climb over you, and rock, bounce or sway with you. Notice, cherish and applaud the physical achievements of babies and toddlers. Give babies time to move freely during care routines, like nappy changing. Encourage independence. Suggestion: offer a range of opportunities for children to move by themselves, making their own decisions about direction and speed. Development Matters - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

Prime area: physical development:

Babies and toddlers will be learning to:	Examples of how to support this:
Reach out for objects as co-ordination develops. Pass things from one hand to the other. Let go of things and hand them to another person or drop them. Gradually gain control of their whole body through continual practice of large movements, such as waving, kicking, rolling, crawling, and walking. Clap and stamp to music. Fit themselves into spaces, like tunnels, dens, and large boxes. Builds tower of 3 cubes (by 18 months).*** Walks up and downstairs with help (by 18 months).*** ***Sheridan. M., Sharma, A. and Cockerill, H. (2014) From birth to five years – children’s developmental progress (4th edition)	Use every day, open-ended materials to support overall coordination. Suggestions: sponges and cloths to hold, squash and throw, or wet and squeeze. Provide a range of surfaces and materials for babies to explore, stimulating touch and all the senses. Provide a wide range of opportunities for children to move throughout the day: indoors and outside, alone or with others, with and without apparatus. Include risky play, as appropriate. Join in with children’s movement play when invited and if it is appropriate, to show different ways of moving and engaging with the resources. Offer outdoor play every day for at least 45 minutes. Include lots of opportunities for children to move freely and explore their surroundings like a slope, a large hole, puddles or a sandpit. Provide materials and equipment that support physical development – both large and small motor skills. Encourage children to use materials flexibly and combine them in different ways. Check that children’s clothing and footwear are not too tight or too large. Development Matters - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

Prime area: physical development:

Babies and toddlers will be learning to:	Examples of how to support this:
Use large and small motor skills to do things independently. Show an increasing desire to be independent, such as wanting to feed themselves and dress or undress. <i>Assists with dressing and undressing, taking off shoes, socks and hat, but seldom able to replace (18 months).***</i> Start eating independently. <i>Holds spoon and gets food safely to mouth, although may play with food (18 months).***</i> Develop manipulation and control. Explore different materials and tools. <i>***Sheridan. M., Sharma, A. and Cockerill, H. (2014) From birth to five years – children's developmental progress (4th edition)</i>	Provide babies and toddlers with lots of opportunities to feed themselves. Be patient, do not rush and take time to talk about what they are doing and why. At meal and snack times, encourage babies and toddlers to try a range of foods as they become more independent eaters. Encourage young children's personal decision-making by offering real choices – water or milk, for example. Provide different types of paper for children to tear, make marks on and print on. Provide lots of different things for young children to grasp, hold and explore, like clay, finger paint, spoons, brushes, shells. Note: Look out for children who find it difficult to sit comfortably on chairs. They may need help to develop their core muscles. You can help them by encouraging them to scoot on sit-down trikes without pedals and jump on soft-play equipment. Development Matters - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

Observational checkpoints within Development Matters:

6 months observational checkpoints:

CL	Does the baby respond to familiar voices, turn to their own name and 'take turns' in conversations with babbling? Is the baby using speech sounds (babbling) to communicate with adults?
PSED	Does the baby respond to their name and respond to the emotions in your voice?
PD	Does the baby move with ease and enjoyment?

12 months observational checkpoints:

CL	Does the baby 'take turns' by babbling and using single words? Does the baby point to things and use gestures to show things to adults and share interests? Is the baby beginning to use single words mummum, dada, tete (teddy)? Can the baby choose between two objects: "do you want the ball or the car"?
PSED	Does the baby start to be shy around strangers and show preferences for certain people and toys?
PD	Can the baby pull to stand from a sitting position and sit down? Can the baby pick up something small with their first finger and thumb (such as a piece of string)?

18 months observational checkpoints:

CL	Is the toddler listening and responding to a simple instruction like: "put on your shoes"? Is the toddler using a range of adult like speech patterns (jargon; gibberish) and at least 20 clear words? Does the toddler understand lots of different single words and some two-word phrases, such as "give me" or "shoes on"? Can the toddler say around 10 words? (They may not all be clear.)
PSED	Is the toddler increasingly curious about their world and wanting to explore it and be noticed by you? Development Matters - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

EYFS Documentation and Links | Shropshire Learning Gateway

Early Speech and Language Development Chart					Name	Date of birth
Stage and age	Attention and listening	Understanding of language	Speech Sounds And Talk	Social skills and use of language		
0-11 months The Early Communicator	- Turns towards a familiar sound - Started by loud sounds - Watches face when someone talks	- Recognises parent's voice - Understands frequently used words such as "all gone", "no", "bye-bye" - Stops and looks when hears own name	- Communicates in a variety of ways - gurgling, crying, babbling - Plays with speech sounds (bababa) > 10	- Reaches out and points - Makes vocal sounds to get attention - Tries to copy adult speech and lip movement - Takes turns in conversations using babble - Senses different emotions in carers voice and responds differently (quietening, laughing, smiling etc) > 12		
8-20 months First Word User	- Locates source of voice with accuracy - Pays attention to dominant stimulus - Enjoys music and singing - Concentrates intently on an object or activity of own choosing, for increasing periods of time. > 20	- Gives named objects to adult (book, apple, car) - Understands simple instructions ("kiss Mummy", "where's your nose", "stop") - Recognises and points to objects, or pictures in books if asked > 18	- Babbling in strings of connected but different sounds ba-ba-no-go-go - Reaches out or points to objects while making speech sounds - Uses around 10 single words although they may not be clear > 20	- Uses gestures such as waving and pointing with eye gaze to make requests and share interests - Plays alone but likes to be near familiar adult - Responds to words and interactive rhymes such as "clap hands" - Uses simple pretend play e.g. feeding teddy > 20		
16-27 months Combiner	- Responds to an adult talking and briefly shifts attention from something they are doing to the speaker - Recognises and responds appropriately to many familiar sounds e.g. a knock on the door	- Understands 200-500 single words - Understands simple instructions, containing 2 key words without clues > 24	- Uses up to 50 words - Begins to combine two or three simple words > 36 - Begins to ask simple questions ("where's my drink?") - Can be understood by familiar adult > 36	- Pretend play developing with toys (feeding a doll or talking on telephone) - Follow adult body language including pointing, gesture and facial expression		
22-36 months Early sentence user	- Listens with interest to the noises adults make when they read stories - Single channelled attention, can shift to a different task if attention is first gained by adult > 36	- Understands who, what, where questions (but not why) - Identifies action words by pointing to the right picture e.g. "who's jumping" - Demonstrates understanding of the language linked to early concepts including 'in/on/under', 'big/little' > 36	- Uses a wide range of words including descriptive language, time, space and function/action - Links 4-5 words together - Able to use pronouns (me, him, she) - Able to use prepositions (in on under) - Starting to use word endings ('ing', 's') - Can be mostly understood by strangers > 48	- Can take several turns in a conversation but jumps from topic to topic - Expresses emotion to adults and peers using words not just actions - Has some favourite stories, songs and rhymes - Uses language to share ideas and experiences - Interested in others play and will join in > 36		
30-50 months Later sentence user	- Enjoys listening to stories - Can shift attention between listening to others and doing own activity without adult prompt. Anticipates and joins in with familiar actions and phrases in rhymes and stories	- Understands use of objects ("what do we use to cut things?") - Shows understanding of prepositions (behind, in front) - Aware of time in terms of today, yesterday, tomorrow	- Uses talk to connect ideas and explain what is happening - Asks lots of 'why' questions - Can retell a simple past event in correct order - Using more complex sentences > 48	- Understands turn-taking as well as sharing with adults and peers - Initiates conversations - Enjoys playing with peers - Able to argue with adults or peers if they disagree – uses words not just actions		
40 -60 months Skilled Communicator	- Sustains attentive listening, responding to what they have heard with comments, questions or actions - Maintains attention, concentrates and sits quietly when appropriate - Two channelled attention- can listen and do at the same time	- Able to follow a simple story without pictures - Understands questions containing sequencing words (what did you do after tea?) > 60 - Understands and enjoys rhyme - Laughs at simple jokes - Understands adjectives (soft, hard etc) - Demonstrates understanding of how and why questions by giving explanations > 72	- Easily understood by adults and peers - Mostly uses well formed sentences - Uses complex linking words appropriately, ('and', 'then', 'because')	- Chooses own friends - Generally co operative with playmates - Able to plan construction and make believe play activities - Takes longer turns in conversations - Maintains theme/topic of conversation - Uses language to organise sequence and clarify thinking - Introduces a storyline to their play		

Confidence:

Whole group ☺ ☹ ☹ ☹ Small group ☺ ☹ ☹ Key person/familiar group ☺ ☹ ☹ One to one ☺ ☹ ☹ One to one (unfamiliar) ☺ ☹ ☹ At home ☺ ☹ ☹

Mike Ridley –Chairman
Jo Chambers – Chief Executive

Shropshire Community
Health NHS Trust
Children's and Specialist Services
SLT Pre-school referral Form/SLT/Masters/referral forms/Review January 2011

Specific safeguarding and welfare requirements for under 2's:

References to paragraphs within the EYFS statutory framework for childminders:

	Childminders	Group and school providers
Baby room	N/A	3.85
Food and drink	3.62	3.62
Food and drink facilities	3.71	3.71
Key person	3.46	3.41
Paediatric first aid	3.42 – 3.44	3.36 -3.39
Safer eating	3.63 – 3.70	3.63 – 3.70
Staff:child ratios	3.47 – 3.57	3.42 – 3.56
Sleeping arrangements	3.85	3.84
Toilets and intimate hygiene	3.86	3.86

[Early years foundation stage statutory framework for childminders](#)

References to paragraphs within the EYFS statutory framework for and group and school-based providers:

[EYFS statutory framework for group and school-based providers](#)

Sections 3 – The Safeguarding and Welfare Requirements (2025)		
	Introduction (The changes to the September 2025 document are in blue)	Checked
3.1	Children learn best when they are healthy, safe, secure, when their individual needs are met, and when they have positive relationships with the people caring for them.	
3.2	This section of the framework sets out the safeguarding and welfare requirements providers must meet. They are designed to help providers create a high quality, welcoming, and safe setting where children can enjoy learning and grow in confidence.	
3.3	Providers must take all necessary steps to keep children safe and well. The requirements in this section explain what providers must do to: safeguard children; ensure the adults who have contact with children are suitable; promote good health; support and understand behaviour; maintain records, policies and procedures.	
	Safeguarding policies and procedures	Checked
3.4	In every setting, a practitioner must be designated to take lead responsibility for safeguarding children. The Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) is responsible for liaison with local statutory children's services agencies, and with the LSP (Local Safeguarding Partners). All practitioners must be alert to any issues of concern in the child's life at home or elsewhere.	
3.5	Providers must have and implement policies and procedures to keep children safe and meet EYFS requirements. Schools are not required to have separate policies to cover EYFS requirements provided the requirements are already met through an existing policy. Where providers are required to have policies and procedures as specified below, these policies and procedures should be recorded in writing. Policies and procedures should be in line with the guidance and procedures of the relevant LSP.	
3.6	Safeguarding policies must include: • The action to be taken when there are safeguarding concerns about a child. • The action to be taken in the event of an allegation being made against a member of staff.	

An audit of the **musts** in the EYFS statutory framework (2025) can be found at:

[EYFS Documentation | Shropshire Learning Gateway](#)

References and further reading:

[Baby and toddler safety - NHS \(www.nhs.uk\)](https://www.nhs.uk) Bottle feeding advice - NHS (www.nhs.uk)

[BBC Tiny Happy People](https://www.bbc.com/health/child-development) Help to develop children's language skills, with simple activities and play ideas to help babies and young children learn.

[Best Books for babies 0-12 months | BookTrust](#); [Best Books for 1-year-olds | BookTrust](#); [Best Books for 2-year-olds | BookTrust](#) Suggested books for children aged 0-2 years of age.

[Bottle feeding advice - NHS](#)

[Froebel Trust | Elinor Goldschmied & treasure baskets](#) Learn how treasure baskets can be used.

[Giving every child the best start in life - GOV.UK](#) Government strategy for improving child development.

<https://www.communityplaythings.co.uk/learning-library/training-resources/what-happens-in-the-baby-room> Information about the enabling environment for the under 2's.

[Movement Provision guidance Nurture and Thrive.pdf \(walthamforest.gov.uk\)](#) Suggested experiences and resources that supports a baby's movement development in the baby room.

[Potty training: how to start & best age to potty train - ERIC](#) Learning how to use the potty independently and stop

[Safer sleep information | The Lullaby Trust](#) Safer sleep reduces the risk of sudden infant death syndrome occurring.

[Physical activity guidelines: early years \(under 5s\) - GOV.UK](#) The physical activity needed for general health benefits for children under 5 years of age.

[What-to-expect-in-the-EYFS-complete-FINAL-16.09-compressed.pdf \(foundationyears.org.uk\)](#) A guide for parent carers on helping their child learn and develop to be healthy and safe