

A Celebratory Approach to SEND Assessment in the Early Years



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Funded by
 Department
for Education

A Celebratory Approach
to SEND Assessment
in the Early Years



Context:

- This project was born out of previous work that had been undertaken with Early Years providers and was funded by the DfE and led by Pen Green.
- Early Years specialists with a passion for working with children with SEND and their families from three Local Authorities were engaged in the project – Stockport, Haringey and Northamptonshire.
- Each of the Early Years settings engaged partners to participate in a multi-disciplinary working party to consider assessment frameworks and develop an on-line toolkit which would celebrate the development and learning of children with SEND.

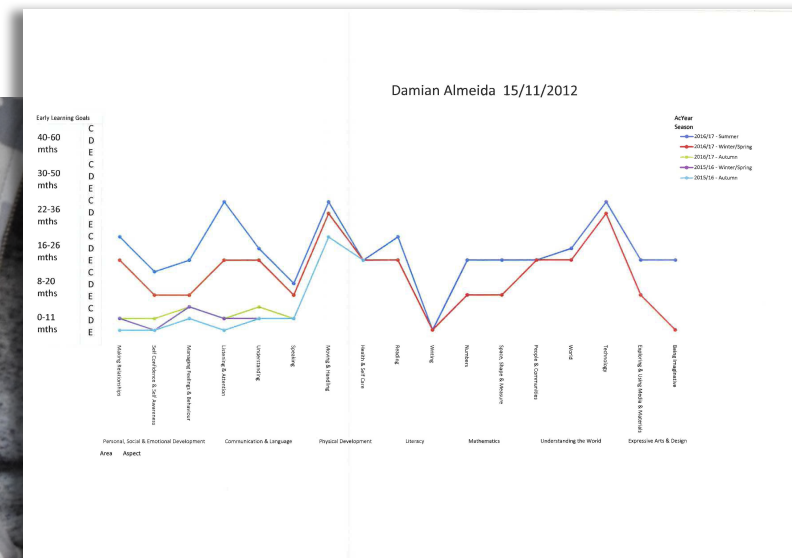
Who was involved:

- Educational Psychologists from two Local Authorities
- Deputy Head Teacher
- Assistant Head Teacher
- SENDCos from all three Local Authorities
- Head of Nursery
- Lecturer and Researcher
- Director of Research
- Director of an Integrated Centre
- Regional Managers from the National Portage Association
- Early Years Lead for Inclusion

Why did we feel this was needed?

- As Early Years specialists we were well aware of the challenges that children with SEND and their families face when trying to navigate through the health, education and care system where professionals will make significant decisions about children with SEND
- We wanted to make sure that children with SEND had an equality of opportunity in the Early Years
- We wanted an assessment process that is fair, appropriate and responsive to the needs of all children, especially children with SEND
- Early Years practitioners must have high expectations and aspirations for all children
- Parental engagement has a powerful and lasting influence on children's outcomes
- We were aware that staff in many Early Years settings have limited access to training and experience of working with children with SEND
- **We have a duty to offer inclusive practice for all children**

- Children with SEND in the Early Years often do not meet developmental milestones. These developmental milestones are norm-referenced. Therefore children with SEND are not celebrated but more often become a deficit through no fault of their own! We have an education system that measures attainment against developmental norms, not through a recognition of children's start points, strengths and their progress and achievement made over time
- The Early Years Foundation Stage has broad age bands in which we can 'best fit' children, unfortunately the Development Matters statements become a tick list in which we as Early Years practitioners judge children, trying to make them fit a box!
- The Rochford Review 'recognises that age-related expectations are not appropriate for a significant proportion of pupils: and that the way we measure their progress accounts for potential differences in the way these pupils learn' (p.5).



SEND Code of Practice

- The code explains that local authorities (LAs) **must** ensure that children, their parents, and young people are involved in discussions and decisions about their individual support and about local provision
- **Early years providers**, schools and colleges should also "take steps to ensure that young people and parents are actively supported" in contributing to needs assessments, developing and reviewing education health and care (EHC) plans
- The assessment and planning process should enable parents, children and young people to express their views, wishes and feelings, and to be part of the decision-making process.

The Early Years Foundation Stage seeks to provide:



- **Quality and consistency** in all early years settings, so *that every child makes good progress and **no child gets left behind***
- **A secure foundation** through learning and development opportunities which are ***planned around the needs and interests of each individual child and are assessed and reviewed regularly***
- **Partnership working** ***between practitioners and with parents and/or carers***
- **Equality of opportunity** and anti-discriminatory practice, ***ensuring that every child is included and supported.***

Early Years Foundation Stage overarching principles

- Unique child
 - Positive Relationships
 - Enabling Environment
 - Children develop and learn in different ways and at different rates.
-
- The EYFS framework covers the education and care of all children in early years provision, including children with special educational needs and disabilities.
However children develop at their own rates, and in their own ways. The above statements can help us to think more broadly about the development and learning for children and staff.



Engaging Parents/Carers in the process

- Parental engagement is key and does make a difference to children's overall outcomes
- Parents know their children best and always want more for their children than they had themselves. We as Early Years professionals can learn a lot from parents, we have to be willing to listen.
- Reciprocal, open and honest dialogue is critical and isn't always easy.



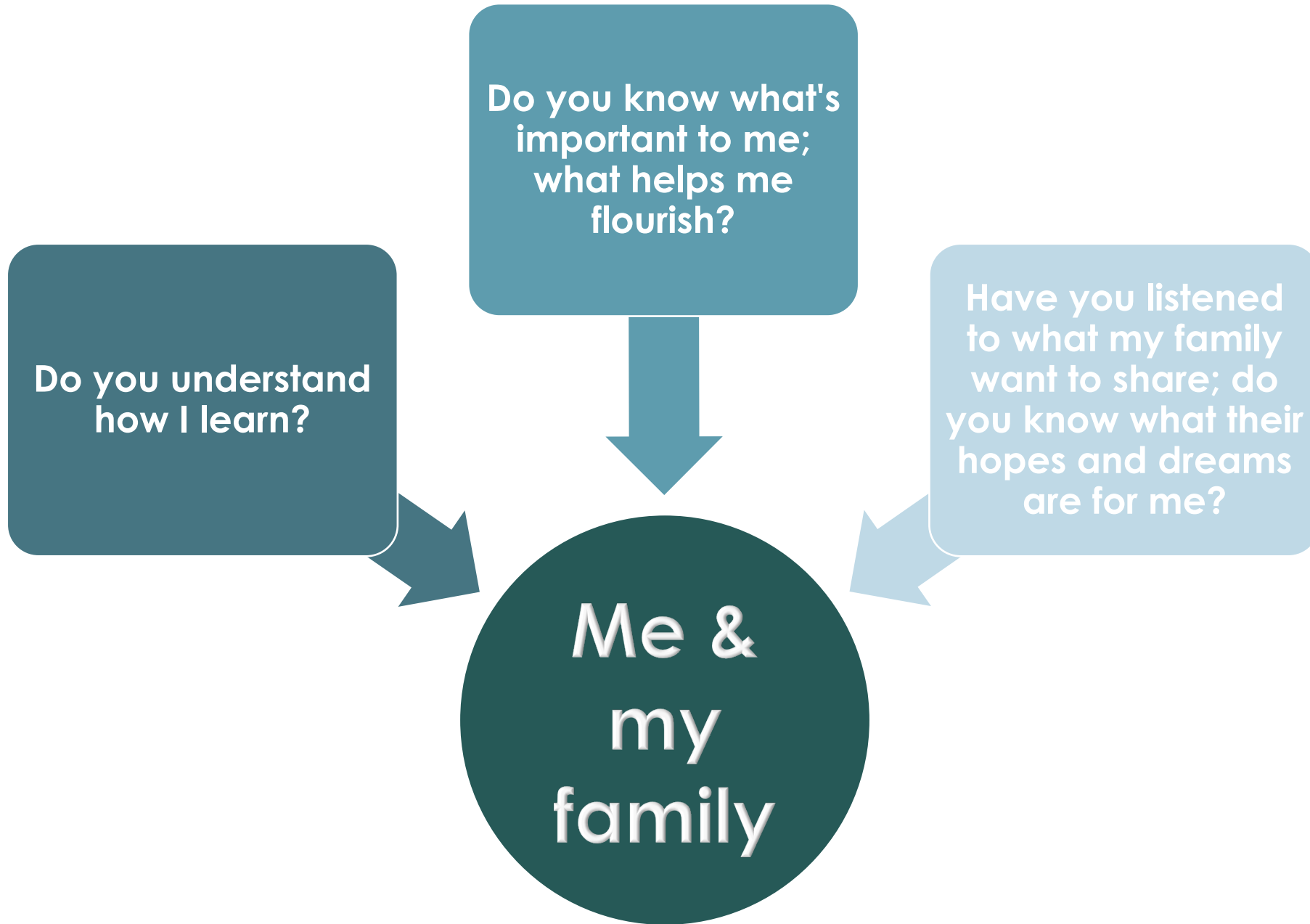
Guiding Principles

Through discussion the Working Party generated a set of principles that informed their recommendations and suggestions:

1. That any assessment must honour both the child and their family
2. That every child's progress should be demonstrated and celebrated and that, where possible, the assessment process adopted should be applicable to all children
3. The voice of the child must be represented clearly and must inform and remain central to any assessment
4. The voice of the family must be represented clearly and where appropriate the voice of peers and siblings should also be heard
5. That the assessment is done in collaboration with, rather than to, the family and that it reflects their views and comments
6. That the assessment is accessible and can be understood by the family
7. That the assessment celebrates achievement rather than identifies 'underachievement' and that its language and style of presentation stays true to this principle
8. That the assessment process offers a powerful means of identifying how the child can be best supported in their development and learning. This may be done through the consideration of next steps or 'Possible Lines Of Direction' for an individual child
9. That the assessment provides insight and information that can be understood and used by others including external agencies and schools to which children may transfer
10. That as the Rochford Review states "Equality is not always about inclusion. Sometimes equality is about altering the approach according to the needs of the child" (p.11).



Guiding Principles



Celebrating...

- **What I can do** not what I can't
- Identifying how I can be supported to learn and develop
- Accessible to all
- Child-centred rather than curriculum focussed

Our purpose

‘High standards and high expectations for all pupils, so that every child achieves his or her potential regardless of background or starting point’

Rochford Review p8

So we shift from a norm referenced approach that only recognises delay towards one which is determined by clear concepts of what is appropriate progress for individual children.

The Rochford Review: final report

Review of assessment for pupils
working below the standard of
national curriculum tests



Chaired by Diane Rochford
October 2016

Recommendation 1- Key Practitioner's Skills

Staff training is imperative if we are to understand and develop the range of skills needed to work with young children with SEND and their families.

SEND assessments in Early Years requires practitioners to have some key skills

- Observing children to gather factually accurate information
- Asking the right questions
- Engaging in difficult conversations with parents
- Writing a 'celebratory' one page profile.

Recommendation 4



Recommendation 4

One Page Profile

This co-constructed document places the child at the centre and offers a unique image of them. The voices of the child and parent should be clear and apparent. The richest profiles are written in a positive and celebratory style, free from professional jargon. The One Page Profile will evolve overtime as the child changes and develops. In this way, each updated One Page Profile offers another tool for celebrating the child's development and progress. At times of transition the One Page Profile plays a vital role in ensuring important information is shared.

In the Early Years, the One Page Profile can often involve the adult transposing their thoughts and knowledge of the child. For the parents and carers this is intimate knowledge and must be apparent.



Practitioners must be able to

- introduce the child in a written form that encompasses the views, wishes and feelings of the child and their family
- gather the key information that captures the uniqueness of the child, including what motivates, interests and engages them in their daily life
- show that the child and the family participate as fully as possible in the process
- produce a One Page Profile that can be used in transition and in addition to formal assessment.

One Page Profile



What is important to me
What I can do....
What I enjoy?
What makes me special?
How you can support me?

Recommendation 4

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Recommendation 7



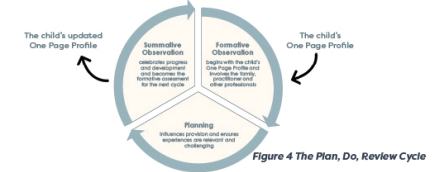
Recommendation 7

Demonstrating Progress

A child's progress will be demonstrated when practitioners engage in the cycle outlined below. The child's 'One Page Profile' and the summative observations made at the end of each cycle can be supported by video, photographs and written observations as evidence. This documentation will celebrate the child's development, engagement and learning style and where appropriate will in general sit alongside the child's tracking of progress through the EYFS.

However, the Working Party was aware that for particular groups of children it will not be possible to demonstrate progress through the age bands of the EYFS. In this case, the Working Party anticipates that external agencies will accept and celebrate along with Early Years practitioners the progress demonstrated using the Plan, Do, Review cycle, see Figure 4 below.

The non-statutory guidance offered in the Development Matters in the EYFS states that: *'Children develop at their own rates, and in their own ways. The development statements and their order should not be taken as necessary steps for individual children. They should not be used as checklists. The age/stage bands overlap because these are not fixed age boundaries but suggest a typical range of development'* (p.6 Non-Statutory Guidance Development Matters in the EYFS Early Education 2006).



For particular groups of children it will not be possible to demonstrate progress through the age bands of the EYFS. The Working Party recommend that external agencies will accept and celebrate children's progress demonstrated using a cycle that begins with a formative observation to create the One Page Profile. This then informs planning and leads to a summative observation which celebrates progress and development over a period of time. This updated One Page Profile becomes the formative observation for the next cycle.

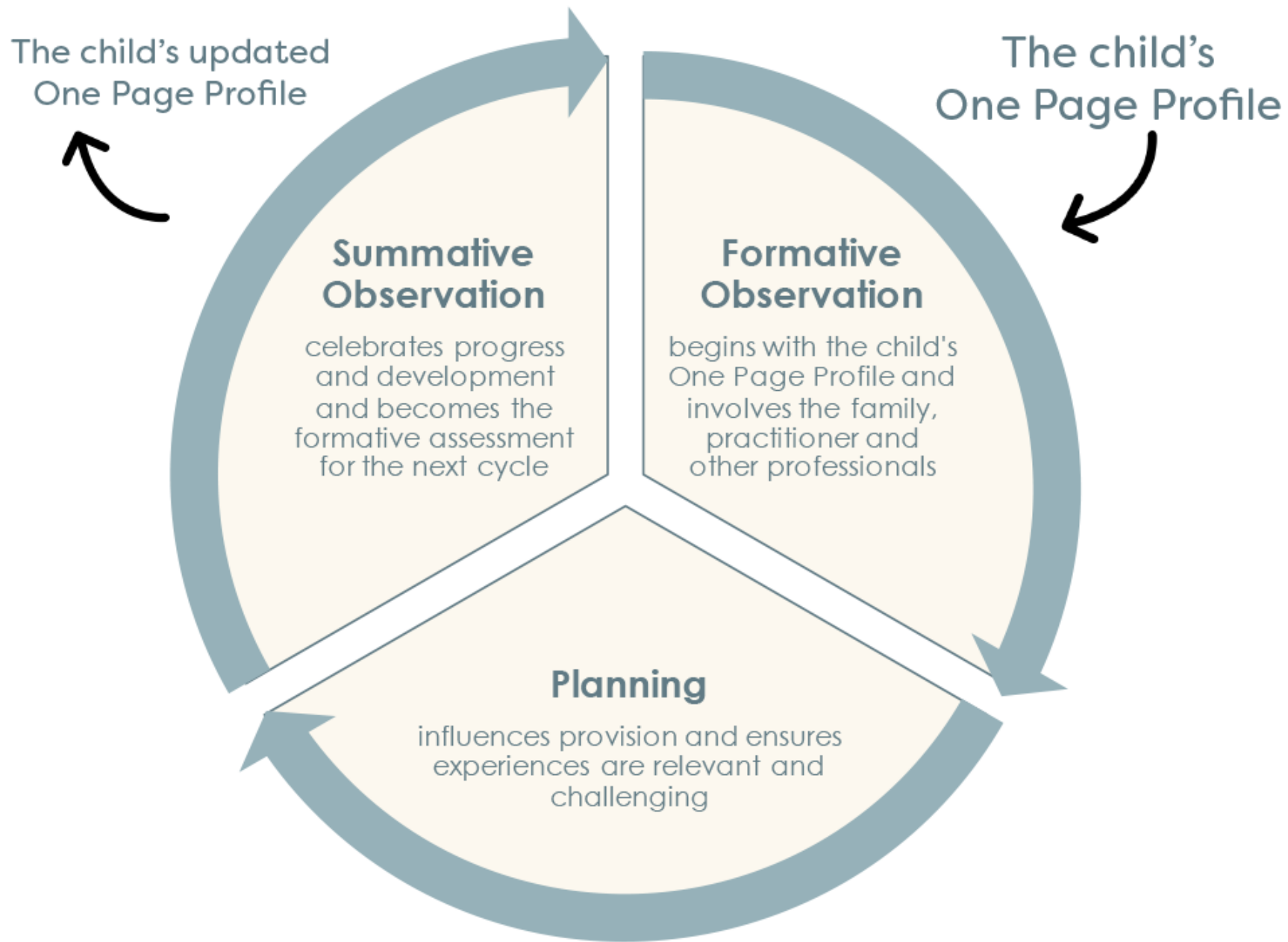
Demonstrating Progress



‘Children develop at their own rates and in their own ways’

p6 Non Statutory Guidance Development Matters in the EYFS Early Education 2006

“Isn’t it funny how day by day nothing changes, but when you look back, everything is different...” — C. S. Lewis



Review Cycle

“The task of the modern educator is not to cut down jungles, but to irrigate deserts.” – C. S. Lewis

A Celebratory Approach to SEND Assessment in the Early Years

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An online Toolkit to support early years practitioners to engage in a celebratory assessment process of all children with SEND in the Early Years.

The materials combine current initiatives, studies, documentation and assessment tools as well as statutory guidance and legislation to enable practitioners to support all children in their learning and development.

