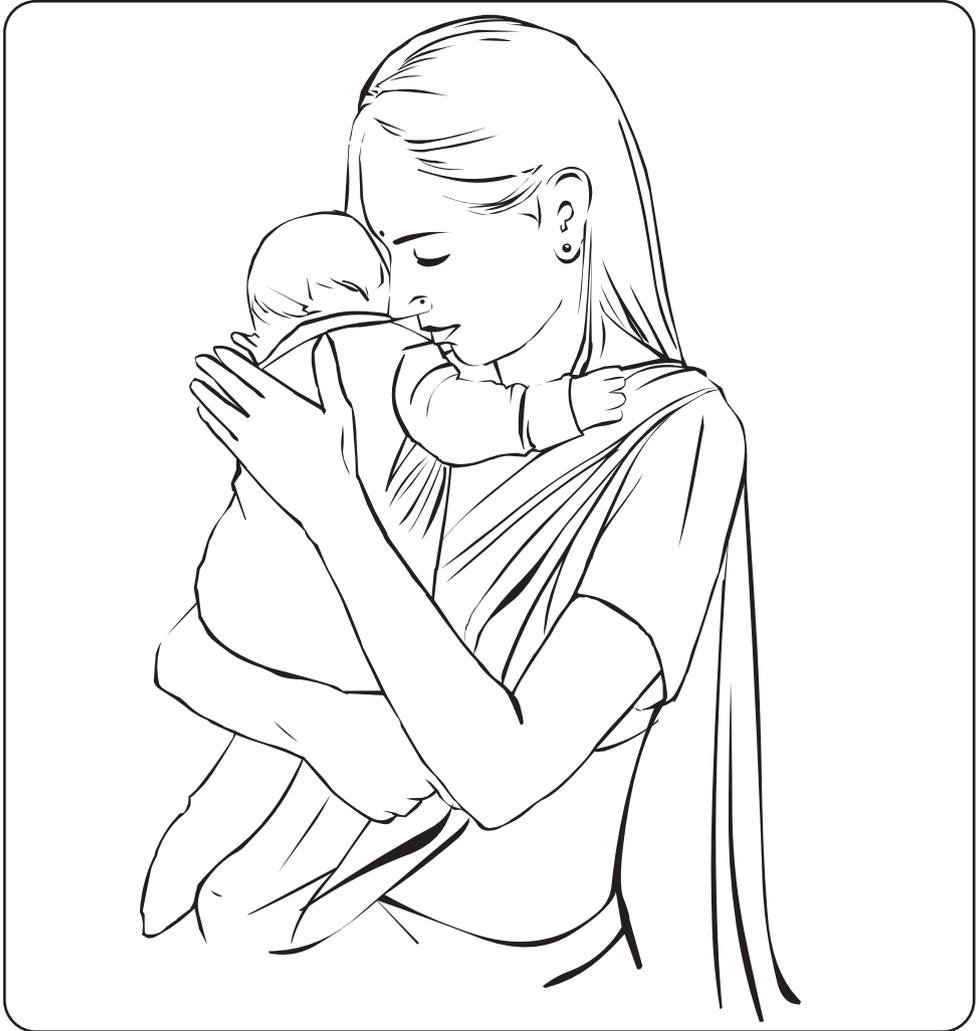


Observation

Booklet 4a

Interpreting your observations
(evaluation) – milestones and norms



This is Booklet 4a in a series of seven booklets.

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Introduction – Booklet 4a

In this booklet you will find:

- sections to read;
- activities to complete.

As you work through the booklet, you should discuss with your teacher or trainer:

- your thoughts about the activities;
- new words and terms for your glossary;
- your self-assessment in the **How did I do?** section.

By completing this booklet you will learn:

- how to interpret the information from your observation;
- how to compare development with milestones and norms;
- the dangers of checking against milestones and norms.

Making sense of your observations

Using the first three booklets you will have collected much useful information from your observations. The activities you have completed so far should help you understand what an individual child or groups of children actually know, understand or can do.

You are now ready to use this information to complete the planning cycle. You can plan and implement activities, routines and experiences to support the further development of the child or children.

Four steps in using the information obtained from your observations

Step 1. Interpretation (evaluation) or identifying the child's significant learning and achievements.

Step 2. Assessment (comparison with the norm).

This involves:

- comparison with the milestones and norms (this will be covered in this booklet);
- comparison using theories and expert opinion (this will be covered in Booklet 4b).

Steps 3 (Conclusions and personal learning) and 4 (Making recommendations) will be covered in Booklet 5.

Step 1. Interpretation (evaluation)

Significant points

Look at the notes from your observation and highlight the significant learning and achievements of the child you observed. The task will be made easier if you remember the aim and objectives of the observation.

Here are some examples of what might be considered significant learning for a child:

- Meera and David share tasks and materials to make their car.
- Tariq and Henry discuss and make decisions about which pieces they are going to use and where to put them.
- Sulaman, when asked if his bottle is full, holds the bottle under the tap until it is full and then shows it to the EYP.

Benefits

You should explain how the points that you have highlighted contributed to or benefited a particular aspect of development.

Other benefits

You may also identify the way in which the activity you observed contributed to other aspects of development (you could call this a secondary benefit).

In the following extract the aim of the observation was social development and most of the evidence collected identified significant development of social skills. After interpreting the information, it was clear that there was also some evidence of the development of mathematical skills and knowledge and understanding of the world.

While they play with the construction set, Meera and David share tasks and materials to make their car. They each choose pieces, give their own ideas and help each other when fixing nuts and bolts. *They also share the equipment with each other.*

The italics identify social development. The underlined text identifies social development and behaviour that would contribute to mathematical development, and knowledge and understanding of the world.

Activity 1

Read the following extract and highlight what you consider to be the child's significant learning and achievements. Then explain how you think this contributed to, or benefited, the child's emotional development.

Leaving carer observation

Aim: To observe a child entering the nursery, first thing in the morning, and to record any signs of emotional development.

Environment: playroom of a nursery – children are playing by themselves (without adult interaction).

Age of child: 2 years 1 month.

Shauna enters the nursery clinging tightly to her carer and clutching her cloth. Shauna puts her cloth in her mouth and starts sucking it as her carer hangs up her bag. Her carer then carries Shauna into the playroom. Shauna is placed on the floor and her carer and the early years practitioner (EYP) kneel down beside her. Shauna begins to cry. The EYP chats happily to her as she puts her arm around her. Shauna's carer kisses her goodbye and takes her coat out of the room. Shauna cries loudly and holds her arms out to the door. The EYP, still chatting to her, picks her up and sits down with her next to some cars and a garage. Shauna watches the EYP push the cars down the ramp. She stops crying, but still sucks her cloth. She edges off the EYP's lap and picks up a car. She lets the car go down the ramp and smiles at the EYP. She still holds the cloth, but has stopped sucking it.

Significant learning and achievement are highlighted in:

How did this contribute to, or benefit, emotional development?

Step 2. Assessment (comparison with milestones and norms)

Comparison with the milestones and norms

You now need to assess whether or not the child you have observed is developing in a way that might be expected for a child of the same age. This is sometimes known as 'comparison with the milestones and norms'.

The word 'norm' is best understood as 'expected behaviour'. In terms of child development, it means 'what might be expected of a child at a particular age' but not 'what we should expect of a child at a particular age'.

There are limitations to checking an individual child's development against the milestones. The dangers of making comparisons with the milestone are that they may encourage early years practitioners to think that:

- a child's development is poor if it falls behind the norm or milestone and, in doing so, overlook the fact that the child's progress may be more advanced in other areas of development;
- a child has a disability if she or he is slow to develop in some way.

Birth to Three Matters and the *Foundation Stage Profile Handbook*, published by Sure Start and the National Curriculum are a selection of Government publications that establish development norms for children.

You can compare the significant learning or achievements of the child you have observed with the 'milestones' that these publications establish.

You need to consider:

- the child’s present abilities and behaviour which you have actually observed

against
- what is expected, or the norm, for a child of the same age.

You should also consider significant background information:

- Were there significant events in the child’s life such as a new baby at home, that might affect learning development?
- Was the child unwell or recovering from an illness, both of which might have affected learning development?
- Are there differences in culture that you need to take into account?

Activity 2

Glossary (words and terms to remember)

Continue building your own glossary of terms that are new to you, or that you have come to understand in a new way.

Milestones _____

Norm _____

Interpret (evaluate) _____

Secondary benefit _____

Activity 3

Learner evaluation

How did I do?

Well done! You have now completed Booklet 4a.

Now spend a few minutes thinking about how you did and answer the questions below. Try to give examples when you make a comment. Then discuss your responses with your teacher or trainer.

What have I learnt so far?

What areas do I need to concentrate on?

What help do I need? Where will I get this help?

When will I take action on this?

What skills do I need to practise and develop in the workplace?