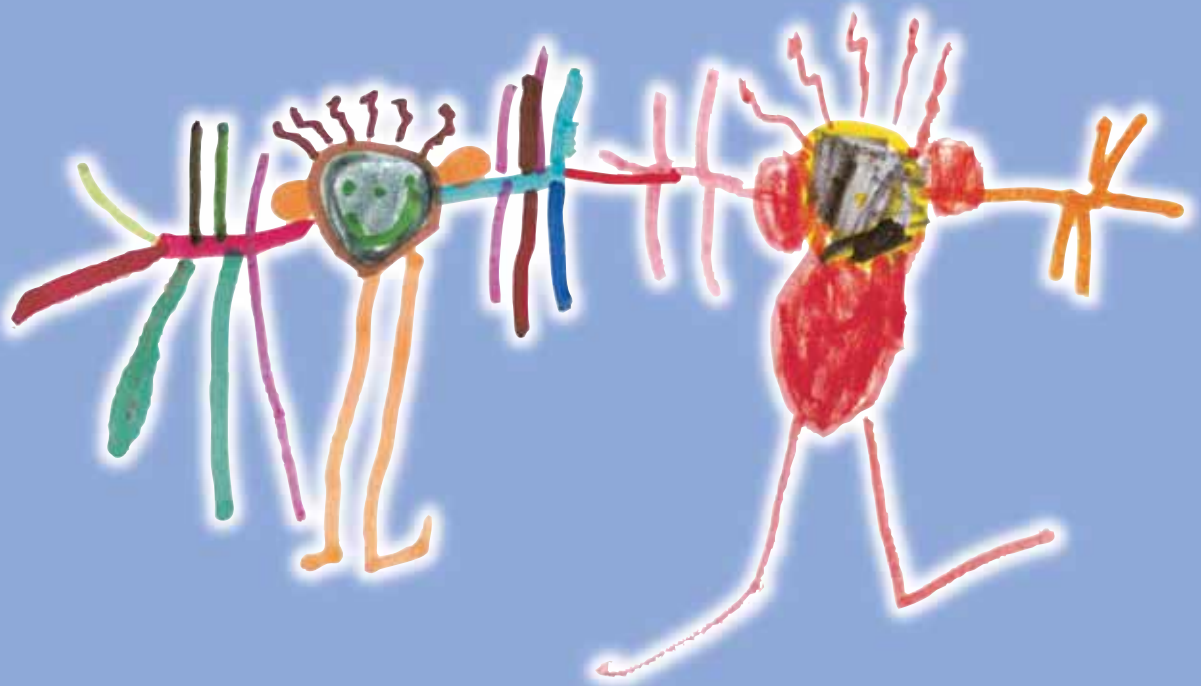


Early Years Outreach Practice



**Supporting early years practitioners working
with Gypsy, Roma and Traveller families**

With transferable ideas for other outreach early years workers



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Save the Children
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London EC1M 4AR
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www.savethechildren.org.uk

First published 2007

© Save the Children Fund 2007

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Acknowledgements

Special thanks to the families who have supported this document and who gave permission to use their photographs in this document.

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Norfolk, Catton Grove, Fiddlewood & Mile Cross Children's Centre
Norfolk, Emneth Children's Centre
Northampton Children and Families Traveller Education Team
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Ormiston Traveller Initiative, Norfolk
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Purpose and aims

|

Purpose and aims of this document

This document is aimed at anyone working outreach with children from Gypsy, Roma and Traveller¹ communities. Its purpose is to share and reflect the work, knowledge and ideas of practitioners nationally. It draws on the experiences and understanding of practitioners currently working in rural and urban locations, within Traveller Education Support Service (TESS)² teams and in Sure Start Children Centres. There has also been a growth of outreach work with Roma families arriving from Eastern Europe, but practice in this area of work remains limited. The information and ideas contained in this document may be transferable to practice with other families currently excluded from early years services.

Practice will always vary and should do if it is to respond properly to the unique needs of a particular locality, community or individual. Therefore, this document does not aim to provide final answers or definitive statements, but rather to provide a basis for reflection on current outreach work in order to support the consistent monitoring of the intention, reasons, quality and effectiveness of what practitioners do. It is hoped that the document will also serve those practitioners in aspects of their work focused on capacity-building in, and training provided to, mainstream early years services.

The document also highlights the importance of the recently published Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) for the delivery of outreach to Gypsy, Roma and Traveller families. It sets out the key elements of the EYFS Statutory Framework and Practice Guidance, and shows how they can be used as a supporting set of principles to guide the delivery of high-quality, effective outreach with these families.

“There is still much more to be done, particularly to ensure that the most vulnerable and disadvantaged families are getting the help they need. Centre Managers should ensure effective outreach and home visiting services are used to increase contact with families who are at greatest risk of exclusion.”

Ann Gross, Deputy Director Children’s Centres and Extended Schools Division,
Sure Start Extended Schools and Childcare Group³

|

Outreach practice is a fundamental aspect of working with Gypsy, Roma and Traveller families. This document aims to support practitioners to raise the profile of their work locally and regionally and to acknowledge the potential of their experience as references for others.

Background

Traveller Education Support Services (TESS) operate in most local authorities to improve access to education for Gypsy, Traveller and, increasingly, Roma children, and to advise schools and other educational settings in order to raise achievement. In 1999 these services were given the opportunity to make a bid for funding, from a designated Department for Education and Skills (DfES) budget, for enhanced early years work. Early years work within TESS has therefore been evolving and growing over recent years in different ways.

Developing Sure Start Local Programmes and, more recently, Sure Start Children's Centres have also increasingly recognised the need to ensure that their services reach Gypsy, Roma and Traveller families. In some areas partnerships between local TESS and Sure Start Children's Centres have been formed, and projects initiated.

Notes

¹ Gypsy, Roma and Traveller here includes: Gypsies, Roma, Irish Travellers, Scottish and Welsh Travellers, Fairground Travellers, Showmen, Circus Travellers, Housed Travellers, New Travellers and Bargee Travellers.

² For the purposes of this document the term Traveller Education Support Service (TESS) is used throughout. However, many local authorities use Traveller Education Service (TES) and others use variations of Ethnic Minority & Traveller Achievement Service (EMTAS). Within case studies and the appendices, contributors have been referenced using their chosen service title.

³ Letter dated 30 November 2006 to Sure Start Children's Centre managers and practitioners, local authorities and primary care trusts, re *Sure Start Children's Centres Practice Guidance*, revised version.

The importance of outreach with Gypsy, Roma and Traveller families

What does outreach mean?

There is variation among early years practitioners working with Gypsy, Roma and Traveller families about the purpose of outreach, depending on the individual service priorities.

- Some view outreach as a route to bringing families into existing locally provided services.
- Others view outreach as a means of delivering a service directly to a family who appear to have no other means of access, and providing a service tailored to the particular needs of that family.
- Most subscribe to a combination of both views.

Outreach work has long been a fundamental aspect of Traveller Education Support Services (TESS). Current TESS early years outreach workers provide evidence that there is a need for a flexible approach, and that no one interpretation alone best ensures outcomes. However, understanding the different interpretations of outreach may help TESS workers to have clearer discussions with mainstream early years service providers when they are working to ensure there are 'outreach' services to Gypsy, Roma and Traveller families.

Outreach – VERB: reach further than (LITERARY): reach out. NOUN: 1. the extent or length of reaching out; 2. an organisation's involvement with or influence in the community.

From *Concise Oxford English Dictionary*, 11th edition

Why is there a need for outreach work with Gypsy, Roma and Traveller families?

There is evidence of families from these communities remaining excluded from many mainstream services and opportunities, particularly health and education services. An 'open door' policy in itself is not enough: an institution or system and the service it provides is in effect closed to anyone who does not know it and has no relationship with it.

Gypsies and Travellers have lower health status than the general population. Mothers are less likely to receive adequate ante- and postnatal support; there are higher levels of infant mortality and more child accidents and illness. Many of the health problems are related to the adverse environmental conditions in which families have to live, the difficulties they have in accessing sustained healthcare and receiving up-to-date health advice and information, the stresses of forced moves, and the racism and discrimination they experience (University of Sheffield, *The Health Status of Gypsies & Travellers in England*, 2004). There is a lack of early identification of special educational needs. These may not be identified and supported until a child is of school age, by which time intervention may already be less effective. Parents may experience high levels

of stress in trying to cope without access to full and clear information and service support networks.

Children do not always start school in the reception year or with any preschool educational experience. In addition, the barriers that families face in accessing education often compromise consistent attendance and children's well-being.

There is often an assumption that a particular service is known about and accessible, and a lack of recognition that families may have no way of knowing and no way of accessing the service on offer. *Outreach is recognition of this and a proactive response.*

Early years practitioners working with Gypsy, Roma and Traveller families often cite similar reasons why the families they are supporting are unable to access services:

- **Area:** The area may be unknown to the family; parents have no local knowledge of services and arrive without a support network or confident sense of belonging within the community.
- **Geographical isolation:** Many families experience rural isolation. Also, families are often visiting, living or residing on sites that have been situated on the periphery of communities.
- **Mobility and travel patterns:** Unplanned travel patterns, lack of permanent accommodation or regular evictions make it impractical to access services.

Parents' comments

"There's no point the little one going to the little school if we're moving up and down, he'd just make a friend and we'd be going."

"We're being moved on tomorrow so there's no point phoning that health visitor, is there?"

- **Highly mobile families:** Those travelling or residing on unauthorised sites are unlikely to have official addresses. This can be a barrier to accessing funded early education places and also health services, whose systems rely on contact addresses for further appointments and details from previous health history.
- **Transport:** The family vehicle may also double as a work vehicle, leaving mothers and children isolated on sites. Others may not have any transport or are reliant on extended family for this support. Appointments can be difficult to meet; transport may be available only at the start or end of the day, not at the times when sessions or particular service groups run.
- **Familiarity:** Gypsy, Roma and Traveller parents may not have experienced early years services themselves and may not be familiar with or at ease with the systems.
- **Shortage of early years places:** Availability of early years places varies; there may be no places available in local settings. Families may arrive in an area after submissions of headcounts for funding.
- **Safety:** Gypsy and Traveller parents have concerns about the safety of their young children and the possibility of prejudice, racism and bullying. They may be concerned about the attitudes of other parents, supervisors and professionals and the particular vulnerability of their child, being of such a young age. These concerns are intensified

"Few of the Gypsy Traveller pupils currently in schools have had the opportunity to attend any form of pre-school or early years setting. Any child without any pre-school experience is already at risk of underachievement."

DfES, *Aiming High: Raising the achievement of Gypsy Traveller pupils*, 2003, p 9¹

if and when the parents have unhappy memories of their own schooling or have experienced racism or prejudice.

Parents' comments

"She's too little to be able to come home and tell me if something went wrong."

"I'm worried they won't be looked after, some people don't like Traveller children, even if they like children."

"Someone from the family would have to stay with him – if I can't go with him, can his sister go and stay with him in the place?"

- **Security:** Gypsy and Traveller parents are often cautious about the security of the buildings where services are provided.

Parent's comment

"I was worried about the security, could she get out and who might go and pick her up."

- **Parental roles:** Some parents have a sense that they are not fulfilling their role completely by sending their child to an early years setting, or using services that may suggest they have a need. Occasionally, traditional gender roles have a clear influence too. Mothers may wish to 'hold on to the baby' of the family, even if older children accessed early years provision before, especially if it is expected that no further children will be born. This may be combined with a sense of positive identity within her community associated with being a mother. Fathers sometimes prefer their boys not to attend play settings, but to remain with them learning a 'cultural role' from a very young age.

Parents' comments

"Traveller kids are babies till they're four or five, they can't be away from the Mam."

"I don't mind Pearly Anne going to the nursery, but it's different for the boys."

- **On-site provision:** A combination of the many barriers experienced in accessing basic services, alongside a strong sense of protection towards children, means that many Gypsy and Traveller parents would prefer provision to be made available on sites. This preference may in itself prevent use of services within the local community.
- **Communication barriers:** As well as language barriers experienced by Roma families, some Gypsy, Traveller and Irish Traveller families find that culturally specific words or phrases are often misunderstood or ignored.
- **Cultural events:** These are likely to be given priority over appointments, groups or sessions.
- **Literacy barriers:** Some parents have low literacy levels, making correspondence related to services difficult.

Not all of the above applies to every family and the issues are not always unique to Gypsy, Roma or Traveller groups.

Every Child Matters

'Every Child Matters', underpinned by the Children Act 2004, sets out the five outcomes that children and young people identified as crucial to well-being in childhood and later life – being healthy; staying safe; enjoying and achieving; making a positive contribution; and achieving economic well-being. All practitioners working with children and their families have a responsibility to provide services that will achieve these outcomes. Integrated services such as Sure Start Children's Centres have been established so that practitioners from universal services can work together towards achieving them, and there is recognition that outreach work must be a core aspect of integrated early years service provision.

Currently Gypsy, Roma and Traveller children in their early years are still too often excluded from the support available from services that aim to maximise life chances for every child. The opportunity for these children to thrive and reach their potential within those five outcomes therefore can be undermined.

Note

¹ www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/ethnicminorities/links_and_publications/763027/

Making it happen: ways of organising outreach with Gypsy, Roma and Traveller families

Organisational issues facing providers

Traveller Education Support Services

Most Traveller Education Support Services (TESS) have an advisory, training and capacity-building role. The majority balance direct work with families through outreach, with capacity-building work with existing mainstream services. This capacity-building highlights the legal responsibilities of mainstream services.

Outreach work is often temporary until the mainstream service has the understanding and capacity to provide services.

A paper about TESS early years practice and organisation, produced by the Eastern Regional Early Years Forum in 2004, reported:

- Not all TESS teams had dedicated early years workers.
- Of those that did, most were part-time and there was huge variation in their early years experience and qualifications.
- Where services had dedicated early years workers, the number of Gypsy and Travellers accessing services had increased.

Traveller education workers are rarely attached to local integrated early years provision and therefore do not benefit from it. However, the knowledge and experience of specialist expertise needs to be considered:

- TESS staff are more likely to have direct knowledge of families and wider cultural understanding.
- TESS early years workers usually work within a specialist team. This can help with referrals and background information.
- In areas where there is no Sure Start Children's Centre the TESS early years worker may be the only practitioner able to provide an outreach service to families.
- TESS workers may be able to follow highly mobile families as they move within a local authority, and build capacity within existing services for families who experience greater stability in their travel patterns.
- TESS workers may have more flexibility in their remits to monitor access and therefore know when to return to families who need support to re-engage with services.

Existing early years services

Early years services that are not part of integrated provision are often limited in their traditional structure and capacity to provide outreach services to families. For example:

- Voluntary preschool groups are rarely able to do outreach work.
- Health visitors and midwives might not receive referrals for Gypsy or Traveller families who have arrived in an area with no local health registration.
- Some areas do not have the required services.

Outreach practice, however, is included and strongly emphasised within integrated Sure Start Children's Centres:

Outreach

- Visits to all families in the catchment area within two months of the child's birth (through the Child Health Promotion Programme or agreed local arrangements)
- Activities to raise community awareness, particularly among disadvantaged groups
- Co-ordinated programme of home visits
- Systems for referring/signposting families to further services
- Systems for monitoring service usage by particular families or groups
- Where possible, keyworker system.

Sure Start Children's Centres Planning and Performance Management Guidance, 2006¹

There is variety in approaches and organisation of outreach and home visiting (see box on p 9). Awareness of outreach methods enables service providers to have more meaningful discussions in their partnership work, and to identify the best ways of providing services for children.

Common Structures of Outreach and Home Visiting Systems

Whole System Model	Outreach and Home Visiting work leans strongly towards family support, most likely to be found in Sure Start Local Programmes (SSLP) led by a local authority.
Generic Team Model	This team is designed to reach families in a very diverse area, where there are communication and cultural issues that require a sensitive service.
Holistic Multi-Team Model	A single team containing a wide range of specialist skills, used across local authority areas where there is more than one SSLP.
Community Development Model	A grass-roots approach, where services are not targeted at particular groups and the aim is to be inclusive, universal and non-stigmatising.
Focused Intervention Model	This outreach team carries out an early assessment of children's progress in order to screen for delays in key areas, especially speech and language, followed by an intervention if necessary, delivered by home visits.
Health Team Model	This approach, or elements of it, is the most widespread, probably because it builds on the services that already exist in the area. The team comprises midwives and health visitors, with back-up from nursery nurses. It is common in SSLPs that are led by primary care trusts (PCTs).
Voluntary Sector Model	In this approach, services may be commissioned from one or more voluntary organisations and delivered by them through their existing infrastructure (Home-Start, for example, may be funded to recruit and train an enlarged volunteer workforce and place volunteers with families from the Sure Start area).
Specialist Home Assistance Model	Here the help that is provided to families is very practical – on the lines of the home help service – and is designed to offer relief and respite for a limited period.
Minimal Outreach and Home Visiting Services	Some SSLPs do not emphasise these services or have begun to emphasise them less as the SSLP has become established. In the areas where this decision had been taken; the reasons given are costs, time, disempowerment of families, and a preference for group-based services.

Key differences which affect the way outreach and home visiting services are structured include:

- size of the team
- combination of skills in the team
- understanding of the family and its relationship to SSLP services, for example, parents as partners
- relation of the outreach and home visiting team to the rest of the SSLP programme
- local variations in what is acceptable in the way services are delivered.

Adapted from national evaluation report: *Outreach and Home Visiting Services in Sure Start Local Programmes, 2006*²

Common organisational considerations

- Practitioners need to have varied skills and knowledge; no one person can effectively provide the range of services that may be needed. However, a key worker can establish the outreach work and build trusting relationships with families.
- Where possible, funding and training should be sought to allow Gypsy, Roma and Traveller community members to take up service provision roles.
- The number of practitioners visiting one family at any one time needs careful consideration. Initial visits and visits to large groups are often made in pairs for practical reasons and so that a safety assessment can be made. Paired visits are also made when another service practitioner is being introduced to the family. More than two visitors can be impractical and intrusive, but where an interpreter is required, the number may have to be more than two. In a case where educational services are being provided in the home and an early years worker is doing this alone, it may be because no other staff are available, or it may be the preference of the worker or organisation. Larger families, or extended family groups in which there are several children in their early years, may require more than one person providing a service at the same time.

“It was important for us that our development worker was interested in doing this specialist area of outreach work. Without her interest and keenness it may have been harder to have got involved with the community and for those relationships to have been built.”

Children’s Centre manager

Parent’s comment

“There was three of them at my door at the same time, I did want to speak to the health visitor but I just couldn’t talk about what I needed to talk about in front of the other two ladies. I never asked them in, I wasn’t being rude, but I don’t have the room in the trailer, do I?”

Practitioners’ comments

“We visit in pairs whenever possible... For extended family groups each one focuses on one age group, eg, one will concentrate on 0–3-year-olds and one on 3–4+ aged children.”

“We work in pairs. We have a lead worker for each family and a ‘significant partner’. The latter is available if the lead worker is on leave. If another agency needs to visit then they just go with the lead worker. Sometimes both play with the child, sometimes one plays while the other focuses on family issues. With Roma families where they have language barriers, the partner is there to support with making phone calls to other agencies for the family.”

“Sometimes I visit with staff from the local setting, often I make visits alongside the health visitor. I always try and let the family know I’m coming. If they don’t have a [telephone] number I visit alone first and then check I can bring someone on the next visit.”

“I ‘piggy-back’ the health visitor for most of my visits to Roma families, she has the interpreter go with her. That means I can do play work and have a conversation to begin to address educational provision.”

- Referrals come from many agencies, eg, health visitors, Highways Agency, etc. Services need to have links, and inter-agency contact lists and meetings may be useful.
- Some outreach workers keep databases or audits of all known children, which are regularly updated and used as the starting point for prioritising support. When partnerships exist between services, information can be shared between them, in accordance with the Data Protection Act.
- When families are mobile, it is vital there is a consistency of service. Some outreach workers provide parents with information that can be shared if and when the family moves. Information is sometimes put with health records, or it may be presented in another format that best reflects the service that has been provided. The minimum information a family should move with is the name and contact number of the previously involved outreach worker.
- There are precedents set for the use of service ‘contracts’ with families. These are discussed and agreed at some point during the initial visits. (See Appendix IA: Play Sacks.)
- To increase the chance of continued support when a family is moving or a child is nearing the end of the Foundation Stage, it is important to create and carry through an exit plan.
- Possible venues for outreach services can be:
 - family homes
 - site cabins
 - spare plots for outdoor play events
 - health and library buses and vans
 - community group venues at a safe walking distance from sites.Excluded families can be reluctant to mix with others in order to access services, even within the known community and extended family. Group venues can mean the loss of private one-to-one time with a parent, which can affect quality of provision, level of trust and success of the relationship.
- Organisation of time for planning, preparation and reviewing is essential. Some TESS teachers involved in early years outreach use their preparation, planning and assessment time (PPA).
- Resources used for outreach work need to be kept in organised storage spaces, cleaned and maintained on a regular basis.

Outreach partnerships

If services cannot regularly deliver outreach they may choose to seek out partnerships with other agencies. It should never be assumed that communities or existing outreach workers are aware of services. Direct face-to-face promotion of services is essential, rather than through literature and postal information.

Some successful outreach partnerships have been established between Traveller Education Support Services, Health Services and Sure Start Children's Centres. Communication is needed between organisations: for example, who will the lead outreach key worker be and how will the work be shared? Partnerships take time to develop, communication lines may be slow, staffing often changes within services and other issues threaten partnerships along the way. Services to Gypsy and Traveller families do not always have time to develop or properly engage partnership support when families are highly mobile; tight and thorough organisation therefore becomes crucial to reducing gaps in provision and ensuring that every child matters.

Examples of partnerships and their organisation

The following case studies illustrate examples of partnerships and the different ways in which these are organised.

Beeston Hill Sure Start for Travellers Project, Leeds

This case study illustrates a Traveller Education Support Service working in partnership with a Children's Centre to establish nursery places and an outreach service for Gypsy, Roma and Traveller families

The Children's Centre and Leeds Traveller Education Service worked together to create a dedicated service for Gypsy, Roma and Traveller families. The Centre created five flexible places in the over-3s nursery for children moving in and out of Leeds during a year. Leeds TES supported with transporting the children.

The Children's Centre wanted to establish an outreach project. It applied for funds, which enabled it to recruit two specialist workers, who were interviewed by Traveller parents, and to purchase resources for a toy library. Referrals would be made to the project from Leeds TES. Use of the outreach service grew and a new bid secured two further workers and three-year funding. Originally focused on children aged 0–3 years, the project has been extended to children up to 5 years and beyond in certain circumstances. The partnership board for the project is made up of Beeston Hill Children's Centre, Leeds TES, Leeds Gypsy and Traveller Exchange and the local PCT.

"We're here, we're not just a service here one minute, gone the next."

The project sees the benefits of having specialist outreach workers, who have enough time to visit regularly and be flexible. This gives the message that the service is consistent; workers visit families at least once a week.

The toy library resources are used for weekly play sessions with children in their homes; these sessions can take place more often if needed. They last up to one hour; but the length of sessions depends on the individual child. They are not time-limited, so as many

play sessions can happen as are needed. The toy library is stored in a room that has a sink, so toys can be washed. All areas of provision found in a nursery are available in the boxes, including water and sand play and outdoor toys. Some resources reflect cultural interests, eg, animal toys, hobbyhorses and mobile home play trailers.

Play packs/boxes are left with a family for a week. There is flexibility about what is left with them, according to parent and child expressed preference, and the responses to this option vary greatly.

The project is beginning to try to encourage families to come and access toys from the Centre resource room (toy library). It plans to do this through holding a group session in the adjacent family room, called a 'toy library access group'. (See [Appendix 2A: Toy Library Recording Sheet](#).) The project also plans to put photos of all the toys on to a CD-ROM so that when they visit families at home they can show them the photos on a laptop.

The project staff work in pairs: the lead worker and a significant partner. The latter is available if the lead worker is on leave. If another agent needs to visit, eg, health visitor, then they go with the lead worker. Sometimes both workers play with the child, sometimes one plays while the other focuses on family advocacy issues.

Each worker has key children (according to a key worker model reflecting that used in the Centre nursery). This provides consistency for both the families and any other agencies involved. Each child has their own individual profile and planning sheet prepared for a session, but often there will be more than one child in a play session (eg, siblings). In these situations the one family will have the same lead key worker.

The project runs a Roma Family Group Service once a week with an advocacy worker and an interpreter. The same interpreter is used every time, to support relationships.

Contact sheets act as records of liaison. (See [Appendix 2B: Contact Sheet](#).)

The project has delivered inputs at conferences and to other agencies, for example, health service providers. They have a display prepared for these events. The display includes comments from parents, which were provided when the project carried out a feedback survey using a questionnaire.

(See [Section 4 – Current Practice](#), for further information about Beeston Hill Children's Centre's planning, observation and assessment of children's learning and development.)

Bedfordshire Traveller Education Service Early Years Project

This case study illustrates the partnership between Bedfordshire TES teachers and local settings to ensure the most isolated children receive outreach support

Here staffing does not allow for a dedicated early years worker. A cross-phase teacher and a learning support assistant have two afternoons a week to offer early years support. Together they offer weekly one-hour play sessions to the most isolated and excluded children. PPA time is used for organising resources and upkeep of planning and records.

The Bedfordshire TES teacher initiated a close working partnership with a local nursery school to access professional support and advice, particularly in developing planning, observation and assessment records.

The project has also spent time with staff in local playgroups and schools and is beginning to spend some time providing support in these settings. This is encouraging some parents to use the settings, as they know the Bedfordshire TES staff, and trusting relationships have been established through their outreach work.

Norfolk Traveller Education Service and Emneth Sure Start Children's Centre

This case study illustrates Norfolk TES working in partnership with a local Children's Centre to provide a toy library and play sessions, and support to families with the transition into settings

Here Norfolk TES had a part-time early years advisory teacher who was able to have an outreach role and a strategic role to help to develop early years outreach work to Gypsy and Traveller children from Sure Start Children's Centres.

A successful bid was placed by Norfolk TES to a developing Sure Start Local Programme. This funded another early years advisory teacher managed by and attached to the TES team, but working in partnership with the Sure Start team and within the Sure Start area. She provided a satellite toy library service using the Sure Start Toy Library resources, carried out play sessions with children at home and supported their transition into both the Sure Start nursery and other settings within the area. All settings in the Sure Start area were provided with culturally reflective resources. This worker is now Head of Inclusion at the Children's Centre; she has been able to mainstream the work and provides outreach work directly to Gypsy and Traveller families one day a week and is available as a trainer for Norfolk TES as and when required.

Oswestry Sure Start Children's Centre and West Midlands Consortium Education Service for Travelling Children (WMCESTC)

This case study illustrates partnership working between a local Children's Centre, local voluntary organisation, local council service and WMCESTC to provide early years services through a previously poorly used play bus

Although a play bus had been visiting a council-run site, with approximately 22 plots and a fairly static community, it was not being well used. The Children's Centre worked with a Home-Start co-ordinator, the Gypsy Traveller Liaison Officer (who was often based on-site) and the TESS to support better uptake of the service. Play bus partnership meetings are held which includes representatives from the Children's Centre, play bus, Home-Start and WMCESTC, a Traveller liaison officer and a Sure Start librarian. Play bus staff accessed Sure Start funds to acquire culturally reflective play resources.

The presence of the play bus has resulted in Traveller parents being more independently proactive in accessing nursery and preschool education. WMCESTC and the Home-Start worker built relationships and worked co-operatively to encourage parents to use the play bus and to access nursery provision.

Nottinghamshire Traveller Education Service, Nottinghamshire Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership and two Children's Centres

This case study illustrates the partnership between a Nottinghamshire TES, local council EYDCP and two local Children's Centres to develop a play bag project and purchase culturally reflective resources

Nottinghamshire TES sought financial support from the Nottinghamshire Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership to develop their early years outreach work. They currently have one advisory teacher and two teaching assistants in their Early Years Team. The Partnership funding enabled them to develop their 'Playbag Project' (See Section 4 – Current Practice, for further information about the 'Playbag Project'.)

In addition to this, Nottinghamshire TES made a successful bid to a Children's Centre 'Enjoying and Achieving Focus Group' for culturally reflective resources to be purchased for all preschool settings within the catchment areas of two Children's Centres. In addition, the bid gained funding for worker time from within the two Children's Centres. This time amounts to one half-day a week from each worker being spent on outreach work in partnership with the TES early years staff.

Derbyshire Traveller Family Learning Project Read On – Write Away! (ROWA!) Derby and Derbyshire Traveller Education Support Service, Advisory and Support Team, Sure Start and Derbyshire County Council

This case study illustrates the partnership between Derby and Derbyshire TES, the local Sure Start Programme, the county council and Traveller families to develop the use of a learning bus to offer on-site early years outreach and adult learning activities

The project delivers family learning sessions on Traveller sites using the ROWA! learning bus as a venue. The aims of this project are to engage and develop parents' own skills, develop children's skills and to increase access to good-quality nursery provision, working with Traveller families to establish a learning culture and to ensure that all children receive the best possible support for early years education.

The ROWA! bus visits sites in Derbyshire providing two-hour sessions, either weekly or more intensively depending on the nature of the site. Sessions are planned and delivered by an early years specialist teacher, a crèche/play worker and an Adult Skills for Life tutor. The first part of the session offers play and learning activities for preschool children and adult learning activities for parents/carers. The adults have access to computers and the Internet on the ROWA! bus and work on their own literacy skills as well as working to support their children's learning. The children's activities are linked to Foundation Stage milestones. In the second part of the session everyone joins in with songs, stories, messy play and other activities that help meet the planned learning objectives. Families are given resources and activities to use at home, where older siblings and other members of the family can also be involved.

The project is continually evaluated, leading to further qualitative and quantitative data on attitudes to learning, participation in education, learning distance travelled, and case studies to inform the development of future work .

The success of the project comes from strong partnership working, the ability to be flexible and the enthusiasm of dedicated staff. The project was central to the achievement of the Sure Start Partners in Excellence Award for Integrated Care and Early Learning in 2005, recognising excellence and innovation in the delivery of services to children and families in England.



Parents' comments

"Mine is asking to read stories and make stories up at bedtime and that's never happened before."

"She takes it all in when we're reading stories... she's ready for school now. I was wary of sending her to school but now I think she'll adapt."

Practitioner's comment

"Families are now beginning to access nursery places independently."

Dad enjoyed the story of Handa's Surprise and eating the exotic fruit.

Training and supporting services to build outreach capacity

Emphasising outreach in training programmes

As the value and significance of early years outreach work is increasingly recognised, both by the services themselves and by the families accessing outreach services, the need to share current practice, develop it further, build it into mainstream service delivery, and monitor the quality of the work becomes greater. Where training programmes exist, provided by services working with Gypsy, Roma and Traveller families, outreach early years practice needs to be emphasised. Sharing practice emphasises the importance of mainstream services reaching out to those children and families who remain marginalised and excluded from them.

Danielle, Mary and Hilary

This case study demonstrates how effective outreach work and positive relationships can provide opportunities for community members to be involved in training within their own wider local community

Hilary, an outreach early years practitioner working from a Traveller Education Support Service, worked with Mary to help her to access the services she needed for her daughter. These included services to identify and support additional speech and language development needs and a diagnosis that Danielle is 'high functioning' on the autistic spectrum. Without the outreach work, it is likely that the early identification of Danielle's unique learning needs would not have been addressed so thoroughly by the services available in her locality, and Danielle would have started her educational journey without the level of confidence she has.



Through the relationship developed within the outreach work, Mary has been able to find new opportunities to share her experiences confidently both as a mother and as a Traveller within the local community. She has contributed to a film about the work of the local Sure Start programme, and joined Hilary to deliver an awareness-raising session about Traveller culture to other parents using the nursery that Danielle attended.

"I really enjoyed that, Hilary. I could see them learning about Travellers and their attitudes changing."

Mary

TESS staff often provide organised awareness-raising training programmes, increasingly involving young people, parents and other adults from the Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities. The specialist understanding that a Gypsy, Roma or Traveller community member provides is vital. Sometimes other practitioners working with Gypsy, Roma and Traveller children in their early years – for example, health visitors – are asked to speak about their work, experiences and understandings. Also important is time for participants in these programmes to share and discuss how they can develop their work to be truly inclusive of all children: where they are providing a service for all families with children in their early years, this must inevitably mean including outreach practice.

Save the Children's Early Years Gypsy, Roma and Traveller Project

This case study illustrates the importance of developing cultural awareness-raising training in conjunction with the Gypsy, Roma and Traveller community

Save the Children has delivered early years cultural awareness-raising and inclusion training as a pilot since 2004. It was felt essential to develop the training in conjunction with a community member. Links were made with local community organisations: Derbyshire Gypsy Liaison Group and Ormiston Children and Families Trust. Both of these groups have run accredited 'train the trainer' courses.

Delivering the training with a community member promotes capacity-building within the community. It also provides a unique opportunity for the community to influence and inform early years service for their benefit. As the training course is already established and is delivered together with the Save the Children training and development officer, the community member can be involved as much as they like, to build up their skills and confidence before delivering a session on their own.

Feedback from training participants has been very positive. The project feels that having a community member there, to answer questions and give a description of their culture and experiences, is a much more influential way of challenging people's perceptions than someone from outside the community just presenting facts.

It may be useful to identify some key strands that might be included in training provided to mainstream service practitioners working with all children in their early years:

- specialist knowledge and cultural awareness
- sharing current practice and experiences
- resources and activities that build on children's lifestyle and cultural experiences and challenge monocultural learning programmes
- discussing and developing future practice, including outreach work.

A model to support the development of outreach work

The model shown on the next page may begin to support this last strand within a training programme, and could be provided to encourage discussion among delegates about how their services might begin to develop outreach practice. Emphasising outreach practice to existing service providers helps them to acknowledge that it is a necessary and valid part of provision and that mainstream providers have a duty to ensure high-quality services are accessible to all children in their early years, not solely those who are able to access services based outside of the home or community.

"The scale of tradition and custom surrounding Traveller communities comes as a big surprise to many service providers."

Janet Millward, in 'Travelling Light', *Sure Start Magazine*

Notes

¹ www.surestart.gov.uk/_doc/P0002365.pdf

² www.surestart.gov.uk/_doc/P0002376.pdf

Development of outreach work model

Who in our local community is currently excluded from the services we offer for children in their early years?

Why is our service hard to reach for these families and their young children?
How can we begin to work outreach?

How can we ensure the quality of service being provided, and that two-way learning takes place?

So that we make sure that children experience high-quality provision and that the child and family benefit from our service, and our service deepens its understanding of the communities and children it aims to support.

What specialist understanding do we need?

Is there anything we should understand or be aware of as we develop ways to be inclusive?

What partnerships are available to us?

Is there anyone in the community, or any other organisation locally that we can work with?
Can we 'work shadow' anyone?

What professional understanding do we need?

Do we need any further professional knowledge that may support our outreach work?

How will we organise our outreach work?

Who will undertake the outreach work, what will their role be, what do they need in order to do the work, etc?

What resources, tools, policies and guidance do we need to support the work?

For example, play resources, storage and cleaning areas, cameras, records, etc; health and safety, lone working, travel and transport policies, etc.

What special skills, sensitivities, aptitudes and qualifications are required in our outreach workers?

For example, listening and communication skills, non-judgemental attitudes, being sensitive to being in someone's home, being aware of the processes of relationships, etc.

How will we monitor the quality and outcomes of our outreach work, how will we review it and ensure that the understanding it gives us continually informs the development of the outreach work and the service we provide?

How will we share our work and support other services to develop their practice and reach all children in the community?

Effective delivery: outreach and the Early Years Foundation Stage

4

Outreach work and the holistic approach

What does good outreach look like? Ideally it is outreach that is effectively planned and that is characterised by a holistic approach to working with children and families. A holistic approach is one within which the health, well-being, care, developmental and educational needs of a child are understood as interwoven and interdependent. By undertaking outreach work, the worker is much more likely to see and understand this wider picture of a family or community situation. Early years outreach workers therefore often become key workers linking families to other agencies in much the same way that other key workers bring together health, care and other agencies to support the integration of children's services at the heart of the Every Child Matters agenda. Crucial to this linking role is the relationship between the family and the key worker.

"All visits to families have to be purposeful and if we know that families have, for example, health or accommodation issues then these issues need to be dealt with by the appropriate agency, and of course Traveller Education Services can signpost the way."

TESS manager

Feedback from current practitioners tells us that positive outcomes happen when trusting relationships are built. It is through such relationships that the true barriers can be revealed. Practitioners cannot assume they understand a situation that they do not have to live with themselves, and parents and families will not 'open up' where there is no trust. It is particularly important, with Gypsy and Traveller communities, that the relationship is strong enough to overcome the barriers created by experiences of sustained prejudice and also separation due to travelling. The amount of time that an early years practitioner can spend working with a family cannot be the determining factor in building a partnership with the parents or carers, as some families will be highly mobile. The quality of experience of every meeting is therefore crucial.

A relationship based on trust enables a shared understanding to emerge, thus reducing the likelihood of a clash of expectations and priorities, which will not be supportive for the child. Relationships of trust are more likely to develop into partnerships with parents.

"The family trusted me so I was the one who introduced them to the health visitor and took them to visit the centre."

Practitioner

The benefit of long-term relationships

The relationship between the family of this child and the worker involved has spanned two years and included times when the family were travelling. The child himself has experienced consistency through the worker, who provided play sessions at home and then supported his transition and settling-in time in nursery.



For a Traveller mother who never went to school and does not read or write, visiting a school nursery may not be a comfortable experience. Sharing family photographs over a cup of coffee in the trailer and getting to know the outreach worker she is being asked to accept is likely to be preferable. The agenda of the service or practitioner may not always be the best starting point in outreach work; the bigger picture of why families do not access services may need to be acknowledged first. Practitioners can start with common ground by focusing on the child, but a relationship of equality is not always maintained when service concepts and language are introduced into the conversation. Moreover, there may be differences between the family's and the practitioner's educational priorities. Not until this is recognised can equality be achieved. Without an equal and respectful relationship, practitioners risk working for, rather than with, parents. Outreach work is about two-way learning that will inform services so they are able to adapt and develop their provision.

"Intense home visiting with 'hard-to-reach' families was used sparingly due to the time such services take, along with the high input required from trained staff and the dangers of developing dependency among families."

National evaluation summary: *Outreach and Home Visiting Services in Sure Start Local Programmes, 2006, p 4*

A period of dependence on a key worker may occur. Shortage of time and well-trained staff places constraints on service providers, and therefore managers may be cautious about approving work that requires a high level of support over a long period. However, dependency should never be used as an excuse not to work with a family, but should be acknowledged as part of the relationship journey with the family, and a wider network of support can then be accessed. Practitioners should be supported to identify the point at which to begin an exit strategy.

Managers of outreach workers need to clarify expected outcomes and to support practitioners to reflect on their relationships with families. Managers also have a responsibility to take on board the learning experienced by their outreach workers in order to respond properly to the real needs of the families.

Practitioners' comments

"For many hard-to-reach families it is extremely difficult to access services without that 'known face' and trust in what services are offering. Outreach work facilitates that building of trusting relationships and provides a safe forum for parents to discuss their hopes, fears and difficulties."

"Through intense home visiting we have found families gain trust and confidence and thereby access services available. We have found that as families gain confidence we can begin to lessen our support."

"I think you need to be careful about dependency, but working with some families is a long-term project. What is the other option – not to visit them at all?"

"The word 'intense' bothers me. I would always use visits to encourage parents to use mainstream provision. I have never noticed dependency from families. I feel the more outreach work can be developed the more families will want to use the mainstream facilities. Parents become aware of the rich rewards of early years work and want their children to experience settings."

"A 'dependency culture' may be a necessary first step to the children attending early years provision. When the families are confident, independence will/may follow."

"Although the need is there, it is much better for all involved if you can encourage the families to use a wide variety of individuals and organisations. Just to add a note, sometimes this [intense home visiting] is the only way to make something happen. In this case the workers should be very aware of the situation and as soon as some level of empowerment has happened, should begin a handover process to other individuals and agencies."

"One hour a week can't be called 'intensive home visiting'! Regular visits build trust and help build a profile of experiences and achievements, which is valuable when the child starts school to dispel deficit stereotypical perceptions school staff may have. Sensitivity of practitioners to the parents' wishes and practitioner attitudes will ensure awareness if dependency seems to be developing..."

"Sometimes a person's home is the only place where they feel fully able to express themselves."

"No one can actually empower another person – you create the circumstances in which they can take up the power, often by giving up your power as a professional and by helping them to see that they have valuable knowledge and experience."

Early years educationalist

Delivering play services in the home

Delivering services in the home: some lessons

Sure Start Local Programmes have found that it is important to be clear about why a service might best be delivered in the home. This can be because:

- It will be easier for a practitioner (health visitor, midwife) to assess how a child is doing in his or her own environment.
- It will be easier to help a parent to respond to the child's needs by demonstrating activities, conversation and other interaction.
- It is necessary to see the home circumstances in order to organise suitable support – for example, to ensure safety, or to provide aids where there is a disability.
- It may make the parent feel more confident about disclosing information about matters such as domestic violence, debt or health worries.
- There will be some families for whom this is the only means by which services can be regularly delivered.

(National evaluation report: *Outreach and Home Visiting Services in Sure Start Local Programmes*, 2006, p 36²)

“Parents from minority ethnic communities will want, on the whole, the same range of services from children's centres as other parents, but may require different kinds of support or delivery in order to access them. The manner in which services are delivered should be tailored to families' particular needs, in terms of timing, venue, language, faith and culture.”

Sure Start Children's Centre *Practice Guidance*, 2006, p 93³

As outreach early years work with Gypsy, Roma and Traveller children has developed, particularly within Traveller Education Services, practitioners have increasingly identified a need to be able to provide outreach *play* services, primarily because many Gypsy, Roma and Traveller children are still not accessing any early educational opportunities.

“The most effective way to promote the achievement of Gypsy Traveller children is to ensure they are able to gain early access to education during the Foundation stage.”

DfES, *Aiming High: Partnerships between schools and Traveller Education Support Services in raising the achievement of Gypsy Traveller pupils*, 2005, p 2⁴

Why offer an outreach play service?

Key workers offering play services have the advantage of being able to use play as a tool to identify the potential, and the holistic needs, of the children their work is focused on. Play is the mechanism through which a child's whole potential is explored and supported. Every aspect of their development, health and learning affects the quality of their play, so that by observing play, practitioners can begin to identify the needs of the child they are supporting. Even at the earliest stages of their lives, children discover, experience, learn and develop through playing. For example, the playful facial expressions between a parent and their baby begin to support the development of attachment and language. Therefore play should not be associated solely with an education-based outreach worker, as it can be a starting point for all services aiming to support children in their early years.

Advantages of outreach play work

- It provides an opportunity to build an equal and respectful relationship with children and parents in which everyone may be 'the expert'.
- It maintains focus on the child, providing time for engagement and questions, learning and observations to occur naturally and in context.
- It can be more private, less inhibited and the play is not being compared with other children's play.
- It values home experiences and the child is more likely to feel safe and confident in their play.
- It introduces practitioners to new learning about play and childhood experiences within cultures unfamiliar to them.
- It can provide new development and learning opportunities for children.
- It provides children with experiences they may meet later within a setting.
- It supports the early identification of any additional needs, eg, speech and language.
- It provides a link to other services, eg, health service, toy library service, baby massage groups.
- It provides an opportunity to work one to one with a child.
- It provides an opportunity to work closely with parents and/or extended family.

"Our Children's Centre has had a focus change from 'home visits' to work in the home focusing on the child's play. We have found that by identifying the 'wow' moments in children's play we engage parents more positively."

Children's Centre manager

Practitioners' comments

"Focusing on the child and celebrating their achievements and abilities, their character and gifts, empowers parents too. As a parent you often feel that your child is a reflection of yourself. When you celebrate the child, you celebrate the parent too."

"I know I have been very lucky to work one to one with children in their homes with their family around us. It is wonderful when everyone is involved in a play session. Sometimes I have thought, this parent is enjoying and needs to play as much as their child does."

Challenges in outreach play work

- Practitioners may find themselves working with a broad development and age range when they are working with a number of siblings or groups of children at the same time. Although a challenge, this can help to support the involvement of parents or other family members.
- Environments add other challenges; some homes and particularly trailers can be restrictive spaces to work in. There is also a need for sensitivity in that the work is taking place in someone's home, which may be being used in other ways at the same time.
- Practitioners may avoid providing play experiences that appear not to respect the home environment – for example, messy or noisy activities. However, openness and discussion with parents can provide solutions. There should be as few limitations as possible on the kinds of resources and activities provided.
- Outdoor play can be affected by a number of factors such as moving traffic and work areas on sites. Temporary or unofficial sites are unlikely to have enclosed safe areas. Risk assessments may have to be carried out and parents can be consulted on finding a safe outdoor play area for sessions.

Ensuring provision of messy play

Plastic sheeting enables messier play activities to be provided. Trailer cushions are often covered in plastic; in the two photos here the practitioners have bought lengths of this plastic as sheeting for the play sessions.



Play enriched by the home environment

For this child, her pets and animals were an important part of her play sessions, she liked to talk about, and show them to her play worker. Photos of her with her animals became talking points and supported her speech and language development. On one occasion the child invited one of her chickens to join a play session.



This time the chicken invited itself to the play session. Here the gravel outdoor area has become part of the whole play experience in which play with small world building site vehicles and water play are taking place at the same time.

A puppet dog is used to support imaginative play outside in the sunshine. The tray is provided for play dough and can be used inside and outside.

The Early Years Foundation Stage – setting the standards for learning, development and care for children from birth to five

The Department for Children, Schools and Families has published the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS), a comprehensive framework for high-quality learning, development and care of all children from birth to the end of the academic year in which a child has their fifth birthday.⁵ The framework builds on, and replaces, the non-statutory Birth to Three Matters guidance, the Foundation Stage curriculum guidance for 3–4-year-olds and the national standards for daycare. It aims to build a coherent and flexible approach that removes the artificial divide between learning and care and creates seamless support for children's development from birth to five. The EYFS lays out the learning and development requirements and welfare requirements that early years providers must comply with.

With legal force, made under the 2006 Childcare Act, the EYFS becomes statutory from September 2008 for all schools and early years providers in Ofsted-registered settings attended by young children including day nurseries, childminders, playgroups, children's centres, preschools and maintained and independent schools.

Outreach key workers working with these settings or schools should be guided by the EYFS framework to ensure that the quality assurance provided by the EYFS underpins the provision for all children including Gypsy, Roma and Traveller children in their early years.

Anyone working with Gypsy, Roma and Traveller children in their early years should be mindful of the quality of the provision, and the EYFS could be used to set the standards for this. Non-mainstream provision should not be compromised in quality.

The EYFS appears in two parts:

- The Statutory Framework sets out for providers in settings the legal requirements relating to learning and development and welfare for children in their early years.
- The Practice Guidance describes how to implement the learning and development and the welfare requirements. It provides guidance on children's development, effective practice, planning and resourcing, and continuous assessment.

“Every child deserves the best possible start in life and support to fulfil their potential. A child’s experience in the early years has a major impact on their future life chances. A secure, safe and happy childhood is important in its own right, and it provides the foundation for children to make the most of their abilities and talents as they grow up...

“The overarching aim of the EYFS is to help young children achieve the five Every Child Matters outcomes of staying safe, being healthy, enjoying and achieving, making a positive contribution and achieving economic well-being by:

- **Setting the standards** for learning, development and care young children should experience when they are attending a setting outside their family home, ensuring that every child makes progress and that no child gets left behind;
- **Providing for equality of opportunity** and anti-discriminatory practice and ensuring that every child is included and not disadvantaged because of ethnicity, culture or religion, home language, family background, learning difficulties or disabilities, gender or ability;
- **Creating the framework for partnership working** between parents and professionals, and between all the settings that the child attends;
- **Improving quality and consistency** in the early years sector through a universal set of standards which apply to all settings, ending the distinction between care and learning in the existing frameworks, and providing the basis for the inspection and regulation regime;
- **Laying a secure foundation for future learning** through development that is planned around the individual needs and interests of the child, and informed by the use of ongoing observational assessment.”

Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage, 2007, p 7⁶

The highlighted phrases in the above section show that the *Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage* currently applies to the settings children attend outside their family home. Although not a statutory requirement for outreach, early years workers should, however, as a matter of good practice, apply the framework to their outreach work.

Statutory Framework

Outreach play practitioners should refer to Section 1 of the Statutory Framework, from ‘A principled approach’ through to ‘Laying a secure foundation for future learning’. Here they can be guided through what could be regarded as the ground rules of quality in their work:

- having a principled approach
- delivering services to an excellent standard
- providing for equality of opportunity
- partnership working
- improving quality and consistency
- laying a secure foundation for future learning.

The EYFS principles are grouped into four themes (described below), supporting a holistic picture of early childhood, learning, development and care.

“A Unique Child recognises that every child is a competent learner from birth who can be resilient, capable, confident and self-assured. The commitments are focused around development; inclusion; safety; health and well-being.

Positive Relationships describes how children learn to be strong and independent from a base of loving and secure relationships with parents and/or a key person. The commitments are focused around respect; partnership with parents; supporting learning; and the role of the key person.

Enabling Environments explains that the environment plays a key role in supporting and extending children’s development and learning. The commitments are focused around observation, assessment and planning; support for every child; the learning environment; and the wider context – transitions, continuity, and multi-agency working.

Learning and Development recognises that children develop and learn in different ways and at different rates, and that all areas of learning and development are equally important and inter-connected.

This approach ensures that the EYFS meets the overarching aim of improving outcomes and reflects that it is every child’s right to grow up safe; healthy; enjoying and achieving; making a positive contribution; and with economic well-being.”

Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage, 2007, p 9⁷

Section 2 of the Statutory Framework, ‘The learning and development requirements’, sets out the statutory early learning goals. Practitioners should be aware that early childhood learning and development is not necessarily linear. Learning and development is achieved through spontaneous play and should not be observed using a checklist method.

“...These sections are not intended to be exhaustive – different children will do things at different times – and they should not be used as checklists.”

Practice Guidance for the Early Years Foundation Stage, 2007, p 5⁸

The 13 assessment scales for children at the end of the early years foundation stage set out in Appendix 1 of the Statutory Framework, and also within profile booklets that practitioners may use, provide descriptors for assessing the progression of learning and development.

Section 3 of the Statutory Framework sets out the welfare requirements within five sections, relating to:

- safeguarding and promoting children's welfare
- suitable people
- suitable premises, environment and equipment
- organisation
- documentation.

Outreach early years workers can use these requirements to assess the quality of their outreach provision and to challenge some of the inequalities children may encounter. For example, parents and outreach play practitioners often have great concerns about the environments Gypsy and Traveller children are forced to live in, particularly those on roadside encampments or sites that are equipped with poor facilities. When these children are unable to access provision in a setting, the EYFS welfare requirements can be used as a reference point for any discussions regarding accommodation needs.

In Section 4 of the Statutory Framework, Appendix 2 outlines the legal requirements for ratios of adults to children. This could be referred to when planning outreach play provision.

Practice Guidance

The Practice Guidance for the EYFS supports practitioners in more detail to implement the learning and development and welfare requirements, and to put the four themed principles into practice.

In addition, Section 1 of the Guidance outlines key concerns for practitioners working within the principled approach, including:

- the underpinning significance of play
- partnership working
- meeting the diverse needs of children
- continuous quality improvement
- continuity and coherence through children's transitions.

These key concerns all support inclusive practice and can provide starting points for discussions between outreach workers and practitioners based in settings about the quality and effectiveness of their provision for children.

"You must plan for each child's individual care and learning requirements. The focus should be on removing or helping to counter underachievement and overcoming barriers for children where these already exist."

Practice Guidance for the Early Years Foundation Stage, 2007, p 6⁹

Current practice

The EYFS learning and development statutory requirements comprise three elements:

- **The early learning goals** – the knowledge, skills and understanding that young children should have acquired by the end of the academic year in which they reach the age of five
- **The educational programmes** – the matters, skills and processes that are required to be taught to young children
- **The assessment arrangements** – the arrangements for assessing young children to ascertain their achievements.

Outreach play provision should promote and encourage families to feel confident about accessing mainstream provision; in addition it must genuinely support children's learning and development, especially in cases where the outreach service is the only service a child receives.

Many practitioners working in outreach are currently planning and delivering their work on the basis of the statutory requirements. There are various forms of programmes of early learning, which are usually planned and delivered mainly through one or more of the following outreach strategies:

- **Play buses and vans:** Sometimes parents are actively encouraged or required to accompany their children on to play buses and vans. Others may only do so until they are settled. Some parents are encouraged to become helpers. They can be used to reach transitory and highly mobile families. Practitioners usually make initial visits to children in their homes before they attend the bus or van provision.
- **Regular group play sessions:** Drop-in sessions and other early years group activities, eg, baby massage. Group play sessions tend to be organised only when there is a room or cabin available within the community location or site. Often they are run during school hours to ensure that they remain early years focused. Practitioners usually make introductory home visits and other visits to promote and encourage uptake.
- **Fun sessions and events:** Occasional events held in cabins or rooms or outside on plots or spaces within the community location/sites.
- **Play boxes, play sacks, play bags and play kits:** These are sometimes used as a toy library service; toys are lent to families and regularly exchanged or rotated. In other cases they are used as part of a planned session.
- **Learning activities incorporated into other services provided within the community:** Examples are story-telling for under-fives on visiting mobile libraries, under-fives activities provided within out-of-school clubs, and holiday clubs taking place at the community location/on sites.

The following examples of current practice show how some of the strategies are being used and how related planning, observation and assessment has been, or is being, developed and used. ([See also related appendix items.](#))

Beeston Hill Sure Start for Travellers Project, Leeds

Providing play sessions at home and a toy library service

See Section 3 – Outreach
partnerships

During an initial home visit workers use a 'Home Visit' form and 'All About Me' where the child's interests and needs are first discussed. Sessions are planned carefully and according to EYFS guidance. (See Appendix 2C: Focused Activity Sheet.) Children have a lever-arch file dedicated to them; this contains their profile, which is exactly the same as those used and put together in the Children's Centre, and is presented in the same way. Photos are taken and an observation note goes with the photos.

The four workers share two digital cameras. Parents are given disposable cameras so they can capture learning and add pictures to the children's profiles. Play session planning sheets contain a section for parental suggestions and 'additional informal comments'. Workers hold the children's profiles, but the profile is given to the nursery when the child starts attending, or to the family. While a home service is being delivered the profile is taken to the family once a month for sharing.

"Using photos is really important because they show children's progress and they are put in the file in a time-ordered way so the parent can see the child's progression through them."

Bedfordshire Traveller Education Service

Providing play sessions at home

"We do a long-term plan produced each term and submitted to the Service Manager. We record learning through observation, note-taking and photographs during the session, which is then transferred as a narrative into a pupil profile book. Narrative is analysed in terms of 'stepping stones' and Early Learning Goals, then next steps are identified. Books are shared with parents who can contribute if they wish. The original goes to the parent when the child enters 4+ or Year 1 schooling; a copy goes to the school and a copy is kept by Bedfordshire TES.

"In addition, we maintain a record booklet for each child. Each page corresponds and is colour coded according to a learning and development area of the EYFS with a box for each 'stepping stone'. The boxes are dated when development is observed."
(See Appendix 3A: Communication, Language and Literacy Sheet.)

Oswestry Sure Start Children's Centre

Providing a play bus service on a site

See Section 3 – Outreach partnerships

The double-decker play bus visits the site once a fortnight during term-time for a two-hour morning session. Two Play Bus Association workers are employed, and experienced early years workers run the sessions and provide the Children's Centre with copies of the session plans. Consideration is being given to learning profiles for the children attending the play bus, and it is likely that they will mirror those used in the Children's Centre nursery.

There are always the two Play Bus Association workers on the bus and sometimes an additional volunteer. The Home-Start worker also visits the bus on occasions. Additionally, the Sure Start librarian has organised summertime story sessions on-site, a library box for 0–5-year-olds on the play bus and a library box for 5–12-year-olds available in the site office. The Toy Library Service is also providing a service on the play bus.

The local school has since reported an improvement in the quality of transitional experience of Traveller children, emphasising improved social skills. Attachment issues improved, children settled more easily, were more willing to go to school, and were able to share and to listen to stories (speaking and listening skills improved), make friends with non-Traveller children and gain familiarity with resources. There is a nursery attached to one of the two main primary schools, to which the children also transfer. The play bus provides for the children up to nursery age and alongside the nursery places they access. The nursery, like the school, has reported improvements because of the play bus experiences: "They can tell instantly if a child has accessed the play bus or not."

Cheshire Traveller Education and Ethnic Minorities Support, in conjunction with Sure Start

Providing a play van service to four Traveller sites, play sessions and loan system of play boxes for children at home not accessing play van

Two teaching assistants take a play van service for children aged 2–5 on to sites once a week. Play van sessions are planned with account taken of the EYFS areas of learning and development. (See Appendix 4A: Planning Sheet (example).)

Where it is not possible to take the van to certain locations/sites, or where there is just one child on a site, play sessions are provided in the home and the boxes are left with the family and rotated every other week. Individual planning sheets for preschool home visits are used. Parents are verbally told of their child's progress after each session and individual records of achievement (EYFS profiles) are provided for each child. (See Appendix 4B: Pre-school Home Visit Record.)

Durham Ethnic Minority and Traveller Achievement Service (EMTAS), Northamptonshire Traveller Education Service and Nottinghamshire Traveller Education Service

Providing play sack and play bag sessions

Durham EMTAS lends play sacks to families, making use of the play sacks during a home visit – for example, reading a book to the child. (See Appendix 5A: Play Sack Record Sheet.)

Likewise, Northamptonshire TES takes play sacks and works with the children in their homes. Visits are planned and agreed with parents through a contract discussed and agreed at the initial home visit. (See Appendix 1A: Play Sacks.) It keeps records of the weekly dates when the service has been delivered. Play sack sessions are planned using an activity sheet with space to record observations. Assessments are recorded on a 'Child's Working Record', which is shared with the setting or school the child transfers into. (See Appendix 1B, 1C and 1D: Support Sheet Play Sacks, Foundation Stage Activity Sheet and Child's Working Record.)

"It is very important for the settings to have some information about the child's learning."

Early years practitioners within Nottinghamshire TES, as well as two Children's Centre outreach workers, working half a day a week with the TES, facilitate play sessions in the home with play bags. Their 'Playbag Project' is described as a 'bridge-building strategy' to encourage Traveller families to take up their children's entitlement to preschool provision. The workers go on to support children's attendance and achievement in settings.



The Nottinghamshire Playbags contain themed play resources to support different areas of learning and have a laminated contents card showing a photo of the contents.

"We think this project is really good because since Denise has been coming to see Callum he has come on a great deal and looks forward to the next visit – he has learnt many things and really enjoys the hour Denise spends with him. Callum loves all the different books and the shapes which he has to match up and all of the other interesting toys, me and my husband think the Playbag Project is a really good idea."

Callum's Mum quoted from the Playbag Project review



Callum enjoys the 'Sticklebricks' from his play bag.

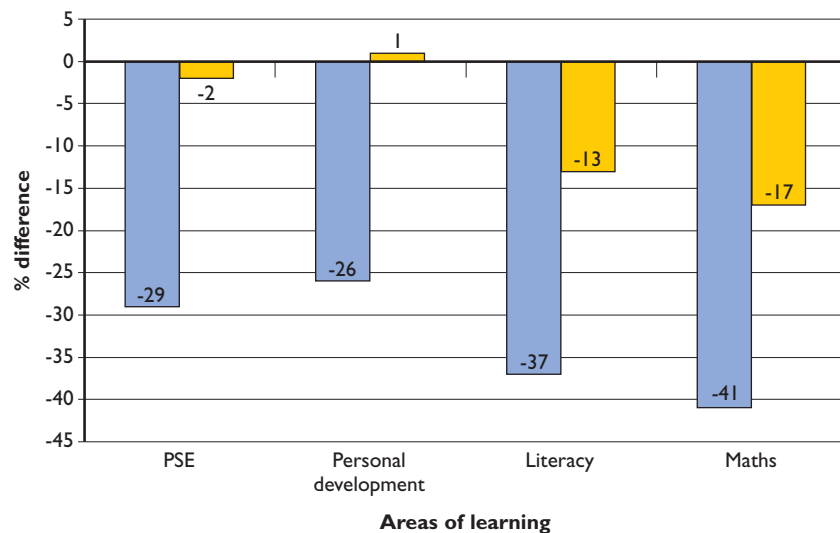
As part of the project, 'Playbag Coffee and Chat' events are also organised by the Nottinghamshire TES early years outreach practitioners. These take place in schools to facilitate a meeting between Traveller parents and their young children, and school staff. TES staff meet and greet parents and the children they have built relationships with through the play bag sessions at home. The school headteacher, Foundation Stage staff and other TES staff who support in the school 'pop in' for a short while to meet parents and children and chat about the play bags and which ones the children have chosen as their favourites.



At Playbag Coffee and Chat events, the playbags are available for the children to enjoy and to remind them which they like best and an 'Evaluation Wheel' provides a focus and talking point as well as an activity for the children.

Nottinghamshire TES keeps a record of support for the individual children it works with. (See Appendix 6A: Early Years Foundation Stage Record of Support.)

In addition they have monitored the attainment of the children who have been involved in the 'Playbag Project', by collecting end-of-Foundation Stage Profile scorings. They produced a graph (see below), which shows that the play bag work is having an impact. The blue bars show the scores before the 'Playbag Project' began; the yellow bars show the scores after the project had been in place for three years.



Traveller children's average scores shown as a percentage difference from county average scores

Key 2002 2005

This attainment data has also supported continuation of funding support for the project, as it shows the continued need for early-intervention outreach play work, by highlighting the differences between the attainments of Traveller children in end-of-Foundation Stage profile scores and the county average.

East Sussex Traveller Education Service in consortium with Brighton and Hove

Providing play bus and play activities in the home

An East Sussex TES part-time early years teacher takes a play bus on to sites once or twice a week. She takes the bus on to some permanent sites, but prioritises highly mobile families. There are many highly mobile families stopping on parks in the area of Brighton and Hove, particularly in the summer because of the opportunities of work in the area. A large percentage of these are Travellers of Irish Heritage.

The early years teacher also makes home visits and provides some play activities. She records her activities and observations and makes a note about ways forward and areas of learning and development to focus on. She models play activities for the parent and identifies any learning needs, which may involve bringing in other agencies. She introduces the idea of nursery provision to the family and will arrange places and offer support with settling in. (See Appendix 7A: Early Years Initial Observation Sheet and Appendix 7B: Planning and Observation Sheet.)

The early years teacher records the names and, where possible, the dates of birth of these highly mobile children and makes play and learning observations. She recognises that sometimes paperwork needs can be a barrier to starting a positive relationship with parents on an initial visit. Sometimes she will see a child only once, as they are so mobile. Consideration is being given to ways in which such children could be provided with a learning record that can be taken from place to place and added to by all early years practitioners the child may meet.

There is a precedent for this, in the National Association of Travelling Teachers 'Red Book' being used by a nursery attended by Circus Traveller children in East Sussex. The nursery adapted the book by adding photos of the children's play, with observation notes and comments.

Tapping into other support

Many practitioners have been able to 'tap into' other resources to support children's early learning and development:

- **Toy library services:** Mainstream toy libraries are sometimes able to re-route in order to visit sites, others can provide resources to outreach workers who then provide a 'satellite' toy library service to the families they work directly with.
- **Library services:** Story-telling sessions for under-fives have been made available on mobile libraries. Libraries and often Sure Start librarians have arranged for book boxes to be kept within communities. In areas where there is no mobile library and where local libraries are near to sites, 'library open days' have been held specifically for families from the Gypsy and Traveller community. Open days allow families to come together to the library and be supported in registering and in discovering what is provided. They may include under-fives story-telling sessions, and cross-phase TESS staff may get involved to support older children during the visit.
- **Bookstart:** The Baby Bookstart packs, Bookstart Plus and Bookstart Treasure Boxes are supplied to early years outreach practitioners who then gift them to children they meet and support. Children may miss out on this resource, especially if they are highly mobile. Many find this a useful way of making introductions to families and discussing early learning and development needs with parents and extended family. In some areas culturally reflective picture books are included, which promote inclusion of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller culture and lifestyle. Families can provide feedback that can be used to inform the evaluation of the Bookstart service. (See Appendix 2D: [Bookstart Questionnaire.](#))
- **Regional Forums for Early Years Practitioners working with Gypsy, Roma and Traveller children:** These can support workers to begin to find commonalities in their practice and provision, and help to increase consistency across areas, particularly in record-keeping, planning and assessment and finding ways of ensuring parents have records of their children's early learning and development. However, it is likely that there will always be variation, as local and individual needs are met. Perhaps most important of all is ensuring that within that variation there is quality.

Other tools

Current outreach early years practitioners make use of a number of useful tools to support their work. Some of these ideas could be adjusted or adapted for use by mainstream services:

- **Contact cards** – contact details for the service and usually the individual outreach key worker. They need to be kept simple and not text-heavy to be accessible to families where literacy levels are low. A first name and mobile telephone number is the minimal information needed. Some services include a photograph that describes the service in some way. Some services find it supportive to laminate cards and/or attach them to key rings when giving them to families.
- **Waterproof folders and files** – a plastic A4 folder, easily storable in a trailer. This can be used to store copies of children’s learning and development records, contact information for services and other information that may involve the outreach worker.
- **Welcome packs** – service contact details and maps of the area showing where services are located in the community.
- **‘Sorry I missed you’ fliers** – paper fliers with contact card information on and the phrase “Sorry I missed you”. These can be left in letterboxes or tucked into trailer doors if families are not in when a home visit is made. They can encourage a family to follow up with a phone call, which provides an opportunity to arrange another visit.
- **Photo cards and photo books** – laminated A5 or A4 cards or books of photos taken of the child during their play, capturing moments in their learning and development and particular interests of the child, and given to the child and family. They can also record important points of transition for the child – for example, their first day at playgroup or first session on a play bus. They do not need to have any text, or they can include minimal text. Current practitioners sometimes use these as records of learning and development which the family keeps as they move around.
- **Visual play provision cards and books** – cards held by the worker. They are text-free and show photographs of the work they do and the service they provide. They provide a visual aid when discussing provision with parents. Some preschool settings make use of this tool to show the environment, activities and routines children may participate in.
- **DVDs/CDs and tapes** – used to record service information and create welcome messages and given to families.
- **Mobile phones and text messages** – many Gypsy, Roma and Traveller families, particularly those who are highly mobile, will not have landline numbers and only use mobile phones. Text messaging is an increasingly useful tool. Settings sometimes make use of this technology too; for example, for sending a text to a parent if a child has not attended, or to a parent on the child’s first day in the setting, to lessen their natural anxieties. The mobile phone is also an essential safety tool for outreach key workers.

- **Disposable cameras/digital photography and video** (used with signed permission from parents/carers) – photos can be exceptionally powerful and meaningful to children and to parents, and are a way of capturing positive and pivotal moments in a child's early years. Disposable cameras are often given to parents to record children's play and interests at home, which support practitioner understanding and parent partnerships. Video cameras can be used in the same way; they are lent to families, the footage is shared between the parents and practitioner, and the child's learning is observed together and discussed. Instant cameras could be used when practitioners are working with highly mobile families, or for an initial visit when there is a possibility that they may work with the child only once. Observational notes can be made to accompany the photos.

Practitioner's comment

"Particularly when you are working with a parent who is anxious about their child going into a setting, showing photos of the child in the setting highlights the positive experiences they are having and the early learning going on and, I have found, is very reassuring for the parents. Also I have used photos to support personal, social and emotional learning in play sessions at home, showing the child photos of them enjoying and achieving in their play. It affirms their identity. One child I worked with identified the photos that meant a lot to him by putting green stickers on them."

- **Contact sheets and liaison sheets** – detail the key information about the child the practitioner works with. They may also include initial background information, contact details of other service workers and agencies involved. Liaison sheets log visits made and any other liaison work related to the child. Liaison records can help the key worker to track their support and provide historical information to support a child. They also offer a picture of the complexities in life experienced by one family, which can support the outreach key worker when they are attempting to engage inter-agency or specialist support for a family.

There may be other tools that have been developed by practitioners that are not included in this list. When organising outreach work there should be time to develop and review these tools.

Supportive pedagogy for outreach early years practitioners

Vital to effective practice is the value placed on and understanding of underlying pedagogy, as this keeps practitioners in touch with current thinking and research. It is also through pedagogy that practitioners can share the relevance of their work with parents.

Key Elements of Effective Practice (KEEP)

The DfES/Sure Start/National Primary Strategies guidance document, *Key Elements of Effective Practice* (2005),¹⁰ reflects current research on effective early years pedagogy. It outlines the key areas of practice, which effective practitioners need to continuously develop, demonstrate and improve:

- relationships with both children and adults
- understanding of the individual and diverse ways that children develop and learn
- knowledge and understanding in order to actively support and extend children's learning in and across all areas and aspects of learning
- practice in meeting all children's needs, learning styles and interests
- work with parents, carers and the wider community
- work with other professionals within and beyond the setting.

The list highlights where practitioners based in settings can focus efforts to improve their practice in order to be inclusive, make provision for and meet the needs of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller children in their early years. It may provide a useful starting point for training programmes related to the inclusion of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller children, developed for early years setting staff.

Experiential learning, the culture of the curriculum and learning styles

When play is meaningful to the child, it has an impact on their learning and development. Experiential learning is learning based on experiences the child is familiar with and understands, or that have meaning for them. The child is better able to make the connections that create new understanding, which in turn encourages them to discover more, and to learn and grow in the process. Practitioners working with Gypsy, Roma and Traveller children know the importance and relevance of using resources that reflect the culture and lifestyle those children experience. Settings should acquire books and toys, and provide play activities, that are culturally reflective and so support experiential learning.

"We support induction and then, in partnership with settings, support raising attainment and the curriculum development and enrichment with culturally reflective materials and resources."

Practitioner

Making use of culturally reflective resources



Here a Traveller site has been created as a small world imaginative play resource. The children enjoying this play in their setting in Nottinghamshire are not Traveller children themselves. The TESS has supported the setting to ensure a culturally reflective play curriculum exists.



Using objects bought from a Traveller's market stall supports water play in a play session at home.



A teacher from a local school in Nottinghamshire has been supported by Nottinghamshire TES to make home visits to Traveller children who will eventually attend the school she teaches in. She shares the book *Come and Count with Us* produced by Nottinghamshire TES. A copy of the book was distributed to all settings in Nottinghamshire – maintained, private, independent and voluntary.



Dad points out to his children the people he knows and recognises in a book about Traveller life and culture.

Resources are the tools used within a curriculum, but the curriculum, or educational programme itself, should reflect the experiences a child is familiar with and interested in. Practitioners should look at the EYFS six areas of learning and development, the early learning goals and the assessment scales with regard for the cultural understandings they have gained from their involvement with Gypsy, Roma and Traveller families. This will help to make the play experiences they provide relevant. The stranger must seek to find and include the child's cultural curriculum to avoid the dangers of imposing a stranger's curriculum, which risks flattening the diversity, the skills and potential of minority communities.

Learning styles will also be culturally influenced. For example, within Gypsy, Roma and Traveller families children learn by being near to, and watching and directly experiencing the skills and knowledge of their own family and community. Gypsy and Traveller children may be included in adult activity; for example, children will be given the same tools as their parent to help wash down the trailer, and even as toddlers, boys may go out with their fathers on a work day. Play becomes associated with the work of adult life. Although still very much seen as children, and protected and celebrated as children, they experience a closeness and inclusion in adult life, and their play is not separated from this.

Play influenced by home experiences



The child weaves string through a tow bar; his play reflecting his interest in connection, based on his experiences of what a tow bar is used for.



The child's skill, engagement and involvement in her play reflect her experiences of being involved in the care of her baby sister.

Changes in learning styles once a child goes to a setting can be challenging and unfamiliar; for example, sitting on a carpet and listening to a verbal instruction about an activity may not be as natural as standing next to an adult, watching and copying them. Practitioners need to recognise that the same learning outcome can occur through a different learning style.

Outreach play practitioners should observe, understand and embrace a child's most responsive and confident learning styles. There is also the challenge of introducing the child to, and building their confidence in, new ways of learning and discovering, which may help to prepare them for new educational experiences. Practitioners can use their knowledge of experiential learning to support mainstream settings and address barriers to enjoying and achieving.

Schemas – discovering the patterns in play

Discovering schema patterns in play can help involve parents and extended family. Schemas can explain certain behaviours in children and preoccupations in their activities and they will be just as visible in play that takes place at home as anywhere else – in fact, often more apparent at home, where a child may feel most confident in their play. Once they are observed and identified, schemas often become very obvious to adults who acknowledge them, and it is possible to then provide for the child's schema interests. In doing so, this values the learning and development the child is involved in. Working with schemas highlights the significance of play and can validate it as a meaningful experience. Perhaps most importantly, however, when parents know about schemas they are given a language, which supports them as the experts in their own children's learning and development.

Norfolk Traveller Education Service

Using schemas in outreach play work

"There is a wind turbine near to one of the sites. A Mum told me that her son would sit for long periods of time staring at the turbine through the trailer windows. I had talked about schemas and we planned together for the next play session thinking of resources to extend a rotational schema. She found a toy car in the trailer and we spun the wheels round for him to see, he was spellbound! I took a hand-held windmill to his play session the next time."

Norfolk TES Early Years outreach play practitioners talk about schemas with parents when they observe a schema in a child's play. They developed a 'play map', which is used to plan play sessions for individual children and to record observations. They use digital photography to record schemas. The photographs are copied for the child and put in a book with the play maps. These books are then given to the parent if and when they move or when play session provision comes to an end. They are also shown to practitioners in settings or schools if the child goes on to attend them. The play maps start with the child's interest and any schema observed, and it is possible to involve parents in the planning and the observations.

Each play map informs the next one: observations made in one play session are used as the starting point for identifying the child's interests, skills and schemas, which are then used as the starting point for planning the activities and resources used for the next session.

This child had a series of play sessions at home (a static mobile home). His outreach play worker identified that he was strongly exploring a trajectory schema in his play. She talked to his Mum about this and his Mum described how he would pile up his food on his plate, pile cushions up on the sofa and pile books up in the library. His Mum said how she felt embarrassed sometimes. The schema was supported with different resources in play sessions and the worker shared her understanding of schemas. This really helped his Mum and in the end she felt she could encourage his play pattern rather than feeling as though she had to stop the behaviour or feel worried about it.



“...we began to see that our play maps could become ‘individual inclusion plans’ too, for children just starting in settings.”

To ensure that activities span the range of areas of learning, ideas are recorded in related boxes on the play map. When children transfer into a setting or school, an early learning record/transition document is completed by the outreach play practitioner. Parents are given a copy and asked to provide their comments for the transition document. (See Appendix 8A and 8B: Play Map and Early Learning Record/ Transition Document.)

When delivering training to early years practitioners in settings and schools, a handout is provided about schemas, with a table that shows types of play activities and resources that support schemas and, at the same time, have relevance to the culture and lifestyle experienced by some Gypsy and Traveller children. (See Appendix 8C: What are Schemas?)

To support the quality of the work they undertake, the Norfolk TES early years outreach practitioners have a meeting once a term to review areas of their practice. They bring to these meetings any new learning from training they have attended. (See Appendix 8D: i) Observations and ii) Early Years Checklist.)

“After the conference, when we heard Chrissy Meleady from Early Years Equality, we began to see that our play maps could become ‘individual inclusion plans’ too, for children just starting in settings. We talked about the possibility of working with staff in settings on a play map before the child starts. This would give us the opportunity to talk about how the setting was going to plan from the child’s schemas, interests and skills and cultural experiences.”

Neuroscience – new understandings in brain science supporting the value of play experiences

In addition to the psychology that exists to support the pedagogy of early childhood learning and development, in recent years information from neuroscience is increasingly able to do the same. Neuroscience tells us that the first five years in human development are very important because it is at this stage that the brain is particularly open to the influences experienced by the child. Evidence shows that the following features influence the brain’s growth, development and organisation:

- activity
- emotional support and secure attachments
- stimulation of all senses
- presentation of novel challenges
- social interaction.

Neuroscience challenges educators to consider how they support these features that influence the brain’s growth, development and organisation. It also suggests that there are particularly ‘sensitive periods’ in the growth and development of the brain, and that capacity to learn is especially sensitive in the period from birth to five years.

This new information derived from science can be of particular support to early years outreach play practitioners who are building close partnerships with parents and working in the home environment rather than a setting. In the same way that schemas provide a language to help to support the value and importance of play experiences, a basic understanding of brain science can do the same.

Norfolk Traveller Education Service

Discovering how neuroscience can support the development of outreach early learning experiences for very young children

“We wanted to develop treasure basket sessions for babies, but we needed to be able to explain to parents what a treasure basket does. We did some research on neuroscience and found the evidence to show that stimulation of the senses supports brain growth. It makes sense to parents and it makes sense to us.”

Norfolk TES developed their ‘treasure basket’ resources and a planning and observation sheet for the treasure basket sessions. Particular care was given to ensuring that the treasure basket resources were safe for children, after a pilot treasure basket had led the mother involved to raise concerns about safety.

“She was anxious about the basket itself in case her little boy scratched himself where the wood was cut off on the corners, and she was worried about what he put in his mouth, of course. We bought some more neatly made baskets and we made sure parents knew that everything in each basket was clean or new.”

A variety of differently textured treasure bags were also made by one of the early years workers; these could be used when parents were uneasy about the baskets and they could also be lent to families. (See Appendix 8E and 8F: Pre-Foundation Resources and Treasure Basket Session Play Map.)

Right: Playing with a treasure basket

Far right: ‘Smelly bags’ were made with coffee beans



In addition to the treasure basket development, the neuroscience understanding supported the outreach early years practitioners in other areas of their work:

“We learned that under stress, a chemical called cortisol floods the child’s brain and can damage the growth and development of the brain. We felt that this was important knowledge when we were supporting families who were suffering from the stresses of enforced evictions. For example, it could arm us with more evidence that those situations affect young children, when we were making educational representation at case conferences where decisions were being made about evictions.”

Early childhood learning and development is an area of professional understanding that is ever developing and moving forward. In order to ensure high-quality outreach play provision for Gypsy, Roma and Traveller children, practitioners must be able to consistently build on their professional knowledge, and managers need to be openly supportive of this. The EYFS helps to support this process as it sets the standards for learning, development and care for children from birth to five. The four EYFS principles exist to guide the work of all early years practitioners and provide a starting point for the pedagogical understanding that outreach practitioners consistently need to seek and work with.

Notes

¹ www.surestart.gov.uk/_doc/P0002377.pdf

² www.surestart.gov.uk/_doc/P0002376.pdf

³ www.surestart.gov.uk/_doc/P0002367.pdf

⁴ www.standards.dcsf.gov.uk/primary/publications/inclusion/tess/pns_incl138205travellers.pdf

⁵ www.standards.dcsf.gov.uk/eyfs/

⁶ www.standards.dcsf.gov.uk/eyfs/resources/downloads/statutory-framework.pdf

⁷ www.standards.dcsf.gov.uk/eyfs/resources/downloads/statutory-framework.pdf

⁸ www.standards.dcsf.gov.uk/eyfs/resources/downloads/practice-guidance.pdf

⁹ www.standards.dcsf.gov.uk/eyfs/resources/downloads/practice-guidance.pdf

¹⁰ www.standards.dcsf.gov.uk/primary/publications/foundation_stage/keep/pns_fs120105keep.pdf

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Play Sacks

Aims

- To work with and support parents to develop their children's learning and development through play
- To demonstrate strategies that can be adopted by parents when playing with their children
- To ensure that parents and children feel confident when moving into pre-school and Foundation Stage provisions

Pre-school play sacks – parental consent for involvement

Parent/Guardian Name _____

Address _____

Emergency Contact No _____

Child's name _____ DOB _____

Medical needs _____

Siblings _____ DOB _____

_____ DOB _____

_____ DOB _____

_____ DOB _____

Time Agreed for Sessions

No	Date	Time Start	Length of Session	Parent Present*	Team Members Present
1.					
2.					
3.					
4.					
5.					
6.					
7.					

Date _____

Signed Parent/Guardian _____

TESS member/s _____

* Traveller Team members will not work with your child without a parent or responsible adult present. Traveller Team members will not work with your children if he/she is supervised by another child of school age. If at any time during the session you need to leave, the Traveller Team members will also leave. Parents should notify the Team if the child is ill, travelling or has a family commitment

Support Sheet – Play Sacks

Year _____ Term _____

Half-term	Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4	Week 5	Week 6

Foundation Stage Activity Sheet

Activity/Resource

Main Learning Intentions

Key Vocabulary/Questions

Observation/Evaluation/Reflection

Child's Working Record

Name of child: _____

Communication, Language & Literacy	Creative Development
Physical Development	Personal, Social & Emotional
Mathematical Development	Knowledge & Understanding of the World

Traveller Family Toy Library Recording Sheet

Parent	Child	Pack	Date out	Date in	Comment

Focused Activity Sheet

Focused Activity	
Child's Name & Age	Home Visit Observation
How To Involve Parents	
Aspect & Component	
Learning Intention	
Vocabulary	
Additional Resources	
Individual Needs	
Resource Pack	Additional Information
Date Planned Date Completed Completed By	What Could I Do Next?

Bookstart Questionnaire (I)

Date _____

1. What Bookstart pack did your child receive?

2. How did you and your child share the books?

3. How did your child show interest in the books?

4. How often do you share stories with your child?

Daily Weekly Monthly

5. Has your child got a special story they enjoy sharing?

6. Do you visit your local library?

7. Do you know where your local library is?

Bookstart Questionnaire (2)

8. Do you need support to visit your local library?

9. Do you know how to borrow books and what your local library offers?

10. How have the packs encouraged you and your family to share and enjoy books?

Any other comments

Communication, Language and Literacy Sheet

Early learning goals for:

• Language for communication	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Interaction/Conversation	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Listening Skills	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Vocabulary	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
• Language for thinking	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
• Linking sounds and letters	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
• Reading	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
• Writing	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
• Handwriting	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>

Planning Sheet (example)

Session plan

Date _____

Activity/Organisation	Learning Objectives	Resources
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Free play • Teddy Bears Picnic Making a paper picnic basket Making a table cloth (painting flowers and animals) • Alien monster game (Counting) • Snack (15 mins) • Dancing (15 mins) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Working as part of a group, take turns and share PSED • Interact with peers, participate in conversation CLLD • Show interest in illustrations • Extend vocabulary CLL • Manipulate different materials and objects. Dvp fine manipulative skills PD • Show an interest in numbers and counting MD • Begin to use number names in play • Enjoy joining in with dancing & ring games, responding to music and body movements CD • Listen, follow instructions. Promote good manners. Make choices PSED. Join in with simple songs CD 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assorted resources • Teddy Bears • Play dough, cutters, rolling pins, aprons • Cardboard templates, large dice • Fruit and drinks • CD player
Evaluation		

Pre-school Home Visit Record

TEMS (Traveller Education and Ethnic Minorities Support)

Family Name:	Reason for visit
Address:	
Details of work done/Activities covered	
Comments	
Team member	Date

Play Sack Record Sheet

Ethnic Minority & Traveller Achievement Service

- Improving outcomes for minority ethnic and Traveller children, young people and their families
- Supporting the promotion of race equality and the celebration of diversity

Name _____ DOB _____

Address _____

Date delivered	Date collected	Age	Sack	Comments (EMTAS/parents, inc progress, future needs etc)

Early Years Foundation Stage Record of Support

Name of child _____

Activities

1. Book sharing												
listening												
handling												
page turning												
pointing												
repeating words												
offering words												
joining in												
developing favourites												
2. Nursery rhymes/Number rhymes												
singing along												
actions/clapping/waving												
3. Manipulative skills												
gripping/grabbing												
manipulating objects												
mark making												
4. Exploring												
flaps/up/down												
buttons/pull/push												
small word												
construction												
match/sort												
5. Communication												
eye contact												
babbling in turn												
single word												
two words												
telegraphic sentences												
responding to requests												
following simple instructions												

Early Years Initial Observation Sheet

East Sussex TESS in consortium with Brighton and Hove

Name of child _____ DOB _____

School/Setting _____ Year _____

Communication, language and literacy

Listening

Reading

Writing

Speaking and Vocabulary

Linking sounds and letters

Mathematical Development

Number

Shape, space and measure

Calculation

Social Skills

Further Information

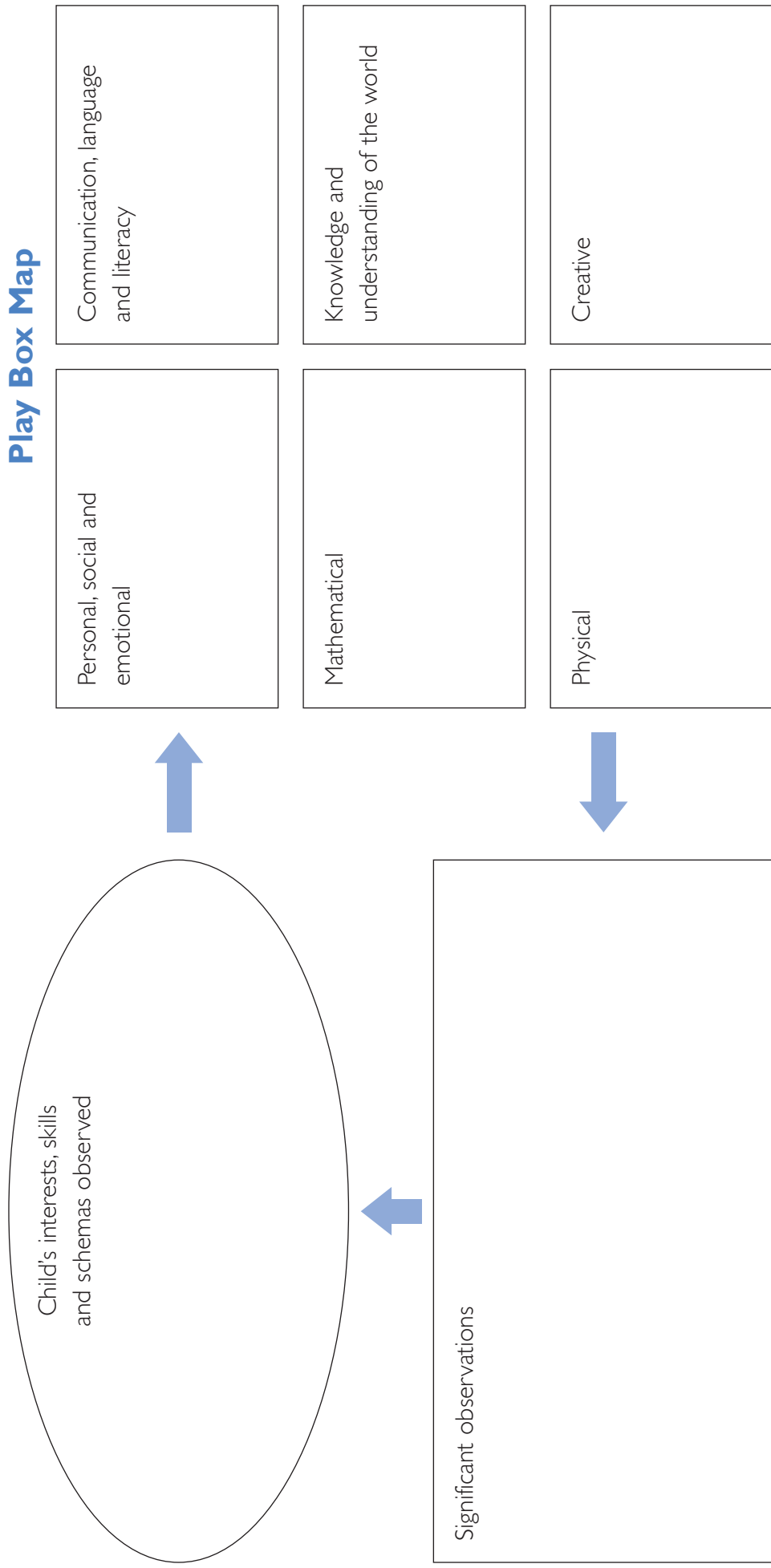
Planning and Observation Sheet

Date	Areas of Learning (ELG and SS)	Activities	Work done/Observations	Forward planning (inc. achievement)

Play Map

Date _____

Play Box Map



Early Learning Record / Transition Document

Child's name:	Date of birth:
Background information:	

Personal, Social and Emotional:
Communication, Language and Literacy:
Mathematical:
Knowledge and Understanding of the World:
Physical:
Creative:

Traveller Education Service Teacher comments:	
Signed:	Date:
Parent's comment:	
Signed:	Date:
School / setting details:	

What are Schemas? (I)

A schema is a pattern of behaviour, which can be seen when we observe what children do. These patterns become concepts in children's learning, development and understanding. Schema patterns were first identified by Jean Piaget. The works of Chris Athey (1990), Tina Bruce (1991) and Cathy Nutbrown (1994), have shown that once a schema has been observed, we can use it to support and extend children's learning. There are about 36 different schemas; the chart lists some of the more easily identifiable schemas seen in children's play. Some children show one particular schema very strongly in their play, this may gradually be replaced by another schema. Other children show several at once – a 'schema cluster'.

Observing schemas helps us to make sense of children's play, understand the concept being explored, and provide for it, whilst valuing their real interests. For example, when we can identify that the reason a child keeps putting sand in the water tray, and crumbling their biscuits into their juice, is because they have a 'Transforming' schema, we can provide for this learning in manageable ways, and condone not condemn the play. Schemas can be observed, discussed with parents who will recognise them from their child's play at home, and used to plan for the child's learning and development. It is understood that children who have similar schemas will play together more harmoniously than those who are exploring very different schemas.

'Schemas are repeated and co-ordinated patterns of movement and perception that become mental constructs or concepts. As a child applies her schemas to a diversity of events and to a range of objects, higher level and more powerful schemas form.' (Piaget 1962, [quoted in] Athey 1990, Bruce 1997).

'As their schemas become co-ordinated, we are able to observe recognisable patterns of behaviour in young children which can help us to understand them better; to enjoy their company more and to help them to learn in deep and thorough ways.' (Bruce 1997).

What are Schemas? (2)

Supporting and extending children’s schematic learning, using resources which may have relevance to Gypsy and Traveller culture and way of life

Schema	Play activity	Resources
<p>Dabbing – targeting, aiming, pressure.</p> <p>Trajectory (Vertical, Horizontal, Diagonal, Scribble) – straight lines, up, down, across, height, length etc.</p> <p>Grid and Intersection</p>	<p>Large sponge painting</p> <p>Water play</p> <p>Road mats, toy cars, making maps, taking directions</p> <p>Sewing</p>	<p>Car / trailer cleaning sponges</p> <p>Hose pipes, plastic bowls and jugs, Fairy Liquid bottles</p> <p>Toy trailers, trucks and motors</p> <p>Lace, ribbons, decorative materials</p>
<p>Connection / Separation – joining, undoing, securing, relationships between objects.</p>	<p>Construction / connector toys, woodwork bench, pull-alongs, junk modelling</p>	<p>Tools, tow bars, ropes, chains, hand made pegs, jewellery</p>
<p>Enveloping / Containing – wrapping, covering, putting away, hiding.</p>	<p>Outdoor play with tents and camps</p> <p>Dressing up</p>	<p>Tents, tarpaulins, baby blankets, decorative cushions</p> <p>Shawls, circus clothes, special occasion outfits</p>
<p>Enclosing / Infilling – boundaries, space, shape, size etc.</p>	<p>Role play</p> <p>Small world play</p> <p>Making animal homes</p>	<p>Large role play trailer</p> <p>Small play trailer</p> <p>Chicken wire, bird cages</p>
<p>Rotational – circles, revolving motion, cycles.</p>	<p>Outdoor play with wheels and tyres</p>	<p>Different sized trailer, car, lorry tyres, bike and push chair wheels</p>
<p>Core and Radial – inner and outer; dissection.</p>	<p>Picking flowers, making flowers</p>	<p>Hand made silk and wooden flowers</p>
<p>Transporting / Positioning – moving things, placing things.</p>	<p>Outdoor and indoor play with vehicles</p>	<p>Bikes, trikes, carts, trolleys, pull-alongs, small play trailer; pull-along motor; truck and trailer; toy cars</p>
<p>Transforming – changing things.</p> <p>Enclosing</p> <p>Enveloping</p> <p>Positioning objects</p> <p>Trajectory and containing</p>	<p>Hairdressing</p> <p>Dressing up</p> <p>Changing home corner into trailer</p> <p>Sand play with water</p> <p>Decorating objects</p> <p>Dark to Light, changing colours</p>	<p>Hair ribbons and clips</p> <p>Circus face paints, jewellery, aprons, shawls</p> <p>Large role play trailer; decorative cushions etc.</p> <p>Jugs and bowls</p> <p>'Barge Art' decorated spoons, horse shoes etc.</p> <p>Fairground coloured light bulbs</p>

Observations – what is significant, what we can look for?

- Well-being
- Making choices
- Motivation and quality involvement
- Showing curiosity, exploring something
- Child attempts something they've not previously tried
- Doing something they haven't been able to do before
- 'Chuffedness' and celebration
- Confidence
- Applying new understanding, knowledge or skills in different situations
- Solving problems
- Making connections
- Using communication – sounds, language, gesture and expression
- Explaining something in a new way
- Explaining how to do something to another child or adult
- Sharing, co-operating and collaborating
- Persevering
- Risk-taking

'Catch as you can' observation methods

- Photographing play in process and / or achievements
- Post-it note observations as play session takes place – good for catching language
- Quick reflective summary of main observations on a Post-it note at the end of the session – could be done with the parent (What did we see today, what has happened in the play today?)
- Reflective notes in the car afterwards

Early Years Checklist

From Marian Whitehead

**'Contemporary Issues in the Early Years'
Centre for Childhood Studies Conference
March 2003**

- Relationships are fundamental, young children need key people in their lives with whom they feel safely and lovingly 'held' emotionally and physically. Beware multiple indiscriminate care, this is why parents / carers / family members and key workers are so important. Positive relationships are the foundation for learning, they provide communication and make meaning happen.
- Physical environments are important and so are the resources within them, these reflect our values and our priorities and send out powerful messages.
- Hold positive expectations of very young children; play is work and young children can work hard!
- Play and exploration are at the heart of learning, children need to be active and *in the lead*.
- Tune in to children; make spaces for watching and listening.
- Collect quality information; you are controlling information that represents the child not you!

Pre-Foundation Resources; Resources for Treasure Baskets/Bags/Boxes

Resources to stimulate the five senses – sight, smell, hearing (sounds and voices), touch (movement and space) and taste, to enable simple connections to be made and to support critical / sensitive periods of brain development, e.g. development of the visual cortex.

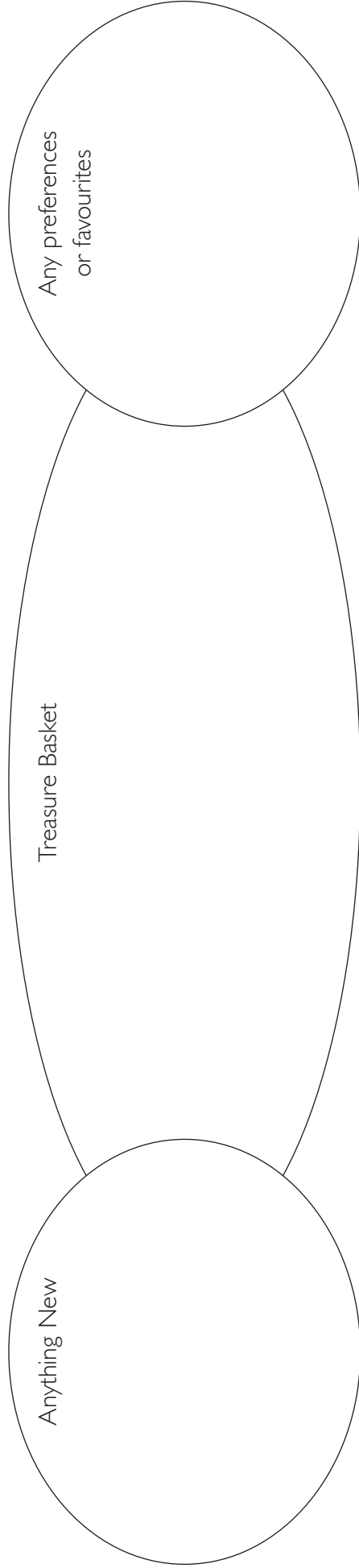
Ribbons	Pom poms	Sweet wrappers
Buttons	Sock puppets	Junk boxes / cartons
Sequins	Sponges	Cardboard tubes
Tinsel	Coasters	Pop bottle shakers, glitter
Christmas decorations	Pegs	Posting boxes
Costume jewellery	Brushes	Soaps
Balloons	Shells	Perfumed candles
Fresh foods e.g. fruit	Feathers	Hair curlers
Bells	Stones	Pastry crimpers
Ball shakers	Various spoons	Smelly jars, essential oil cotton wool
Musical instruments	Kitchen utensils	Smelly bags, herbs, coffee beans etc.
Light balls	Whisks	Lavender bags
Fibre optics	Tea strainers	Rosemary
Mirrors	Corks	Cinnamon sticks
Bubble wrap	Cotton reels	Foil balls
Belts	Keys	Chains
Toothbrushes	Nail files	Wind chimes
Plugs	Balls of string	Bowls
Rope	Wooden beads	Powder puffs
Scarves	Eggcups	
Textured material off-cuts	Sieves	

Culturally relevant:

Lace / Fur hairbands	Wooden flowers
Hand-made pegs	Horse tack

Treasure Basket Session Play Map

Date _____



Significant observations

<p>A Skilful Communicator: Being Together, Finding a voice, Listening and responding, Making Meaning</p>	<p>A Healthy Child: Emotional Well-being, Growing and Developing, Keeping Safe, Healthy choices</p>
<p>A Strong Child: Me, Myself and I, Being Acknowledged and Affirmed, Developing Self-assurance, A sense of belonging</p>	<p>A Competent Learner: Making Connections, Being Imaginative, Being Creative, Representing</p>