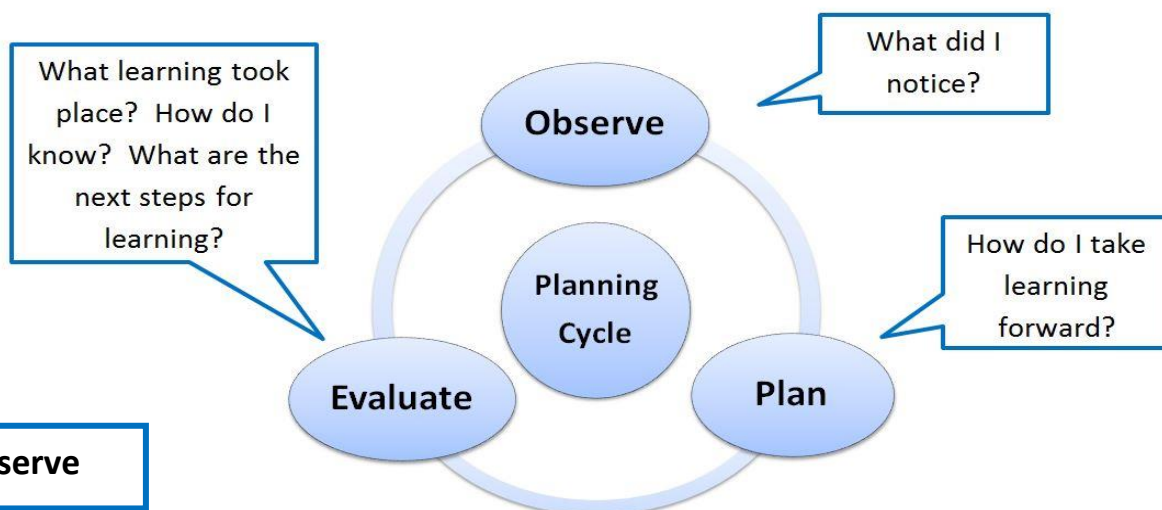


The purpose of planning is to ensure we meet the needs of young children across all areas of learning. This guidance document is to be used to enable managers of ELC settings to have the flexibility to individualise planning approaches which are most appropriate for them. Click on the images and hyperlinks below to access planning support resources available on the [Early Learning and Childcare Blog](#)

*'It is children's learning which must be our main concern, not our plans or schemes of work. They should support learning, not hinder it'*  
**(Hutchin 2000:p9)**



## Observe

All planning should begin with observations of the children's interests, strengths, needs and behaviours. This is absolutely essential as all learning should have the child at the centre.

*'The observation, assessment and planning cycle most naturally starts at observation. It is the bedrock upon which all else is built. Without knowing your children, understanding their interests and existing knowledge you cannot plan meaningful, challenging and exciting activities for them'* **(Brodie 2013:p17)**

## Plan

Planning within ELC can be completed over long, medium or short time periods. Most planning is completed in the short term. This means different things to different settings from planning a week in advance to a few hours in advance. However, planning should always be responsive and flexible, changing to suit the children's needs at that time. Practitioners should observe, be reflective and consider how learning is progressing and make adjustments as necessary.

*'Our approaches to planning are flexible and highly responsive ensuring that children are making sustained progress in their learning.'*  
**QI 2.2 Curriculum p25**

*'Flexible planning that assists staff to be responsive ensures that potentially rich and meaningful learning experiences, which have not been planned, are also recognised and maximised'.*  
**Pre-Birth to Three p46**

*'Adults who are not afraid to change their own plans and take the lead from the child and who are able to act as a support to the young child when needed.'*  
**Building the Ambition p72**

# How to Approach Planning in the Early Years

When planning learning opportunities, Practitioners should focus on aspects of the ELC setting which inform their planning process. These could be:

## Particular Groups of Children

This refers to an identified area of interest or a specific skill development for life, learning and work for a group:  
*'Planning strongly reflects children's ideas and interests and shows how practitioners very effectively respond to and promote their creativity, inquiry and curiosity.'*

**HGIOELC QI1.2 Leadership of Learning p15**

## The Setting

This refers to planning which highlights personalised ELC specific events such as health promoting week or community events as well as key festival, seasonal and cultural learning opportunities.

## Planning

This refers to the layout and organisation of the play space. This should include planning provision for literacy, numeracy and health and well-being across the indoor and outdoor play spaces.

## The Environment

This refers to areas of development highlighted through an observation, child's plan, discussion with family, pre-school form 1 or developmental overview. For individuals, practitioners may identify specific next steps for learning. They can then plan how to provide opportunities to take learning forward.

## Needs or Interests of Individual Children

## Evaluate

As Practitioners you are evaluating children's learning all the time. Take time to stand back and reflect on how learning is progressing across the setting. What skills were developed? What did individuals or groups of children learn? Was your plan effective and did it have an impact on children's learning? What incidental learning took place? How do you know? What are the next steps for learning?

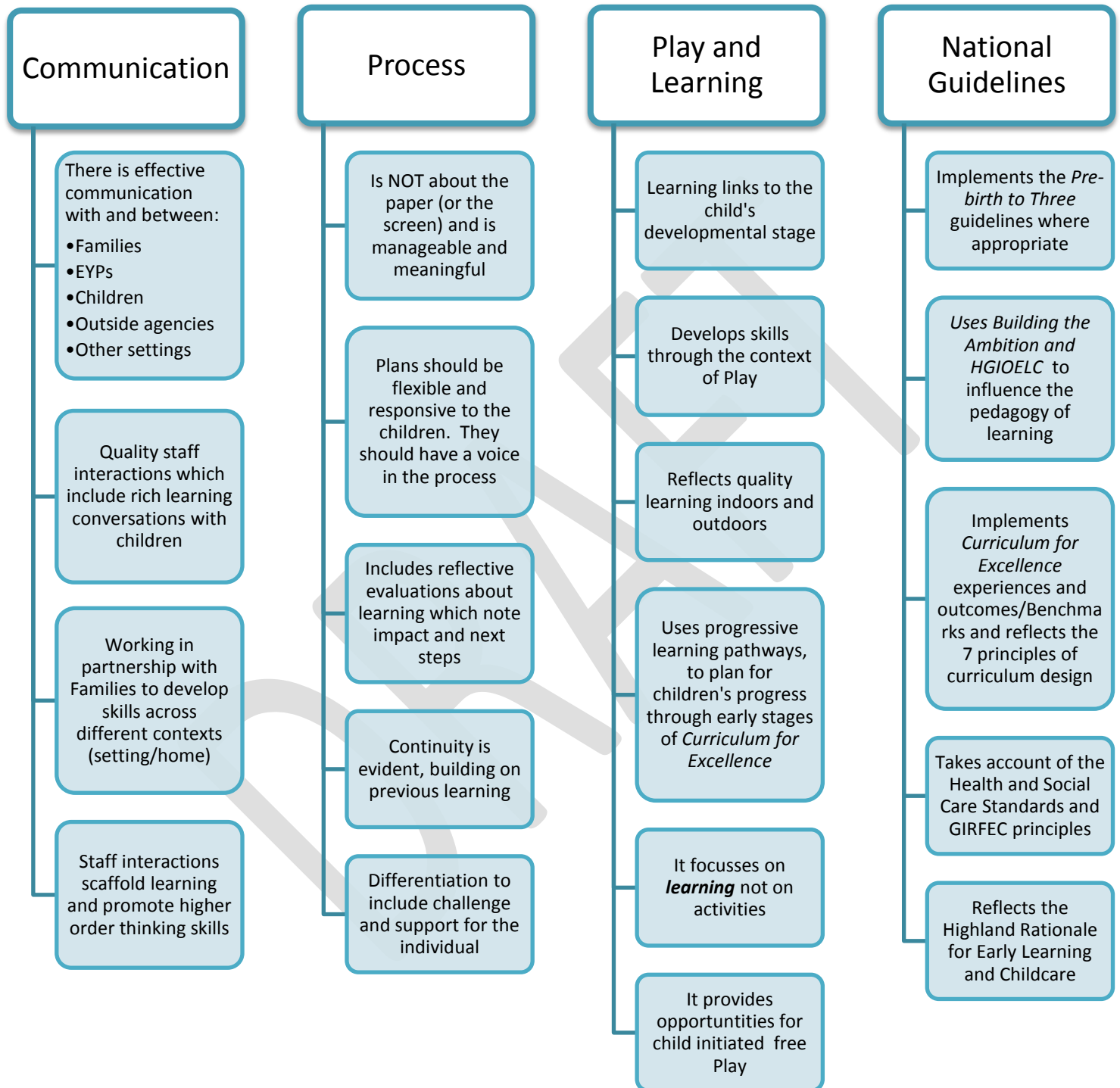
## How Good Is Your Planning Process?

Highland Council has issued new guidance on profiling and reporting which staff can now access. Planning a child centred curriculum and reviewing your planning is a key part of the profiling and reporting process. Discussion and debate about planning programmes are a crucial part of the process of improvement. Time should be taken to evaluate/review your planning processes regularly as part of ongoing self-evaluation. Highland key planning principles and challenge questions from [HGIOELC](#) (QI 2.3) can be used to support this.

# How to Approach Planning in the Early Years

## Key Planning Principles

We know it's a good approach to planning if we include these elements:



Resources to support planning approaches can be found [here](#) on the Highland Early Learning and Childcare blog.

# How to Approach Planning in the Early Years

**This document draws on information from:**

- Pre-Birth to Three, Positive Outcomes for Scotland's Children and Families (2010)
- How good is our early learning and childcare? Education Scotland (2016)
- Building the Ambition, National Practice Guidance on Early Learning and Childcare, Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014
- K. Brodie, *Observation, Assessment and Planning in the Early Years* (2015)
- V. Hutchin, *Tracking Significant Achievement in the Early Years*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition (2000)
- Building the Curriculum 3, (2011) Scottish Government
- Building the Curriculum 2, *Active Learning ~ A Guide to developing professional practice*, (2010) Scottish Government
- A statement for Practitioners from HM Chief Inspector of Education (2016) Education Scotland
- Quality and Improvement in Scottish Education Report, Early Learning and Childcare Settings (2016)

DRAFT