

## Key Learning Observations (KLOs) in Early Learning and Childcare

### Why do we observe?

- To find out about the child; their interests, what motivates them and their preferred way of learning
- To build relationships of mutual trust and respect
- To gather information about each child's strengths, development and learning
- To monitor the child's progress and identify next steps for learning
- To use this to build up a holistic view of the child's learning, development and achievements
- To capture significant learning moments
- To support children in developing their awareness of their own learning

*'Observing children is simply the very best way there is of knowing where they are, where they have been and where they will go next.'* **Drummond 1998**

### What do we observe?

- The overall wellbeing of the child
- How emotionally settled and secure the child is
- How engaged the child is in their play and learning
- How curious and motivated the child is
- The child's social and communication skills
- The child's physical development
- Significant, relevant learning and progress



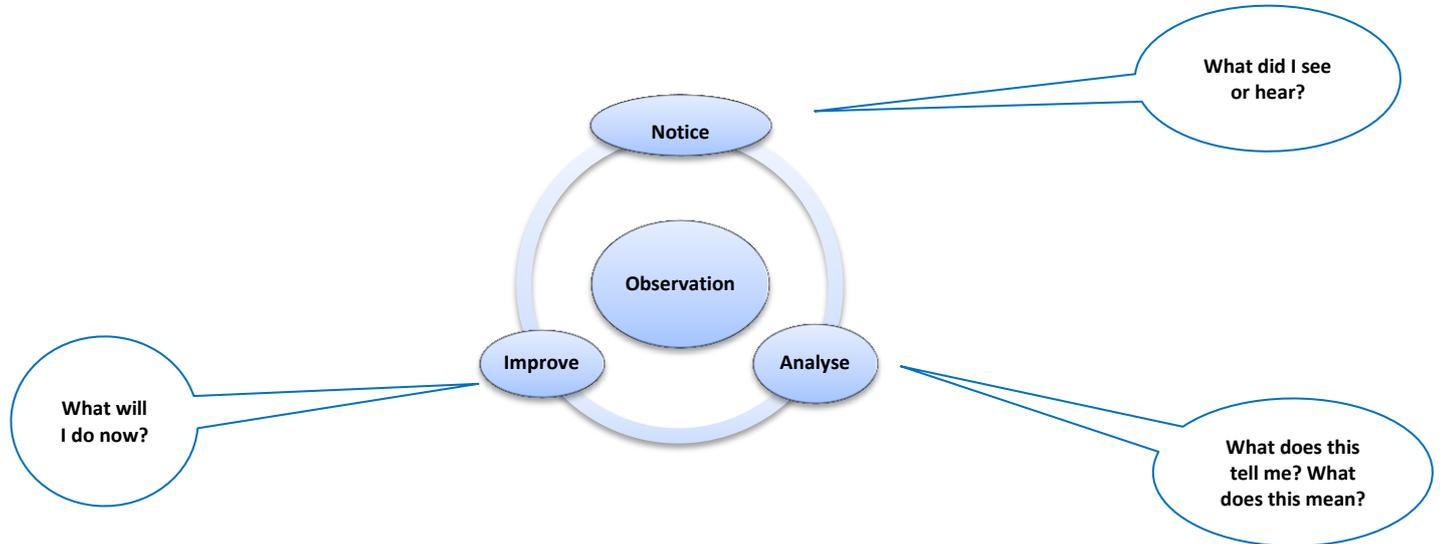
What am I seeing/hearing  
that makes me sit up and  
take notice?

*'Adults need to make detailed and sensitive observations to really "see" what children are doing, to make sense of their actions, to recognise their achievement and to create further learning opportunities.'*

**Nutbrown 1996**

## How do we observe?

*'Observation is about really listening to children and looking at what their play has to tell us.'* **Education Scotland**



### Notice (What did I see or hear?)

The skill of noticing what children do sounds very basic, but the quality of this is determined by the skill level of the adult. It is not the role of the adult to take every moment forward but instead to make informed decisions about the next steps in the learning process for individual children, with detailed significant observations being recorded. There are two key aspects in relation to the adult. The first is 'does the adult want to notice?' The second aspect is 'does the adult notice what is significant in relation to learning.' **Education Scotland**

### Analyse (What does this tell me? What does this mean?)

It is important not to draw conclusions from a single observation. In best practice effective analysis is achieved by analysing observations gathered across a range of learning opportunities and/or from a number of practitioners.

Staff should record; something the child has not done before, is showing something new the child has achieved or shows progression in their learning. **Education Scotland**

### Improve (What will I do now?)

Effective observation practice should always result in action being taken and such action can take many different forms e.g.

- Make a judgement about how much and how well a child has learned.
- Make a change to the learning environment to support and extend learning or to deepen an interest.
- Consider carefully interactions to support and extend learning. **Education Scotland**

### Points to remember when recording high quality Key Learning Observations (KLOs)

- Observations should be clear and concise; not long 'stories'.
- Only record what is significant - avoid 'so what?' observations.
- Observations do not have to be a record of one specific snapshot or activity - they can be an overview of development you have noticed over a period of time.
- Observations should be a record of children's learning based on what they say, make, write or do.
- Observations must be individual - there should be no group observations. If observing several children during one experience, make sure you are recording the individual achievements of each child. Children will not all be learning the same thing or developing the same skills.
- Observations must be checked for spelling, grammar and punctuation.
- All photographs and children's comments should be accompanied by a written note about the learning.
- All practitioners are responsible for observing all children, throughout the setting, at all times.
- All observations must clearly contain the exact date i.e. date/month/year e.g. 24/5/17.

#### Effective Criteria for Key Learning Observations (KLOs)

- ✓ Personalised
- ✓ Focus on learning and the skills being developed
- ✓ Note progression
- ✓ Specific
- ✓ Worded positively

### Ethical Observations – key points to consider

- Parent/carers need to understand why we observe and what we are recording.
- Written consent should be provided by parents/carers.
- Children should have an understanding of why we make notes and take photos.
- When observing children, practitioners are mindful of the child's rights.
- Writing an observation should never come in the way of supportive adult interaction.
- Every child should be valued, included and supported with no discrimination.
- Observations must reflect value and include the child's culture, language and family.

**This document can be used as an audit tool to monitor the quality of Key Learning Observations (KLOs)**

*'All practitioners have a clear focus on monitoring and evaluating the quality of children's learning and on tracking their progress and achievements.'* **HGIOELC QI 1.1**

*'In our setting, practitioners know individual children very well as learners. As a team, practitioners make very good use of high quality observations and interactions to make accurate judgements about the progress being made by babies, toddlers and young children. Observations are used to inform appropriate and well-timed interventions and future learning.'*

**HGIOELC QI 2.3**

*'High quality observations take place naturally during everyday activities and interactions. Effective use is made of observation to inform future learning and identify the progress made.'*

**HGIOELC QI 2.3**

*How can you use conversations and observations with children to implement, support and plan effectively for their needs? (Building the Ambition 2010 p44)*

*Making meaningful observations enables staff to get to know individual children well, ensuring that they are well placed to plan and provide for children's individual needs and interests. Observing children is a fundamental aspect of day-to-day practice and is the cornerstone of high quality early years provision. Adults, including staff and parents, should have a shared understanding of, and commitment to, the need for ongoing observations in supporting and promoting children's learning and development.*

**(Pre-birth to Three p43)**

**Monitoring Key Learning Observations (KLOs)**

It is suggested that current observations for one or two children from each Key Worker group in the three core areas are selected and used as a basis for a staff team discussion.

The questions below could be considered. Key workers should agree to their observations being used.

- **Is progress noted in Literacy/Numeracy/HWB and other areas?**
- **Are all observations relevant?**
- **Are there sufficient observations to provide a holistic view of the child's learning and development (within a selected timeframe)?**
- **Are observations personalised to the individual child?**
- **Do observations focus clearly on specific learning?**
- **Are observations worded positively?**
- **Are all observations correctly dated?**

This document draws on information from:

Education Scotland  
Cradle-Hall Nursery  
Curriculum for Excellence (2008)  
Pre-birth to Three (2010)  
How good is our early learning and childcare? (2016)  
Building the Ambition (2014)  
C. Nutbrown, *Respectful Educators – Capable Learner* (1996)  
M. Drummond (1998) in S. Smidt, *Observing Young Children* (2010)  
The Children in Scotland publication: *The Cycle of Observation, Assessment and Planning* (2013)  
K. Brodie, *Observation, Assessment and Planning in the Early Years* (2015)