

Step 2:

Deepen Understanding

It is important that yourself and your team consider on a deeper level the reasons that the changes to assessment practices in the EYFS were deemed necessary. Unfortunately, though the previous version of Development Matters stated, on each page, that the guidance was not to be used as a checklist, the format and the need to provide progress 'data' to Ofsted led to many settings and schools using this approach. The proliferation of online progress trackers has also contributed to the trend, in response to a perceived 'need' from users.

Expecting linear progress and basing 'next steps' on 'gaps' in a checklist sits very uncomfortably with the notion of high-quality, child-centred practice in which the vast majority of our Early Years Professionals believe. Thankfully, Ofsted have made it clear over recent months that there will be no request to see progress data when they visit for an inspection. This clears the way for getting back to basics and trusting our own professional judgement when it comes to assessing our children's learning.

However, for many of our staff who began working in the last decade, the previous version of Development Matters has in some cases acted as a crutch to support their practice and sometimes cover up gaps in their knowledge of child development. It is going to be imperative in the coming years that the sector is able to provide professional development to support these practitioners and to remind more experienced staff what life was like before. This is easier said than done, and will be a significant challenge.

