

SMART Targets

When a child needs something additional to or different from the majority of children it is important to have documentation in the form of a personalised individual plan to ensure that a person-centred approach is adopted. This should form part of the graduated approach to improve outcomes and attainment for children with a special education need or disability (SEND), measure interventions and support parental engagement.

Herefordshire Council provides an 'Early Years Play Plan' document which can be used when creating individual plans (this can be downloaded at Herefordshire Councils website). Within this document 'next steps' for learning should be set as clear SMART targets. SMART targets are targets that are **S**pecific, **M**easurable, **A**chievable, **R**ealistic and **T**ime bound whilst also being personal to the child. They should be set as small steps towards the child meeting their long term outcomes and be used as part of a graduated approach to supporting children in consultation with parents and the child.

It is important to ensure that **targets** are used when planning for children and not **aims**. An aim is a long term goal whereas a target is a statement of what the child can achieve within a given time. For example if the aim for Clive is to know the names of colours. The target might be for 'Clive to point to a red wooden block when asked by his keyworker, when presented with 2 red wooden bricks and a yellow wooden brick (3/5 tries)'. The SEND Code of Practice (DfE, 2015) states that:

9.66 An outcome can be defined as the benefit or difference made to an individual as a result of an intervention. It should be personal and not expressed from a service perspective; it should be something that those involved have control and influence over, and while it does not always have to be a formal or accredited, it should be specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and time bound (SMART). When an outcome is focused on education or training, it will describe what the expected benefit will be to the individual as a result of the educational or training intervention provided. Outcomes are not a description of the service being provided – for example the provision of three hours of speech and language therapy is not an outcome. In this case, the outcome is what is intended that the speech and language therapy will help the individual to do that they cannot do now and when this will be achieved.

Specific

As part of the planning process it is important to consider what specifically the child will be accomplishing by their target. The outcome should be broken down into a small 'next step' that is personal to the child. A good support resource to use when planning targets is the 'Early Support Developmental Journal' (available to download on the Herefordshire Council website)

It is important that clear language is used when setting targets. They should describe exactly **what** the child will be able to do to be successful.

These are some words that are often used in targets that are unclear and therefore not specific:

- Identify
- Understand
- Listen
- Know
- Enjoy

As these words are not specific, they are open to interpretation and cannot be measured. For example, how would we know that a child has understood a concept or has enjoyed a story that has been read to them?

Instead use words that are clear and specific such as:

- Name
- Point to
- Look towards
- Reach towards
- Construct
- Crawl
- Walk
- Run
- Catch
- Find
- Match
- Read
- Recall
- Retell
- Give
- Count
- Label
- Repeat

Measurable

In order to show that children are making progress practitioners must identify that targets have been achieved. Therefore when setting a target there must be a measurable factor to clearly show during times of review whether or not the target has been successful.

Often the level of success is stated by how many times the child responds successfully out the amount of times they have practised so the target may include a frequency measure to decide if the target has been successful during the review period. For example if the target is for Mae to catch a large ball from a distance of two metres the target might be changed to 'Mae will catch a large ball 3 out of 5 times, thrown to her from a distance of 2 metres'.

Achievable

It is important that targets are achievable and it is possible that the child will be able to reach the target by a given date. Considering this will help in deciding whether the next step is suitable within the given time or in fact a future aim.

Realistic

Targets must be developmentally appropriate for the child and therefore a genuine next step for them.

Time bound

SMART targets are always bound to a date in which the target will reviewed to assess progress.

Key considerations when setting SMART targets

- How many targets will be set?
- Is the target one that can be 'seen, heard, counted or measured'?
- How often does the target activity need to be carried out?
- What tools/materials/resources do you use to support you to develop these?

- What progress do you hope to see as a result of the action taken?
- How have you reflected the child's voice?
- How will you show the child they are successful? E.g. praise, reward, special activity
- How will you record progress?
- When will the target be reviewed?
- Consider how this approach can be carried out at home?
- How have you involved parents?

Examples of targets that are **not SMART**:

Joshua will make a choice.

Arlo will communicate when he wants more.

Kelly will know 2D shapes.

Marlin will respond to an adult.

Jacob will join in for a short activity.

Laura's vocabulary will improve.

Tyreke will enjoy a story.

Examples of targets that **are SMART**:

Joshua will point to his choice of snack, when shown a choice of two snacks by his key worker in a distraction free environment (on 3 out of 5 times offered).

Arlo will request more by using the sign 'more', when his key worker blows bubbles to him during 1:1 time (on 2 out of 5 occasions).

Kelly will pick up a 2D square shape when asked by an adult, from a group of 2 2D triangle shapes and 1 2D square shape of the same colour (on 2 out of 5 occasions).

Marlin will turn her head towards her key worker, when her key worker says her name and when just Marlin and her keyworker are present (3/5 times).

Jacob will copy the action movement for 'round and round' for the action song 'The Wheels on the Bus', when a practitioner models the action and the action song is playing during 1:1 time (4 out of 5 times).

Laura will say 'lion' and 'mouse', when her key worker points to these characters in her favourite book 'The Lion and the Mouse' during 1:1 time (3/5 tries).

Tyreke will retell the ending of the story 'The Music Maker', when his keyworker has just read the story to him and his keyworker points to the pictures on the final two pages during 1:1 time (4/5 times).

When creating targets for children with complex SEND it is important to remember that targets may need to be broken down into very small steps. Herefordshire Portage Service offers a 'Portage Workshop' for Early Years Practitioners in Herefordshire. A key part of the training is developing an understanding of the small steps approach to learning and gives professionals the tools to help children achieve their long term goals by effectively planning a small step approach and using 'fail safe learning'. Please contact Herefordshire Portage Service if you would like to find out about when the next training will be available.