

Early Years Support Tool

When completing the tool, please consider what the child is doing independently without adult support, to ensure a true reflection of their achievements.

The Key Indicator should be highlighted when the child has achieved the statement. When the child is working towards the key indicator statement then small step section is to be completed to reflect this.

The Small Steps Tool is to be used alongside the Ordinary Available Inclusive Practice document to support you further in meeting the needs of the child.

Personal, Social and Emotional – breaking down the key indicators into smaller more achievable steps

Key Indicator	Small Steps to incorporate the environment, role of the adult and effective planning			
Step 1 0-3mths	Holds eye contact briefly (5 seconds or more)	Looks at faces Smiles at people	Copies facial expressions and mouth shapes – for example, sticking out tongue, opening mouth and widening eyes	Is comforted by touch Is comforted by people’s faces
Step 2 2-5mths	Recognises and is most responsive to main carer; face brightens, activity increases when familiar carer appears	Makes sounds and movements to initiate interaction with another person	Calms from being upset when held, rocked, spoken or sung to with soothing voice	Holds eye contact during interactions with a familiar person
Step 3 4-7mths	Shows emotional responses to other people’s emotions – for example, smiles when smiled at and becomes distressed if hears another child crying	Laughs and gurgles	Likes cuddles and being held – for example, calms, snuggles in, smiles, gazes at carer’s face or strokes carer’s skin	Shows pleasure at return of familiar carer
Step 4 6-10mths	Shows attachment to special people, e.g. by being distressed when they are separated, staying close and showing affection	Takes turns in interactions with others; quietens when another person talks Lifts arms in anticipation of being picked up	Makes own sounds when talked to, especially when a smiling face is used by parent	Uses voice or gesture to refuse – for example by pushing object away, shaking head
Step 5 9-13mths	Follows with gaze when an adult directs attention to an object by looking and pointing – for example, when an adult points to a dog and says “Look at the dog” and your child looks at the dog	Is wary of strangers Builds relationships with special people – for example, by showing affection or holding your attention by vocalising	Points to draw other people’s attention to things of interest Enjoys finding their nose, eyes or tummy as part of naming games	Shows interest in the activities of others and responds differently to children and adults – for example, may be more interested in watching children than adults or may pay more attention when children talk to them
Step 6 12-16mths	Uses other person to help achieve a goal – for example, to get an object that’s out of reach or activate a wind-up toy	Uses familiar adult for ‘emotional refuelling’ when feeling tired, stressed or frustrated – for example, stops playing to have a cuddle or sits quietly snuggled in on your lap for a few minutes	Clings to special person and hides face when feeling scared or overwhelmed	Gets distressed and anxious if left somewhere without their familiar adult Uses comfort toy or object to calm self
Step 7 15-19mths	Is aware of other people’s feelings – for example, looks concerned if hears crying, or looks excited if hears a familiar happy voice	Explores new toys and environments, but looks back to you regularly to ‘check in’	Responds to a small number of boundaries, with encouragement and support	Reacts to an audience – for example, repeats an activity or action which is received positively by a smile, or which is laughed at, applauded or cheered
Step 8 18-22mths	Uses a familiar adult as a secure base from which to explore independently in new environments – for example, ventures away to play and interact with	Can tolerate brief separations from special people	Expresses emotions and seeks reaction – for example, may cry at a minor injury and ask for help or comfort	Starts to share and ‘give and take’ Plays ball cooperatively with an adult – for example, may kick or roll the ball back and forth

Early Learning and Childcare Team – Small steps guidance incorporating information from the Early Years Development Journal which was created in partnership with the Open University and the Department for Education (*Crown Copyright 2013*)

	others, but returns for a cuddle if becomes anxious			
Step 9 21-25mths	Demonstrates sense of self as an individual – for example, wants to do things independently, says “No” to adult, and so on	Actively draws others into social interaction	Hands a toy to an adult for assistance when unable to get it to work; sees adult as someone who can help	Spends time in groups of other children engaged in own play, but watching the other children
Step 10 24-31mths	Shows understanding of some rules and routines	Takes a lead in positive interactions with special people – for example, initiates interaction, shows spontaneous affection, can wait a little while before seeking others for comfort and security	Uses others as sources of information by asking questions	Makes choices that involve challenge, when adults ensure their safety
Step 11 30-36mths	Recognises self in mirror or photo – for example, if looks in mirror and sees dirt or food on face, tries to wipe it off, or points to self in photo when asked	Seeks out others to share experiences Understands they have to share and take turns but might not always be willing to do so – for example, with toys	Participates and helps with familiar routines with help from adults – for example, dusting, setting table or putting away toys	Includes another child in their play sequence and may talk to them as they do so – for example, gives child a cup to drink from
Step 12 35-41mths	Shows independence in selecting and carrying out activities	Is sometimes stubborn or negative and reacts with annoyance to frustration	Enjoys responsibility of carrying out small tasks such as carrying a bag back from the shops	Regularly uses adults as sources of knowledge, comfort and shared activities
Step 13 40-51mths	Is curious about others and can adapt behaviour to fit in with different events and social situations – for example, removing shoes and socks before going on slide after seeing others doing this	Understands that own actions affect other people – for example, becomes upset or tries to comfort another child when they realise they have upset them Often actively seeks sharing and fairness	Has an awareness and pride in self as having own identity and abilities and welcomes praise Can express wishes and needs clearly and understands when these are not immediately met	Shows care and concern for others, for living things and the environment Enjoys joining in with family customs and routines
Step 14 50-60+ mths	Works as part of a group or class, taking turns and sharing fairly, understanding that there need to be agreed values and codes of behaviour for groups of people, including adults and children, to work together harmoniously	Understands and follows agreed values when in group situations with adults and children Selects and uses activities and resources independently	Understands that people have different needs, views, cultures and beliefs, which need to be treated with respect Understands that they can expect others to treat their needs, views, cultures and beliefs with respect	Is confident and skilled in seeking comfort, reassurance and help from special people Enjoys talking about past experiences, the present and future plans Knows about their culture and beliefs and those of other people

Communication – breaking down the key indicators into smaller more achievable steps

Key Indicator	Small Steps to incorporate the environment, role of the adult and effective planning			
Step 1 0-3mths	Turns eyes and or head towards you when you speak	Cries to express needs, for example when hungry or in discomfort	Uses sounds for example, gurgling and cooing when relaxed	
Step 2 2-5mths	Reacts by smiling, looking and moving when you interact	Makes sounds in response when you talk	Turns quickly to your voice across the room	Shows excitement at approaching voices, footsteps or other familiar sounds
Step 3 4-7mths	Vocalises back when talked to (making own sounds) especially to familiar adult and when a smiling face is used	Looks carefully at a person talking	Stops communicating if speaker turns away	Enjoys listening to nursery rhymes Responds to changes in tone of voice
Step 4 6-10mths	Begins to babble by repeating a series of the same sounds – for example, ‘baba ba’, ‘ma-ma-ma’	Begins to develop and use some consonant sounds, for example ‘g’ ‘m’ ‘p’ ‘d’. Begins to develop and use vowel sounds, for example ‘aa’	Understands words they hear a lot and that are said with gestures, for example ‘all gone’ ‘bye-bye’	Uses voice or gesture to attract attention
Step 5 9-13mths	Begins to point to objects and people, using index finger	Responds to own name by turning or looking up at whoever said their name	Recognises some family names; mummy/daddy/brothers/sisters/pets will turn to them when name is said	Copies the speech of others Babbles using varied consonants and vowels – ‘baga’, ‘maba’
Step 6 12-16 mths	Uses approximately five different words without any help	Takes part in simple conversation with adult focusing on here and now or frequent events such as meals or bath time	Uses sound instead of word to represent different object – ‘brmm’ for car, ‘yum’ for dinner, ‘dodi’ for dummy	Responds to familiar words and short sentences based on familiar routines, for example runs to the door when adult holds keys and says “its time to go”
Step 7 15-19mths	Recognises and will identify many objects and pictures (by pointing) when asked questions – for example, “Where’s the ball?”	Understands and follows simple instructions in context, for example ‘give me the ball’ When asked can show simple body parts on self by pointing to them – hair, eyes, ears and nose	Copies expressions they hear a lot, for example ‘oh dear’ or ‘all fall down’. Enjoys nursery rhymes and tries to join in with actions or sounds	Uses different single words to comment on what’s happening, for example says ‘bird’ if they see one in the garden
Step 8 18-22mths	Begins to combine words into simple sentences, usually two words at first	Is learning new words almost everyday Uses words for actions as well as objects and people	Listens and responds to simple information or instructions out of context, for example ‘Ben find your car’ or ‘Ali put your teddy in bed’	Begins to use words to refer to people and things that are not present Sings or gestures along with favourite action rhymes although words may not be clear
Step 9 21-25mths	Recognises and joins in with songs and actions – for example, ‘The Wheels on the Bus’	Repeats words or phrases from familiar stories Fills in the missing word in a story or rhyme – Humpty Dumpty sat on a	Understands simple instructions involving two people or objects such as ‘get mummy’s shoes’ or ‘find Jacobs car’	Uses words to ask for help Uses adult form of vowels (a,e,i,o,u)
Step 10 24-31mths	Begins to make little ‘sentences’ by joining three words together – for example, ‘Daddy gone work’	Learns new words very rapidly and uses them when communicating with other people	Shows sustained engagement and interaction when sharing a picture story book with an adult	Uses a variety of question words, for example ‘what’ ‘where’ ‘who’

Early Learning and Childcare Team – Small steps guidance incorporating information from the Early Years Development Journal which was created in partnership with the Open University and the Department for Education (*Crown Copyright 2013*)

		Understands more complex sentences – ‘put your toys away and we’ll read a book’	Tries to repeat many things the adult says	
Step 11 30-36mths	Listens eagerly to stories and requests favourites over and over again	Shows understanding of position words such as ‘in’ and ‘on’, carries out the action – ‘put dolly in the box’	Talks about ownership – ‘my teddy’ ‘your book’ ‘the mans car’ Uses pronouns correctly, for example ‘I’ ‘Me’ ‘you’	Knows full name Says all or part of simple nursery rhyme
Step 12 35-41mths	Uses a range of tenses – for example, ‘play’, ‘playing’, ‘will play’ and ‘played’	Uses sentences with more than 3 words Understands the use of objects, for example ‘What do we use to cut with?’	Can re-tell a simple past event in correct order- ‘went down slide and hurt finger’ Talks about own life and favourite things	Asks questions with yes/no answers – ‘was he singing’? Says negative sentences, for example @he wasn’t singing’
Step 13 40-51mths	Uses language to connect ideas, explain what is happening and anticipate what might happen next in a familiar situation	Begins to use language for pretending and organising play – ‘you be the Mum and I be the baby’ Produces nearly all the consonant sounds accurately	Easily understood by a range of people Retells stories in correct sequence drawing on language patterns of stories – ‘Once upon a time’	Understands ‘when’ and ‘why’ Talks about what might happen next in a familiar situation
Step 14 50-60+ mths	Can pick out the first sound in a word	Can produce most speech sounds, although may have some difficulty with consonant blends – ‘tr’ in tree and ‘bl’ in blue	Shows an understanding of the elements of stories – main character, sequence of events and story beginning and end	Asks ‘why’ frequently and considers reply Adapts language to the needs of the listener

Physical – breaking down the key indicators into smaller more achievable steps

Key Indicator	Small Steps to incorporate the environment, role of the adult and effective planning			
Step 1 0-3mths	Makes smooth movements with arms and legs, which gradually become more controlled	Turns head to side when placed on tummy Opens mouth to feed when corner of mouth is touched	Sucking is strong and rhythmic with coordinated swallowing Lifts head clear of ground	Looks steadily at things for short periods (5 seconds or more) Presses down foot/straightens body when held standing on hard surface
Step 2 2-5mths	Explores hands and fingers – for example, watches them, presses hands together, clasps and unclasps hands	Able to control head when supported in upright position; head does not flop forwards or backwards	When lying on tummy, lifts head up and uses forearms to support Uses movement and senses to focus on, reach for and grasp objects	Closes hand firmly on objects placed in palm Sits with support
Step 3 4-7mths	Picks up and explores objects e.g. by holding to mouth	Rolls over from front to back, from back to front	When lying on back, lifts legs in vertical position and grasps feet	Can lift head and chest to support self, using straight arms and flat hands lying on tummy
Step 4 6-10mths	When sitting, can lean forward to pick up small toys	Sits unsupported on the floor Passes toys from one hand to another	Pulls to standing, holding furniture or person to support	Can move from sitting position to hands and knees Moves around the floor by wriggling
Step 5 9-13mths	Actively cooperates with nappy changing (lies still, helps hold legs up)	Crawls, bottom shuffles or rolls continuously to move around Holds own bottle or sipper cup Opens mouth for spoon	Picks up small object between thumb and fingers Enjoys mark making in damp sand, paste or paint Throws toys or objects deliberately	Stretches out with one hand to grasp toy if offered Can let go of things – to drop something or give it to you Can reach and grab a moving object by moving towards where the object will go
Step 6 12-16mths	Takes first few steps; feet wide apart, uneven steps, arms raised for balance	Starts to communicate urination and bowel movements Walks around furniture lifting one foot and stepping sideways (cruising) Walks with one or both hands held by adult	Grasps finger foods and brings them to mouth Attempts to use spoon and other utensils – can guide towards mouth but food often falls off	Holds an object in each hand and brings them together in the middle, for example bangs two blocks together Holds pen or crayon using a whole hand (palmar) grasp and scribbles with different strokes
Step 7 15-19mths	Clearly communicates wet or soiled nappy or pants	Builds tower of 2 blocks Walks with shorter steps and legs closer together, no longer needs to hold arms up to balance Walks up steps holding hand of adult	Comes downstairs backwards on knees (crawling) Accepts new textures and tastes – larger pieces of foods and different types	Develops own likes and dislikes in food and drink and may refuse disliked food or drink Takes off easily removed clothes, for example socks Turns knobs and easy screw lids

Early Learning and Childcare Team – Small steps guidance incorporating information from the Early Years Development Journal which was created in partnership with the Open University and the Department for Education (*Crown Copyright 2013*)

			Shows awareness of what toilet/potty is used for	
Step 8 18-22mths	Starts to help with dress and hygiene routines	Holds cup with both hands without much spilling	Is aware of where clothes are kept Gets onto child's chair without assistance either backwards or sideways	Brushes own hair Can kick a large ball
Step 9 21-25mths	Holds pencil between thumb and two fingers no longer using whole hand grasp	Runs safely on whole foot, stopping and starting easily and avoiding obstacles Squats steadily to rest or play with object on the ground and rises to feet without using hands	Feed's self competently with spoon Drinks well without spilling	Puts on hat and slip-on shoes Indicates need for toilet by behaviour – dancing movement or holding self
Step 10 24-31mths	Shows control in holding and using hammers, books and mark-making tools	Climbs confidently and uses nursery climbing equipment Builds a tower of up to 6 blocks	Takes off loose coat or shirt when undone Turns pages in a book one at a time	Unzips front zipper on coat or jacket Can undo Velcro fasteners
Step 11 30-36mths	Can catch a large ball	Walks downstairs safely, 2 feet to each step whilst carrying a toy Stands on one foot when shown Makes snips in paper with child scissors	Usually able to control bowel with occasional accidents Takes pleasure in personal hygiene including toileting Pulls up own trousers, pulls up zipper	Can undo large buttons Screws and unscrews toy nuts and bolts Able to blow, for example candles or food
Step 12 35-41mths	Wash and dry hands	Holds pencil near its tip between first 2 fingers and thumb and uses good control to draw	Asks for toilet using voice, gesture or action Pulls down own pants when using toilet	Ride's tricycle using pedals Can jump forward 2 feet Puts arms into open fronted shirt or coat when held up
Step 13 40-51mths	Reliably dry and clean during the day	Negotiates space successfully when playing racing and chasing games with other children adjusting speed or changing direction to avoid obstacles	Handles tools, objects, building and malleable materials safely with increasing control Hangs up own coat/buttons up	Walks upstairs using alternating feet, one foot per step Eats competently with knife and fork
Step 14 50-60+ mths	Dresses and undresses independently	Travels around, under, over and through balancing and climbing equipment with confidence	Shows increasing accuracy in throwing, catching and kicking a ball	Recognises the importance of keeping healthy and things that contribute to this Takes responsibility for self-care in washing, teeth cleaning and toileting Dresses and undresses independently

Thinking – breaking down the key indicators into smaller more achievable steps

Key Indicator	Small Steps to incorporate the environment, role of the adult and effective planning			
Step 1 0-3mths	Shows interest in new experiences – for example, when you show a new toy	Moves hanging rattle or soft toy while moving arms and legs	When lying on back or propped up, moves eyes to follow face or toy moving side to side, close to face	Turns eyes and/or head to new sound Is startled by sudden noise
Step 2 2-5mths	Repeats actions that have an effect – for example, kicking or batting a mobile to create movement including actions to make a sound again, for example, shaking a rattle	Shows interest in small objects or the detail of a toy Reacts with sudden behaviour change when face or object disappears suddenly from view	Looks around a room with interest; visually scans environment for new and interesting objects and events Smiles with pleasure at recognisable playthings	Shows interest in moving pictures and sound – T.V Can shift visual attention by looking from one object to another and back again
Step 3 4-7mths	Shows anticipation and enjoyment of familiar caring routines and simple games – for example, sucks or licks lips in response to sounds of preparation for feeding or gets excited upon seeing spoon or familiar toy	Plays with and explores objects by touching them, looking at them, bringing them to the mouth and listening to the sounds they make	Persistently and deliberately reaches out for toys	Notices change in groupings of objects, pictures and sounds, for example they may look puzzled, unsettled or stop what they are doing
Step 4 6-10mths	Watches toy being hidden and tries to find it	Plays with objects by banging, shaking, turning them around in their hands	Reacts to familiar sounds or sights by changes in behaviour, for example extends arms and legs, smiles, searches with eyes when hears vacuum, running bath, footsteps	Shows interest in toys and other things that incorporate technology Can release toy from grasp if attention disturbed
Step 5 9-13mths	Struggles to get objects that are out of reach and pulls a mat towards them to make a toy or object come closer	Shows excitement during turn taking games such as peek a boo – clasps hands together as their turn grows closer Looks towards the floor if an object is dropped	Explores new objects in an orderly way to investigate cause and effect Understands the meaning of some sounds – hears the telephone ring and looks at the phone	Anticipates what will happen next, for example expects to be fed in highchair and may become upset if expected routine doesn't happen Imitates and improvises actions they have observed – clapping or waving
Step 6 12-16mths	Engages in simple pretend play with soft toys – for example, hugs and kisses teddy or pretends to be asleep (covers self with a blanket and closes eyes)	Knows there are different ways to play with different toys – a ball is for throwing/rolling a car is for pushing Realises one object can act as a container for another	Interested in things that go together, for example cup and saucer Recognises favourite toys/games – sees character in a book and brings same toy for you to play with	Experiments, for example if two things don't fit together one way then tries another

Step 7 15-19mths	Matches shape of piece to hole – for example in a shape sorter	Remembers where objects belong	Actively explores objects using different senses – shaking, hitting, looking, feeling, tasting, mouthing, pulling, turning and poking	Shows understanding that things exist even when out of sight; will refer to, request or search for objects that are not in sight
Step 8 18-22mths	Can organise and categorise objects – for example, putting all red things and all blue things in separate piles	Matches objects with parts that fit together Uses understanding of cause and effect – straightens tower of blocks if it starts to wobble	Shows curiosity of how things work Is interested in pulling/pushing things Builds simple structures	Shows interest in toys with buttons, flaps and simple mechanisms Asks for a desired object by pointing, which may be accompanied by vocalisations and single words, checking back to the adult that request has been noticed
Step 9 21-25mths	Operates mechanical toys – for example, turns the knob on a wind-up toy, pulls back on a friction car, pushes button to open flap	Copies everyday actions in play – brushing dolly's hair, feeding teddy	Makes pretend sequences, for example pouring pretend tea then drinking, getting in a car going to work	Creates and experiments with blocks, colours and marks Tries to work out problems by thinking first – how to switch something on/off
Step 10 24-31mths	Completes simple puzzle board	Matches set of identical objects, understands the idea of the same Begins to develop the sense of time – later, tomorrow, yesterday	Understands simple explanations and reasons given by others	Understands size differences – bigger/smaller Names two or three colours
Step 11 30-36mths	Is more organised, gathering together the toys they want to play with before starting play – for example, getting the doll and the tea set before starting to play tea-parties or getting the train and tracks and setting them out before playing trains	Seeks to learn basic skills in turning on some ICT equipment Engages in imaginative play and role play based on own experiences Shows curiosity about the world by asking questions and thinking about reasons why things happen	Joins in with learning activities led more by able partner and can perform new actions after they have seen them demonstrated Enjoys playing with small world models – farm, garage, trains Notices deliberate mistake in story or rhyme	Uses and understands the logic of 'if' and 'then' for example 'if I stand on the step then I can reach the toy' Repeats a two-digit number sequence, for example '7, 2'
Step 12 35-41mths	Draws person with head and one or two other features or parts	Puts three pictures in correct order to represent a sequence in a familiar activity or story Uses various building materials Follows direction if not intently focused on activity of choice	Shows awareness of danger – is careful on playground equipment Builds stories around toys Notices what adults do, copying what is observed then doing it when the adult is not there	Uses ICT to perform more complex functions, for example selecting a channel on the television remote Repeats a three-digit number sequence 2, 8, 5
Step 13 40-51mths	Concentrates and listens for more than ten minutes in adult-led activities that they enjoy	Shows interest in different occupations and ways of life Remembers three or four items shown on a list, for example a shopping list – oranges, apples and bananas	Comments and asks questions about where they live and the natural world Builds complex things with a wide range of objects, selecting appropriate resources and adapting their work when necessary	Talks about personal intentions, describing what they are attempting to do Is able to ignore distractions and concentrate on a chosen task

Early Learning and Childcare Team – Small steps guidance incorporating information from the Early Years Development Journal which was created in partnership with the Open University and the Department for Education (*Crown Copyright 2013*)

<p>Step 14 50-60+ mths</p>	<p>Shows flexibility in trying different ways of tackling problems</p>	<p>Selects the tools and techniques they need to shape, assemble and join materials they are using</p> <p>Explains own knowledge and understanding, and asks appropriate questions of others</p>	<p>Finds out about and identifies the uses of everyday technology, and uses information and communication technology, and programmable toys to support their learning</p>	<p>Makes short-term future plans</p> <p>Finds out about their environment, and talks about the features that they like and dislike</p>
---	---	--	---	--