

What is an action plan?

Action plans are living, working documents. They form an integral part of the continuous development process for improving practice. Having an effective action plan in place, alongside monitoring progress will help you stay on track with what you want to achieve.

Creating an action plan may feel daunting, especially if you are new to this process. Here are some top-tips to help you with this reflective cycle.

Where do I start?

➤ Self assessment audits

The Learning Environment audit will help you to understand:

- how well your setting environment is designed to support children with maths and whether the resources you provide for children support their maths exploration
- how well you promote positive relationships and communicate with parents.

The Staff Confidence audit will help you understand:

- the confidence level of your staff in relation to supporting and teaching early years maths
- individual and group development needs.

Once you have completed these audits you can analyse your results and identify key priorities for improvement.

Start by looking at the areas that you graded yourself as **3 or 4**, which are either not yet implemented in practice or are not consistently embedded across the environment/ staff team, as these should form the basis of your action plans. You can use a highlighter pen or online highlighting tool to mark these areas.

Completing the action plan template in the Maths Champions Programme

- **Strategic direction** – add here the biggest priorities that were identified through the audit process that you want to take forward. Write down exactly what you intend to do.
Example: 'Increase staff knowledge of positional and directional language and how this can be used in everyday interactions with children'
- **Taking effective action** – break down the intent into clear and specific tasks. Identify all of the practical steps you will need to take to achieve this
Example: 'Provide a short training session on positional and directional language; model the use of positional and directional language to staff; organise a team planning session focussing on how positional and direction language could be used daily; display positional and directional words in rooms as prompts for staff; observe staff and discuss how they support use of positional and directional language'
- **Who will be involved** – identify who will take lead and be involved in completing the task. This could be one or a number of people.
Example: 'Maths Champions; Room leaders'

- **Resources needed** – identify what tools will be needed to achieve the desired outcome. Remember you do not need purchase any specific resources, where possible look to use recycled items, loose parts and natural materials
Example: 'Card and printed words to make words to display; time to create resources; time for modelling and observation'
- **Timescales** – note down key dates or deadlines for tasks to be completed. These can be short term, medium term or longer term.
Example: 'January 2024 (1 months' time); September 2024 (6 months' time); every 3 months'
- **Impact and reflection** – What has been the impact of the actions you have taken? This can be positive or negative and can help you to consider whether you need to continue doing something or do something different, if it is not having the desired impact.
Example: 'Staff are actively using more positional and directional language as part of daily practice. Evidence of this can be found in staff observation records. As a result children have increased their understanding of positional and directional language and are using in more in their play.'



Important note: remember to be realistic. Think about what can be done practically, strive for the best but don't set targets that are too ambitious – ultimately you want to be able to make positive but sustainable changes, however big or small, and see the impact of these actions.

How do I monitor my action plan?

Monitoring is an ongoing assessment of progress against the priorities you have set.

Consider the following questions:

- Are we doing what we said we would do?
- If not, why not? For example, are we using resources efficiently and effectively to achieve objectives?
- Are we achieving outcomes within the set time frames?
- Are we taking corrective action to refocus in order to achieve our objectives?
- Are we making progress?

Your action plan is a live, working document so use it to add notes, thoughts and reflections and if actions aren't working then change them to try something different.

Successful action planning

Consider the following:

- **Involve the whole team** – create action plan together in a staff meeting or once you have completed a draft of the action plan, share it with your colleagues to discuss and make any necessary changes. Throughout the programme, use it as a working document which can be changed and added to at any point. Encourage staff to work together collaboratively and in teams, and where possible give them individual responsibilities based on their unique strengths or interests (tapping into their strengths, expertise, energy and passion will help with motivation and ensure all staff 'buy in' to developing practice). You can pair up staff or create small working parties of practitioners that have the same interests and passions so they can work together to develop and lead practice in this specific area

- **Prioritise** - having a long list of actions can be overwhelming. Read through your actions/goals and decide which ones are your top priority. Number them if it helps, and start by introducing a small number of priority actions. Large goals should be broken down into smaller bite size chunks/goals so they can be accomplished more easily for long-term gain. A good tip is to RAG rate (red, amber, green) your action plan. This will help you to focus on what needs doing first or as a priority
- **Delegate** - as Maths Champion you, alongside your Deputy Maths Champion, will lead on the programme, coaching staff and ensuring things are on track. However, you don't need to do everything yourself. You won't physically have the time and the more you do the less impact it will have on developing staff confidence. You could give each room a focus of two key objectives; giving responsibility to someone in each room to feed back to you and the Deputy Maths Champion at the end of each week. This would give staff clear direction as to what they have to do and it will support you to manage your time effectively as someone will feedback to you
- **Reflect and measure the impact** - you can measure the impact through observing interactions and talking to staff. Remember that your priorities can be modified as you move along the process. If you have set out one strategy for achieving your action, on reflection, you may find this isn't working; don't be afraid to modify your ideas to ensure your goals are attainable and effective in practice.

*For more in depth information on action planning please refer to 'Coaching as Educational Lead' training in the programme.