

Child-centred Learning

Child-centred learning is about **adapting** the sessions to **meet** the needs, abilities and interests of **each child**.

This can be quite daunting if you have large numbers of children in your session.

The **key** to child-centred learning is **involving** the children in their **own learning**. Each child needs help to understand **what they can do, what they like doing, what they want to do, how they want to do it, what they want to improve** and then planning activities with them to help them **improve**.

Initially you may need to deliver an activity that **finds out** exactly what the child **can** or **cannot do**. You could use a Technical Skill Card or an Activity Card to do this. As part of a **Coaching Conversation**, ask the child to reflect on their current skill level. Observe the child in action to assess the accuracy of their judgement.

Conversation Coaching is an approach to delivery that involves working with the children, rather than telling them what to do or giving instructions. Conversation coaching features discussing, prompting, questioning, modelling, challenging the children to think for themselves, making decisions, reflecting accurately, etc. The Activity Cards include **questions** that you can use to **support conversation coaching** and **enhance** your **questioning** skills.

If you **agree** with the child, you could then engage in a further **coaching conversation** to help the child decide **what they might work on next** so the child has ownership over the own learning, taking **responsibility** for their own **improvement**. If you disagree, it is still a coaching conversation but this time seeking to **clarify** what the child can do, relying on evidence to come to a decision, trying things out **together**. Once you have agreed, revert back into the **'what next'** coaching conversation.

Children enjoy making decisions about **'what'** and **'how'** they do things, as well as **'who'** they work with. An opportunity to work in **friendship** groups is very important to children and affects their long-term **participation**.

The **personal and social aspects** of sessions must not be underestimated, children often value these more than 'physical' opportunities. See **'Developing whole child'** Factsheet for more information.

To support you in delivering child-centred learning there is a **continuum** of both Skills and Activities. The continuum within the **Technical Skills Cards** ranges from **'as they develop skills'** through to **'as they apply their skills'**. If a child is struggling with a particular skill, there are **teaching points, Traffic Light practises** and **video clips** for each technical skill. This will help you **to work with the child** to **identify** ways to make that skill **easier** or **harder**, as well as select **earlier** skills that might contribute to the execution of a more **difficult** skill.

The **Dragon Multi-skills Activity Cards** are progressions from the **'Play to Learn'** Activity Cards. If a Multi-skills activity is too challenging for a child or group of children, you can select activities from the 'Play to Learn' resources. Many of these activities have the same name but are **simpler** versions. The suite of activity cards (Play to Learn and Dragon) presents a whole continuum of learning that you can use to **plan** your sessions.



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Your biggest tool in helping you to child-centre the learning is your **imagination**. Have a **coaching conversation** with the children to **create alternative** ways to **adapt activities** by changing the **space**, the **task**, the **equipment** or the **people**. Making the activity **more appropriate**.



change the
space



change the
task



change the
equipment



change the
people

In most instances it will be a **pair** or a **small group** of children that want the same thing, rather than an individual, but you will be able to **challenge** specific **individuals** if you want to. You will need to think about the way the children are **grouped** in your session to **maximise learning**. Grouping children in **friendship** and **opposite groups** might be appropriate for personal and social outcomes, **ability** groupings might be beneficial to skill development and **mixed ability** groups might be beneficial to fair competition. Groups could be working on the same outcome but using different skills/activities, they might be working on the different outcomes with the same skill/activity, or different outcomes and skills/activities.

Pace is important to child-centred learning, some children want to **move on** or are **ready** to before others, so the pace of learning is another coaching conversation to ensure that the **timings** of **progressions** are appropriate.

Your role is to engage in **conversation coaching** with the children to **support** them and ensure their **safety** as they **take increasing responsibility** for their own learning, helping them to **learn how to learn**. It will help to have a range of resources you can use to support this independent learning, including **equipment, resource cards, ICT equipment, including digital cameras** and **young leaders**. The more support, the better the **child/leader ratio**, which will mean the children have **more support** from a significant other if they want it. This helps make the approach more personalised as the children have someone they can go to for support. Research has shown that **relationships** are important to children, they like to interact with significant others and establish **rapport** and **trust** with these individuals. Young Leaders are good **role models** for children.

It is important to discuss each child's **progress** with them and their **parents/carers/advocates**. The Dragon Multi-skills approach encourages children to **transfer** their learning from one situation to another. One case of this might involve a child

taking part in an after-school Multi-skill session and also a community Netball programme. If the child is going to make progress in both situations then both sets of deliverers need to be kept **informed** of the progress the child has made in the other sessions. Deliverers need to seek out and take advantage of creative ways to **transfer information** so that all deliverers can continue to build on the current needs, abilities and interests of each child. The children themselves have a role to play in this by being able to identify accurately what they can and cannot do.

It is by **working with** children, engaging in **conversation coaching**, developing a **shared understanding** of needs, abilities and interests that deliverers will be able to provide **child-centred learning**.

Note for teachers

Conversation Coaching is consistent with '**shared sustained thinking**' in the Foundation Phase and **dialogic teaching**.