

## Element 4: Professional Practice

### Introduction

This element of Curriculum Foundations examines individual professionalism—the practitioner’s role and responsibility in developing his/her own professional practice, and in doing so, better supporting all children’s learning and development. Both *Aistear* and *Síolta* emphasise the skills, knowledge and dispositions that contribute to practitioners’ professional practice.

*Practising in a professional manner requires that individuals have skills, knowledge, values and attitudes appropriate to their role and responsibility within the setting. In addition, it requires regular reflection upon practice and engagement in supported, on-going professional development (Síolta, 2009, p.79 to Standard 11: Professional Practice).*

Similarly, *Aistear’s* principle on relevant and meaningful experiences, refers to the adult’s ability to reflect on practice.

*On-going assessment of what children do, say and make, and reflection on these experiences helps practitioners to plan more developmentally appropriate and meaningful learning experiences for children. This also enables them to improve their practice (Aistear, 2009, p.11).*

Making space and time for professional development, reflection and dialogue enables practitioners to focus on curriculum development, on children’s learning and development and to bring about positive change in their setting.

While all practitioners are considered ‘leaders for learning’, the Practice Guide also acknowledges the particular role that managers and room leaders play in supporting and encouraging professional practice.

The Professional Practice element within Curriculum Foundations focuses on three aspects of practice that relate to children’s learning and development as shown in the table below. Most of these are relevant to all practitioners while two of them are specifically to managers.

## The Three Aspects of Professional Practice

Image and Role of Practitioner (Activities A-B)	Reflective Practice (Activities C-E)	Leadership for Learning (Activities F-I)
<b>A.</b> <i>Professional role</i>	<b>C.</b> <i>Reflective practice</i>	<b>F.</b> <i>Thinking about leadership for learning</i>
<b>B.</b> <i>Ethical practice</i>	<b>D.</b> <i>Reflecting on my dispositions, skills, abilities and knowledge</i>	<b>G.</b> <i>Leader for learning in a managerial role</i>
	<b>E.</b> <i>Identifying opportunities for reflection</i>	<b>H.</b> <i>Supporting change</i>
		<b>I.</b> <i>Leading professional practice</i>