

Leadership and Management

Recognition and praise



As part of the management and leadership team you are in a position to influence the morale of the workforce and ensure your team feel appreciated and are performing at their best. The early years sector can be a challenging environment with long working hours, low pay, and high workload, so it is understandable that at times practitioners may feel undervalued. It is worth remembering that sometimes the simplest of gestures can make the biggest difference! Showing your team genuine appreciation can be massively impactful, as it helps you to:

- Create a work environment where everyone feels appreciated and recognised for their efforts.
- Boost staff's confidence and motivation, increasing staff's commitment leading to improved staff retention.

TASK 1

Reflecting on your own practice, consider the questions below:

- Do you say 'thank you' sincerely and regularly? This is one of the simplest and most effective ways that you can show your appreciation – seems obvious but can be overlooked!
- Do you compliment and praise? For example, the appearance of the room, activities and displays.

- Do you encourage practitioners to praise one another and promote a culture of positive attitudes towards one another? If so, how?
- Have you considered whether or not you ever appear inconsistent in your approach – praising some more than others? Some practitioners may outperform colleagues, some might be less forthcoming in their approach, but it is crucial that you are conscious of showing recognition and praise to all staff, celebrating achievements and effort, whether it be something big or small. Each member of staff is on their own journey and their progress should be celebrated.

TASK 2

Rewarding your team is an effective way in being able to praise and recognise individuals' achievements. There are many intrinsic rewards you might consider offering in your setting that are not costly or money orientated. Create a thought shower of how you can ensure your staff feel appreciated by leaders and colleagues. Below are a few examples to get you started:

- Professional development rewards – provide access to additional training and CPD opportunities. Taking an interest in your team's professional development can be a much-appreciated way to show your recognition and thanks.
- Employee of the month – this is a great way to acknowledge the hard work and dedication of individuals by featuring them in this special way. You can create an 'Employee of the month' bulletin board and introduce your star employee on social media and parent newsletters.

- A gratitude board – staff encouraged to write thank you notes to their colleagues on a sticky note and display on the board, celebrate these gestures on a regular basis.
- Celebrate birthdays and work anniversaries – many people appreciate a little extra attention at important milestones in their lives like birthdays and work anniversaries, so make a point to celebrate them as a team.
- Give recognition along with a small token or card to staffs achievements during team meetings.
- Plan a fun team building exercise – Group outings or activities like a motivational speaking event, doing an obstacle course at the local park, or anything that is meaningful to your team can be a great way to get to know and appreciate each other better and create a great team culture.
- Handwritten thank you notes – a small personal gesture like this can mean a lot.

TASK 3

Finally, consider the use of ‘Staff Learning Journeys’ for each member of staff. Examples of what they can include are:

- Certificates and qualifications achieved.
- Wow moments from managers and peers – big and small!
- Recent CPD opportunities
- Images of good practice
- Feedback from parents and children.
- Thankyou letters from parents, children, and the wider community.

How could they be used to celebrate progress and achievements? What do you think would be the impact of using them?

Useful Links

[Do rewards drive children to learn in the Early Years? | Fa \(family.co\)](#)

[7 Ways to Motivate Employees in Your Nursery - Nursery HR people \(thenurseryhrpeople.co.uk\)](#)

[How to Show Appreciation for Your Childcare Team Without Breaking the Bank - Honest Buck Accounting](#)

[The Importance Of Showing Your Early Years Team Gratitude \(earlyyearscares.com\)](#)