EYMD Taxonomy

The EYMD is primarily organised using a structured taxonomy that provides a consistent framework for classifying early years measures (Figure 1). The taxonomy aligns with the areas of learning and development set out in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) and reflects the Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) priorities, while also drawing on research literature and early years experts to ensure theoretical coherence. Measures are organised into the following domains:

- Communication and Language;
- Literacy;
- Mathematics;
- Personal, Social, and Emotional Development (PSED);
- Physical Development;
- Expressive Arts and Design;
- Understanding the World;
- Early Learning Environment; and
- Digital Technology.

Within each domain, the taxonomy is further structured into sub-domains and proficiencies. Sub-domains represent distinct, theoretically grounded components within a broader developmental area. Proficiencies refer to observable behaviours or capacities within each sub-domain that may be measured through assessment tools.

This taxonomy enables consistent tagging of measures across the database and supports more precise searching, filtering, and comparison. It allows users to identify tools aligned not only to broad domains, but also to more specific constructs.

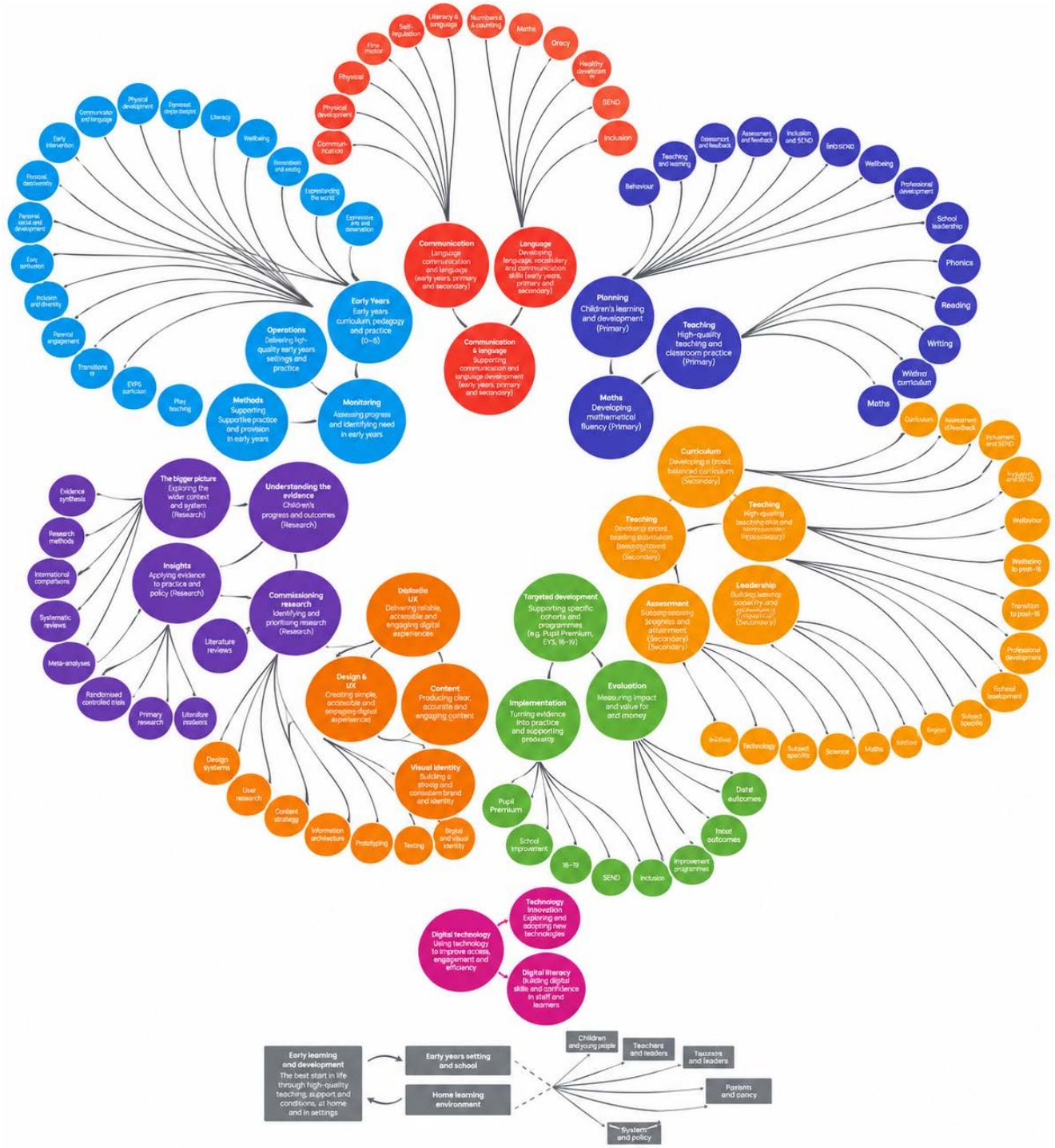


Figure 1: The EYMD taxonomy

The largest shapes represent domains, with sub-domains emanating from them and proficiencies linked to the sub-domains. Some proficiencies are linked to more than one sub-domain, shown with lines going from the proficiencies to more than one sub-domain. Where a proficiency is attributed to more than one domain, we have used graduated colouring to illustrate this. Digital Technology proficiencies and the Early Learning Environment are presented as underpinning learning and development in other domains.

The domain, sub-domain, and proficiency definitions are given in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Domain, sub-domain, and proficiency definitions

Domain	Domain definition	Sub-domain	Sub-domain definition	Proficiency	Proficiency definition
Communication and Language	Children's proficiency in understanding and conveying information, ideas and feelings, including through words and sentences	**Communication**	Children's proficiency in conveying and understanding information, ideas, or feelings	Joint attention	Proficiency in sharing focus with one or more individuals on the same object or event, co-ordinated through eye gaze, pointing, or other verbal/non-verbal cues
				Gesticulation	Proficiency in using gestures, such as hand movements or facial expressions, to convey meaning alongside or instead of speech
				Turn taking	Proficiency in engaging in reciprocal communication with another person
				Speech	Proficiency in producing spoken language sounds clearly and fluently to convey meaning
				Pragmatic skills	Proficiency in adapting verbal and non-verbal communication to different social contexts
				Code switching	Proficiency in alternating between two or more languages or language varieties depending on context and audience
		Language	Children's proficiency in understanding words and sentence structures and using them to express meaning	Expressive vocabulary	The range of words a child can produce and use in speech, writing, or sign language
				Receptive vocabulary	The range of words a child can understand when heard or read
				Syntax	Proficiency in arranging words to make meaning
				Morphology	Proficiency in using word parts, such as prefixes and suffixes, to create meaning
				Grammar	Proficiency in using the system of rules governing the structure of words, phrases, and sentences, to create meaning
				Narrative skills	Proficiency in structuring and telling a story or recounting events coherently
				Inferencing	Proficiency in understanding information that is implied but not directly stated, using context clues and prior knowledge
				Language reasoning	Proficiency in using language to explain their thinking and reasoning
Literacy	Children's proficiency in engaging with, understanding and conveying meaning through written text	**Reading**	Children's proficiency in decoding and making meaning from written text	Print awareness	Understanding that print carries meaning and knowing how to handle books and written materials
				Letter naming	Proficiency in recognising and naming the letters of the alphabet
				Phonological awareness	Proficiency in recognising and manipulating the sound structures of language (e.g. syllables, phonemes, rhyme, and alliteration)
				Letter-sound correspondence	Proficiency in matching written letters/graphemes and the sounds they represent
				Word reading	Proficiency in reading familiar and unfamiliar words
				Rapid automised naming	Proficiency in quickly naming familiar items, such as letters, words, numbers, or colours, when presented visually
				Code switching	Proficiency in alternating between two or more languages or language varieties depending on context and audience
				Reading comprehension	Proficiency in understanding and interpreting the meaning of written text
				Reading fluency	Proficiency in reading text accurately, quickly, and with appropriate expression
		Writing	Children's proficiency in generating and recording	Graphomotor skills	Proficiency in co-ordinating fine motor movements for writing and drawing
				Mark making	Proficiency in creating marks on a surface as a precursor to writing

			ideas using symbols to communicate meaning	Spelling	Proficiency in writing words with correct letter sequences to represent spoken language
				Handwriting	Proficiency in forming letters and words legibly and consistently
				Written composition	Proficiency in organising ideas to create meaningful written text
Mathematics	Children's proficiency in engaging with and understanding ideas about number, relationships, quantity, and space	**Number**	Children's proficiency in understanding and expressing ideas about quantity, counting, and numerical patterns	Pattern awareness / matching	Proficiency in recognising and reproducing patterns using shapes, colours, numbers, objects, or events
				Recognising and naming digits	Proficiency in identifying and naming written numbers
				Linking number words, digits, and quantities	Proficiency in identifying the relationship between spoken number words, written digits, and their quantities
				Counting	Proficiency in skills including correctly saying number words in a sequence, assigning each number word to a single object (one-on-one correspondence), and recognising that the final number word used represents the total number of objects in the set (cardinality)
				Subitising	Proficiency in visually seeing a number of objects instantly without needing to count them out one at a time
				Number composition	Understanding that a number can be made up of two or more smaller numbers
				Place value	Understanding the value of a digit based on its position within a number
				Comparing numerical magnitude	Proficiency in identifying which numbers are worth more or less than each other
				Numerical patterns	Proficiency in recognising and reproducing patterns using numbers, and what this means about their relationships
				Mathematical talk	Proficiency in having spoken or written conversation with teachers, children, and self in order to problem solve or aid understanding of mathematical concepts
		Operations	Children's proficiency in grouping, sharing, and combining numbers	Additive reasoning	Proficiency in solving problems involving combining, separating, or comparing quantities using addition and subtraction
				Calculation	Proficiency in carrying out mathematical operations such as addition, subtraction, multiplication, or division
				Inverse operations	Understanding that some mathematical operations can reverse the effect of others
				Symbol knowledge	Proficiency in recognising and understanding mathematical symbols and their meanings
				Strategy selection	Proficiency in choosing appropriate methods to solve mathematical problems
				Comparing numerical magnitude	Proficiency in identifying which numbers are worth more or less than each other
				Numerical patterns	Proficiency in recognising and reproducing patterns using numbers, and what this means about their relationships
				Mathematical talk	Proficiency in having spoken or written conversation with teachers, children, and self in order to problem solve or aid understanding of mathematical concepts
		Measurement	Children's proficiency in understanding, describing, and comparing physical attributes including size, weight, and capacity	Non-standard units	Proficiency in measuring objects or quantities with everyday items rather than formal units, such as using blocks, footsteps, or hand spans
				Estimation	Proficiency in making a reasonable guess about quantity, size, or outcome before measuring or counting
				Comparing physical magnitude	Proficiency in comparing and ordering objects and shapes by size, weight, and capacity

				Comparing quantities	Proficiency in identifying which quantities are worth more or less than each other
				Pattern awareness / matching	Proficiency in recognising and reproducing patterns using shapes, colours, numbers, objects, or events
				Mathematical talk	Proficiency in having spoken or written conversation with teachers, children, and self in order to problem solve or aid understanding of mathematical concepts
		Geometry and Spatial Thinking	Children's proficiency in understanding, describing, and comparing shapes, space, and spatial relationships	Shape recognition	Proficiency in identifying and naming common shapes
				Shape decomposition	Understanding that complex shapes can be broken down into smaller, simpler shapes, and ability to do so
				Two dimensional (2D)–three-dimensional (3D) relationships	Understanding how 2D representations relate to 3D objects
				Spatial language	Proficiency in using words to describe the position, direction, and movement of objects in space
				Perspective taking	Proficiency in understanding and representing how objects or scenes appear from different viewpoints
				Comparing physical magnitude	Proficiency in comparing and ordering objects and shapes by size, weight, and capacity
				Pattern awareness / matching	Proficiency in recognising and reproducing patterns using shapes, colours, numbers, objects, or events
				Mathematical talk	Proficiency in having spoken or written conversation with teachers, children, and self in order to problem solve or aid understanding of mathematical concepts
PSED	Children's proficiency in forming relationships, understanding themselves, and making choices about their emotions, behaviour, and learning	**Personal Development**	Children's understanding of themselves and capacity to take actions to look after themselves	Self-esteem	Confidence in their own worth or abilities
				Self-concept / sense of self	Beliefs and knowledge about their own attributes and qualities
				Self-care and healthy behaviours	Capacity to engage in activities and habits that maintain physical and mental health, such as rest, hygiene, and healthy eating
				Safety behaviours	Capacity to engage in activities and habits to avoid harm and ensure personal safety
		Social Skills	Children's proficiency in adapting to and interacting effectively with others in group and one-on-one contexts	Theory of mind / mentalisation	Understanding that others have thoughts, feelings, and perspectives different to their own
				Empathy	Proficiency in understanding and sharing others' feelings
				Relationship skills	Proficiency in interacting effectively with others, building positive relationships, and managing social challenges
				Prosocial behaviour	Capacity to engage in actions intended to benefit others, such as helping, supporting, or sharing
				Conflict resolution skills	Proficiency in resolving disagreements in respectful and constructive ways
		Emotion Skills	Children's proficiency in recognising, understanding, and expressing emotions in themselves and others	Emotion recognition	Proficiency in identifying their own emotions through feelings and through verbal and non-verbal communication
				Emotion expression	Proficiency in communicating feelings verbally and non-verbally
				Emotion vocabulary	The range of words a child can use to describe and express feelings and emotions
				Emotion understanding	Proficiency in understanding a range of distinct emotions that they can experience
				Emotional regulation	Proficiency in planning, monitoring, and adjusting their emotional responses
		Self-Regulation	Children's proficiency in adapting their thoughts,	Emotional regulation	Proficiency in planning, monitoring, and adjusting their emotional responses
				Behavioural regulation	Proficiency in planning, monitoring, and adjusting their actions and behaviours

			behaviours, and emotions to achieve their goals	Cognitive regulation	Proficiency in planning, monitoring, and adjusting their thinking processes to achieve goals
				Persistence	Proficiency in continuing working towards a goal despite challenges
				Inhibition	Proficiency in controlling impulses and refrain from action
		Executive Functioning	Children's proficiency in using cognitive skills to carry out goal-directed behaviour	Meta-cognition	Proficiency in thinking about and reflecting on their own thinking and learning processes
				Cognitive flexibility	Proficiency in adjusting to situational demands, shifting perspectives, and balancing competing needs
				Working memory	Proficiency in holding and manipulating information in the mind for short periods
				Attention control	Proficiency in focusing attention on relevant information while ignoring distractions
				Persistence	Proficiency in continuing working towards a goal despite challenges
				Inhibition	Proficiency in controlling impulses and refrain from action
				Task initiation	Proficiency in independently starting a task or activity
Physical Development	Children's proficiency in the physical skills needed for everyday tasks and active play	**Gross Motor Skills**	Children's proficiency in co-ordinating their large muscles to balance and move around	Stability / balance	Proficiency in maintaining control of their body position whether moving or still
				Co-ordination	Proficiency in using different parts of their body together smoothly and efficiently
				Body awareness	Understanding where their body is in space and how it moves
				Strength	Proficiency in exerting force to move objects or their body
				Locomotion	Proficiency in moving from one place to another using actions such as crawling, walking, running, or jumping
		Fine Motor Skills	Children's proficiency in co-ordinating the small muscles in their hands and fingers to perform precise tasks	Grasping and releasing	Proficiency in grasping and letting go of objects intentionally
				In-hand manipulation	Proficiency in moving and positioning objects within one hand
				Hand-eye co-ordination	Proficiency in using visual information to guide their hand movements
				Palmar grasp	Proficiency in holding objects securely using the whole hand, with the fingers wrapped around the object
				Pincer grasp	Proficiency in holding small objects between their thumb and forefinger
				Graphomotor skills	Proficiency in co-ordinating fine motor movements for writing and drawing
Expressive Arts and Design	Children's proficiency in exploring and expressing their ideas, feelings, and creativity	**Performing Arts**	Children's proficiency in exploring and expressing ideas, feelings, and creativity through movement, music, and drama	Early musicality	Proficiency in perceiving, producing, and responding to musical elements such as rhythm and pitch
				Role-play	Proficiency in taking on and acting out roles in imaginative scenarios
				Narrative	Proficiency in structuring and telling a story or recounting events coherently
				Dance	Proficiency in using movement intentionally to express ideas, emotions, or stories
				Creativity	Proficiency in generating and expressing original ideas
		Visual Arts	Children's proficiency in exploring and expressing ideas, feelings, and creativity through drawing, painting, and other visual media	Colour knowledge	Proficiency in identifying different colours and their properties
				Manipulating materials	Proficiency in handling and shaping materials to create or modify objects
				Creativity	Proficiency in generating and expressing original ideas
		Design and Technology	Children's proficiency in creating and adapting materials, structures, and tools to express ideas and solve problems	Understanding function	Understanding how tools, machines, or objects help people in daily life
				Selecting materials	Proficiency in choosing appropriate materials or tools for an identified problem or purpose
				Manipulation materials	Proficiency in handling and shaping materials to create or modify objects
				Creativity	Proficiency in generating and expressing original ideas
Understanding the World				Understanding of sequence	Understanding of the order of events or steps in a process

	Children's proficiency in making sense of the social and material world around them	**Past and Present**	Children's proficiency in engaging with and understanding ideas about the order of events and the passage of time	Chronological understanding	Understanding the passage of time and how events are ordered in relation to each other
				Chronological vocabulary	The range of words a child can use to describe time and sequence
				Comparison skills	Proficiency in identifying similarities and differences between objects, concepts, or events
				Observation skills	Proficiency in closely watching and noticing details in the environment
		The Natural World	Children's proficiency in engaging with and understanding ideas about living things and the material environment	Comparison skills	Proficiency in identifying similarities and differences between objects, concepts, or events
				Observation skills	Proficiency in closely watching and noticing details in the environment
				Natural process knowledge	Knowledge of phenomena related to nature and the environment
		People, Culture, and Communities	Children's proficiency in engaging with, understanding and appreciating the social world	Comparison skills	Proficiency in identifying similarities and differences between objects, concepts, or events
				Observation skills	Proficiency in closely watching and noticing details in the environment
				Religious and cultural knowledge	Knowledge of different religious and cultural beliefs, practices, and traditions
				Sensitivity to difference	Awareness and respect for individual and cultural differences
Digital Technology[a]	Children's understanding of proficiency in using digital tools and devices	**Technology Awareness**	Children's understanding of the purposes and functions of Digital Technology		
		Digital Literacy	Children's proficiency in using digital tools to find, create, and communicate information and solve problems		
Early Learning Environment	The physical, social, and emotional conditions that shape children's early development and learning	**Home Learning Environment**	The physical, social, and emotional conditions that shape children's early development and learning at home	Physical environment	The physical surroundings where learning and development take place
				Social and emotional climate	The relationships, emotional support, and interactions in a learning environment
				Adult–child interactions	Adults' interactions with children
				Peer interactions	Children's interactions with each other
				Health and hygiene routines	Children's understanding and practise of everyday habits that keep the body clean, healthy, and safe
				Learning resources	The materials and tools available to support children's learning and development
				Cognitive stimulation	The experiences and activities introduced to support children's learning and problem-solving
		Early Years Setting Learning Environment	The physical, social, and emotional conditions that shape children's early development and learning in a non-home environment (e.g. formal early childhood education settings, outdoor learning provision)	Physical environment	The physical surroundings where learning and development take place
				Social and emotional climate	The relationships, emotional support, and interactions in a learning environment
				Adult–child interactions	Adults' interactions with children
				Peer interactions	Children's interactions with each other
				Health and hygiene practices	Health, safety, and hygiene routines and protocols
				Learning resources	The materials and tools available to support children's learning and development
				Cognitive stimulation	The experiences and activities introduced to support children's learning and problem-solving

[a] *Included as a set of proficiencies underpinning learning and development in other domains.*

The EYMD includes two types of measures: longlisted and shortlisted. Shortlisting was based on predefined criteria outlined in the final report (Malik *et al.,* 2026a).

- **Longlisted.** For longlisted measures, the database provides key descriptive information to support initial identification and consideration. These measures are coded by domain only.
- **Shortlisted.** For shortlisted measures these include additional, more detailed information. These measures have been coded using the full EYMD taxonomy (including sub-domains and proficiencies, where applicable) and have undergone structured appraisal of their psychometric evidence as well as recording practical information around the administration of the measures. This enables users to compare tools not only by domain and age range, but also by the strength and nature of the available evidence.