

'Thinking about Professional Love'

The first step in this process of 'Thinking about Professional Love' is for practitioners to become more **self-aware** by **stepping outside of their own personal frame of reference** so that they are **available** to reflect upon the consequences of their actions and interactions with others.

Step two is to **de-centre** – to be compelled to act for the good of the other person. In doing so the practitioner needs to shift their thinking *beyond* their own needs, and become completely absorbed in thinking about and acting with the needs of the other person in mind, in a completely non-judgmental way

Step three is when practitioners are able to **emotionally invest** something of themselves in the relationship-rather than to distance themselves from the child and/or parent.

Step four is for practitioners to build a **gradual, authentic, reciprocal relationship** with children and parents. It is this reciprocal relationship which determines the level of acceptance and trust between the child and the practitioner but also between the practitioner and the parent.

When practitioners have built **enduring mutual** relationships with children with whom they have formed a close, affectionate bond, developed over many hours, days, weeks, months or even years of the child's attendance at their early years setting, then it is likely that they will have come to love them.

This triangular model of thinking about love in the early years is intended to offer practitioners a process to have in mind which complements a parent's love for their child rather than undermine it; hence step 5 **is to recognise the existence of 'Professional Love'**



