

Settling in and transitions

To feel securely settled and ready to learn, children need to form attachments with the adults who care for them, primarily a key person, but others too. In this way they feel part of a community; they are able to contribute to that community and receive from it. Very young children, especially two- to three-year-olds, approach separation from their parent with anxieties, older children have a more secure understanding of 'people permanence' and are able to approach new experiences with confidence; but also need time to adjust and feel secure. It is the entitlement of all children to be settled comfortably into a new environment.

We follow the following model of helping children to settle in

1. A visit with parents to come and see the site and meet staff
2. 2 x 1 hour sessions with a care giver (no charge)
3. 1 x 2 hour session where the child attends independently
4. If the child has settled during the previous session, then parents and staff will decide whether they are ready to start their full hours. If a child hasn't settled, then we will offer additional settling in sessions.

The settling in procedure may be reviewed on a day-to-day basis

Settling-in for those with SEND

- If a child has been identified as having SEND then the key person/SENCO and parents will need to identify and address potential barriers to settling in e.g. timings of medication and invasive procedures, specific routines and levels of support.
- We may advise carrying out a Pre-School entry plan with the inclusion team.

Promoting proximity

- An hour is sufficient for a young child and parent to attend on any one day initially.
- On the first day, the key person shows the parent around, introduces members of staff, and explains how the day is organised, making the parent and child feel welcome and comfortable.
- The senior member of staff always greets the parent and child.
- The parent is invited to play with their child and staff will spend time with them.

Promoting secure base

- When the young child has experienced different settling in sessions then these will be built upon to begin their full hours.
- Staff will observe to see who the child begins to develop a relationship with. We tend to use this process to decide on keyworkers for the child.

- Parents are asked to handover their child to a member of staff and to pass on any messages. When the parent leaves, we always encourage them to say goodbye and say they are coming back. Where possible, we avoid parents slipping away without children realising as this can lead to stress for the child.
- If a child finds it difficult to separate from care-givers then staff will have some toys to hand to begin to play or the child could bring in a recently worn tee shirt or scarf that smells of them.

Promoting dependency

- Once the child is happy to move away from their care-givers to play for short periods of time then we will support the children to do their full hours. If we have any concerns, then we will also phone the care-givers.
- Older children will be encouraged to say goodbye to their parents and to bring in their own coats and bags and to begin to hang them on their pegs.

When a parent is unable or refuses to take part in settling in

- Information about the 'settling in' plan is given at the first visit and the reasons are explained.
- If the parent feels that this will be difficult – perhaps another close relative can come in instead.
- Genuine difficulties need to be handled sensitively, but generally speaking this is not an issue where the care-giver has a choice not to attend with their child. A care-giver who refuses to take part in settling in may have the offer of the place withdrawn. A meeting will be held with the care-giver and Pre-School Lead

Prolonged absences

- If children are absent from the setting for any for periods of time beyond one or two weeks, their attachment to their key persons may have decreased and will need to be built up again.
- Parents will be made aware of the need to 're-settle' their children and a plan will be agreed.

For children whose first language is not English

- For many children learning English as an additional language, the stage of proximity takes longer as the child is dependent upon the parents' input to make sense of what is going on.
- If the parent does not speak English, efforts are made to source an interpreter for induction; it will be helpful for them to see around the setting and be clear about their role in interpreting in the play area.
- The settling-in programme is explained to the parent, and it is emphasised how important it is that they stay with the child and talk to him/her in the home language to be able to explain things.
- Through the interpreter, the key person will try to gauge the child's level of skills in their home language; this will give the key person an idea of the child's interests and levels of understanding.
- The need for the parent to converse in the child's home language is important.

- Staff makes the parent feel welcome using smiles and gestures.
- With the parent, make a list of key words in the child's home language; sometimes it is useful to write the word as you would pronounce it. These words will be used with the child and parents will be addressed with 'hello' and 'goodbye' in their language.
- The key person prepares for the child's visits by having a favourite toy or activity ready for the child to provide a means to interact with the child.
- Children will be spoken to as per any other child, using gestures and facial expressions to help.
- When the child feels happy to spend time with the key person (secure base), the parent should spend time outside of the room.
- Progress with settling in will be done as with any other child; it just takes a little longer to reach dependency/independence.

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