

09 Early years practice procedures

09.4 Prime times – Settling in and transitions

We believe that children settle best when they have a key person to relate to, who knows them and their parents well and who can meet their individual needs. This helps secure relationships which support children to thrive and give parents confidence. We aim to make the setting a welcoming place where children settle easily because consideration has been given to individual needs and circumstances of children and their families.

We also recognise that during the year a child may become unsettled again due to a variety of reasons. We would discuss this with parents and plan a way forward.

We follow a three-stage model of settling in based on three key needs:

1. *Proximity* - young children feel safest when a familiar adult, such as a parent, is present when they are getting used to a new carer and new surroundings. In this way they can become confident in engaging with those experiences independently later on.
2. *Secure base* – Because the initial need for proximity of the parent has been met, young children gradually begin to feel secure with a key person in a new surrounding so that they are able to participate independently for small periods of time.
3. *Dependency* – young children are able to separate from parents' and main carers when they have formed a secure attachment to their key person who knows and understands them best and on whom they can depend for their needs to be met.

The setting manager and key person explain the need for settling in and agree a plan with the parents according to a Child's individual needs.

Starting a setting for the first time

- A child may have little or no experience of group care. As part of gathering information from parents, it is important to find out about the child's experience of non-parental care, for example grandparents, or childminder; this informs staff as to how a child may respond to a new situation.
- The three-stage approach involving *Proximity*, *Secure Base* and *Dependency/Independence* is applied
- Before a child is enrolled we provide opportunities for the child and his/her parents to visit the setting
- We may if needed offer a home visit by the key person and manager
- Initially the parent/carer may stay for some of the session .
- *It is evident that the child is developing a sense of secure base when he or she shows interest in activities and begins to engage with the key person and other children. Then the parent/ carer may gradually start to spend shorter periods of time to see how the child responds, this time increases until the child can manage a whole session without the parent.*

- Separation causes anxiety in children as they have no concept of where their parents have gone. Parents should always say goodbye and tell them when they will return. Patience with the process will ensure children are happy and eager to come to play and be cared for in the setting.

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.
- The key person 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.