

Teaching and Learning

Developing relationships – Settling in



When starting something new, we can all relate to the feelings and emotions that surface – anxiety, nerves, excitement, panic etc. It only stands to reason that our smallest humans will experience many feelings when starting their journey at your setting.

It is for this reason that a settling in policy is advised, to offer consistency for new starters and reassurance for families that you will support the transition with consideration and consistency.

The process for settling in, will need to be flexible, to enable you to meet the needs of the individual.

Task 1

Let's reflect on how new starters are supported:

What do you need to know before the child starts?

- How is parent feeling about the child starting? How might their feelings impact on the transition?
- What the child can or can't do, their likes and dislikes, their routine, their fears, how they can be comforted etc.

What experience has the child had of separating from their main carer?

- How might this information help you prepare for their starting?
- Does the parent have any suggestions as to what has worked well before or any potential challenges that they are anticipating?

How can parents be engaged in the process of aiding a smooth transition?

- What will their routine look like the morning of their first session?
- Who will be dropping off/collecting the child?
- For older children, will this be discussed with them?
- Have you provided parents with a breakdown of the routine, to enable them to prepare their child?
- Are they prepared with what is needed for their child's session e.g., nappies, comforters, bottles etc.
- How will you keep parents informed of how their child is settling?

How flexible is your settling in process?

- Will you offer a home visit as a first step?
- Are parents able to stay for the initial visits?
- At what point do you encourage parents to leave their children? Is this for shorter periods of time, before building up to longer?
- What reassurance can you offer parents about how you will meet the child's needs in their absence – particularly following the parent's departure?
- Are children able to keep comforters with them? How will you manage this as the child settles?

How might staffs understanding of emotional development impact?

- Can they empathise with what might the child be feeling?
- Can they identify what the child's behaviour might be telling them?
- Is adequate consideration and attention paid to all? e.g., those that are presenting as upset, those that appear to be engaging, those that are quietly observing their new surrounding etc.

How will the role of the key person impact?

- At what point is the key person assigned?
- How is this communicated to parents?
- What steps will the key person take to create opportunities for developing their relationship with their key child?
- What steps will the key person take in enabling the family and the child get to know them as a person? Their likes, dislikes, hobbies etc.

This is not an exhaustive list of factors to consider, but it is a starting point for reflecting on how effective your settling in practice is. The child's age and stage, as well as lived experiences and the partnership you have with parents, will all shape how well this transition is managed. Your preparation is key.

Useful links

[Emotions - Help for early years providers - GOV.UK \(education.gov.uk\)](#)

[How to deal with babies and young children crying | Early Years in Mind | Anna Freud Centre](#)

[Settling-in: supporting the transition from home to childcare | Croner-i \(croneri.co.uk\)](#)

[Emotion Coaching in the Early Years | early years alliance \(eyalliance.org.uk\)](#)