



09 Early years practice procedures

09.4 Prime times – 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.

The setting manager and room leader explain the need for settling in and agree a plan with the parents. They write this down and both key person and parents keep a copy. Each day they review the plan and agree what will happen the next day.

Settling-in

Starting a setting for the first time

- A two-year-old may have little or no experience of group care.
- The parent will remain in the room throughout the hour long first session. The room leader will gather 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.
- An all about me will be completed on the child
- During the second hour long session the parent will be seated in the office/staff area to complete paperwork but will remain in the building.
- To settle in a two-year-old, the setting will gradually increase the time a child attends.
- 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 child will gradually attend longer sessions, being present for lunch to start see how the child responds, this time increases until the child can manage a whole session without becoming significantly distressed.
- Separation causes anxiety in two-year-olds, 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.

Three- and four-year-olds

- Some children appear to leap to dependency/independence within a couple of days.
- After the parent attends for an induction meeting with the setting manager or room leader, (or in some circumstances a home visit), a settling-in plan is drawn up.

- Parents are encouraged to explain to their child where they are going, and that they will return.

For children whose first language is not English

- For many children learning English as an additional language, settling in 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 make 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.
- Staff prepare 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.
- Progress with settling in will be done as with any other child; it just takes a little longer to reach dependency/independence.