

Child care practice

4.2 The role of the key person and settling-in

Policy Statement

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. Research shows that a key person approach benefits the child, the parents, the staff and the setting by providing secure relationships in which children thrive.

We want children to feel safe, stimulated and happy in the setting and to feel secure and comfortable with staff. We also want parents to have confidence in both their children's well-being and their role as active partners with the setting. We aim to make the setting a welcoming place where children settle quickly and easily because consideration has been given to the individual needs and circumstances of children and their families.

Procedures

- We allocate a key person before the child starts.
- Where possible, home visits are carried out before the child starts, this is either done by the key person, the manager and/or deputy manager.
- The key person works with the parent to ensure the child's individual needs are met.
- The key person acts as the key contact for the parents and has links with other carers involved with the child, such as a childminder or grandparents. The manager supports the sharing of appropriate information about the child's development with external registered carers.
- A key person is responsible for developmental records and for sharing information on a regular basis with the child's parents.

- 'Tapestry' is used to share observations by both parents and carers. This helps to create a full picture of the child in our setting and at home.
- We promote the role of the key person as the child's primary carer in our setting and as the basis for establishing relationships with other staff and children.

Settling-in

- Before a child starts to attend the setting, we use a variety of ways to provide his/her parents with information. These include our parent handbook, displays in the setting and information on our website.
- We offer two induction mornings for the child and his/her parent/carer.
- We allocate a key person to each child and his/her family before she/he starts to attend; the key person welcomes and looks after the child and his/her parents at the child's first session and during the settling-in process.
- When a child starts to attend, we explain the process of settling-in with his/her parents and jointly decide on the best way to help the child to settle into the setting. Where appropriate, we may suggest that the child's first few sessions are shorter in duration, with the parent/carer gradually taking time away from their child, increasing this as and when the child is able to cope.
- Younger children will usually take longer to settle in, as will children who have not previously spent time away from home. Children who have had a period of absence may also need their parent to be on hand to re-settle them.
- When parents leave, we ask them to say goodbye to their child and explain that they will be coming back, and when.
- In instances where a child will not settle and continues to show signs of distress, we will contact the parent/carer to come and either collect them or spend the remainder of the session with them.

- We reserve the right not to accept a child into the setting without a parent or carer if the child finds it too distressing to be left.

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