09 Childcare 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, may approach separation from their parent with anxieties, older children tend to 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 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, babies and 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 a key person who knows and understands them best and on whom they can depend for their needs to be met.

The setting manager will explain the need for settling in and agree a plan with the parents. Each day they review the plan and agree what will happen the next day.

* Young children 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.
* Separation can cause anxiety in young children, as they have no concept of where their parents have gone. Parents are encouraged to explain to their child where they are going, and that 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.
* Some children take longer to settle, and their needs for proximity and secure base stages should be accommodated as much as possible.

**Settling-in for children with SEND**

* If a child has been identified as having SEND then the 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.
* An individual settling in plan will be agreed, depending on the child’s individual needs.

**For children whose first language is not English**

* For many children learning English as an additional language, the settling in period may take 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 should be made to bring in an interpreter for the induction. The settling-in programme can then be explained to the parent, with an emphasis on how important it is to stay with the child and talk to them in the home language to be able to explain things.
* Through the interpreter, the manager / 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. A list of key words in the child’s home language will be made with the parent. (Sometimes it is useful to write the word as you would pronounce it.) These words will be used with the child, and to address parents in their home language. E.g. ‘hello’ and ‘goodbye’.
* 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.