06 Children’s Onsite Safety

**06.02 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 managers and key person explain the need for settling in and agree a plan with the parents. Feedback is given to the parent each session and a plan is agreed for the following session.

**Prolonged absences**

* If babies or toddlers are absent from the setting for any for periods of time beyond one or two weeks, their attachment to their key persons will have decreased and will need to be built up again.
* Parents are made aware of the need to ‘re-settle’ their children and a plan is agreed.

**Two-year-olds starting a setting for the first time**

* A two-year-old may have little or no experience of group care. As part of gathering information from parents, it is important for us 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.
* 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.
* 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**

* Most children of this age can move through the stages more quickly and confidently.
* Some children take longer, a plan will be discussed with parents with either the managers or key person.
* 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, 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.