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Document.	<b>Settling in and transition policy</b>				
Revision	<b>02</b>	Approved By	<b>Katy Taylor</b>	Approval Date	<b>28/08/2025</b>

## Scope

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.

We follow a three-stage model of settling in based on three key needs:

1. *Proximity* - Babies and 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* – Babies and young children are able to separate from parents’ and main carers when they have formed a secure attachment to their key person who knows and understands them best and on whom they can depend for their needs to be met.

The setting manager and key person explain the need for settling in and agree a plan with the parents. This will be reviewed each settling session.

- If a child has been identified as having SEND then the key person/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.

## **Babies settling for the first time**

### **Settling-in for babies, children under two and those with SEND**

- Start times for babies are staggered to allow sufficient one to one time with each child and parent/carer.
- Babies should at least be at stage 2 of settling before the key person begins settling another child.

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- Where a number of babies need to start – key persons can start settling one child in the morning and another in the afternoon. In their first week, children who are settling in will not stay all day.
- If a child has been identified as having SEND then the key person/SENCO and parents/carers 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.

### ***Promoting proximity***

- For the first day, the parent/carer attends with the baby and does not leave for any time.
- One to two hours is sufficient for a baby and parent/carer to attend on any one day initially.
- On the first day, the key person shows the parent/carer around, introduces members of staff, and explains how the day is organised, making the parent/carer and child feel welcome and comfortable.
- The key person always greets the parent/carer and child. (Shift patterns may need to be adjusted when settling in.)
- The parent/carer is invited to play with their child and the key person spends time with them. As much time as possible is allowed for the key person to do this.
- At this time, the key person does not change or feed the baby but observes the parent/carer's handling of the baby and how the baby responds.
- The key person will engage the baby in eye contact but not rush to handle or hold the baby if this causes them distress.
- The key person observes to see if the baby is recognising them, beginning to explore the environment (if able), noting what they seem to like and making sure it is available the next day.

### ***Promoting secure base***

- When the parent/carer leaves, they always say goodbye and say they are coming back. Parents/carers should never slip away without the baby noticing; this leads to greater distress.
- When baby can comfortably cope with 30 minutes, the key person and parent/carer plan the next stage.

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- Parents/carers can be asked to bring in a recently worn tee shirt or scarf that smells of them. Babies will often settle if they can smell the familiar smell of the parent. Some parents/carers may agree to send in a recording of a song that they sing to get their baby to sleep, especially if it is in their home language.

### ***Promoting dependency***

- Attachment can be seen when the baby shows signs that they are happy to transfer their need to be dependent onto the key person. Key persons look for signs such as the baby being pleased to see them, looking for them when distressed, holding out their arms to be held, establishing eye contact, responding to play, feeding and taking comfort from the key person.

### ***When babies do not seem to settle***

- It is not good for babies to be in a setting when they are acutely distressed and anxious. A baby who is not securely attached and settled is overwhelmed with fear. They are unable to participate in any activity and do not learn. It is not in their immediate or long-term interest to attempt to prolong what is an agonising experience for them.
- A highly distressed baby will need 1:1 attention consistently; their distress will upset other babies and put stress on staff. If this is the case, the key person discusses with the manager or deputy.
- Attempts are made to reduce anxiety and distress through a planned approach with the parent/carer.
- Particular triggers of distress are discussed to see what can be done to alleviate it.
- If all attempts have been made and the baby or toddler still cannot cope without the parent, then the place is offered only with the parent/carer attending. In some cases it may be appropriate to withdraw the place and help the parent/carer consider alternatives. For a child 'in need' this may need to be discussed with the social care worker, where one is allocated to the child, health visitor or referring agency.

### ***Moving up from baby room to the main room***

- One-year olds are not moved to the main room before their second birthday or before they can cope; they are given the opportunity to visit the main group as part of a normal day and participate in play and join in at mealtimes, becoming familiar with adults, children and the environment.
- When approaching their second birthday, and when a vacancy arises, a new key person is identified. The key person discusses the plan for the child moving up with the parents.

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- The baby room key person and the parents agree how the child will be settled; ideally parents/carers spend time with their child and new key person before the move takes place.
- The current key person will spend time with the child in the new group, liaising with the new key person and ensuring that the child is familiar with all the main times of the day.
- The child gradually spends more time with the new key person until they can cope in their new room.

### ***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 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.
- On the first settling session the parents/carers will sit down with the child's keyperson and fill in an all about me form, so we can get as much information about the child as possible. The key worker plays with the child and gets to know them. Depending on how the child is coping within the setting the parent may try and leave for half an hour to see how the child is. It is important to let the child know you are leaving and say goodbye.
- The second settling session will be completely dependent on how the first session went. If parents'/keyworkers and children are happy, the parents/carers can leave the child for the full half day session ie. 9.30-11.45 or 1.30-2.45. If the child settles during this time they are welcome to start on the next day they are due in.
- Some children may need further settling sessions. This will depend on each child and can be discussed with the child's key person.
- 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, and their needs for proximity and secure base stages should be accommodated as much as possible.

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- Some children may need further settling sessions. This will depend on each child and can be discussed with the child's 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.

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- 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.
- Progress with settling in will be done as with any other child; it just takes a little longer to reach dependency/independence.

### ***Transition to new room***

- When a child is due to move into a new room the child's key person will talk with the child's parents and explain the process. A new key person from the next room will be allocated, this person will already know the child and will have formed a relationship with them.
- Settling sessions will then be arranged to allow the child to get to experience the other room, there will be as many or as few sessions needed for the child to settle in. The children will move to the new room the term after their birthday, to ensure they won't be the only child moving up.
- Alongside their settling sessions the current key person will complete a short transition sheet to give to the new key person with all the important information of the child included.

Responsibility for periodic review	<b>Annually by the manager</b>
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### **Document History**

<b>Rev</b>	<b>Changes</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Approval</b>
00	Policy Created	02.07.24	Katy Taylor
01	Amended to include babies	28.08.25	Katy Taylor
02			

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