

Sticky Fingers aspires to provide a safe, fun and welcoming environment for everyone. We offer children experiences to support their development, empowering them to reach their full potential



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09 Early years practice procedures

09.04 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's lead practitioner and key person explain the need for settling in and agree a plan with the parents during the induction meeting and adapt this as needed while the child settles in.

During the beginning of the school year, new children at the setting have a staggered start throughout September to ensure that they can build relationships with their key person and settle into the setting without being unsettled by other children who are also settling.

Settling-in those with SEND

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

- To settle the child into the setting and routines, it may be necessary that we will gradually increase the time a child attends based on their individual needs.
- The key person/1:1 always greets the parent and child. (Shift patterns may need to be adjusted when settling in.)
- If the child is absent from the setting for any periods of time beyond one or two weeks or have repeated absences, their attachment to their key person and their settling in process will be affected and will need to be built up again.

Children 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 childminders; this informs staff as to how a child may respond to a new situation.

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- To settle in a child, the setting will go through the same process of gradually increasing the time a child attends when needed to support the child's needs.
- 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.
- 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 children, 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.
- The setting welcomes phone calls from parents checking in to see how their child is while the child is settling.
- Some children take longer, and their needs for settling in should be accommodated as much as possible.

For children whose first language is not English

- If the parent does not speak English, efforts are made to source an interpreter for induction.
- 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, facial expressions and visual cues to help.
- To settle in a child, the setting will go through the same process of gradually increasing the time a child attends when needed to support the child's needs.