



# The Role of the Key Person and Settling In Policy

## EDITION 4

### Summary

Dicky Birds believe that children settle best when they have a key person to relate to, who knows them and who enjoys regular and consistent updates with their parent/s/carers. Research shows that a key person approach benefits a child, the parents, the staff and the setting by providing secure relationships in which children thrive and parents have confidence. In turn this creates a consistent flow of communication and it has been found that staff are committed to ensuring that their key children benefit from a more intense home to nursery handover each day.

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 within 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.

The key person role is set out in the Welfare Requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage. Each setting must offer a key person for each child.

The procedures set out a model for developing a key person approach that promotes effective and positive relationships for children who are in settings.

### Procedure Nurseries:

- The key person offers unconditional regard for the child and is non-judgemental.
- The key person works with the parent to plan and deliver a personalised plan for the child's well-being, care and learning.
- The key person acts as the key contact for the parents and has links with other carers involved with the child, such as a child-minder, and co-ordinates the sharing of appropriate information about the child's development with those carers.



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- A key person is responsible for developmental records and for sharing information on a regular basis with the child's parents to keep those records up-to-date, reflecting the full picture of the child in our setting and at home.
- The key person encourages positive relationships between children in her/his key group, spending time with them as a group each day.
- We provide a buddy key person so the child and the parents have a key contact in the absence of the child's key person.
- 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.
- **The key person and manager are responsible for implementing risk assessments which have been undertaken to provide a safe environment for all children and conducting other specific risk assessments which may need to be carried out to address day to day activities**, allergies, medications and or any physical or emotional disabilities.
- To ensure that all staff have regular supervision meetings and appraisals to identify any areas for development or further training.
- To ensure that all staff hold a current DBS or if not are never left unsupervised.
- To ensure that all staff have an up to date understanding of safeguarding/child protection and how to protect children from harm. This would include identifying signs and symptoms of abuse and how to raise these concerns as set out in the nursery safeguarding/child protection policy.
- Operating the whistleblowing policy to help staff raise any concerns about their peers or managers and thus helping staff develop confidence in raising worries as they arise in order to safeguard the children in the nursery.
- To ensure that all staff are trained to carry out intimate care such as nappy changing and understand how to promote consistent and caring relationships.
- To ensure that parents and carers understand how the key worker system works.
- To ensure that new staff have thorough inductions and are aware of the nursery's policies.



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### Settling-in

It is important that staff and parents plan sufficient time for a child/ren to spend in the nursery so that they might feel confident and secure in preparation for the official start date. Each child is an individual so this process must be tailor made to suit each family. For example it may be necessary to arrange additional settling in dates after the official start date in particular to support children who only attend one day a week.

Before a child starts to attend the setting, we use a variety of ways to provide his/her parents with information. These include written information (including our prospectus and policies), displays about activities available within the setting, information days and evenings and individual meetings with parents. The settling in period is usually 3 weeks although there is the option to attend play dates two months in advance ( See below)

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.

It is important that staff find a connection between home and the nursery that reassures the family that we are committed as a nursery to going that extra mile. We may offer a home **visit by a senior manager** and the person who will be the child's key person to ensure all relevant information about the child can be made known.

We use pre-start visits and the first session at which a child attends to explain and complete with his/her parents the child's registration records.

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.

We encourage parents to stay with their child/ren with the view to leaving him/her for short periods of time (To be agreed with the staff) this eases the separation process as it has been proven that little and often enables a child to feel comfortable in their new environment. As



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experienced carers we would recommend a minimum of 8-10 sessions as a realistic expectation and indication of time needed to settle a child. On average we find parents/carers need to remain with the child for at least 5 full settling in periods unless they have been in a setting before or are very adaptable to new experiences.

Below is a timetable for parents which indicate some of the strategies that may be used for settling a child into the nursery.

- Play dates up to 2 months prior to start date – this is optional but is encouraged.
- A Home Visit – This enables staff to interact with the child in surroundings that are familiar and comforting to the child – this can be used to support families who need a little more help.
- 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> week intensive settling in for 1 1/2 hours during either a morning or afternoon session.
- 3<sup>rd</sup> week as above but to include a meal at either lunch or tea time and if possible a sleep.

Younger children will 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.

We judge a child to be settled when they have formed a relationship with their key person; for example the child looks for the key person when he/she arrives, goes to them for comfort, and seems pleased to be with them. The child should be familiar with where things are and be pleased to see other children.

**Participating in activities, eating and sleeping at nursery are all good indicators that a child feels safe and confident.**

We encourage Transition Books which provide children with familiar faces to connect the home with the nursery and transitional objects – we encourage parents to leave a familiar object with their child so that they feel secure that the parent will return.

When parents leave, we ask them to say goodbye to their child and explain that they will be coming back, and when.

We recognise that some children will settle more readily than others but that some children who appear to settle rapidly are not ready to be left. We expect that the parent will honour the commitment to stay for at least the first week or two, or possibly longer, until their child can stay happily without them.

We do not believe that leaving a child to cry will help them to settle more quickly. We believe that a child's distress will prevent them from learning and gaining the best from the setting.



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We reserve the right not to accept a child into the setting without a parent or carer if the child finds it distressing to be left. This is especially the case with very young children.

Within the first four to six weeks of starting we discuss and work with the child's parents to start to create their child's record of achievement.

## Procedure Breakfast and After School Club (B&ASC)

### Key worker group

The club operate a 'key group' procedure, children from each class at the school will have a key worker from the B&ASC who collects them together with any information from the teacher/school. The key worker will then do the handovers to parents from the club for children in their group ensuring that any information from the school is communicated to the parent.

### Settling in

Due to the age and stage of the children at the club they generally only require one visit to meet the staff and their fellow club members and this is offered the week prior to their start date.

Children who appear to need more time are offered additional sessions throughout this week.

If parents are particularly concerned about how their child will settle a longer period will be arranged prior to joining the club.

## Linked policies, documents and resources:

*Home Visit Policy*

*Parents Information Evenings*

*Settling In Without Tears*

*Child Entry Forms*

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| <b>Devised by</b>          | Rachel Berry  |
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