

Inclusive practice in early years settings

Business Planning

When creating or updating your business plan you should include some flexibility for providing additional support for those children that need it. For some children with additional needs, including children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND), their need for support over and above what is provided for most children may continue for some or all of the time that they are with you.

Inclusion funding may be appropriate for some children with SEND, but most children will not meet the threshold for inclusion funding. It is important to remember that providers have a duty to adapt their provision to meet the needs of children who attend their setting. Developing an effective business plan, that includes additional support that you will need to provide for some children, will help you to be prepared for each child and support their development.

Planning Places

Settings should plan the places they offer by considering:

- the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) statutory ratios,
- their Ofsted registration,
- the physical space and staffing they have,
- their business plan, and
- meeting the children's needs.

You can limit the number of places offered to children on specific days or times. For example, you may decide that in a particular session, you are not able to take any additional children. This may be due to the level of need of the children attending that session. If you are limiting spaces in this instance it **must** be for all children – you cannot decline a request for a space for one child and then offer that space to another child. This could be discriminatory and may result in complaints about your setting. You may also be in breach of the [SEND code of practice](#) and the [Equality Act 2010](#) and potential legal action could be taken.

There may be occasions when you are unable to accommodate all of the children on your books, for one session or more. We recommend that you have a clear criteria about how you will allocate the available spaces fairly, so families are aware and understand the rationale. Suggested criteria could include prioritising:

- children of critical workers,
- vulnerable children for example, children with SEND, children with social care involvement, children we care for,
- children in receipt of 2 year old Free Entitlement, and
- 3 and 4 year olds, in particular those who will be transitioning to Reception, followed by younger age groups.

If you think you will be unable to accommodate children's sessions more than once, or there is a longer term problem, it would be helpful to keep a record of which children/families have been affected so that this is managed fairly for all. It is essential that settings consider the [Equality Act 2010](#) when making these types of decisions and ensure that they do not discriminate against those with protected characteristics:

- age,
- disability,
- gender reassignment,
- marriage and civil partnership,
- pregnancy and maternity,
- race,
- religion or belief,
- sex, and
- sexual orientation.

Parent Partnership

Building a successful partnership with parents is a requirement of the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) and an essential part of supporting children to maximise their potential. Building this partnership starts from the first contact you have with a family which could be via a website, a phone call or a visit to your setting. It is important to note that all settings **must** publish their Local Offer on their website, "[How to complete your Local Offer](#)" provides useful guidance to consider. Extending an inclusive welcome to all children and families at all times will support this ongoing partnership.

Settings should have a clear plan for engaging with families which adapts to meet the needs of the range of families in the setting, this should be communicated to parents. Staff should also be supported by managers to ensure that this plan is consistently implemented.

A crucial part of parent partnership is listening to parents, as they know their child best and have the biggest impact on outcomes for their child. Parents should be involved in planning for their child and staff in the setting should support them to continue their child's learning at home. A positive partnership with parents should:

- encourage children's parents to share any concerns they have about their child or a situation at home that may impact their child.
- enable staff to understand the importance of listening and responding in a solution-focussed way to what parents tell them. Whilst sensitively sharing their professional expertise with the parent to support the best outcomes for the child.
- support frequent, honest, open dialogue about a child with their parents. Therefore, support staff to keep parents up to date about their child's progress and raise concerns quickly if anything is identified within the setting.

There are times when parents may be wary of sharing information about their child and their individual needs. This may be due to their own previous experience or feeling that their child will not be accepted or offered a place if they share that their child requires additional support. Whilst hearing about a

need that you may not feel confident in meeting can be daunting at first, it is crucial that you respond positively to the parents and plan a time when you can talk to them in more detail. To prepare for this meeting:

- gather the information that you need, this may include speaking to other professionals,
- consider the adjustments that you may need to put in place and how you can do this, and
- arrange for the meeting to be held as soon as possible.

Following the meeting, it is important that you keep parents informed of any progress and work with them to plan the next steps for their child.

If you need to have difficult conversations with parents – such as not being able to accommodate the exact sessions that they would like, or that you would like to access support for their child from another agency – make sure that you allow parents time to reflect on what you have said and ask questions. When you finish the meeting, confirm the key points discussed and what the agreed next steps are. Difficulties sometimes arise when parents are unclear of what is happening and feel that their child is unwelcome or not being supported well.

Induction

All settings should have an induction process to support children starting in their setting. Having a planned induction process will ensure the correct support is put in place from when the child starts with you. Where you identify additional needs that have not been shared by the family, you can talk to the family and work with them to ensure that the child starts with the support that they need in place. It is important any information gathered in the induction is shared with relevant staff, as it is unlikely to be a successful start for a child if they arrive on their first day and staff do not know the child's needs and how best to support them.

The transition arrangements for a child starting at your setting should be clear. Setting should offer some flexibility to meet the needs of each child and all arrangements should be communicated clearly to parents. To support children to feel safe and secure in a setting, you may want to consider the following:

- The first visit should include parents staying in the setting with their child. Some children will need more than one session with their parents staying before they are confident to stay without them.
- Once the child is ready, settings can offer some short sessions for the child to attend without their parents present. These short sessions may support the child to engage within the setting knowing that their parent will return.
- The amount of time the child is attending without their parents can increase until they are ready to attend the setting for their full sessions. Some children will settle quickly and some will take longer, particularly where a child has not attended a setting before and may have had limited time away from their parents. Therefore, it is important you consider the individual needs of each family during the induction process.
- Ensure a clear transition process is in place as this can support parents to understand the importance of saying goodbye and leaving their child with

you. This will also outline what you will do to reassure their child and help them settle if they become upset.

Where additional needs that impact the induction process are identified, you should set up an additional meeting with the family. You can then arrange a revised transition timetable to balance the child's, settings and family's needs.

Training

All staff in the setting should be prepared and ready to adapt practice to meet the needs of the children accessing the provision. You should ensure that all staff have access to the training and support they need to fulfil their statutory duties and provide high quality, inclusive practice for all children attending.