



## **Guidance for Policy on Settling-In for Pre-school Services**

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## 1.0 Purpose

The purpose of this guidance document is to provide pre-school services with the regulatory requirements in the specific policy on Settling-in, as set out by the [Child Care Act \(1991\)](#) [Early Years Service Regulations \(2016\)](#). This document sets out the core requirements that should be addressed in this policy, as well as prompts and considerations that will support registered providers to ensure that their policy and procedures are fully developed and are reflected in the practices in their service.

The information in this document should be applied to the specific policy on Settling-in and the accompanying procedures of the service. This document should be read in conjunction with Tusla's [Practical Guide to Developing Policies, Procedures and Statements in Early Years Services](#), and the [Quality and Regulatory Framework](#).

*This document is for reference only. It should not be assumed that the guidance provided is comprehensive or that it provides a definitive answer in every situation.*

Further resources are available in [Appendix 1](#).

## Regulatory Requirements of this Policy

### **Child Care Act (1991) Early Years Service Regulations (2016), Schedule 5. 1 (s)**

A settling-in policy in relation to a pre-school service, means the procedures in place in the service to facilitate the integration in the service of a pre-school child when they first attend the service, their progression within the service and their transition to primary school.

## 2.0 Core policy requirements

A Policy Statement is recommended in this policy alongside the core requirements as set out further in this document. The policy statement should commit that the service will carefully, sensitively, and collaboratively, plan for all transitions that impact on children attending the service. The policy statement should acknowledge the various types of transitions that may occur including: the transition into the service, transitions within the daily life of the service, transitions out of the service to school or another service.

## Requirement 1

The policy sets out how children's various transitions are supported- (a) settling into the setting (b) transitions within the setting, (c) transitions within the daily routine, (d) moving on to primary school or to a new service.

### **Prompts and considerations** (not an exhaustive list)

The policy specifies:

**(a)** The measures to be taken, beginning from when a child is first enrolled in the service to ensure their transition into the service is well supported and meets the needs of each child, their parents/guardians and their family. This includes:

- Inviting parents/guardians and newly enrolled children to visit the service.
- Implementing measures to develop consistent key relationships between staff and families.
- Providing for the sharing of information as appropriate and in compliance with the GDPR.
- Providing for the careful, empathetic and sensitive management of introductions, settling in, new routines and new experiences for children, parents and families.

***Parents should be actively involved in the settling in process and should always be welcomed into the service, whether to support their child's transition into the service, and at drop off and collection times.***

**(b)** The measures to support children's various transitions in the service. This includes but is not limited to:

- A child moving to a new room,
- A child's increased or decreased hours of attendance,
- Familiar staff and/or children leaving and new staff and/or children arriving
- Significant changes to the care and learning programme,
- Significant changes in their family life that the service is aware of,
- Any other transitions the child may experience.

**(c)** The measures to be taken to ensure that children are comfortable in the transitions that occur daily. This includes but is not limited to:

- Consistency of relationships,
- Making sure children are aware of the routine and are informed of any changes,
- Making sure transitions built into individualised routines and care plans are supported.

**(d)** The procedures to support transitions from the preschool service to primary school. This includes but is not limited to:

- Liaising and communicating with parents/guardians, staff in the school the child is transitioning into, and any other professionals as appropriate.
- Preparing the child for the transition through developmentally appropriate language, materials, and activities.

- Providing any relevant information (to parents/guardian or with parental consent to the new school) that is helpful in ensuring a successful transition from preschool to primary school. The NCCA have developed a number of [resources](#) to support this transition.

## Requirement 2

The policy describes how continuity of care is maintained e.g., using a key person system.

### **Prompts and considerations** (not an exhaustive list)

The policy specifies:

- (a) That if the service operates a Key Person system this should be stated. Parents/guardians are introduced to the Key Person as soon as possible and made aware of how the system operates.
- (b) The information the service requests from parents/guardians of newly enrolled children and the format in which the information is communicated with the service. This should include (but is not limited to) the child's likes and dislikes; their individual needs and preferences; their routines including sleep; the foods they like and dislike; who the important people in their lives are; their interests; key words that the child uses/understands, and whether they have a special transitional object (such as a 'blankie').
- (c) How the service communicates with parents/guardians about their child's day, and how communication within the service operates so that staff are aware of the care needs of each child in the service.

## Requirement 3

The policy details how parents and guardians are involved in transitions, as appropriate.

### **Prompts and considerations** (not an exhaustive list)

The policy specifies:

- (a) That parents/guardians are considered a partner in supporting their child's settling in, and parents/guardians are invited to take an active role in settling their child into the service. ***Parents should always feel welcomed into the service to support the settling in process for their child.***
- (b) The measures to be taken to support parents/guardians who wish to stay with their child during the settling in period, to include support for parent's gradual withdrawal over a flexible timeframe.
- (c) The measures that staff will take to support and comfort a child who is upset during the transition and how this information is shared with parents.

### 3.0 Best Practice in developing and implementing a Settling In policy.

In addition to the regulatory requirements for this policy as set out in this document, service providers can enhance the quality of practice in the implementation of the Settling In Policy in the service. In this section, best practice in this policy area is outlined and further information is signposted where available.

- Implementation of the policy should reflect Síolta Standards, in particular Standard 13 [Transitions](#).
- Remember that the child's settling in experience could be their first experience of being separated from their parents/guardians. This could result in separation anxiety and distress for the child. This is one of the reasons that this time can be sensitive and stressful for parents/guardians and children.
- Don't put pressure on parents/guardians to leave the service if the child is distressed. Settling in takes time and patience and is not a one-off event.
- Think about the daily transitions in the child's life, as well as the less frequent transitions.
- Children experiencing social and economic disadvantage, children with English as an additional language (EAL) and children with special educational needs (SEN) may require additional supports at time of transition.
- Settling in and successful transitions are dependent on the development of supportive, responsive relationships between parents/guardians and the service through frequent communication and sharing of information and goals.
- Settling in and successful transitions are built on responsive relationships between children and educators that are secure, nurturing, consistent and continuous.
- Consider settling in and transitions from the perspective of the rights, health, wellbeing, learning and development needs and requirements of each child.
- Individualise routines and practices to support each child's rights, needs, interests, their own and their family's circumstances, their preferences, their culture and first language.
- Evaluate the quality and effectiveness of transitions using various means, including observations of the children and feedback from their families.
- Ensure the most appropriate transition to other environments and services by beginning transition planning as early as possible prior to the child's move.

## 4.0 Appendix

### 4.1 Supporting Information

- Aistear Siolta: [Practice Guide](#)
- Barnardos: [What to look for in an Early Years Service \(for parents\)](#)
- Barnardos: [A guide to supporting children and families in early years services](#)
- Betterstart: [Transitions: Transition to Preschool Tip Sheet for Early Years Educators](#)
- Betterstart: [Room to room transitions.](#)
- Betterstart: [Transitions within the daily routine](#)
- Early Childhood Ireland. [Settling babies.](#)
- First 5: [Transitions Tip Sheet](#)
- National Childcare Network: [Key person approach.](#)
- Nurturing Skills: [Transitions](#)
- PACEY (UK). [Transitions and settling in](#)
- Raising Children Network (AUS) [Starting and Settling into Childcare](#)

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