

Early Years Inclusion and Childcare Service

Children’s Starting Points - a holistic approach



Consider using the questions overleaf as prompts to support you in capturing a holistic picture of each child during their transition. They should not be used as a tick list but for you to reflect on as you develop relationships with the child and their family.

We do not specify a format for recording children’s starting points. Instead, we encourage early years providers to find a bespoke format that works for them, as children, families and early years providers are all unique.

This approach to capturing children’s starting points is informed by the EYFS 2021 but is also rooted in good early years practice as outlined below:

‘Practitioners should look at each individual child as a whole, building up a broad picture of children’s well-being, interests, characteristics of effective learning and learning and development across all areas. Practitioners need to take into account the views of parents, carers and other key professionals, as well as the views of the child.

This knowledge about a child should come from a mix of observing and communicating with the child in day-to-day interactions, and seeking information from other sources such as discussions with parents, family and other settings that a child may attend across a week.

Observations of children are vital. Because each child has a unique set of abilities and talents, observations in different situations capture these first hand. The starting point is always with the child. Observing what children choose to do, what their interests are and who and what resources they enjoy playing with, provides adults with reliable information about children as individuals.

Effective practice includes:

- effective methods for including and welcoming all parents. In this context, ‘all parents’ means, for example, parents who may speak more than one language at home, fathers and mothers with busy working schedules and/or unsocial hours, same-sex parents, traveller parents and single parents, and should include, where appropriate, parents who live separately from their child
- time for the key person to talk to parents before a child joins a setting
- regular opportunities, both informal and formal, where information is shared and parental contributions are sought.’

Progress Matters, 2009, Dept for children, schools and families

Identifying what each unique child “knows and can do” is the foundation of inclusive early years practice.

Transitions are opportunities for professional dialogue both within and between settings, as well as with the home. It is the responsibility of all early years practitioners to ensure that children feel welcomed, gain a sense of belonging and are helped to settle happily.

Effective transition is a process rather than an event, and should be planned as such.

High quality transitions recognise the importance of feeling known.

The key person makes essential connections. When children enter their new setting the task of providing continuity is made easier by a warm welcome from responsive and available practitioners.

Birth to Five Matters , Early Education, 2021

Practitioners must consider the individual needs, interests, and development of each child in their care, and must use this information to plan a challenging and enjoyable experience for each child in all areas of learning and development.

Statutory framework for the early years foundation stage, DfE, 2021

Are there planned opportunities to speak with the child and family?

What daily routines support the child at home?

What do parents most want for their child whilst they are with you?

Which people are important to the child?

What are the most important things parents think we should know about their child?

Do parents have any worries or concerns? Is there anything they think their child needs support with?

How does the child prefer you to communicate with them?

What languages are spoken and understood by the child and close family members?

How well does the child use their home language?

Have there recently been any changes to the child's/family's situation that may impact on the child?

What can the child do?
What are their strengths?

What does the child dislike or find difficult?

How does the child express their emotions and needs?

How does the child initiate play? What are their interests and fascinations?

What does a typical week look like for the child?

How does the child play at home? What do they love to play with or do?

What experience does the child have of playing with other children outside the setting?

Where are the child's favourite places to be – in the setting, at home, in the wider world?

What special events, celebrations and traditions are important to the family?

What do the family enjoy doing together?

Are there things parents like to do or skills they have that they would like to share with others in the setting?

What soothes/calms the child?

How is the key person/child bond developing?

How is the child settling in?

*The term "parents" is used to mean parents, carers and guardians