

## Supporting Transition Back into Settings

### Supporting staff with anxiety

**Personal anxiety** – It is understandable that there will be varying levels of anxiety amongst staff members. Each staff member is likely to need more regular 1:1 supervision than usual and time for this should be made available. Regular opportunities to reassure staff of the safety measures that will be put in place and involving staff in problem solving will increase confidence and develop a team approach to overcoming barriers and fears about a return to work.

Some staff members may be unable to return to work for health reasons which could put greater pressure on the staff that are able to return. Communication between all staff members of procedures will be vital for staff to feel safe and secure in the working environment (please refer to the operations section in this guidance). Try to include everyone so you maintain a team approach and can support one another.

Some staff may need to be redirected to outside support agencies to support their personal anxiety. This includes line managers who need to be mindful of their own emotional wellbeing in trying to support their staff team alongside anxieties of concerned parents.

### Alleviating professional anxiety

**Ratios:** be clear about the expectation for groupings. It is likely that you may need to operate with smaller ratios than usual to ensure safety. Firstly, establish how you will prioritise which children can be offered a space and the staff members you have available (remember some parents may elect to keep their children at home, while others will need provision so that they are able to return to work). The guidance states that priority should continue to be given to vulnerable children and children of critical workers followed by 3 and 4 year olds, and we would suggest that those children due to transition to school this year would benefit from re-establishing themselves in an educational environment as soon as possible to support this transition. Reorganising the setting may be necessary to make it easier for smaller groups to access different areas throughout the day to allow for a degree of social distancing. Allowing additional time for cleaning will also impact of the ratio of staff available to care for children throughout the day.

**Support for children with SEND:** Please continue to liaise with your Area SENCo for support in meeting these children's' needs. A focus on their reintegration and meeting their personal, social and emotional needs should be a priority initially before returning to working towards outcomes in their support plan.

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The government guidelines make it clear that provision should be made available for this vulnerable group of children. In cases where a child's key person is not available to work, steps should be taken to reorganise staffing to continue to offer provision for children with SEND, where parents are requesting a place. We must ensure that this vulnerable group are enabled to attend where risk assessments allow, by making reasonable adjustments to ensure their safety and care. Please liaise with you Area SENCo, if you would like support with this.

**Assessment/paperwork:** government guidance says this does not have to be your priority and the delivery of the EYFS curriculum is likely to be affected during the initial transition of children back into nursery. A focus on supporting children's personal, social and emotional needs should take precedence during the transition period where the emphasis should be on supporting children back into the 'new' routine in the setting and meeting their emotional needs (see section below).

**Transition to school:** schools will be creating new arrangements and communicating these to parents in due course. Please continue to use existing transition paperwork as you usually would, including the recommended formats for supporting transitions for children at SEND support which can be found on:

<http://www.supportservicesforeducation.co.uk/Page/2058>

Your Area SENCo will be responsible for liaising with staff and parents to arrange School Entry Planning meetings for MAISEY children as usual, either by requesting written information or through a virtual meeting.

Once children are resettled back into their setting, the focus can revert back to supporting school readiness; developing turn-taking, listening and attention, physical skills and early mark-making, developing independence and toileting etc.

Social stories and time-in with groups to discuss their feelings about starting school can also take place in the usual way.

If children are unable to meet their teachers before September, an 'All about me' booklet or one page profile (outlining the child's interests, what they need more support with and the important people in their lives) may be co-created between nursery and parents to support the school to prepare for the individual needs of each child.

### **Supporting children's' well-being (including children with SEND)**

**Prior to returning:** Re-establish contact with all parents to ascertain the current need for provision. A welcome back message could be posted on your website or

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other form of virtual communication. Ensure that parents clearly communicate when and on what days their child will be going back to nursery, once this has been formally agreed and established. Children may also benefit from knowing who will be in the setting when they return (staff and friends).

Clearly communicate your new procedures and routines to parents to reduce their anxiety- if parents are anxious at drop-off then children are likely to be more anxious and find it more difficult to settle.

**Assessing individual needs on return:** We would recommend that settings create a 'return to setting' form to gather information from parents about the potential impact of the 'lockdown' on their child. Suggestions to be included in the form could include:

What has changed in your family? What has stayed the same? What has gone well? What difficulties did your child have? What are your concerns about transition back to nursery/preschool? Any other information that we need to know about your child to help transition.

**How to welcome children back:** It will be important to ensure children feel safe and secure on their return. Use your prior knowledge of each child and the transition information from parents to provide positive experiences and activities for the children. Be clear about any new procedures and routines, such as groupings and rotation of activities and the staff that will be available (all staff need to be fully aware of these so that they can communicate clearly and confidently to the children in their care).

The setting may be quieter than usual, and some staff may not be there, so children may notice that things are different than they may have been expecting. Allow time to tune-in to individual needs and to offer greater reassurance- relaying what is still the same whilst acknowledging that some things are different. Try to stay positive. Children will easily pick up on staff anxiety and any reticence to be near a child and this will be confusing and upsetting for children. Be clear that some things have changed to 'keep us safe' without mentioning fears about catching the virus as this will cause further worry for the child.

It may be necessary to assess children when they come in for social/emotional needs in some way. The following assessment tool may be beneficial:

<https://www.earlylearninghq.org.uk/earlylearninghq-blog/the-leuven-well-being-and-involvement-scales/>

<https://czone.eastsussex.gov.uk/media/4599/leuven-scale.pdf>

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Remember to consider what the child was like before the lockdown and how they may have changed. Adjust provision and support accordingly and discuss this with the child's parents or carers.

Significant concerns about a change in behaviour should be discussed with your EYFS Link Worker and Area SENCo, who may be able to signpost you to further support and offer advice.

**Children with SEND:** In addition to the above advice, children with SEND may need additional support to understand the changes. Use of visual aids and grouping children with supportive adults and children to model the new routine will be essential. Please see the SSE website for specific advice and support or contact your Area SENCO.

### **Suggestions to support children/parents not returning (e.g. shielding):**

In the event that some children remain at home due to shielding, continued contact should be made with these families with some virtual support that may include activity ideas and information sharing. We want these children to remain feeling part of the setting community despite not being able to attend. Further advice on this will be given once we establish how many children are likely to remain at home.

Should parents opt to keep their child at home, consideration should be given to how settings will continue to liaise with these families' and their children. Again, this can be explored further when we have clearer idea of the number of children in this scenario.

### **Advice to Early Years Settings from the Educational Psychology Service:**

<http://www.supportservicesforeducation.co.uk/Page/17110>

#### **Please follow this link for information on:**

- Tips for Families Around Coronavirus
- Baby Talk: Parent Coronavirus Questions Answered
- Back to Child Care Following Shelter in Place
- Mindfulness Practices for Families
- Helping Toddlers Cope With Grief and Death
- Comics Exploring Coronavirus
- Favourite Books for Families