



Planning Successful Transitions

for Children with ASN in the Early Years

Preparation for Parents

A child starting an Early Learning Centre (ELC) for the first time can cause mixed emotions for any parent. It can be a time of apprehension: but also a time of great excitement and hope for the future. If your child has a disability; additional support need or developmental delay these emotions can be even more heightened. This document, will hopefully offer some reassurance and tips for a successful transition.

Developing Positive Partnerships with the ELC

Every child is different. Every child has different needs; and need different strategies to help them settle! The best way you can support your child in a successful transition is through positive partnerships with the ELC.

Prior to you child starting, you will often be invited to visit the ELC/School for an Induction Meeting. In some circumstances you might also be invited to attend a more formal Child Planning Meeting, along with Professionals who already know and work with you and your child. This might include: Health Visitors, Speech and Language Therapists, Physiotherapists, Occupational Therapists, your Key-Worker from the Pre-School Home Teaching Service etc.

Meetings give you the opportunity to share important information about your child and help you to feel secure that your child's needs have been identified and planned for. The ELC will also appreciate learning about your child's needs, interests and any tips or strategies you, or other professionals, can offer in supporting your child.

In addition, Early Years Practitioners often have a vast amount of experience in building relationships and supporting a broad range of children in settling and early learning. They will offer you information about their establishment and can recommend a number of strategies to help your child to settle.

When your child starts at their ELC, you will also have a further opportunity to complete paperwork detailing your child's needs and complete consent forms.

Strategies some ELC might choose to talk to you about

Meeting new staff – If timing allows, the ELC Practitioners who will be working with your child, sometimes find it useful to visit the child at their current playgroup, nursery or home setting. This lets them meet the child within an environment the child feels safe and gives them an idea of your child needs.

Visiting the nursery – Some ELC's will allow the child to visit, along with you, when the ELC is quiet. This is a good opportunity for you and the ELC practitioners to get an insight into how the child might settle and help to highlight things that might need considered and planned for further, before the child starts.

'All About My ELC' Children's Transition Booklet – Many ELC's have a simple transition booklet containing photographs for you to share with your child. This can help them to become familiar with things like: the staff, where they hang their coats, toilet/changing areas; snack/lunch areas; outdoor play and other play areas etc.

Like children, every ELC is different. Please speak to your child's ELC to see what strategies they use to support early years transitions.

Preparing your child in advance

Walking the route to the ELC – Introducing new routines and familiarise your child on the route to the ELC in advance. This will help your child to become familiar with the community and manage one change at a time.

Looking at picture books together - There are a wealth of story books that talk about starting nursery / playgroup. You don't need your child's full attention to read the books word for word, cover to cover. Just enjoy looking at the pictures together and talking about the characters/child's new experiences and activities they can play with at the ELC.

Sharing a Sensory Story – If your child struggles to engage with a book, try introducing your child to the ELC with a sensory story to help your child become aware of the sounds, textures and sights they might experience.

(Sensory Stories and Guidelines can be downloaded from the PSHTS Blog)

Talking Tubs – Collect a small range of activities that can be found in an ELC and place them in a box e.g. sand; water; playdough; building blocks; musical instruments; doll; cars; crayons, puzzles, books etc. Place a mat on the floor and bring out one activity at a time to explore with the child. Name the activity for the child, let the child explore, demonstrate uses for the child, talk about the things they will see at the ELC. If they have explored all the toys over a few sessions why not bring out two or three at a time to encourage choice making.

Making use of ELC Blogs

Many ELC's have Websites or Blogs. Use these to see if you can access SWAY's/ Video clips of ELC Practitioners reading stories or singing songs. This will help you child become familiar with the voices and faces of the people they will meet. Some ELC's run parent and toddler sessions too e.g. PEEP which you could attend to help your child become familiar with the environment.

Helping your child adapt to new routines

Starting with a good bedtime – To get off to the best start in the morning, start with a good bedtime routine. Having a good sleep and a regular morning routine will help your child to feel calm and safe for the day ahead.

Wear set clothes – Nursery uniforms are generally not a necessity. Wearing a nursery jumper, or plain school jumper from the Supermarket, however will help your child connect the jumper with the environment. This will help them to prepare for their day and reduce anxiety caused by uncertainty.

Use an Object of Reference, Photo or Sing a Song Signifier on your Journey-As you are heading out the door, offer your child an object to carry that represents the ELC or sing the same song everyday on your journey there. This will help them to recognise where they are going. Similarly, you can do the same on the way home / shops / Childminder etc with alternative objects.

Comforters / Transitional Objects- If your child requires a comfort blanket, teddy, toy that cannot be left at home or in a bag, check with the ELC on what strategies can be put in place to manage this while the child settles and no longer requires it within the ELC.

'Home in a Box' – Check with the ELC if they are happy for you to take in a small clear box e.g. a pack lunch with familiar things in it from home. It could contain a small photo album containing pictures of family, pets, home, favourite toys; a familiar teddy/comforter, a car, a tub of playdough, a pack of bubbles. The idea is you choose things that are of interest and familiar to your child so staff can use it to talk to child to build relationships, engage a child in play that might be struggling slightly, or offer a distraction or reassurance if it is required.

Build Trust –You know your child best! Share your tips and hints to reassure and distract your child when required. Aim to work together, with the ELC, to create a plan that works for everyone, so you can leave your child and begin the settling process as swiftly as possible.

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