

Top Tips for Parents with Children attending Early Years settings in September 2020

Here are some tips on how you can support your child to attend early years childcare settings, child-minder, nursery, preschool etc.

- 1** Firstly look after yourself, get support from family, friends and services if needed. Attend to your own self-care. Be kind to yourself and encourage children to do the same. It's been a massive upheaval and it's going to take time to get used to the new ways of doing things and time before things eventually get back to normal.
- 2** Start talking to your child about their setting and their key worker. Using the keyworker's name and talk to your child about all the exciting things they do at their setting. This will help them remember who looks after them.
- 3** If your child has been away from the setting create a 'countdown to nursery/child-minder' calendar for your child. Toddlers and pre-schoolers can benefit from counting down the days by using a visual timetable or calendar. This preparation provides sense of predictability and security, and this will counteract the feelings of uncertainty and disruption they may have experienced as a result of the crisis.
- 4** Acknowledge your child's feelings about attending. Your child might feel sad, worried or cross about the sudden break from nursery, or about going back. They might talk or play about these feelings, or they might show them to you through tantrums or other changes in behaviour. You can help by staying calm and trying to name these feelings out loud. This shows that you understand and will help your child to cope with their big feelings.
- 5** Prepare your child for new changes being introduced at the setting and the new routine. Keep talking about them after they have attended. Find out what changes there have been. You might find it useful to then talk to your children about these. Acknowledge that this might feel strange and different, and take some time to get used to.

If the child's key worker is expected to change, this should be explained to the child in an age appropriate way before they come back to the setting. Having an awareness of changes is important as it will help you stay attuned to the baby's communications, after they return to the setting.

- 6 Before the setting opens, they might agree to facilitate your child's key worker connecting with your child in some way. Maybe you could send pictures of activities or drawings to keyworkers, to help them stay in touch with the child's experiences. This contact reassures the child that their keyworker is thinking about them, that they have not 'disappeared', and that they are hoping to see them again soon. If the child is getting a new key worker, they could also perhaps connect with them in some of the above ways before the return.
- 7 Find out if your setting is introducing a 'settling in process' for the children. If you feel it would help, talk to your nursery about introducing this for your child. This will foster their sense of security in the setting, and enable them to re-establish their connection to staff.
- 8 Ask if children are permitted to bring in objects from home. A familiar toy, object or blanket from home can help the child cope more easily with the separation from their home environment, and their parents or carers.
- 9 Stay positive. Although things are a little different at the moment, try not to let this affect the way you talk about starting back to nursery/child-minder. Keep calm and smile – it is natural to feel a little nervous about sending your child back given the circumstances – but remember, your child easily picks up on your emotions. Ensure that you are always positive when talking about their setting. If you are positive and enthusiastic then your child will feel the same way too.
- 10 Seek support if you need it. Transitioning back or starting Early Years settings after being in lockdown is no easy task. You may find that your child struggles to adjust to the routine or experiences difficulties while they're at their setting. If this is the case, reach out to your child's keyworker as soon as you can so that you can make them aware of the challenges and work together to support your child.

If you are concerned about your child's mental health/well-being and you think they need professional support, speak to the setting and your GP about the best next step.

