

# Smooth transitions in the Early Years COVID 19 Guidance

## This information is for Childminders, Early Years Settings and Schools in Oxfordshire

Transitions are central to young children's development and emotional wellbeing, and the way in which the first transitions are handled could have a significant impact on the child's capacity to cope with change in the short and long term.

At this difficult time Early years practitioners will be thinking carefully about children's rights to education, but also how to keep safe during COVID19; therefore, we have put this document together to help provide guidance with some practical ideas of how to improve transitions when children move onto their next setting or school.

There is a full transition document called Smooth Transitions in the Early Years: A Good Guidance is available at <https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/business/information-providers/childrens-services-providers/support-early-years-providers/transition-pack>

**It is important that providers contact each other and contact families as soon as possible to ensure the transition process is effective. It is important to establish clear communication and trusting relationships with families and children, explaining what the process moving forward is.**

### Clear communications

- ❖ Share your plans for COVID19 response to restarting your provision and keeping everybody safe e.g. Handwashing / visitors / arrivals / end of the day / meals etc.
- ❖ Ask parents to inform the current provision of where the child is moving onto next, and that the new provision will be in touch.
- ❖ Talk to parents about settling in procedures – share a book list that explains starting school, transitions and changes
- ❖ Post a letter or card to the child, welcoming them to the school. You could have an older child in your provision writing and sending this. You could ask the child to send something back to you
- ❖ Ask parents to complete an "All about me" transfer form with their child; ensure parents add any further information they feel would be useful e.g. specific needs and any services that support the family. **Under these COVID19 circumstances this is even more essential, parents may need additional support at this time.**
- ❖ Set up your school channels of communication/Tapestry/EYLog/2simple and set up accounts early to be prepared
- ❖ Keep in regular contact e.g. phone calls, virtual meetings, letters and reminders
- ❖ Take time to find out about children's experiences while they have been at home
- ❖ Ensure parents have access to policies (updated due to COVID19)
- ❖ The current provision must direct parents to activities for children to continue learning at home
- ❖ Encourage parents to start a routine at home, this helps children feel safe, secure and looked after, especially during difficult/stressful times
- ❖ Talk to parents about resilience, a confident, competent child with good emotional support from parents will be more resilient in this new situation.
- ❖ Children may not have had as much experience of regulating emotions due to lockdown, you could share information about self-regulation.

## Building relationships

- ❖ Build a strong relationship with families, have a key person for each child to promote a positive relationship between the provision and the home
- ❖ Hold virtual home visits/meetings, or phone conversations with families, be welcoming and share information about practicalities too - book bags, practical suitable clothing, spare shoes, labels in clothes
- ❖ Send some taster online activities that you have already been sharing with the current children you teach
- ❖ Have an open forum for Q & A with parents – e.g. Zoom / dojo/What's App
- ❖ Let children know which of their friends they will see at school. The new provision and parents could arrange some skype playdates.
- ❖ Consider pre-school virtual celebrations with families at the end of term to highlight the completion of pre-school and children's individual development.

## Familiarisation

- ❖ Record a short virtual tour of your provision with a simple commentary and put on your website; exploring the early years environment. This can include typical resources and play opportunities, toilets, cloakrooms, smiling staff. Ensure webcams are at the child's height, you could send these to parents' phones too.
- ❖ Sharing new routines of the day. This will be included in your welcoming pack and include start times, what children need to bring with them, what happens if a child is unwell, information you need from parents
- ❖ Share story time / songs and rhymes on virtual platforms, including COVID19 books for young children
- ❖ Ask parents to give children opportunities to send things into school to be shared
- ❖ Ask parents to familiarise children with the journey to the provision, this could be by walking/driving/cycling the route
- ❖ Think about priority groups when you are planning the return to setting/school phase. There is more information on the COVID19 Government [webpage](#)

## For Reception to Year 1 transition

Due to children missing a significant part of their Reception year, Schools will need to consider how the curriculum is adapted to ensure that it is developmentally appropriate and meets the needs of the children. For example, extending EYFS practice into Years One. Transition from Reception to Year 1 during COVID 19 has further information and can be found at <https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/business/information-providers/childrens-services-providers/support-early-years-providers/transition-pack>

## Changes within families

Children may also have had to face other changes due to COVID 19 which will require additional support, it could be separation from a parent or the death of a family member. The Oxfordshire Practitioner Toolkit has further information about organisations that support bereavement [https://fisd.oxfordshire.gov.uk/kb5/oxfordshire/directory/practitioner\\_toolkit.page](https://fisd.oxfordshire.gov.uk/kb5/oxfordshire/directory/practitioner_toolkit.page)

Children going through these transitions may be experiencing a range of emotions or a sense of loss. Early years practitioners have an important role to play in supporting children when they are experiencing strong emotional upset. It is important you share this type of information with a new setting to help with a smooth transition. Keeping to familiar routines can help to reduce a child's anxiety. It is common for children's play to reflect what is happening around them and this is a healthy response which should be encouraged.

You can support children by:

- ❖ sharing stories about transition or loss appropriate for a child's age
- ❖ give children activities that they like doing or are interested in
- ❖ having puppets and dolls for children to use to express themselves
- ❖ allowing children to express their emotions through mark making and painting
- ❖ talking about emotions freely
- ❖ Child friendly COVID19 information

### **Children with Special Educational Needs**

Young children with Special Educational Needs often find change very difficult and will therefore need schools, settings and families to work together to plan for them as individuals, taking into account their specific needs, strengths, interests, as well as potential anxieties and learning styles. Many parents feel anxious about their child's transition to school however we know from talking to the parents of children who have additional needs that their usual concerns are amplified by the current situation and the uncertainties about when and how their child will be able to start in their new setting and what sort of preparation they will receive.

It's helpful if schools and settings acknowledge these worries and provide an opportunity for parents to share their concerns and talk them through.

- ❖ During this period of school closures and partial attendance, we encourage schools and settings to make phone calls or have virtual meetings with parents or carers of children who will be starting with them so that there is an opportunity to begin building relationships and for parents to feel listened to and involved.
- ❖ We recommend virtual transition meetings that include parents, staff from the current setting, the school and possibly a SEND advisory teacher or therapist if relevant. These meetings provide a crucial opportunity to share knowledge about the child and the support they will need to make a smooth transition, the support and interventions that have been effective in their current setting and those that need to be in place on day one in their new setting. As always, it's important to record the actions agreed. See transition plan template <https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/business/information-providers/childrens-services-providers/sen-support-providers/early-years-sen-toolkit/all-children-sen>
- ❖ A communication chart may be particularly helpful at this time as a way for the family to record subtle actions or sounds that their child uses in order to express specific needs and wants (see the appendices section in smooth transitions in early years booklet for further information).

### **Ideas for supporting the transition process for young children with SEND during the current situation:**

- ❖ Take photographs of key adults and places that will be important to the child, label, laminate and send home or send electronically
- ❖ Create a social story about starting school. <https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/sites/default/files/file/information-childcare-providers-sentoolkit/socialstories.pdf>
- ❖ Make a short visual timetable for a child's first day at school and share with home.
- ❖ Once children start it will be important to know what things they find calming and reassuring. At first they may need to bring familiar, preferred items to look at, touch or smell to help them feel safe.
- ❖ Find out from parents whether the child has any sensory processing needs e.g. might they need a quiet space to withdraw to? Do they need sensory resources such as a weighted cushion or ear defenders?

The EY SEN webpages are there to offer advice, support, ideas and strategies to assist you in providing for children with additional needs. You will also find the paperwork needed to request additional resources and the guidance to help you complete them. This includes **SEND transition funding** for children who are likely to require a high level of support during their first term in reception <https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/business/information-providers/childrens-services-providers/sen-support-providers>

### **Vulnerable children in the Care of the Local Authority CLA**

A good transition involves careful planning and the sharing of information between education providers. Each provider will have a named member of staff who has responsibility to promote the educational achievement of looked after children, who acts as the main contact for social workers, carers and any other professionals involved whilst the child is attending their provision. In schools this will be the Designated Teacher (DT) and in an early years setting this will be the safeguarding lead, the Designated Person (DP).

Transition into Reception should be planned through the child's Early Years Personal Education Plan (PEP). The PEP is used to identify key areas for development and then consider how these are used to support either in the setting or through activities in the home or community. It is important to remember Looked After Children can have several care placements and they may, as a result, have more changes in education placements. It is therefore important the child's emotional wellbeing is addressed and plans are put in place to support the child's needs. In addition, some children who have additional education and health needs will need to have these supported and planned for.

Good practice is to:

- ❖ Provide the receiving school with the names of key people already supporting the child within the EY provision for example key person, SENCo, Social Worker, CAMHS etc.
- ❖ Provide the receiving school with the names and contact details of people/key agencies supporting the child for example SALT and/or ATTACH.
- ❖ The EY provision should find out the names/roles of key people within the receiving school who will be supporting the child; name of class teacher, Designated Teacher in charge of safeguarding (DT), SENCo.
- ❖ The EY provision should forward onto the DT key information and meeting dates such as Looked After Care review, PEP document/meeting date.
- ❖ The EY provision should check the receiving school is invited to the transition PEP meeting.
- ❖ The EY provision should complete a Transition Profile and share with the receiving school's DT.
- ❖ The Primary school DT should offer the child a named key person who will support their emotional development in school, provide support for regular small group transition work plus extra supported visits.

### **Early help in Oxfordshire**

As a result of COVID19, there is likely to be an increase in vulnerable families and disclosures from children; settings need to be prepared to respond to these. Examples of additional support include environmental factors- finances, job loss. Adults may need support with mental health- isolation, anxiety, addiction relapse, relationship difficulties, domestic abuse and parenting. At this difficult time there will be a need of additional support because of the impact from bereavement. It is important that any additional needs or vulnerabilities identified are discussed with the family as appropriate, passed onto the childminder, setting or school and any support required about how to manage/address the vulnerabilities can be explored with LCSS

<https://www.oscb.org.uk/practitioners-volunteers/locality-and-community-support-service-early-help/>

## Reporting Safeguarding Concerns

- ❖ Immediate Concerns about a child call the MASH Tel: 0345 050 7666
- ❖ For non-immediate safeguarding concerns or if you are unsure whether to make a referral contact <https://www.oscb.org.uk/practitioners-volunteers/locality-and-community-support-service-early-help/>

## Oxfordshire Health visitors

In line with advice to manage social distancing and COVID -19, Well Baby Clinics and physical groups, (such as Early Days and Knowing Me Knowing You), are presently closed and developmental reviews are very limited at present. HVs are continuing to carry out new birth visits, by phone, digitally, or face to face if necessary and are providing a very limited number of clinics by appointment only in some situations.

In addition, each HV team has a daily duty line within working hours for health advice and support. This can be accessed via your usual HV team telephone number in your red book. HVs also continue to provide support around sleep, behaviour, feeding etc. Appointments can be by phone or digitally. If parents have concerns or questions about the health of their child/children, please ask them to contact their Health Visitor directly using the telephone number in the **red book**.

There is a variety of health advice on the HV Facebook page. There are also a number of helpful videos by the nursery nurses around feeding, sleep, behaviour. The Oxfordshire HV Facebook page can be found here: <https://www.facebook.com/OxfordshireNHSHealthVisitors>

Oxfordshire Health visitors have produced useful guidance to support children and families, there is a COVID19 well-being pack, top tips about emotional well-being and top tips during COVID19. This information can be found on the parent's school readiness webpage.

<https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/residents/children-education-and-families/education-and-learning/get-children-ready-school>

## Support from the Community

The voluntary and community groups play an important role in supporting families and organisations in Oxfordshire to access information, support and advice in the current Coronavirus/COVID-19 situation.

- ❖ <https://www.oxfordshireallin.org/>
- ❖ <https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/sites/default/files/file/working-early-years/communityaroundsetting.pdf>

## Government COVID Guidance

- ❖ [https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-for-schools-and-other-educational-settings?utm\\_source=77084a7b-88f8-42d0-a8b8-ae463d3f1d1d&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_campaign=govuk-notifications&utm\\_content=immediate](https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-for-schools-and-other-educational-settings?utm_source=77084a7b-88f8-42d0-a8b8-ae463d3f1d1d&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=govuk-notifications&utm_content=immediate)

## Other useful links:

- ❖ **Oxfordshire Early Years Toolkit**  
<https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/business/information-providers/childrens-services-providers/good-practice-and-ideas-childcare-providers/early-years-toolkit>
- ❖ **School Readiness for practitioners**  
<https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/business/information-providers/childrens-services-providers/support-early-years-providers/what-school-readiness>
- ❖ **School Readiness for parents/carers**  
<https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/business/information-providers/childrens-services-providers/support-early-years-providers/what-school-readiness>
  
- ❖ **Information for childminders**  
<https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/business/information-providers/childrens-services-providers/support-early-years-providers/information-childminders>
- ❖ **Health visiting advice**  
<https://www.oxfordhealth.nhs.uk/health-visitors/useful-links/>
- ❖ **The Local Offer**  
<https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/residents/children-education-and-families/education-and-learning/special-educational-needs-and-disability-local-offer>
- ❖ **The Virtual School**  
<https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/residents/schools/our-work-schools/virtual-school-looked-after-children-and-care-leavers-0-25>