Managing the Return to Early Years Settings

Following the Proposed Easing of the Government's COVID-19 Lockdown Measures

Summer 2020

Ealing Early Years
Quality Partnership

Foreword

This document aims to support early years settings by providing some points for consideration in relation to their staff, children and families in order to facilitate a smooth return after the easing of the Government's full COVID-19 lockdown measures.

Contents

Some FIRST-TIER Points for Consideration

General

- Clean / deep clean the setting and equipment
- Consider a plan of action to manage the transition back into the setting
- Consider how and when staff and parents might be informed of the relevant aspects of the plan prior to the nursery's opening (to manage the expectations of staff, parents and children)
- Meet with staff teams collectively to review the setting's safeguarding policy, including a reminder of the signs, symptoms and reporting of abuse (that may be disclosed on children's return to the setting)

- *Refer to link below for latest government guidance*

  Actions for education and childcare settings to prepare for wider opening from 1 June 2020

  https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/actions-for-educational-and-childcare-settings-to-prepare-for-wider-opening-from-1-june-2020/actions-for-education-and-childcare-settings-to-prepare-for-wider-opening-from-1-june-2020

Emotional Wellbeing

- Consider how the wellbeing of <u>individual</u> staff will be identified and met prior to the children (and parents) returning to the setting
- Consider how support will be provided to staff members (keypersons) to enable their own emotional capacity to support and 'contain' the emotions of their key children and key parents – particularly for those staff members whose own families have experienced loss (e.g. bereavement, jobs, housing), and/or known other stressors, anxieties, etc.
- Meet with staff teams collectively to:
  - identify and support their own emotional well-being
  - brief them for example on:

Ealing Early Years
Quality Partnership

- the plan of action to manage the transition back into the settings for all the children, parents and staff
- the significance of children's and adults' (staff and parents') emotional well-being
- being mindful that staff, children, and parents may present with <u>delayed onset</u> of anxiety and / or their emotional responses to traumatic events and /or COVID-19.
- the (re)development of strong attachments; and the importance of fostering these for the children's overall wellbeing, learning and development
- The fact that this may be a significant transition for the parents too (leaving their children again to return to work; and some may feel upset and a sense of loss and separation anxiety being away from their children after this unusual period of time at home)
- a review of the setting's settling-in / transition policy
- how parents will be supported with understanding the importance of re-establishing boundaries and routines for their children at home?
- how some parents and children might need to be supported additionally
- signposting of information for parents (financial support, counselling services, etc)
  - Bereft Bereavement Support is Ealing's bereavement counselling charity. They offer open ended counselling to Ealing residents that have suffered a loss. Clients pay what they can afford. Go to www.bereftbereavementsupport.co.uk for more information.
  - The mental health charity, Mind, also offers information and advice on bereavement and a huge range of mental health topics.
- For colleagues and families that live outside of Ealing, Cruse, a charity that offers support and care for bereaved people, has a free helpline which is staffed by trained bereavement volunteers. Call 0808 808 1677 or email helpline@cruse.org.uk

- Refer to the Ealing document '*Reception Transition Guide*' which provides guidance to support successful transition for all children in the EYFS – particularly during these unique times.

Ealing Early Years
Quality Partnership

- *Refer to link below for latest government guidance*

  Opening schools and educational settings to more pupils from 1 June: guidance for parents and carers

  https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/closure-of-educational-settings-information-for-parents-and-carers/reopening-schools-and-other-educational-settings-from-1-june

Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) Staff, Children and Parents

The Government has released recent research statistics regarding the higher incidences of COVID-19 related deaths among Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) communities. In light of this, settings will need to remain sensitive to, and consider the potential impact for their BAME staff, children and parents. For example, the need:

- for bereavement support to be signposted to relevant staff, children and families
- for awareness and sensitivity to the potential changes in behaviour and presentation of staff, children and their families, and the possible causes of such (e.g. bereavement, concerns, anxieties, etc.); and the avoidance of unduly labelling such individuals
- for awareness of the potential increased levels of concern and anxiety for BAME staff regarding returning to the workplace, and the potential affect if may have on the health of the individual staff member and/or their family members at home
- for awareness of the potential increased levels of concern and anxiety for BAME parents about their children leaving the home and / or the need to protect other family members at home; and the potential impact on the children's attendance at the setting

Ealing Early Years
Quality Partnership

Social Distancing

If social distancing is still required, some factors to take into consideration for this might include:

- What might social distancing look like for the adults and their positioning within the environment?

- What might this look like for the children whilst taking into account their ages and stages of development; their stages of play (e.g. solitary, parallel, collaborative, etc.); and their need for socialisation, connection and emotional support, comfort and reassurance?

- How might children be supported to make friends and build positive relationships with their peers?

- How does the physical layout of the indoor-outdoor environment facilitate social distancing for children and adults whilst ensuring that *'children must usually be within sight and hearing of staff and always within sight or hearing'* (EYFS Statutory Framework, 2017, p23)?

- How can children's opportunities for free-flow access between the indoor and outdoor learning environment facilitate social distancing?

- How will the number of children attending at any one time affect social distancing?

- How might social distancing measures be applied during key times / experiences during the day such as circle times, children accessing the toilets, lunch and snack times etc.?

- Maintaining the increased hygiene levels:
    - **Standard:** regular handwashing (20 seconds)
    - **Customised by some settings:** Parents washing their children's face and hands on arrival to the setting

- If home visits were previously conducted by your setting, what might you do differently to begin to form those effective relationships with your children and families during any periods of social distancing?

- *Refer to link below for latest Government Guidance*
  Coronavirus (COVID-19): implementing protective measures in education and childcare settings

  https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-implementing-protective-measures-in-education-and-childcare-settings

Ealing Early Years
Quality Partnership

Individual and Collective Settling Plans: a considered approach

Government guidance has stated that 3-and 4-year olds followed by younger age groups should be prioritised in the transition back into an early year setting.

As the emotional well-being of children, parents and staff and is of paramount importance during the whole process, some factors to take into consideration during children's settling / re-settling might include:

- Will all children (and their parents) be expected to return to nursery on the same day and time? If so, how will that be managed to ensure the emotional, physical and safety needs of the children, parents and staff are met whilst also maintaining their emotional wellbeing?

- Will there be a staggered intake (e.g. smaller groups of children starting on different days / times)? If so, over what period of time, and which children will be encouraged to start first?

- How will the staff's shift patterns reflect the settling / re-settling-in plans for individual children (e.g. so that the individual children's keypersons are on shift to greet and receive their key children on arrival)?

- How will settling be considered for the following groups of children (accounting for their own unique individualities too):
    - Children with SEND, including those with an EHCP?
    - Children for whom there are safeguarding concerns (e.g. Children in Need (CIN), Child Protection (CP))?
    - Children who were still settling-in (had not fully settled in / developed secure attachments) prior to the COVID-19 lockdown?
    - Children who were due to start the setting prior to or during the COVID-19 full lockdown period but had not yet started?
    - Those children who are known to require a longer settling in process after periods of absence (e.g. after half-term holidays, sickness, etc.)?
    - Those children, who under normal circumstances, do not usually require a longer resettling-in period after periods of absence (however, continue to be mindful as these have not been 'normal circumstances', and there may have been additional stressors experienced by the child and family that may not have been shared with the setting prior to the child's return to the nursery)?

Ealing Early Years
Quality Partnership

- o Those children of keyworkers who had transitioned to another setting during COVID-19 (consider how the emotional well-being and transition for those children will be supported if they are returning to your setting)?
- o Children whose families have experienced loss (e.g. bereavement, jobs, housing etc.), and other known stressors in family?

Some SECOND-TIER Points for Considerations

Supporting the Children's Learning, Development and Progress

- What might the children's learning and development experiences look like if they return to the setting before the end of the academic year? How will the prime areas be supported in order to underpin the progress and attainment in the specific areas?

- How and when will the setting's formative and summative assessments take place (including progress summaries, cohort progress tracking, etc.)?

- How are staff going to be supported with maintaining a sense of urgency in closing any potential or identified gaps in children's experiences, progress and attainment – whilst maintaining sensitivity to the emotional toll experienced by some children and families?

- How are the children's progress and attainment going to be accelerated whilst ensuring the children's experiences are developmentally appropriate; and linked to their next steps, interests (as a motivator for their learning) and ages and stages of development?

- How are parents going to be included as partners in the acceleration of their children's progress and attainment and the closing of any identified gaps?

- How are parents' own fundamental needs (e.g. financial, food, housing, social, emotional, mental health, physical health, etc.) going to be supported? How might parents be signposted to other agencies and sources of information?

Ealing Early Years
Quality Partnership

Further Support

Please feel free to contact an Early Years Consultant (EYC) should you wish to discuss any points for consideration in relation to your own specific setting's context:

- Lizzie Ross:
    - lross@ealing.gov.uk
    - 07957 658 019

- Natasha Henry:
    - henryn@ealing.gov.uk
    - 0754166 7630

- Samira John-Bailey
    - sjohnbailey@ealing.gov.uk
    - 020 8825 6525

Ealing Early Years
Quality Partnership

Early Years Quality Partnership

Perceval House

14-16 Uxbridge Road

Ealing W5 2HL

earlyyearsservices@ealing.gov.uk

Ealing Grid for Learning www.egfl.org.uk/EY