

**Settling In Policy –
Updated to include information for COVID-19**

Policy Statement

Little Stars on the Lane is committed to the smooth transitions of children and their parents/guardians into NAMED SERVICE. We recognise that one of the key challenges for all who care for children during this COVID-19 pandemic is to balance the need for a practical and sensible level of caution with the need to provide a nurturing and supportive environment for children. We are committed to ensuring that any practical precautions to reduce the chance of spread of virus such as by limiting adult interaction with the service will be balanced against the needs of children which will remain our priority at all times as they transition into our service.

This policy has been updated in line with current guidance the HSPC Infection Prevention and Control guidance for services providing childcare during the COVID-19 Pandemic, the DCYA's Return to Work Safely Protocol and Tusla's Children Services Regulations Guidance Document for Early Years Services: COVID-19

Principle

This policy is underwritten by the Child Care Act 1991 (Early Years Services) Regulations 2016, the Child Care Act 1991 (Early Years Services) (Amendment) Regulations 2016 and the Tusla Early Years Inspectorate Quality Regulatory Framework.

Guidelines:

Consider the following when drafting your Settling In policy:

1. The service will have provided information on the Settling-in policy to the parent/guardian/carer on initial enquiry and consider how to do this so parents/guardian can access the settling in procedures of the setting and to minimise the need to attend the service. This is done by displaying the policy on the website and verbally with the parent.
2. Services learn from parent/guardian about child's feeding and sleeping routine and rituals, preferences, etc. and create close links with home, bringing familiar items/photos.
3. Parents/guardians must have completed a Record Card/Registration Form with all the relevant details about the child, especially contact and collection information in accordance with the Childcare Act 1991 (Early Years Services) Regulations 2016.
4. Parent/guardian should be encouraged to drop-in at pre-arranged times during opening hours with their children to familiarise the children and themselves with the routine, the setting and the staff. These settling in times are limited to 2 occasions prior to commencement. After commencement if a parent would like to take their settling in slowly, we can absolutely do this. But we offer two complimentary, one hour, settling in sessions prior to commencement. Should a parent set a settling in date and then not avail of the settling in sessions, fees are still due on the date booked to start in the service and the settling in sessions are deemed completed.
5. During COVID-19, settling in sessions will be staggered to ensure that we minimize the opportunity for the virus to spread. Adults are not allowed in the care rooms at any time and children must be left at the door of the care room to minimize COVID spread.
6. An information chat for parent/guardian should be held to discuss issues and concerns around the process of settling-in (i.e. different stages - clinging, crying, not talking, needing security blanket, all a normal part of separation anxiety).
7. During COVID-19, it won't be possible to have an in-person information session, instead an online discussion could be set up in advance of children starting with new families. This session online could discuss how the

setting will support children through feelings of distress, how the educator will support the child and promote positive interactions and how technology will be used to maintain communication.

Some things to focus on for an information session:

- The dignity and rights of every child are maintained at all times.
 - Children will spend time in small groups during the day
 - Educators practice active engagement and interact continually with children. They show respect and affection for children by smiling and speaking to children at their eye level, throughout the day.
 - Every child is able to engage with a primary educator(s) in meaningful, open interactions that support the acquisition of skills for life and learning.
 - Educators are available responsive to children, encouraging them to share experiences, ideas and feelings, and listen to them with attention and respect
8. Parents/guardians should be advised to make work arrangements to facilitate the settling-in process.
9. Staggered starting days and times for new children is essential to facilitate the integration of the child into the group. This may need to be altered for COVID-19.

Sample Policy:

We would like to welcome you and your child to **Little Stars on the Lane**. We hope that you get to know us and have a happy and successful time with **Little Stars on the Lane**.

Pre-Admission

- Little Stars on the Lane will provide information on the Settling-in policy to the parent or guardian on initial enquiry.
- Little Stars on the Lane will learn from parent or guardian about child's feeding and sleeping routine and rituals, preferences, and will create close links with home, bringing familiar items/photos.
- Parents/guardians must have completed a Record Card/Registration Form with all the relevant details about the child, especially contact and collection information in accordance with the Childcare Act 1991 (Early Years Services) Regulations 2016.
- Parents and guardians will be encouraged to drop-in at pre agreed times during opening hours with their children to familiarise the children and themselves with the routine, the setting and staff.
- Little Stars on the Lane will not be able to facilitate parents dropping in line with COVID-19 restrictions. During the COVID-19 period, Little Stars on the Lane must implement alternative arrangements to minimize adult interactions in line with guidance from the HPSC. Use of technology for communication with parents will be implemented. Little Stars on the Lane will focus on working together with parents during this period to support the needs of children.
- An information session for parents and guardians will be held to discuss issues and concerns around the process of settling-in (i.e. different stages - clinging, crying, not talking, needing security blanket, are all a normal part of separation anxiety). This information session will be held virtually during COVID-19. Normally as a phone call individually with the parent.
- Parents and guardians will be advised to make work arrangements to facilitate the settling-in process.
- Staggered starting days and times for new children will be introduced to facilitate the integration of the child into the group. This may need to be adjusted due to COVID-19 and we will communicate with families directly about times they can attend the setting for settling in.
- The settling-in process is designed to support you and your child to settle-in to their (new) environment, we will work with you and your child to ensure that your child settles in and becomes happy and confident with

their new surroundings. We offer two complimentary one hour sessions for your child to settle with us. When you book a start date with us, your fees begin on that date, whether you have availed of the settling in time or not.

- We will work closely with you:
- To support your child in the move from home, family and familiar people, into the new community of Named Service.
- To help your child make a strong attachment to her or his key person.
- To help your child feel secure and confident in our setting.
- To work with you to help your child with any difficulties that might arise.

Settling in policy: guidance for parents

Little Stars on the Lane aim to work closely with parents to support your child in the move from home, family and familiar people, into the new community of the childcare service. We seek to help your child make a strong attachment to her or his key person and to help your child feel secure and confident in our childcare service. We will work with you to help your child with any difficulties that might arise. Before a child starts to attend our service we will provide his/her parents with written information (including our prospectus and policies) and displays about activities available within the childcare service.

- We provide opportunities for the child and his/her parents to visit the setting. During COVID-19 this will be minimised but through ongoing communication, parents will have the opportunity to discuss their child often.
- We allocate a key person to each child and his/her family before she/he starts to attend; the key person welcomes and looks after the child and his/her parents at the child's first session and during the settling-in process.
- We use pre-start visits and the first session at which a child attends to explain and complete with his/her parents the child's registration records.
- When a child starts to attend, we explain the process of settling-in with his/her parents and jointly decide on the best way to help the child to settle into the childcare service.

Helping Your Child to Settle in:

Children settle into Preschool in lots of different ways. Some children will confidently move into the Preschool Room as soon as they come in. Other children may be nervous and anxious about leaving their parent. Most children will be somewhere in between. Please try not to worry if your child experiences difficulties – it is a very normal part of a child's development to be anxious, nervous or angry about starting nursery/preschool. We also recognise that many parents will find this a difficult and sometimes upsetting process. We hope that we can use our experience to support you and your child in whatever way suits you. Please remember that we require all parents and carers to help their children settle in. In our experience, all children benefit greatly when the nursery/pre-school works closely with the family on settling in.

The settling-in period:

Different children need different amounts of time to settle in. We recommend that you plan for two weeks to support your child. The settling in period is a time for your child to get to know his or her key person - with the reassurance of having you here too. As the relationship develops, your child will be able to trust that:

- the key person and the other staff in the nursery/pre-school are able to meet her or his needs.
- they can be helpful, comforting and deal positively with any problems.
- they can provide interesting experiences which make it worthwhile to come to the service.

The settling in process gives you a chance to check out:

- what type of service this is

- how the staff work
- what kinds of experiences we offer to the children.

You will be able to see how we:

- play with children
- talk with them
- have fun together

At any stage of the process – if you would like to talk to someone or support then please talk to your child’s key person, or the Childcare Manager.

Sample Settling In Procedure

- Orientation conversations, phone calls and visits will occur prior to the child commencing care. These meetings enable Staff and families to discuss ideas, routines, procedures and policies and any child allergy or medical condition. During COVID-19, these meetings will be held online.
- Managers and Room Leaders will use the Orientation and Enrolment Form during the orientation process.
- We encourage and welcome mothers who are breast feeding to visit the setting and feed their child should they wish to do so throughout the day. During COVID-19, we will continue to work with families to support breastfeeding in a safe way.
- Verbal and written communication channels are established between families and Staff to outline children’s routines and share daily events
- Feedback about the child’s day is provided to families after each attendance.
- Families are welcomed to share information about their child’s interests and experiences outside of the setting.
- Families are included in decision making about their child’s day at the setting.
- Informal and formal meetings between families and Staff can be arranged to discuss children’s learning and development, and to express any concerns that may arise at home or at the setting.
- When families from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds are enrolled at the setting, the manager will make every effort to explain policies and procedures.
- Staff participate in a range of professional development relating to effective communication and relationships with families.
- Any family involvement is welcome and appreciated. We encourage families to get involved in the curriculum and share their knowledge and/or skills where appropriate. Families also have the option of not being involved (beyond a minimum level of communication with staff each day) if that is their preference.
- Staff create a welcoming environment where the diversity of families and communities, and the aspirations they hold for their children, are respected.
- Family photos and other aspects of children’s home life are incorporated into the environment and the curriculum.
- Staff will ensure that all transitions and progressions within the setting adhere to the settling in procedure.
- Links are made with the local primary schools to ensure smooth transitions for all children.
- An invitation is made to the primary school teachers from the local schools to visit the children in the preschool prior to their first day in September. All staff will work cooperatively with the teachers to design an appropriate plan.

It should be noted that Garda Vetting is not required for parents/guardians who are settling-in their children.

This policy links with our -

- Admissions Policy
- Children with Additional/Special Needs Policy
- Transitions Policy
- Equal Opportunities Policy
- Partnership with Parents/Guardians Policy

Person Responsible: _____

Date implemented: _____

Signed by: _____ **On behalf of Management (Manager, Owner,**
Chairperson)

Review Date: _____

