Transition Guidance
Including bereavement

Guidance Aim

- To ensure all setting staff understand the types of transitions that children in their early years may experience. Some examples are listed below:
    - Starting school, preparing to move to a new setting, nursery or pre-school.
    - Attending more than one setting.
    - Family breakdowns.
    - New siblings.
    - Moving home.
    - Death of a family member.
    - Death of a family pet.
    - Change in staff / key person.
- To ensure all setting staff are sensitive to the issues children may experience whilst going through a transition.
- To prepare children for transitions and involve or support parents and the receiving setting as appropriate.
- Staff know children well enough to identify a change in behaviour or character and are confident to discuss observations with parents.

Including parents in the transition process

Effective communication with parents is crucial in ensuring a smooth transition. Staff and parent relationships need to be positive to ensure all information is shared to provide appropriate support for a child and their family.

- We ask that parents inform us of any changes in the home environment that may impact on their child so staff can be aware of the reasons behind any potential changes in the child's character.

Supporting transitions

Staff will support all children with any transitions. If the transition is due to occur at the setting, e.g. new starter / room changes, staff will fully support the child and family in the following ways:

New to setting

- Staff and in particular the key person will work with parents to make sure their child is settled as quickly as possible. We will provide support during what can be an emotionally distressing time for the parent and child.

- The key person will read the children's registration form before the child starts. This helps us to provide the child with the most positive transition experience possible.
- Staff will work with parents to agree an appropriate way to settle their child during their first session.
- If a child becomes extremely distressed after the parent has left and cannot be calmed down, the parent will be contacted.
- Staff will consider the needs of the child and parent when settling them into the setting and may adapt practice to accommodate individual needs.

Attending more than one setting (sharing of information)

- Where a child attends more than one setting, staff will seek the parent's permission to share information on their child's learning and development with the other setting or childminder. This is covered in the general consent section of the registration form. This helps by:
    - offering a valuable insight in to how a child learns and adapts in different environments,
    - giving a more realistic overview of a child's developmental progress,
    - aiding smooth transitions from setting to setting,
    - enabling the key person to plan appropriately for the child's learning and development.

Starting school

Starting school is a huge transition and the staff/key person will do all they can to facilitate a smooth move. We have a variety of methods that support this:

- Staff/key person will provide access to a variety of resources and activities that relate to the move into school, e.g. uniform to dress up in, a role play area set up as a school classroom, photographs of the schools the children may attend. This will help the children to become familiar with what to expect when they move into school.
- Staff will invite school representatives, such as the Reception Teacher to visit children in the setting so they can get to meet them.
- Children with additional needs may require extra support when transitioning to school. The setting's SENDCo will discuss the additional support required with the school class teacher/SENDCo during the year leading to their school transition.
- The key person will initiate conversations with their key children about the school and discuss what they think may be different and what may be the same. They will talk through any concerns the child may have and provide activities or group discussions relating to any issues enabling these to be overcome.
- The key person will write a summary of the child's learning and development in the form of a Transition record. Parents are asked to contribute to these records and a signature is

required before sending to the child's school. This will enable teachers to have a good understanding of each child.

Family breakdowns

- When parents separate this can be a difficult situation for all concerned. Staff understand that emotions run high and will always act in the best interests of the child.
- Staff ask that all parents keep them informed of how their child is coping and whether their sleep or behaviour is affected.
- Staff will remain impartial and not act as arbitrators in disputes.
- Staff cannot deny access to the child's information/records and/or the child if both parents have parental responsibility, unless a certified copy of a court order is held at the setting.

Moving home and new siblings

- Moving home and new siblings are normally events that parents have advance notice of. We ask that parents let the setting know about these events so we can help provide support to the child. We can spend time talking to the child and provide activities that may help the child to act out any worries they have, e.g. through roleplay, stories and discussions.
- Staff will also support parents who may want additional sessions during these events to provide children with consistency and time away from the changes occurring.

Bereavement

We aim to support both the child and their family and will adapt the following to support their individual needs and wants:

- We ask that if there is a loss of a family member or close friend that the parents inform the setting as soon as they feel able to.
- The key person and/or the manager will talk with the family to ascertain what support is needed or wanted from the setting. This may be an informal discussion or a meeting away from the child to help calm a potentially upsetting situation.
- The child may need extra support at this difficult time and the setting will adapt their staffing arrangements, where possible, so they are fully supported by the most appropriate member of staff on duty, preferably the child's key person.
- The setting will take advice from the family and any professionals working with the family in order to use consistent language and where possible answer questions in keeping with the family's wishes/beliefs.
- The manager will be flexible wherever possible to adapt the sessions the child and family may need during this time.
- The death of family pets is also an area that children and their families may need support with. We will follow the above procedure wherever it is appropriate to support the child to understand their loss and support their emotions through this time.

- Reading stories, having honest conversations and using play opportunities to discuss death and dying is part of the setting's curriculum. Our aim is to reduce emotional distress when a death occurs.

There may also be rare occasions when the setting is affected by a death of a child or member of staff. This will be a difficult time for the staff team, children and families. Additional support will be available via the setting as required.

The setting manager and the key person are always happy to look at ways of providing additional support for children because of any changes in their life. If parents feel they would like this to happen, then they can speak with the manager and key person.

Further support, guidance or counselling can be found through the following organisations:

General advice on dealing with bereavement and loss
For general advice on bereavement, there are pages on the NHS UK website (www.nhs.uk) and on Age UK (www.ageuk.org.uk).

Sunflowers Suicide Support is based in Stroud but offers support across Gloucestershire to those bereaved by suicide.
www.sunflowerssuicidesupport.org.uk

Winston's Wish is based in Cheltenham but offers national bereavement support to children and young people whose parent or sibling has died.
www.winstonswish.org

Child Bereavement UK: Free confidential bereavement support 'when a child grieves or when a child dies.
Call 0800 02 888 40
www.childbereavementuk.org

Cruse Bereavement Support: Bereavement advice, information and helpline.
Call 0808 808 1677
www.cruse.org.uk

SANDS: Stillbirth and neonatal bereavement support
Call 0808 164 3332
www.sands.org.uk

General support
The Samaritans: 24-hour free support line
Call 116 123
www.samaritans.org

British Association of Counselling and Psychotherapy: Information about counselling
Call 01788 578328
www.bacp.co.uk