

Settling Your Child into Care!

Starting childcare can be an emotional experience for both you and your child.

Each child's reaction to settling into care, and the time it takes for them to be comfortable in their new environment, is dependent on the individual child, their age, and their past experiences in childcare. Children will vary in how long they take to settle into the centre. Some will settle easily on their first day, while others may show distress for some weeks before settling happily and confidently.

This information sheet offers some suggestions that can help you support your child during the settling in period.

Plan an Orientation visit!

An orientation visit before your child starts will give them a chance to explore their new environment. They can begin to develop a relationship with the educators and meet other children at the service with the security that you are close by. Familiarising your child with their alternate carers and care setting will be a huge help to them.

This is also a great opportunity for you to discuss your child's interests, routines, and rituals with the educators.

What else can you do?

Here are a few other strategies that you can consider to assist your child during the settling process:

- If possible, start with some shorter days and gradually build up the length of time your child spends at the centre when they first start.
- Send in a favourite toy or other familiar comfort item that might help them settle. Although we don't encourage this long term, it can certainly help in those first few weeks.
- Allow your child to help pack their bag for childcare in the morning or the night before.
- Print and laminate a photo of mum or dad for your child so that they can keep you close.
- Inform us of your child's favourite activities they we may be able to use to distract your child at drop-off time.
- Help your child settle into a preferred activity before you leave
- Talk about going to care with your child, and what will happen there and let them know that you are happy and confident that they will be safe and have lots of fun.
- Reassure your child when you leave that you (or someone else) will be back later to collect them. You might like to tell them what time you will be picking them up (eg. afternoon tea time).

‘For your peace of mind, we encourage you to give us a call to see how your child is going. Children who become very upset when they are left often settle very quickly and happily once the actual separation is over.’

At the end of the day...

Here are some suggestions to create meaningful conversation with them after their day with us:

1. Ask them about their favourite activities of the day.
2. Talk to them about the friends they have made. Ask them to name a few children who you know your child is friendly with or spends time playing with.
3. Ask your child what was for lunch and who did they eat with today.
4. Talk to them about their favourite educator at childcare and what they like about them.
5. Ask them if their educator read them a story, which one was it, and what they liked about it.
6. Mention some items that your child would see or play with at the service, as this helps them recall situations. For instance, ask them what they and their friends made with the blocks.
7. By the time you get home, you should have received your child’s daily diary with their photos and videos and what they did for the day. You can go through this together with your child and let them see their photos and tell you what they are doing.

