

Key Worker Policy

Askea Community Childcare Centre is committed to ensuring that every child is allocated a Key Person who has a particular responsibility for that child's care. The Key person gets to know the child well and their individual needs, monitors their progress, maintains development files, learning records and plans for the child to share with parents/guardians.

Principle of Key Worker Policy

This policy is underwritten by the Child Care Act 1991 (Early Years Services) Regulations 2016; The Childcare Act 1991 (Early Years Services)(Amendment) Regulations 2016; (Registration of School - Age Services) Regulations 2018; Our Duty to Care 2002 and Children First National Guidelines for the Protection & Welfare of Children

Rationale

"We can never remind ourselves too often that a child, particularly a very young and almost totally dependent one, is the only person in the nursery who cannot understand why he is there. He can only explain it as abandonment, and unless he is helped in a positive and affectionate way, this will mean levels of anxiety greater than he can tolerate"

(Goldschmied & Jackson, 1994)

It is important for a child's wellbeing that they have a person with whom they feel connected. By having a specific knowledge and understanding of the child, the key worker can show warmth and sensitivity in their communication with the child.

They will become a secure base from which the child can explore the world and a safe haven to return to when they feel overwhelmed by the environment. When the child feels unwell, tired or fearful, or has questions, they will seek out their key worker.

The key worker approach in early years is a method of care in which each child is assigned a particular educator who will act as their 'go to' person. This person will support the child and their family when they are first integrating into the setting and will continue to be the key worker for routine care and for moments of emotional intimacy, building up a secure attachment with the child.

The Key Worker policy provides for continuity of relationships without exclusivity.

The Key Worker and child will be designated to Play Pods, this will ensure movement and contact with others outside of their play pod is minimised and controlled at all times, with the availability of floating staff to cover breaks to implement health and safety measures during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Procedure

The key Worker will be sensitive and responsive to a child's needs in the same way as that of a parent.

To implement the Key Worker policy staff will:

- Link closely with parents in helping the child settle into their new environment
- Understand the child's needs and the parent's needs in relation to their child's care and learning

- Understand cultural differences and key words from the child's own language if English is not the child's first language
- Observe changes in the child and how their particular interests might develop
- Make contact at the beginning or end of each day with the child and parent to provide updates on progress and development if possible. Where this is not possible due to Covid-19 health and safety measures, staff will provide written reports to parents and engage in technology communication at a time that does not impact on the staff member's responsibilities to engage and supervise children.

The Key Worker Ensures that:

- A range of appropriate experiences are offered
- All areas of learning and development are covered
- Experiences are matched to a child's abilities, interests, needs and developmental level
- Themes which relate to children's interests and experiences are chosen

Communication Plan For staff & families

A copy of all policies will be available during all hours of operation to staff members and parents in the Policy Folder located in Reception.

Parents may receive a copy of the policy at any time upon request.

Parents and the staff team will receive written notification of any updates.

Related Policies, Procedures and Forms

- Partnership with Parents Policy
- Settling In Policy
- Health and Safety Policy
- Curriculum Policy
- Infection Control Policy

References

- Tusla: Quality and Regulatory Framework
- Child Care Act 1991 (Early Years Services) Regulations 2016
- The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child
- Return to Work Safely Protocol, Covid-19 Specific National Protocol for Employers and Workers (2020)
- Covid-19 Infection Prevention and Control guidance for settings providing childcare during the COVID-19 Pandemic (HPSC, 2020)
- First 5, Guidance for Reopening, Government of Ireland (2020)
- Guidance for Early Years Services managing COVID-19, (Tusla, 2020)
- Síolta: The National Quality Framework for Early Childhood Education
- Aistear: The Early Childhood Curriculum Framework
- Aistear Síolta Practice Guide
- The Key Person Approach, Positive Relations with Children in the Early Years, Barnardos

Who Must Observe This Policy:

This policy must be observed by:

- Managers
- All staff members
- **Parents/Guardians**