

Supporting children

[Family](#), [Children](#)



(E1+E2) There are several laws that influence working practices in a setting for children that are currently in place. The Data Protection Act 1998 contains 8 principles to keep personal data safe. The principles state that data must be; obtained and processed fairly and lawfully, used only for specified and lawful purposes, adequate, relevant, not excessive, accurate, kept up to date, processed in accordance with the individuals rights and is kept secure (www. legislation. org. uk). The Data Protection Act was passed to control the way information is handled and to give legal rights to people who have information stored about them.

Supporting children includes keeping them and their personal data safe. When working in a childcare setting it is important that childcare practitioners protect the children's personal data by keeping to the rules given by the Data Protection Act. The Children Act 2004 identifies and places a responsibility on childcare practitioners to work together to help children meet the following five priority outcomes: be healthy, stay safe, enjoy and achieve, make a positive contribution and achieve economic wellbeing. (www. medway. gov. k) Emphasis should be on adopting a holistic approach to identifying the child's individual needs at an early stage and working with the family and other agencies to meet these needs. The Children Act 2004 provides a legal framework for the Every Child Matters programme (Tassoni. P, Et al, 2007, page 116).

The Human Rights Act 1998 came into force in the United Kingdom in October 2000. ' It means that you can defend your rights in the UK courts and that public organisations (including the Government, the Police and local councils) must treat everyone equally, with fairness, dignity and respect'

(www.liberty-human-rights.org.uk). This means that within childcare settings both the childcare practitioners and the children should have their rights met; for example, the right to their privacy could be met by having cubicles in the toilets. Anyone who works in a childcare setting has the responsibility for the health and safety of others there. The Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 is 'An Act to make further provision for securing the health, safety and welfare of persons at work' (www.legislation.gov.uk).

Employees in childcare settings must identify and reduce any possible hazards within the setting to ensure the health and safety of themselves, other adults and the children in the setting. The act states that safety procedures must be displayed clearly and all risks should be controlled and monitored. The Health and Safety at Work act 1974 ensures that children in the setting are protected from risks and hazards. 'The Equality Act came into force from October 2010 providing a modern, single legal framework with clear, streamlined law to more effectively tackle disadvantage and discrimination' (www.qualityhumanrights.com). In order to follow this legislation, childcare practitioners need to treat every child in their care the same and not discriminate children of different religion, ability, gender, age or children with either a physical or medical disability. (E3+E4) Every childcare setting needs policies and procedures that show how they are meeting legal requirements. Safeguarding children is vital for childcare practitioners as they have a duty of care towards the children within the setting.

Childcare settings should have a child protection policy and procedures for dealing with issues of concern or abuse in order to safeguard children. These

policies and procedures will conform to the Children Act 2004 as it will ensure children are healthy and safe. A setting should also have a policy in place for working with parents. This could include remaining confidential when working with parents to meet the Data Protection Act 1998. To meet the Equality act 2010, childcare settings should have an equality of opportunity policy.

This policy could promote positive attitudes and encourage participation from people from minority groups; it should also eliminate any unlawful discrimination from the setting. A health and safety policy will meet the requirements of the Health and Safety at Work act 1974. Part of this policy should ensure that employees in the childcare setting identify and reduce any possible hazards within the setting. It is important that children are treated fairly and are given every opportunity to achieve their full potential.

In order to achieve full inclusion within a childcare setting, childcare practitioners must remember to include parents as well as the children in the setting. In order to achieve this, childcare practitioners should constantly be reviewing their work and ask themselves if they are meeting the children's and their families' needs. Childcare practitioners should ensure that individual needs are met in order for them to be fair, just and inclusive. Policies and procedures can promote fair, just and inclusive strategies in many ways. Childcare settings may have a settling-in policy, recognising that some children may need more time to settle into the setting. When creating an accessibility policy childcare practitioners should consider how people are coming into the setting, childcare practitioners that promote, fair, just and inclusive strategies would talk to the parents to find a way to meet their

accessibility needs. (A) There is a significant amount of legislation that influences working practices within early years settings. In a childcare setting it is a statutory duty to ensure legislation criteria is being met within the setting.

Therefore, the legislation must be implemented in the working practices within the setting. The Welsh government have devised a national minimum standards for childcare settings to work under. ' Providers of child minding and day care in Wales are required to meet the standards detailed in the National Minimum Standards for Regulated Child Care. ' (wales. gov. uk). Childcare settings are monitored by regulatory bodies to ensure they are meeting the national minimum standards. This influences the working practices within childcare settings as they should ensure that all standards are met in the day-to-day running of the environment.

Curriculum frameworks within childcare settings need to meet the national curriculum in order to secure the right of all children to a broad and balanced education. Childcare settings need to plan their activities around the national curriculum. Fitting every aspect of this around the setting's daily running may be difficult, but it must be done. The amount of funding childcare settings receive may influence their working practices as it may reduce the amount of activities the setting is able to provide for the children.

The practitioner's role within the setting is to ensure that the planning is differentiated but to maintain an inclusive practice. The childcare practitioner needs to know children's backgrounds so that the diversity within the setting is known and all children's individual needs can be met. Simple rights such as those outlined in the Human Rights Act 1998 must be given, the childcare

practitioner should make sure that every child has their rights considered. (E6 + D1) A transition is a change from one situation to another.

Most children will go through similar transitions, for example most children will go to nursery, and then move onto primary school. Some children may find going through transitions easy, however other children may be scared or worried about the transition. It is important that all children are prepared for a transition. When explaining what is happening either before or during a transition to younger children, just talking may not be enough; using tools such as toys, drawing or role play, may explain the situation better.

Role play can encourage children to act out their fears by using dressing up and it may inspire questions. Some children may need more support than others during new transitions. Older children may talk about their worries so it is important to be flexible with these children and explain the transition in more detail with them. It is important to recognize early on that a child may not cope on their own with the transition. ‘ Signs that a child is not coping or is becoming anxious might include tearfulness, clinginess and some regressive behaviours’ (Tassoni. P, Et al, 2007, page 147).

It may be helpful to find ways to make the transition easier for children showing any of these signs. Professional support may be needed if in some cases, the difficulty with this transition is linked to previous transitions that may have been a bad experience for the child. Transition objects such as a teddy or blanket may make the transition easier for the children. When moving from one setting to another, children should have visits to their new setting, where they have a chance to play and explore their new environment and meet with their new practitioners.

Childcare practitioners from the original setting take small groups of children to visit their new class, explaining what will happen and reassuring them. It is important that the childcare practitioner considers how the child may be feeling throughout a transition. Childcare practitioners should consider how the transition is made from a child-centred approach. Exchange visits like this can be extremely important in helping the new practitioners as they then know the best way in which to help the children when they move to the new setting.

Children should be prepared for transitions in their life; this preparation will be important when the transition is taking place. When preparing children, it is important that parents are involved as it could be confusing for the child if the parent and childcare practitioner are explaining the transition differently. The amount of preparation that is given to the child depends on their age. Before they are 3 years old, children have a limited understanding of time, this could mean that talking about a transition too far in advance could confuse them.

Between 4 and 7 years, the children's concept of time is still developing, however they do have a better understanding, this means that preparation for a transition needs to be carefully timed to their understanding. Children aged between 7 and 12 may have already experienced a few transitions. These previous experiences will help them prepare for future transitions as they may remember how their worries were settled. They also have a good understanding of time, understanding that a week is not long, but a year is.

Older children aged around 13 to 16 years old should be involved in transitions from an early stage and are likely to want to be part of the

decision making that is part of any transition. Being part of the process will help these children gain confidence. (Tassoni. P, Et al, 2007, page 145) To help children through a transition, childcare practitioners should gather as much information about the transition as possible. Childcare practitioners may be able to do this from the parents or directly from the new setting. This depends on the type of transition the child is going through.

By gathering as much information as possible the childcare practitioner should find the best way to prepare the child. Older children may want to find out information for themselves. For example they may use resources such as the internet to research or they may ask to go and visit the new setting. Transitions will be made easier for children if all childcare practitioners and parents work together. Communication between all settings and parents is paramount. It should be done far in advance so that all childcare practitioners know what others are doing to meet the children's individual needs, and parents can be informed. E5+D2) ' Empowerment is seen as a central concept so that children are better equipped to take greater charge of their lives in order to enhance their self-confidence, competence and self-esteem' (www. swanseagfl. gov. uk). Childcare practitioners use many strategies to empower children and develop their independence and self-reliance. Childcare practitioners can empower children through play. Childcare practitioners can empower children by encouraging them to initiate play, also teaching them independence.

Childcare practitioners could also mirror the children while they are playing. ' It is the process of serving as the reflection of a child's abilities, skills and qualities so they begin to " see" themselves as they really are: highly

valuable, talented and capable right now' (www. psychologytoday. com). Giving children the choice of what to play with will teach them self-reliance, knowing they can make decisions about what to do. While playing children need to have the ability to ask questions so need constant supervision in order to have people around to ask.

Childcare practitioners should plan play in order to challenge children in order for them to develop new skills. Another way childcare practitioners empower children is through a positive reinforcement system. For example when children are toilet training, settings could have sticker charts near the bathroom. The bathroom could be a system of earning mini-stickers if the child at least tries to go, and then a larger sticker if they actually go to the toilet. Since all children toilet train differently, the childcare practitioners should be able to adjust the system to meet the needs of each child.

Positive reinforcement systems develop independence and self-reliance as it does not use pain, punishment, or intimidation that can hurt the child, their self-esteem, emotional growth, wellbeing or their relationship with the childcare practitioner. It is up to the child whether they get the reward at the end, giving the child responsibility independence. Children will be empowered by systems like this as they are learning to make the right choices for themselves. Gaining new skills through positive reinforcement systems will give the child confidence. C1) One theoretical perspective which supports the development of strategies for empowering children is Albert Bandura's Self Efficacy theory. Bandura uses the term self-efficacy to consider how much we value ourselves; this covers every aspect of a child's life. ' A child with a high sense of self-efficacy believes that they are capable

and that they have control over how well they do' (Tassoni. P, Et al, 2007, page 135). These children may be confident in trying new tasks because they feel that with practise, they will be able to do it.

If the child is confident in their ability they will expect to do well in the activity. Children with low self-efficacy may start out thinking that the task is too hard and they cannot do anything to make it easier. Self-efficacy is developed when children have support as well as when they feel empowered, feeling they have control over certain tasks. According to Bandura, children need to be given activities and responsibilities that allow them to feel independent. If childcare practitioners take over because the child is not doing well, the child will develop a poor sense of self-efficacy.

In 1996 Pajares stated that although high levels of self-efficacy enhance one's accomplishments and feelings of personal well-being and it helps people to remain calm when approaching challenging tasks, they do not always guarantee positive outcome expectations and they vary greatly between individuals, which makes them very difficult for researchers to assess (sbluman2. blogspot. co. uk). I believe that self-efficacy supports strategies for empowering children and effects practice as childcare practitioners need to provide environments which are supportive and encouraging to give high self-efficacy to children.