

3.4 The Wider Context

Working in partnership with other settings, other professionals and with individuals and groups in the community supports children's development and progress towards the outcomes of *Every Child Matters*: **being healthy; staying safe; enjoying and achieving; making a positive contribution and economic well-being.**



Multi-agency working

- In order to achieve the *Every Child Matters* outcomes for children – being healthy, staying safe, enjoying and achieving, making a positive contribution and achieving economic well-being – practitioners need to work together across services.
- This may involve, for example, working with home visitors, outreach workers, health or social care professionals, ethnic minority achievement service staff, librarians or local artists.
- To best support children and their families all these groups need to communicate well, listen carefully to all concerned and to put the children's needs first.

Transitions and continuity

- Children may move between several different settings in the course of a day, a week, a month or a year.
- Children's social, emotional and educational needs are central to any transition between one setting and another or within one setting.
- Some children and their parents will find transition times stressful while others will enjoy the experience.
- Effective communication between settings is key to ensuring that children's needs are met and there is continuity in their learning.

The community

- Every setting is part of its community even though not all the children may live in the surrounding neighbourhood.
- The local community may contain many different racial, cultural or religious groups. Even if it doesn't, there will be children and adults of various ages with different views, beliefs and backgrounds using the setting.
- When the setting values the local community it can encourage the different community groups to work together for the benefit of all.



Effective practice

- Ensure that parents are kept informed in advance about what will happen at transition times, such as when children join the setting.
- Involve parents at transition times, valuing what they say and encouraging them to stay with their children while they settle in.
- When children attend several settings ensure that practitioners from each setting regularly share the children's development and learning records and any other relevant information.
- Take time to listen to colleagues from other professional backgrounds and be open about differences of language and approach.
- Involve children in learning which takes them into the local community, such as walking to the shops.
- Invite members of the local community into the setting to share their expertise, for example, digging a new flower bed or talking about their own childhood.



Challenges and dilemmas

- Finding time to record children's progress and development in ways which can be easily shared across agencies.
- Finding sufficient time to really involve parents fully in decisions made about their children.
- Maintaining good relationships with professionals whom you only see once in a while.



Reflecting on practice

- Do you have a policy for transition and continuity which is shared with everyone involved both in and beyond the setting?
- How do you help children and families who are new to the area or your setting to settle in and get to know people? What is the role of the key person in this?
- How well do staff know the local area and use this knowledge in planning for children's learning?

What do I do next?

- **Welfare requirements** are explained in full in the *Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage* booklet.
- **Areas of Learning and Development** including effective practice, planning and resourcing at different stages are detailed in the *Practice Guidance for the Early Years Foundation Stage* booklet and on the CD-ROM.
- **Early Support** information is available on the CD-ROM under areas of Learning and Development.
- **Research and resources** are available on the CD-ROM.

