Creating, monitoring and reviewing your Policies and Procedures

Introduction

Your policies and procedures are an integral part of your daily routine. They should form an accurate reflection of your practice and the ethos within your provision. This toolkit aims to help you develop a set of policies and procedures that are individual to your provision and help you meet the relevant requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage. It will also provide you with examples of good practice and links to useful websites which will help you to ensure your policies and procedures are current.

The final part of this toolkit is "A guide to policies in early years" which is a separate document and gives specific guidance on writing a number of individual policies.

What is a policy?
A policy is a guiding principle.   It informs parents and staff of what they can expect to see within your setting and the ethos that you hold.

What is a procedure?
A procedure is a written, course of action that you will follow to ensure that your policies are fulfilled in a consistent and uniform manner.

For specific information on developing a **Safeguarding Policy**, please refer to the Safeguarding Children toolkit.

Links with other documentation

Since your policies and procedures cover all aspects of practice within your early years provision, links can be made with all areas of further documentation such as the Early Years Foundation Stage and Every Child Matters. For instance, a policy on healthy eating would link to the "Be Healthy" section of Every Child Matters, and commitment 1.4 of the Early Years Foundation Stage – "Health and Well-being". However, the provision and quality of your policies can be linked strongly with the more specific links mentioned below.

The Early Years Foundation Stage

A Unique Child: *1.2 - Inclusive practice.* Well considered policies and procedures will help to ensure inclusive practice within the provision, which in turn will ensure that diversity is valued and respected throughout the provision.

Positive Relationships: *2.1 – Respecting each other.* Policies and procedures lay down ground rules and expectations for staff, parents and children. Consistently following set practices will help to build respect between all those using the provision.

Enabling Environments: *3.2 – Supporting every child.* An inclusive set of policies and procedures will help to support each individual child within the setting, ensuring that needs are considered and met.

Enabling environments: *3.4 – The wider context.* Developing and reviewing your policies and procedures is an ideal way to work in partnership with all members of your provision and in some cases, the wider community.

Every Child Matters

Make a Positive Contribution – Including children in the development and monitoring of policies and procedures helps them to engage in decision making, and consider how they can support their community and environment. Policies and procedures give expectations for all and encourage positive behaviour and relationships. Sharing policies and procedures ensures that everyone is aware of the stated boundaries, which in turn can help build confidence.

Ofsted self-evaluation form

Your policies and procedures, and how you review these and use them in your practice directly links to **Part B, section 5, o)** of the Ofsted self-evaluation form: The effectiveness of leadership and management in the Early Years Foundation Stage.

Some relevant quotes from the Statutory Framework of the Early Years Foundation Stage.

"An effective safeguarding policy and procedure must be implemented" **(page 22)**

"All practitioners should have an up-to-date understanding of safeguarding children issues and be able to implement the safeguarding policy and procedure appropriately. Policies should be in line with LSCB local guidance and procedures" **(page 22)**

"Providers must engage with, and provide the following information for parents:
- *the provider's policies and procedures, for example, admissions policies, equality of opportunity policy, safeguarding children policy;*
- *the complaints procedure (copies to be available on request);*
- *the procedure to be followed in the event of a parent failing to collect a child at the appointed time;*
- *the procedure to be followed in the event of a child going missing.*" **(page 23)**

"Providers must put in place a written procedure for dealing with concerns and complaints from parents and keep a written record of complaints and their outcome" **(page 23)**

"All providers must have and implement an effective policy about ensuring quality of opportunities and for supporting children with learning difficulties and disabilities" **(page 25)**

"Providers must implement an effective policy on administering medicines" **(page 26)**

"Providers should discuss with parents the procedure for children who are ill or infectious" **(page 26)**

"Providers should have a no smoking policy" **(page 27)**

"Providers must have an effective behaviour management policy which is adhered to by all members of staff" **(page 28)**

"A health and safety policy should be in place which includes procedures for identifying, reporting and dealing with accidents, hazards and faulty equipment" **(page 33)**

Other areas of the EYFS document suggest further policies and procedures that you should consider developing

Effective Practice

Developing your Policies and Procedures
Your policies and procedures should reflect the views and opinions of everyone involved in your provision. They should be a description of the actual practice that occurs within your provision. Therefore, it is very important that they are individual to your setting and not merely copied from a guidance document. Consulting with staff, children and parents when developing your policies, will ensure that their needs and views are taken into consideration from the start. Good consultation will also give a better chance of everyone agreeing with, taking ownership of and understanding the policies and procedures that are put in place. There are many ways to include the wider team in developing your policies, for example:

- Holding a meeting for staff and parents to discuss ideas for policies and procedures, recording all comments and using these to inform the documents
- Open ended questionnaires could be used with parents, children and staff to find out what they want from the setting
- Gaining an understanding of everyone's views through day to day conversations, and integrating these views into your policies and procedures.
- Using your observations of children can tell you a lot about what is and isn't working within the setting for them. The information you gain should be used to inform your policies and procedures. For example, you may notice that a baby's enjoyment of mealtimes is increased when they are able to interact with their key person and peers. This may lead you to add a procedure within your Food and Drink policy referring to interaction and the key person system
- Making a suggestion box/book freely available to everyone visiting your setting will enhance the opportunities for ongoing consultation
- Stepping back and observing practice within your provision can provide you with information to help maintain and improve the quality of care and provision
- Discuss your policies with older children focussing on what is important to them. They may choose to illustrate their ideas and display them within the setting or make their own policy book. These ideas could be adapted for younger children

When considering your policies you should also refer to the Early Years Foundation Stage, and especially the statutory framework as this includes the specific legal requirements, and statutory guidance to which providers should have regard.

Making your Policies and Procedures accessible

Everyone involved in your provision has a right to know and ask questions about your practice and beliefs. To ensure this is reflected in your practice, your policies and procedures should be made accessible to all. There are many ways to do this, for example:

- Collating all policies and procedures in a file or folder and leaving them in a place where parents and staff can access them easily, such as an entrance hall
- Displaying key policies and any changes to these in a prominent position that all have access to
- Ensuring policies are visible and accessible to older children. For example, you may discuss your behaviour policy with the children and invite them to create their own reminders for this. Positive reminders such as "we walk inside the building" and "we take turns on the computer". The children could then illustrate these and display them at a low level
- You could put your policies and procedures onto a CD or memory stick and either pass these onto new parents/staff or loan them out when required
- Often, one policy is much easier to look at than a whole set! Try displaying or giving out one policy a week, or handing a couple of policies out with your newsletter to parents or the people you work with and ask for any comments
- You will need to consider any other formats that you can make the policies available in, such as other languages, large print, Braille, cassette etc. You may also need to arrange a meeting to discuss the policies and procedures in depth with parents/staff who cannot access the policies in other ways
- Ensure that you have spare copies of your policies and procedures within the setting so that if you need to loan some to a parent or team member you will still have a copy within the setting

New staff or volunteers should be introduced to your policies and procedures in their induction period so that they are aware of the expectations of the provision. You may need to prioritise these so as not to overwhelm the new staff member with too much information at once. Safeguarding for instance is one policy that you would give high priority to.

If you have a **large team**, it can be hard to ensure that everyone fully understands the policies and procedures. Introducing them through group activities at staff meetings can help further this understanding and also refresh the memories of those who may not have looked at the policy for some time.

Reviewing and Monitoring your Policies and Procedures

Your policies and procedures should be a working document and you should not be afraid to update or add to these policies whenever there is a need. For example:

- A change of legislation such as the administration of medication, or employment law
- A child, parent or staff member with additional needs which are not fully considered in your policies and procedures
- A new child starts the nursery and you realise that your settling in procedure needs to be made more flexible
- You follow a procedure that you have not needed to follow previously, such as a Transport and Outings policy, and you realise that additions or changes are needed to make the policy work

Always remember that you must where possible, consult with the whole staff team, parents, children and any other stakeholders when considering and making any changes to your policies and procedures. However, sometimes it may become apparent that your current procedure does not work and you may have to make immediate changes. In these cases it is important that the changes are made, but also important that you inform all those who use your provision of the changes.

In addition to this ongoing monitoring you should formally review all of your policies and procedures annually, again taking into consideration the views and needs of those using your setting. This does not mean that you have to review all of your policies and procedures in the same month; you can for instance choose to review a number of policies each month so that they are all formally reviewed over the course of the year. This may also help to make consultation with your staff, parents and children more manageable. When your policies and procedures are reviewed, you need to show some evidence of this, and the fact that all staff are aware of the changes. Probably the easiest and most effective way of doing this is to ask all staff to sign and date the policy once they have familiarised themselves with it.

Reflecting on practice

How good are your policies and procedures right now?

Before you go any further, you might find it useful to evaluate how good your policies and procedures are now. A 'good' policy / procedure should:

- Be visible and accessible to everyone it concerns
- Be an accurate reflection of the actual practice that occurs within the provision, or an accurate plan of what will happen in the case of an emergency
- Include the views of all the people it might affect
- Be inclusive and consider diverse needs and backgrounds
- Be reviewed regularly
- Be familiar to every staff member and parent

The questions below may help you to review your current practice and ensure that everyone is fully aware of your policies and procedures. We have provided suggested questions for the leader/childminder, staff and parents. You may choose to use all of these or just one or two sections, depending on your provision and how confident you feel about your policies and procedures. You can use the questions as individual questionnaires or use them informally through staff meetings, chats with parents etc.

When you answer these questions, don't just answer yes or no – think about the question and ask yourself:

- How do I know?
- What is my evidence?
- Is that always the case?
- Is that true of everyone using the provision?

The column for ***"Any further development needed"*** on each questionnaire is best completed by the whole team or by the childminder. This becomes part of the development plan for your provision so it's important that it is thought about and completed by the person/people who will be responsible for carrying it out.

Questions for the leader / manager / childminder

(A Word version of this table is available to download)

Consider	Our current practice	Examples of evidence of this within our setting	Any further development needed Completed by:-
Does everyone in your setting (including parents) know where to find your policies and procedures?		*e.g Parents and staff are shown where the policies and procedures are when they start – they are placed in a prominent position in the entrance hall.*	
Can parents and staff access the policies independently?		*e.g. Last week Mrs A brought the opened policy file to me and asked a question about our transitions policy. Gill took a policy CD home to refer to for her assignment. Mrs B is visually impaired and so Amy*	
Do your policies and procedures reflect the views of all children, parents and staff?		*e.g. Parent/staff questionnaires which have influenced policy through comments and/ or suggestions. Children's ideas from consultation on Promoting Positive Behaviour policy*	*e.g. Consult with children on more policies which are relevant to them*
Are your policies and procedures **always** present within your setting?		*e.g. We have spare copies on CD so if anyone wants to read through them they can take a copy home and leave the master copy in the setting*	*Need to make a poster saying that policy CD's are available to take home*

Consider	*Our current practice*	*Examples of evidence of this within our setting*	*Any further development needed* *Completed by:-*
When was the last time you referred to your policies and procedures?		*e.g. Last week someone brought in a new toilet cleaner and I looked at the H&S policy to double check COSHH info. Also showed a parent our medicine policy when they asked us to administer non-prescribed medicine*	
When did you last formally (and informally) review your policies and procedures? Is this date recorded on your policies along with a signature?		*e.g. Last full review was in March. Made changes to the Outings policy last week – added mobile phone to what we need to take on outings. Each policy is dated and signed by all staff. Some staff still need to read, sign and date new outings policy*	
Have you invited staff and parents to contribute to your policies and procedures? Do you have a written record of this?		*e.g. Newsletters, invitation to parent meetings, invite to join parent group, staff meeting minutes, supervision notes*	
Do you feel that each of your policies and procedures is followed effectively and consistently by all staff?		*e.g. Staff very good at following the behaviour policy consistently as evidenced in peer observations. Less good at following sickness policy– one colleague came to work yesterday saying that she had sickness and diarrhoea the day before. She didn't observe the 48 hour exclusion period.*	*e.g. Need to revisit the sickness policy and exclusion periods with staff*

Consider	Our current practice	Examples of evidence of this within our setting	Any further development needed Completed by:-
If you have used the questions below with staff and parents, did their answers back up what you have already said?		*e.g. About 60% of parents knew where the policies were and felt able to access them independently. About half did not feel they had been consulted with on policies and 2 parents didn't know we had policies and procedures*	*e.g. To raise awareness through newsletters! Ensure anyone who is showing prospective parents around the provision clearly points out and explains the policy file*
How do you ensure that your policies and procedures include each and every child, parent and practitioner who use your setting?		*e.g. Our provisions' aim is to value diversity, and our flexibility is apparent in all of our policies. We consider not only the families and practitioners that currently use our setting but those who may use it in the future.*	

Questions for practitioners

Consider	Our current practice	Examples of evidence of this within our setting	Any further development needed Completed by:-
Do you know where to access your settings' policies and procedures?		*e.g. They're on the parents notice board*	
Are they freely available for you to look at?		*e.g. We can read them on the board but I don't think we're allowed to take them down*	*e.g. Need to provide extra copies that staff can read more easily*
When was the last time you looked at your settings' policies and procedures?		*e.g. I read the policies and procedures when I started working here last summer – I took them home and read them all on my first night. Since then I have looked at a few in staff meetings*	
Have you ever been asked to sign anything to say that you've read and understood the policies and procedures?		*e.g. Yes, I signed and dated each policy when I first read them*	

Consider	*Our current practice*	*Examples of evidence of this within our setting*	*Any further development needed* *Completed by:-*
Have you been invited to contribute to your settings' policies and procedures?		*e.g. Yes, we discuss a few policies at each staff meeting to see how they are working and whether or not we need to make any changes*	
Are you given time to become familiar with the policies and procedures?		*e.g. I would have preferred a bit longer to read them really. I read them all on my first night but they didn't all make sense to me*	*e.g. Prioritise policies and procedures so that they can read over a more extended induction period.*
When (for instance) preparing and serving snacks, or dealing with a complaint or accident, are you confident that you are following the correct procedures?		*e.g. I'm confident that I'm doing what my other colleagues do but not sure if it's what the policy says*	*e.g. Look at routine procedures such as nappy changing, dealing with accidents etc at the next few staff meetings. Work in small groups to ensure everyone feels confident enough to join in*
If you noticed that a policy or procedure was not being followed correctly by a member of staff, what would you do?		*e.g. I feel confident enough with my colleagues to mention it tactfully on a one to one basis. If that did not work I would talk to my supervisor.*	

Consider	Our current practice	Examples of evidence of this within our setting	Any further development needed
If you did not agree with a policy or procedure, would you be able to highlight this?	*e.g. Yes, I could raise this with my manager, either in my appraisal/ supervision meetings or in day to day chat.*		
Do you feel that the policies and procedures take account of your needs and views?		*e.g. Mostly yes, although I think that I have some good ideas that could be included, for instance making sure the welcome information is in an accessible format for all parents. Last week a parent came to look around and her first language was French, she had to ask the child's father to translate all the information for her.*	

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Questions for parents

Consider	Our current practice	Examples of evidence of this within our setting	Any further development needed
Do you know whether the setting follows any written policies or procedures?	*e.g. I know they have policies on things like managing behaviour and special educational needs*		
Have you ever looked at the settings' policies and procedures? If yes, when was the last time?	*e.g. I've not really needed to – I can ask any questions that I need to*		
Do you know where to access the settings' policies and procedures?	*e.g. I know when we first came to playgroup they were kept in a file near the front door, but I think they've moved and I'm not sure where they've moved to!*		*e.g. To remind parents about the policies and where they are kept each month through the newsletter. If we move them – put a poster up for a month to let them know where they have gone*
Are they freely available for you to look at?	*e.g. I'm sure they are – I'm just not sure where they are!*		

Consider	Our current practice	Examples of evidence of this within our setting	Any further development needed
Are the policies and procedures in a suitable format for you to take home and share with people who are significant in your child's life?	*e.g. When we first started coming we were offered a photocopied version of the policies to borrow*		*e.g. Make sure parents know they can take a copy of the policies home whenever they wish – add to next newsletter and add poster next to policy file*
Have you ever been invited to contribute to the settings' policies and procedures?	*e.g. I don't think so*	*e.g. Newsletter to parents from Autumn term.*	
Are you made aware when they are updated?	*e.g. Yes, I remember there was a note in the last newsletter to say that the Safeguarding children policy had been updated*		
If you noticed that a policy or procedure was not being followed correctly by a member of staff, what would you do?		*e.g. Last week I was told my daughter had fallen over and grazed her knee but there was no accident form. I talked to the leader about it and she made sure that one was written.*	

Consider	Our current practice	Examples of evidence of this within our setting	Any further development needed
If you did not agree with a policy or procedure, would you feel able to highlight this?		*Yes, the leader is always very accessible and I know I could talk to her*	
Do you feel that the policies and procedures take account of your needs and views?		*e.g. I don't know – I haven't really looked at them in detail*	*e.g. Organise a staff / parents evening to look at policies in partnership with parents*

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Staff team activity

If you are in a team of staff, then completing an activity is often a more fun and kinaesthetic way of refreshing yourselves than simply sitting and reading a few policies. Childminders may find it beneficial to carry out some of these activities with a group of other local childminders. As well as refreshing yourselves on your policies, it may also bring to light areas that would benefit from updating. Depending on the policy/policies that you want to refresh, your activity can be planned to suit – all it takes is a bit of imagination! Here are a few examples of activities that you could carry out:

Activity 1

Learning and development policy

In small teams, discuss and agree on four areas of your practice that demonstrate how you meet each of the themes of the EYFS, looking specifically at each of the commitments (e.g. Child development, Inclusive practice etc). Depending on the size of your staff team, you may decide to share the commitments between the teams, or for smaller teams you may just do a set number of commitments. You can then compare these to your learning and development policy to check that all areas are included.

Activity 2

All policies

To increase general understanding about all of the policies and how they all relate to each other, ask staff to write a list of the things they do during the day. Then ask them to link each activity to the relevant policies. For instance, some activities such as recording accidents will link directly to a policy of the same or similar name. Others may take more thinking about. Some activities that staff carry out may link to more than one policy, for instance, cuddling and comforting a new child may link to "Settling in / Transition policy", "Adult interactions with children", "Key person policy", "Partnership with parents" and "Learning and development".

Activity 3

Selection of policies

Choose a selection of policies, and use the scissors to cut them into single sentences. Challenge the staff team to put each sentence under the correct heading (policy name) – you could even challenge them to put the sentences in the right order!

Activity 4

Individual policy

Choose a policy that you want to focus on, for example Equal Opportunities. If you have enough staff for more than one team you may choose a policy for each team. Give each team 20 minutes to talk about their policy in their group and list whatever evidence they know of that demonstrates how they follow the policy effectively. Then give them 10 minutes to go and collect all the evidence together. You may find that this activity highlights links to other policies, or identifies gaps in evidence.

Places to look

Useful links

http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/everychildmatters/   - A government website aimed at improving outcomes for all children

http://www.education.gov.uk/ - A government website for the Department for Education

http://www.safeguardingchildren.co.uk/ - North Yorkshire Safeguarding Children Board website

http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/ - The homepage for Ofsted

http://www.teachernet.gov.uk/ - A government developed online resource for education

http://www.pre-school.org.uk/ - The homepage for the Pre-school Learning Alliance

http://www.ncma.org.uk/ - The homepage for the National Childminding Association

http://www.ndna.org.uk/ - The homepage for the National Day Nursery Association

http://www.4children.org.uk – A national charity all about children and families

Useful documents

The Early Years Foundation Stage – Setting the standards for Learning, Development and Care for children from birth to five. DCSF, 2008