

Ready and waiting

Augusta Foster, one of 4Children's London area child care managers, talks about her settings' preparations for the new EYFS framework...

As an area child care manager for 4Children, getting ready for the new EYFS framework has been a priority for some months, and now that the new framework has been launched I will be busy supporting the settings that I manage. Although there is much continuity between the 2012 and 2008 frameworks, there are also new areas for practitioners to focus on.

Over recent months, my colleagues and I have started to develop our settings' awareness of the expected changes. All of our nursery managers received an EYFS review training pack to make them aware of expected changes to the framework and to help them share the information with the rest of the staff at dedicated meetings.

One of the key new areas included in the revised framework is the focus on parental involvement. Our settings are very particular about encouraging parental involvement and partnership in supporting children's learning and development – from the moment a child is offered a nursery place when we have a robust settling-in procedure that encourages mums and dads to get involved – and we are keen to develop this further and share ideas across our different settings.

An effective practice that we already have in place is regularly sharing information on children's learning between home and setting using a 'To and Fro' book. We also have parents' open days and evenings to enable parents to come into the setting to find out how and what their children are learning, and to discuss any issues regarding their development. I look forward to seeing my staff highlighting to parents just how influential their actions can be on their children's development; it is always so positive to see them becoming aware that just engaging in natural ways – be it pointing out colours, patterns, engaging in role-play or allowing their children to shadow them as they cook and clean – is hugely valuable to their child's early education. Of course, it is also of benefit to us as practitioners that parents better understand that the free play their children undertake at nursery is very much a deliberate part of their education.

Development checks

Another new aspect of the revised EYFS is the two-year-old development check, and it is an exciting new step in ensuring that children get the best possible start. Practically every bit of recent research on educational outcomes (and on social mobility) points to the fact that if problems are picked up early, whether in relation to speech or behaviour or any other aspect, the outcomes – as well as professionals' and parents' ability to assist the child – are vastly improved. Unsurprisingly, our staff have welcomed this area of development, and I want to encourage our settings to work in partnership with health visitors in order to ensure that our parents are given a full overview of their children's progress and their next learning and development steps.

After thinking and talking about the new EYFS for what seems like a long time, what I want now is to see it in action and to get down to helping my settings be as ready as they can be for September 2012 – and to reassure our practitioners that it is not all change but a case of building on what they do well already.

We know that the Early Years Foundation Stage is absolutely vital to children's long term outcomes: by providing for children's development and their learning, as well as excellent childcare, we can safeguard the future of our children and build thriving, healthy, lifelong learners

ANNE LONGFIELD, CHIEF EXECUTIVE, 4CHILDREN



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