



# Transitions Advice for Parents/Carers



Midlothian Early Learning  
& Childcare

Summer 2020

## *A New Journey Begins!*



Whether your child is just starting at an Early Learning and Childcare centre (ELC), or whether they are returning, this is a time of great excitement and optimism for them. They will be looking forward to meeting new friends and catching up with old friends, meeting new adults and re-connecting with familiar staff. They will continue the learning journey that they have started at home, with you, with lots of new and interesting experiences.

Although an exciting time, it can sometimes be tinged with sadness or anxiety for you as a parent / carer and perhaps even more so in these unprecedented times living in the midst of a global pandemic.

We hope the information in this guide will help to allay any concerns you might have and reassure you that your child will be cared for in a safe, nurturing learning environment where the quality of experiences and the wellbeing of children will be at the heart of everything we do.

The number of children in an ELC centre will be fewer than usual to start with and will be organised into small groups referred to as 'bubbles'. As far as possible these will be made up of friendship groups of up to eight children, with at least one assigned key adult, which will be continually reviewed as per the latest Scottish Government guidance. To prepare your child for how this might look, read Midlothian Council's 'Going to Early Learning and Childcare setting' booklet with your child.

In the meantime, before your child starts at their new setting, here are a few ideas to help you both to manage the transition between home and the ELC centre....



Cameryn, aged 3



## Top tips for parents and carers to support Children's Transitions in 2020



Watch a virtual tour or look at photos of your child's ELC Centre.

Allow time to settle your child.

Try hard to keep positive - a smile goes a long way! 😊

Share some positive thoughts about ELC with your child.

Make dressing easy!

Read stories about going to an ELC Centre.

Have a good bedtime routine.

Practice good handwashing!

Read stories, sing, dance, play and learn together!

Support your child to develop their confidence and independence.

Practise walking the route to the ELC Centre.

Communicate with staff from the ELC Centre.





## **What can I do to make transition to ELC easier?**

- **Watch a virtual tour or look at photos of your child's ELC Centre:**  
Some settings may create virtual tours for your child to watch, or share pictures of the ELC centre to help your child to familiarise themselves with their new learning environment. Talk to your child about what they see and like and have positive conversations about starting at an ELC centre.
- **Communicate with staff from the ELC centre:**  
The setting will want to contact you to find out more about your child before they start the ELC centre - this could be via telephone, email, letter in the post etc. Centres will set up a profile for your child and will welcome your contributions, where they can, to get to know you as a family. This will form the beginning of a learning profile for your child and will be an opportunity for you to find out more about what the setting will do to support your child.
- **Share some positive thoughts about ELC with your child:**  
Talk with your child about going to an ELC setting. Tell positive stories of when you were at ELC - e.g. the songs you sang, the games you played with friends, the stories you read and the fun you had. Accept that your child may have fears, but try to reassure them e.g. 'I can see that you're worried, but remember you will make new friends'.
- **Read stories about going to an ELC Centre:**  
Reading stories about going to an ELC setting will help your child to talk about anything they want to ask, or are curious about, any feelings they might have around starting, whether these are positive or worries. This is an opportunity to support them through these emotions. For story ideas, please see the appendix.
- **Try hard to keep positive - a smile goes a long way:**  
Children pick up on emotional cues/anxiety from you. They are attuned to your body language and feelings/emotions. A smile can go a long way in helping your child feel confident:

*'If you see someone without a smile, give them one of yours.'*

- **Allow time to settle your child:**

If possible, try to plan ahead for your child starting at an ELC Centre, by setting aside time to support them to settle. Some children will settle more quickly than others and some may settle initially and then regress at a later date – this is perfectly normal. Although you will not be able to go inside the building, your child's ELC Centre will have plans in place for settling children in accordance with Scottish Government guidelines. Hopefully you and your child will have had the chance to get to know the staff and key workers beforehand via digital technology. Although we will not expect children to physically distance, the adults will have to do this, including parents and carers. If your child is struggling to settle, skilled practitioners will support you through the settling in process, always keeping the child's needs at the centre.

- **Make dressing easy:**

Put your child in clothes that are easy for them to pull on and off, especially if they are newly toilet trained. Shoes with Velcro fastening will make them feel more independent, as they won't need to ask for help tying the laces.

- **Transitional objects:**

Some children rely on a special toy or object to comfort them. In a nutshell, this object is something that 'keeps them close' to you, the parent or carer, when you can't be with them – a comforter. With safety and hygiene being key priorities at the moment you should ask your child's setting how they manage these. It may be that their particular toy or object can be kept in a special safe place that they can see or access when needed. Perhaps transitional objects will be put on a display or you may be asked to send the ELC centre a family photograph for display.

- **Practise walking the route to the ELC Centre:**

Talk to your child about the things that they see on their way to the ELC setting. You could make a map of your route with your child and create some activities together to familiarise them with the journey. For example, you could look at the different door numbers along the way or if you pass a shop, you could play shops at home and talk about the shop you saw on your route.

- **Have a good bedtime routine:**

Having a good bedtime routine for your child and yourself, as a parent/carers, is important to keep healthy. Sticking to the same bed time and reading stories together will help your child to get a good night's sleep. For more information about sleep there is a link to Sleep Scotland in the appendix.



- **Learn together:**

Talk to your child about what you have been learning at home during lockdown - praise them for their efforts. All children learn at different rates and the most important thing is they are happy, healthy and enjoying their learning. For ideas about learning at home see, 'Learning Together' in the appendix.



- **Play:**

Play helps children make sense of the world, process feelings, work out problems and manage emotions. For more information about play and how you can support it, see the link to the IPA (International Play Association) in the appendix.

- **Build your child's confidence and independence**

Help them to feel a sense of responsibility. For example, could they help you sort washing, choose and prepare meals, sort plates and cutlery? At the ELC setting children will be served snack by the practitioners under the Government advice, however learning new skills at home will help to develop your child's independence.

- **Sing!**

Music is so beneficial to wellbeing and for young children rhythm and repetition can be soothing and help them feel secure. Perhaps your child's ELC centre has shared songs that they will sing once they start which will make transition easier?

And finally ...

- **Remember to practice good hand washing!**



## **Appendix**

### **Useful Websites and Further Information**

Parent Club <https://www.parentclub.scot/>

Sleep Scotland <https://www.sleepscotland.org/support/gateway-to-good-sleep/>

Learning Together [Learning at Home: Ideas for parents and carers about Early Level](#)

International Play Association <https://ipaworld.org/>

### **Starting ELC Book List and Interactives Stories**

The following stories are available on 'You Tube':

- ❖ George's First Day at Playgroup  
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O\\_aKtcsVBbU](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O_aKtcsVBbU)
- ❖ Maisy Goes to Nursery  
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gA\\_wOTmIMEw](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gA_wOTmIMEw)