

A sense of agency

When children develop a sense of agency, they understand that they have the ability to make their own choices and decisions, are able to influence events and control their own lives.

This helps them to develop a strong sense of identity and feelings of belonging.

The promotion of young children's agency has been identified as the foundation of learning, development and well-being outcomes.

Research has gained increasing recognition on children's perspectives of transitions and highlights the importance of developing children's agency to support them through periods of change and transition.

Learning aims

- Develop a sense of agency
- Support emotional well-being and feeling valued
- Separate from main carer with support
- Build confidence
- Promote independence
- Make choices.



Activity Outline

When children develop a sense of agency they understand that they have the ability to make their own choices and decisions, are able to influence events and control their own lives. This helps them to develop a strong sense of identity and feelings of belonging.

Therefore, when children have a sense of agency, they are in the 'driver's seat' of what happens for them at a given moment in time. Plan these activities into your continuous provision and everyday routine to help children develop a sense of agency.

Choices

Ensure resources and activities are easily accessible, and establish a flexible routine to promote independence.

Tasks

Children love to help and feel important and valued; offering tasks such as laying the table for snack time promotes responsibility and meaningful engagement. This helps them gain a sense of belonging.

Challenges

Offer experiences that challenge and promote perseverance; this will help children develop resilience and a sense of achievement.

Children's voices

Ensuring children have a voice is vital, not only as it is their human right, but for them to be able to view themselves as someone who matters in their own right.

Responding positively to their opinion or choice has a positive impact in helping children develop a sense of agency.

Extending the activity

- Be sensitive to children's feelings and emotions as they settle; note specific times that may raise children's anxiety levels. For example, lunchtime can be noisy and busy; some children may worry if they do not like the food
- Using the toilets in a new setting can be difficult for some children; particularly if they have moved from nursery to school where they may have had a lot of support
- Activities, such as circle time, puppets and stories, give children the opportunity to express themselves in a safe environment
- Focus on children's reactions, body and facial language through your everyday observations.