

Maintaining Relationships

With current social distancing guidelines, it is important that we consider how to maintain positive relationships in the setting with parents, staff and other stakeholders.

The sample documents Working Together With Parents Agreement (childcare setting) or Childminding Covid 19 contract with parents on First 5 can help with this.

Developing and maintaining strong partnerships with parents is essential. People often feel overwhelmed in these difficult times; stress and anxiety can impair our ability to communicate well and this can have a negative impact on relationships.

Communicate openly, early and often:

- Reassure others that you are doing your best to provide for everyone's needs.
- Keep parents and staff informed regarding changes to policy and practices.
- Anticipate questions or concerns that might arise and how you will address these.
- Create clear two-way communication pathways for parents, staff and other stakeholders.
- Compile a list of questions asked and your answers to share with parents, staff and others.

Listen:

- Show understanding of the challenges faced by everyone during the pandemic.
- Seek out feedback, giving time and opportunities to ask questions.
- Reflect back what was said and clarify if necessary.

Stay calm:

- When you are calm, it will help others be calm.
- Take long, deep breaths if you feel stressed.

Be assertive:

- Be empathic, recognise the other person's viewpoint.
- State your position calmly and respectfully.
- Look for alternatives and compromises but say "no" if you must.

Remember:

- Face-to-face communication is still important where possible, especially when communicating private, sensitive or difficult information. Arrange video calls or if needed, in person meetings while adhering to public health guidelines.

Examples

(other scenarios can apply)

Cherry Preschool;

During setting closures, Cherry Preschool kept in contact with families through video calls and emails. When they reopened, they told parents how much they valued this contact and asked parents about their preferred method of communication. Based on feedback, the preschool sends regular updates by email and key workers are available to take calls at designated times each week. They plan to offer parent meetings through an online platform at the end of each term.

Johnstown's early learning and care setting;

have been working with an early years mentor for the past year to support the development of their practice. To minimise risk, the setting team are now using video conferencing to meet with their mentor.

Young Explorers;

is a large full day setting with a staff team of 22. They have moved monthly team meetings to an online platform. The manager checks in with room leaders daily and has short meetings in the outdoor area with the staff in each room every fortnight. As a team, they have talked about creating a supportive workplace that values relationships and have put in place simple strategies to promote self-care and wellness such as walking meetings, putting colourful art in the staff room and having exercise breaks.