



Starting Strong

for early years children in Kent

A guide for my family

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Starting Strong guidance,
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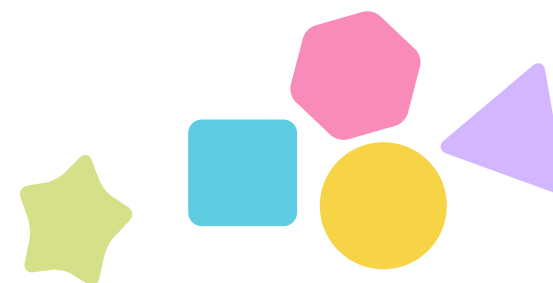


On behalf of



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Introduction

Starting Strong

A guide for my family is adapted from the Starting Strong for Early Years Children in Kent which describes what good care and learning should look like for me, as a young child. It helps make sure I feel safe, happy and included wherever I learn, whether that is with a childminder, at preschool, nursery or school.

Simple overview

This guide gives my family a simple overview of Starting Strong. It explains the key things my setting should have in place to help me grow, learn and develop.

What I should experience

It also helps you, as my parent or carer, understand what I should experience each day. My setting should use Starting Strong as a guide and build on it so that they support me as an individual.



The right setting for me

Ordinarily Available Provision

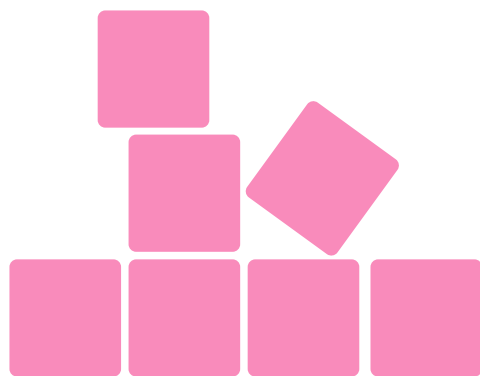
All early years settings are different, and that helps my family choose the one that feels right for me.

Wherever I go, the people who look after me should make sure I feel safe, welcome and included. This everyday support is called **Ordinarily Available Provision (OAP)**.

Everyday support

Starting Strong shows, the fun activities, experiences and support that help me learn, grow and do my best.

Starting Strong keeps me at the heart of everyday support. It helps guide not only my setting, but also you at home and other professionals who support me, so everyone understands what should be offered to me every day.



Child

- Shares how and where I can develop.
- Recognises I am unique and individual.
- My needs are supported and nurtured.

Family

- Understand what is expected in my early years setting and find strategies to support my learning.
- Be involved in my development.

Early years setting

- Describes what should be in place in my setting.
- Includes strategies, ideas and resources.
- Builds a relationship with my family.

Other professionals

- Helps others to understand my setting.
- Support discussions with my family and other professionals.

The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) principles

I am unique

Every child is an individual and I am no different. I have my own:

- Preferences to how I learn and develop.
- Way of communicating with others.
- Interests and things I enjoy.
- Strengths and abilities.
- Way of thinking and exploring the world around me.
- Needs for support that are recognised and understood.

Celebrating me

Starting Strong supports everyone to recognise and value who I am. It focuses on my unique strengths, what I enjoy and what I can do. This means:

- My strengths are recognised and built upon.
- My interests are valued and used to support my learning.
- My progress is observed, understood and celebrated.
- I am included, respected and feel a sense of belonging.
- Adults use kind, positive language and show understanding of me.

Getting to know me

My key person and the other adults in my setting take time to really get to know me. They observe how I play, learn and interact with others. This helps them to understand:

- How like to play, explore and learn.
- How I build relationships with others.
- How I am developing emotionally and socially.
- What I am learning and what support I may need next.



The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) principles

My key person

At my setting, I have a key person who takes the time to get to know me and helps me feel safe, secure and valued.

My key person:

- Builds a strong, trusting relationship with me and my family.
- Provides consistent care and support to me each day.
- Works in partnership with my family to understand my strengths, needs and interests.

Shaping my learning

The adults in my setting work closely with my family, observe my play and development, and use simple assessment approaches to understand me as an individual.

They use Starting Strong to plan fun, engaging learning experiences that reflect my interests and support my ongoing development.



‘We want to create an environment where every child feels supported, valued, and included.’

Kent SEND Strategy 2025-2028 p.9

The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) principles

The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) helps to make sure I am provided with high-quality care and learning, and that the adults around me know how to support me and my individual needs.



I want to be able to...

Learn, play, thrive, have fun, be engaged and be understood.

I need adults who...

are caring, loving and nurture me. To work in partnership with my parents to fully understand me, my needs and my family's lived experiences.

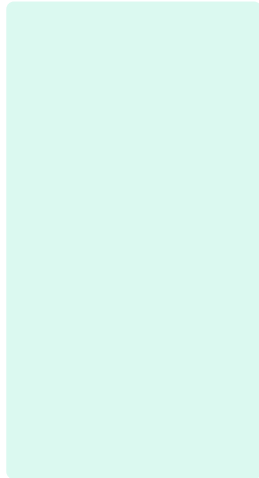
I need spaces that...

follow my ideas, interests and fascinations. I need an enabling environment that is safe, challenging and responds to my individual needs.

This will help me because...

these are the foundations of high-quality inclusive practice and together will ensure my needs are met in an environment that supports my learning and development stage.

An example from Starting Strong



Listening, attention and understanding

I want to be able to...	This will help me because...	I need adults who...	I need spaces that/with...
follow instructions 	● I will understand what you want me to do. ● I will receive positive attention and recognition for my efforts. ● I will be motivated to follow instructions.	● use short, simple instructions and use my name so that I know the instruction is for me "Joe, coat on." ● tell me what to do rather than asking me e.g. "sweep the sand off the floor thank you." ● understand that instructions are used for guidance as well as asking me to do something. ● check that I have understood and support my understanding with visual supports, signing, simplified language, modelling. ● give me specific praise when I do what I have been asked.	● have clearly labelled storage with photographs, pictures and words to encourage my independence. ● a range of visuals to support understanding of instructions, including signing, photos, symbols.

Inclusion in practice

My key person and setting use the **Inclusion in Practice** section to help support me every day.
My parents and carers can also use this information to support me at home.

Communication and Language	Personal, Social and Emotional Development	Physical Development and Sensory Needs	Cognition and Learning and Characteristics of Effective Learning
This is important because it helps me learn and understand the world. I will use these skills all through my life. I am learning how to: ● Share my thoughts and feelings. ● Play and talk with other children and adults. ● Listen and focus my attention. ● Follow simple routines and instructions. ● Tell others what I want and need. ● Take turns with others. 	This is important because it helps me feel good about myself and build happy relationships with others. I am learning how to: ● Understand and talk about my feelings. ● Calm myself and make safe choices. ● Look after my own needs. ● Try again when things feel tricky. ● Make friends and play with other children. ● Feel confident about who I am. 	This is important because it helps me play, learn and explore every day. I am learning how to: ● Move my body in different ways. ● Build my balance and strength. ● Use different tools and equipment. ● Feel safe and comfortable in my surroundings. ● Do more things for myself. ● Join in and play with my friends. 	This is important because it helps me learn, think and understand the world around me. I am learning how to: ● Be curious and interested. ● Explore and find things out. ● Make choices and have my own ideas. ● Try new ways of doing things. ● Feel calm and happy while I learn. ● Stay motivated and enjoy learning. 

I am unique and develop at my own rate of learning, and this does not always happen in a predictable sequence.

Useful contacts for my family

If my family has questions about my learning or development, they can get help and advice from my setting and from other support services:

[The Best Start in Life Hub](#) offers support and information from pregnancy through the early years, including child development, starting school and childcare.

[The Health Visiting Service](#) supports families with a new baby or child under five-years-old by offering advice and guidance.

Department for Education guide for parents on [What to expect in the Early Years Foundation Stage \(EYFS\)](#).

[Kent Family Hub](#) offers advice, support and services for families from birth to 19, or up to 25 for young people with SEND.

[CBeebies Parenting](#) is an online support hub for parents and carers, offering advice, tips and activity ideas to support children's development.

[Talking Walk-ins](#) – play-based drop-in sessions for preschool children and their parents or carers who have concerns about speech, language or communication.

[The Pod](#) from Kent Community Health NHS Foundation Trust, offers information, practical strategies and videos to support neurodivergence, speech and language, occupational therapy and physiotherapy.



Useful contacts for my Early years setting

My setting can access additional advice, guidance, training, and funding support from:

[The Education People's Early Years and Childcare Quality Team](#) or [Childminding Quality and Sufficiency Team](#). They can support, advise and guide on providing a high-quality inclusive provision for all children.

[The Education People's The Primary School Improvement Team](#) who can also offer support, advice and guidance that is tailored to primary school settings.

A local [Early Years Professional Resource Group](#), which consists of a range of professionals and services across health, care and education. My setting can make a referral to help them in meeting my needs.

The [Early Years Universal Package](#) of training, which is available to upskill my settings knowledge and practice.

[Additional Funding](#) if I am eligible. This is through Early Years Pupil Premium (EYPP), Disability Access Fund (DAF) and Special Educational Needs and/ or Disabilities Inclusion Funding (SENIF).



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