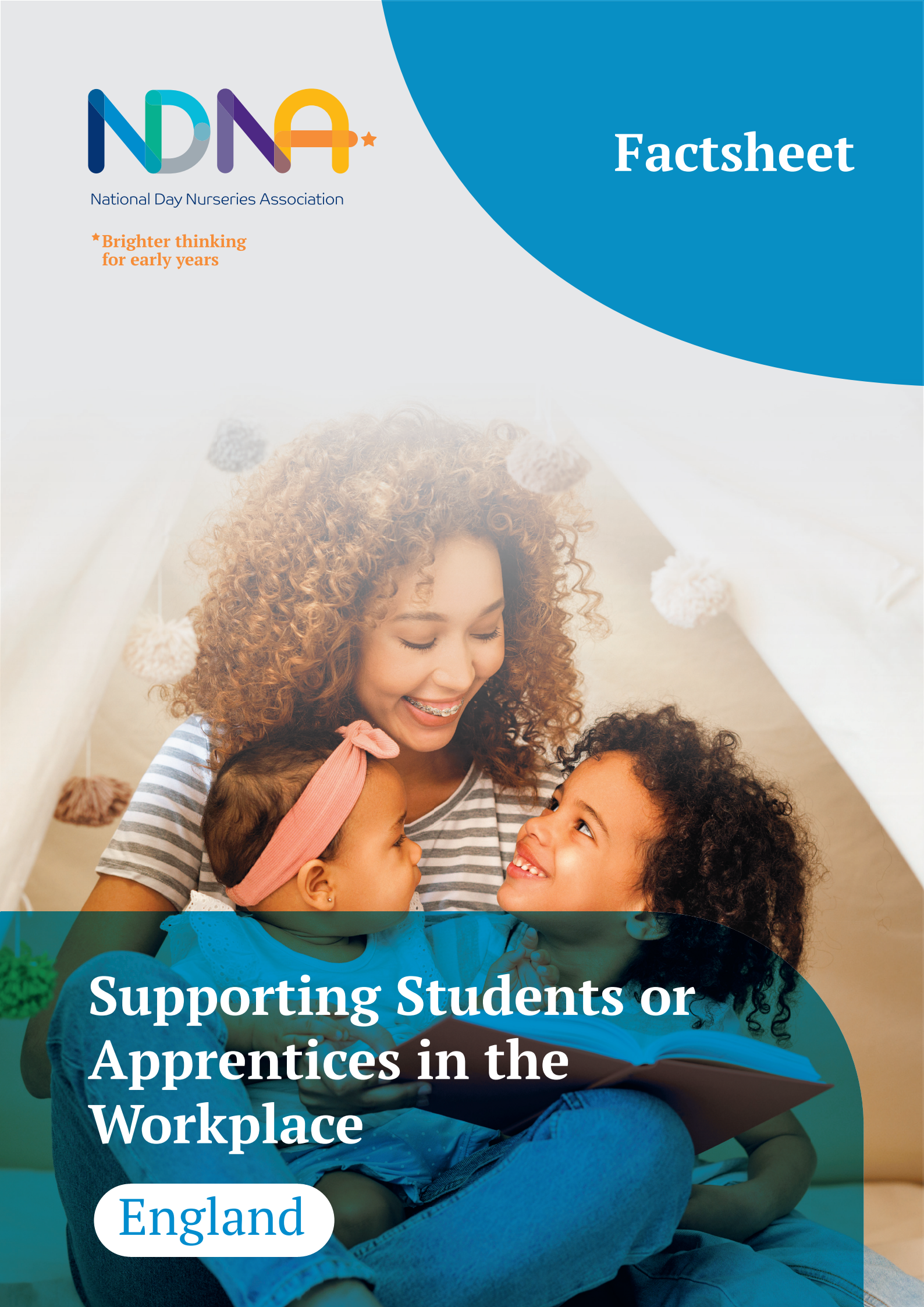




National Day Nurseries Association

★Brighter thinking
for early years

Factsheet

A photograph of a woman with curly hair, wearing a striped shirt, smiling and reading a book to two young children. The children are sitting on the floor inside a white tent. The woman is holding the book open, and the children are looking at it with interest. The scene is warm and intimate, with soft lighting and decorative pom-poms hanging from the tent's interior.

Supporting Students or Apprentices in the Workplace

England

Supporting Students or Apprentices in the Workplace

Hiring a student or apprentice can be rewarding for both the workplace and for the student/apprentice. However this requires careful consideration to ensure a successful, supportive and effective placement occurs.

This factsheet looks at supporting you to successfully integrate students/apprentices into your workplace setting.

Many early years providers have told us that often when students exit programmes of training, they are not work ready. 'Growing your own' staff through an apprenticeship is an ideal opportunity to ensure they are fully embedded in the practices within the setting by the time they are qualified. Through 'growing your own' new entrants, you can control the quality of their performance and watch them blossom into a fully qualified early years professional.

EYFS statutory requirements

The Early Years Foundation Stage requirements states that:

"Suitable students on long term placements and volunteers (aged 17 or over) and staff working as apprentices in early education (aged 16 or over) may be included in the ratios at the level below their level of study, if the provider is satisfied that they are competent and responsible and if they hold a valid and current PFA qualification."

Considerations for hiring a student/apprentice

Before hiring a student/apprentice, you need to consider who within your team would be able to coach and mentor a student or apprentice. Considerations include:

- Do you need to put extra resources in place to ensure that there is a named member of staff who has the skills to coach and mentor along with allocated time to dedicate to supporting the learning of the student/apprentice?
- Have you checked whether your insurance policy covers students/apprentices in your workplace?
- Do you have a job description for students and apprentices with clear reporting lines and guidance of what you expect them to do?
- Before you start, it is important that you as an employer and the person mentoring the student/apprentice see and understand the expectations of the student/apprentice course content and that you are both confident that you will be able to support with the requirements of the course along with the capacity to support for the duration of the placement

- Do you know what the student/apprentice is required to achieve during the placement and the expectations on all parties?
- Are you aware of the requirement for apprentices to have 20% of their contracted hours dedicated to off-the-job training? Do you know if the college requires the apprentice to attend one day per week or are you expected to provide training such as shadowing colleagues, attending in-house or external training or attending team meetings?
- Does the allocated member of staff need mentor training or support to fulfil the role? Are they clear about what the role involves, for example the requirements to give accurate written and verbal feedback based on their performance against standards and the responsibilities this entails?
- Will the student/apprentice mentor liaise with the training provider to arrange work visits for observation and assessment in practice? How will this be supported?
- Do all staff understand that students/apprentices must not be left unsupervised (until you as the employer are satisfied that they are competent and responsible) for the safety of the children and the student/apprentice?
- Do you have policies and procedures in place to support students or apprentices? Does this cover the expectations for all staff including what support is available for the student/apprentice and information for staff to know what to do if they highlight areas for concern for example behaviour or engagement with children?
- You will need to think about the interview, what will this involve, what types of questions you ask to find out about their values and if they align with your setting's principles and ethos
- Pre-employment checks will need to be carried out prior to the placement starting, e.g. safeguarding and reference checks
- Has employment law for young workers been considered including working hours and a risk assessment developed to safeguard the student/apprentice and children within the setting?

Considerations for induction

Having the same induction as any new employee is crucial to ensure a successful placement; it sets the expectations of the placement including the procedures to follow, the expectations within the provision and ensures that these are understood from induction and beyond.

On the first day you will need to consider having a tour of the building, introduce the key staff including the mentor or coach allocated to them, staff they will be working with, key information about children such as children with allergies, where to find everything they will need.

The job description will need to be discussed and what their day-to-day role will be, including the expectations of what duties they will need to fulfil and why these are important?

The student/apprentice needs to fully understand policies and procedures to ensure that they know the expectations and how these relate to everyday practice. Ensuring these are fully understood will

also minimise the risk of any incidents happening. There needs to be careful considerations made for the systems that need to be in place to ensure that knowledge and understanding of the policies and procedures are fully understood and adhered to through the employment for example through mentoring, staff meetings and supervisions. At the start of the induction, key policies including safeguarding, health and safety, behaviour and whistleblowing need to be explained fully including whom they need to report concerns to and an induction with staff who perform lead roles, e.g. Designated Safeguarding Lead or SENCo need to be a priority within their first few days. Sufficient time needs to be planned into the induction so that they can read policies at the setting and ask any questions when they arise.

Tip

Do you have quizzes, scenarios or discussions to test understanding and find any gaps in knowledge? You can use this to put a plan in place that will support new starters with any gaps in knowledge or identify the need to attend further training.

Students/apprentices need to be given a copy of the setting's code of conduct to read and be able to refer back to. Managers should check that they have been given time to fully understand the setting's expectations including the use of mobile phones, appropriate language to use and what language not to use, dress code, time keeping, social media, sickness protocols and any other processes including the importance of confidentiality and having professional boundaries ensuring that they protect the reputation of business.

Tip

Do you have an induction checklist that both the manager and learner signs when they feel confident that the student understands each policy or procedure of the setting? Managers can use this as a talking point to ask questions such as 'tell me what you should do if you suspect there could be a safeguarding issue with a child at nursery?'

Health and safety considerations are important, particularly when supporting students/apprentices under the age of 18 and so legally classed as children themselves. There needs to be time planned within the induction to discuss health and safety considerations within the setting. Students/apprentices will need to be inducted into their responsibilities as an employee and informed how to respond and report any health and safety risks to both children and staff. Like any new employee it is important to be sure that they understand what is done daily to minimise the risks, what risk assessments are in place, daily checks that are carried out and manual handling techniques. They need to be aware of who the first aiders are in the provision and what they should do when there is an accident or potential accident, who and what to report and what the emergency procedures are that they need to follow. Students/apprentices also need to be aware of any children

that they will be in contact with that have any dietary requirements or allergies, have knowledge of what to do to keep children safe and know who to report to in case of an emergency.

When there are gaps in knowledge with regard to children's learning and development or settings policies and procedures, plans need to be put in place with the student/apprentice to ensure they acquire the knowledge required. This may include booking onto training, including safeguarding, reading supportive materials and having time to observe staff modelling good practice. The mentor and student/apprentice should have regular sessions to check learner's understanding against activities undertaken for development and ensure knowledge acquired has been fully understood.

Safeguarding

Safeguarding needs to be a priority when inducting students/apprentices, both at the outset and on an ongoing basis. You will need to check if they know:

- The importance of safeguarding children
- Ensuring that they are fully aware of their roles and responsibilities
- How to identify, respond and report when concerns arise around children
- What to do if there are concerns around a member of staff
- What will happen if there are concerns around their own conduct.

At the first opportunity you should book time for the student/apprentice to meet with the safeguarding lead to discuss your policy, after they have attended in house or external training events and at supervision to discuss scenarios on knowing what to do in various situations.

It may be the first experience for a student/apprentice of being in a workplace and working in a group situation. As such, it is important that they are supported to understand the workplace conduct, such as their behaviour, language that is acceptable or not and conversations that are not appropriate in a professional environment. When entering early years as a career, they should commit to safeguarding children both in the setting and in their personal lives. They need to be aware of moderating their behaviour when outside the setting so that it is acceptable and doesn't put their reputation or that of their workplace into disrepute.

Students and apprentices also need to understand children's behaviour:

- Do you give clear advice and guidance on how to manage and support the behaviour expectations for each individual age group?
- Do you give time to observe other staff on how they support children before they are expected to support children themselves?
- Is this observed closely and are they coached and mentored until you are confident they are capable?
- How do you assess they are capable?

Careful consideration needs to be given about how adequate supervision and support is provided, for example, how you ensure that they are not left alone with the children, especially in places where others potentially can't see them, e.g. nappy changing areas.

Having a student/apprentice requires additional support beyond that for a qualified practitioner.

- What will you do if there are concerns or incidents?
- Have you got procedures and policies in place?
- What is the role of the training provider in relation to safeguarding both for children and the student/apprentice if they are covered by safeguarding legislation?

Staff also need support and guidance to ensure they know what to do if they have a concern around the conduct of the student/apprentice, however minor these may be. Staff need to understand that this could be part of a bigger picture of concerns.

Safeguarding issues from any staff member can have a long-term effect on a business, including their reputation and has the potential to impact negatively and could result in closure.

Intimate care routines

If students and apprentices are going to be carrying out intimate care routines, the following needs consideration:

- Are they shadowed until they are competent and responsible?
- How do you ensure that they are competent and assess they are capable to carry out intimate care routines?
- Have you assessed their practice and knowledge?
- Do you observe performance continually and assess that they retain the required standard?
- Does your layout ensure that intimate care routines provide privacy for children and protect staff from allegations and, if not, what safety measures do you put in place?

Ongoing support

Having regular pre-planned meetings, which are systematically booked in place at regular points in time, ensures that any concerns however minor are discussed, recorded and dealt with in a timely manner. It also ensures that the objectives of the students/apprentices' course are met and any course requirements can be planned into the nursery routines. It also provides opportunities to discuss and support their well-being.

When you are at the point of considering if the student/apprentice will be counted in ratios, how do you decide when you are *'satisfied that they are competent and responsible'*?

- Do you have systems in place to review their competencies?
- Have you got a mixture of methods for testing knowledge including what they would do in various scenarios?
- Do you carry out observations of practice to ensure that their practice meets the required standard before they are counted in ratios?

If you are going to include the student/apprentice in the role of key person, you will need to make sure they are fully trained to do this.

- Ensure training to support them to understand the role, including working with parents, how to greet parents and dealing with concerns
- Explain the support available to them if they identify concerns around a child's development, what to do if support plans need to be put in place and who will take the lead.

Students and apprentices will need to quickly develop observation skills to effectively support children. They will need to familiarise themselves with and understand your practices on observation, assessment and planning. Questions to check understanding could be developed to ensure supervisions are effective, e.g. what have they observed from the children they have been working with and how have they used this observation? Constantly checking child development knowledge and an understanding of the EYFS will help students and apprentices to bed into their role sooner. Provide them with a copy of the EYFS and help them to make links between what they are seeing in practice and how this relates to the statutory guidance.

You will see the benefits of growing your own staff team and teaching them how you operate your nursery provision. Benefits of employing apprentices/students goes both ways as they bring new perspectives and fresh ideas which will benefit not only the children but also your team.

Further information and support

- Apprenticeships - UK Government <https://www.apprenticeships.gov.uk/>
- Young workers, apprentices and work experience - ACAS <https://bit.ly/3IGqMkK>
- Employer's guide to apprenticeships – UK Government <https://bit.ly/3TPKTtL>
- Employing an apprentice - UK Government <https://bit.ly/3ndWmXL>
- Introduction to T levels – UK Government <https://bit.ly/3LJ2IbJ>
- Health and safety for young people at work - HSE <https://bit.ly/3yV3vif>
- Safeguarding – NDNA training <https://bit.ly/3Z6bsM3>
- Recruitment & Selection – NDNA publication <https://bit.ly/3FDZD95>
- Health and Safety for Early Years Practitioners – NDNA training <https://bit.ly/40iNbn4>

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Factsheet

Our factsheets are written by early years experts for the early years workforce. Most NDNA factsheets are free to our members.

NDNA is the national charity and membership association representing children's nurseries across the UK. We are a charity that believes in quality and sustainability, so we put our members' businesses at the very heart of ours.

We are the voice of the 21,000-strong nursery sector, an integral part of the lives of more than a million young children and their families. We provide information, training and advice to support nurseries and the 250,000 people who work in them to deliver world-class early learning and childcare.

See the full range of NDNA factsheets at www.ndna.org.uk/factsheets

The information provided in this factsheet is for use by early years practitioners only. It has been written by early years experts but is not intended to be, and should not be relied upon, as a substitute for professional advice. NDNA has endeavoured to ensure the accuracy of the information presented in this factsheet. NDNA assumes no legal liability or responsibility for your interpretation or use of the information contained within it.

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