

## Early Years Advisory Team

### Good Practice with 2 year olds

#### Sleep

Most 2 year olds will need to rest, nap or sleep at some point during the day

Sleep and rest are essential to young children's wellbeing. If there is a lack of sleep young children are more likely to have behaviour issues and tantrums. Regular sleep helps develop the immune system and is linked to brain development. Storing and processing information is usually done while asleep so there is a direct link between sleeping well and learning and development. Sleep is also needed to regulate hormones, which is why the lack of sleep is linked to obesity in children.

#### How much sleep is enough?

This can vary but most children between 24-36 months need between 11-13 hours within every 24 hours when they are asleep or napping. Adults need to look for signs of not enough sleep, these can include: - regularly having less hours than recommended; irritable; generally unhappy; regular tantrums; difficulty waking in the mornings; not refreshed after a sleep; frequent colds/infections; lack of concentration.

#### Parents

Some parents are unaware of how important sleep is to their growing 2 year olds. They may need support getting children into a bedtime routine at a reasonable time and getting the child to stay in their own beds. Linking with local health visitor teams, suggesting websites, having leaflets and books available on this topic can support parents. Some parents direct the setting not to let their child nap however the child's well-being over rides parent's wishes. Ofsted have given inadequate to a setting for keeping a child awake. Best practice is to have a sleep policy and explain to parents when their child is settling in just how important sleep is and how and why the setting see regular sleep as part of children's learning and development needs. In some countries older children are encouraged to have a daily nap and these countries often have better educational and well-being outcomes for their children, for example Scandinavian countries.

#### Helping 2 year olds sleep in the setting

Some children who are over tired will struggle to nap and rest. The key person could try different strategies and routines to support these children. The adult's role is crucial to support the young child to rest as they often do not have the maturity to understand they are tired and this may mean one to one support to help some children rest. When tired 2 year olds can't rest or sleep the outcomes can be a huge change in behaviour and ability to learn. Things to consider to create a relaxed environment for sleep are:- regular routine; a

darkened room; calm, still and quiet space; no sudden noises/distractions; a cover e.g. sheet/blanket; comforter e.g. soft toy; mattress in the same place and the key persons calm attention. This may be difficult for some settings to achieve but can be worked towards.

Regular timing is important so this is best organised earlier in the session/day. Late afternoon time could be used for gross motor activities to ensure lots of movement during the time before the night time sleep. Times of activity and movement also need to be planned for all 2 year olds.

Staff need to avoid rocking or stroking a child to sleep on a daily basis. Sleep and the way of getting to sleep for humans is based on habit. Best practice is to work with parents to help the child to fall asleep without any sleep aids. This is because in the normal sleep cycle there are times when the child will awake slightly and if they are used to a sleep aid that is not present they are more likely to awake fully and be uncomfortable, cry etc. and this can lead to some children waking several times a night. By 24 months children can sleep unaided especially if offered the environment described above and regular adult support to sleep. There are many websites that give support to parents about sleep routines and health visitor teams can help if difficulties persist. Working in partnership with parents includes the key person sharing their experience and expertise with parents, building a close relationship with parents right from the start can help with any differences of opinion.

Sleep opportunities also need to be available throughout the session when a child may need an unexpected nap. If a child is tired at any time of the session there needs to be the opportunity to rest and sleep which the key person may need to facilitate.

## References

Getting it right for Two Year olds by Penny Tassoni (2014)

NHS Choices 2013 online

Babycentre.co.uk online.