

An Early Years Practitioners Handbook: A guide through transitions.



(Source: Schools Week, 2022. Google search).

Contents Page

Introduction - page 3

The needs of a child - page 4

The role of the adult - page 7

Partnerships - page 9

Interventions - page 10

Proposed Outcomes - page 11

Reference list - page 12

Introduction

This handbook aims to provide a guide informing early years practitioners how to achieve the best transition period for a young child of the ages 2-4. Transitions will include a 2-4 year old starting at a daycare setting and where they may attend nursery at age 3/4 and return back to daycare. This handbook will cover what a transition is, the role of the adult, the needs of the children, partnerships needed to make the transition positive, interventions put into place to assist the transition and proposed outcomes. Additionally it will look at theorists that are relevant to transitions in early years.

What is a transition?

Brooker, (2008) states that a transition is a change. Transitions are a regular occurrence in an individual life and are inevitable growing up, for example hitting puberty. These developmental changes shape their life, both positively and negatively. Developmental transitions are often supported by family, friends or community, such as a parent supporting their child when starting school. Transitions can be seen as frightening due to the unfamiliarity. Similarly, Bronfenbrenner (1986) suggests a transition is when an individual's position is altered in the environment. He highlights the importance a change can have on a child short and long term. Bronfenbrenner's, (1986) holistic ideas of transition are important as it allows children to learn and develop. Crivello, Vogler and Woodhead (2008) support this idea. They look at transitions as three different types. The first is called a horizontal transition, consisting of a regular or everyday less significant occurrence, for example getting dressed in the morning. The second type of transition is called a vertical transition. This is a key change for the child that will move them upwards in life such as starting a brand new school. The final type of transition is Education-Associated transition. This is a transition that takes place outside of education that still has an effect on development and includes shaping the child's pathways and experiences in a less formal way such as a swimming club.

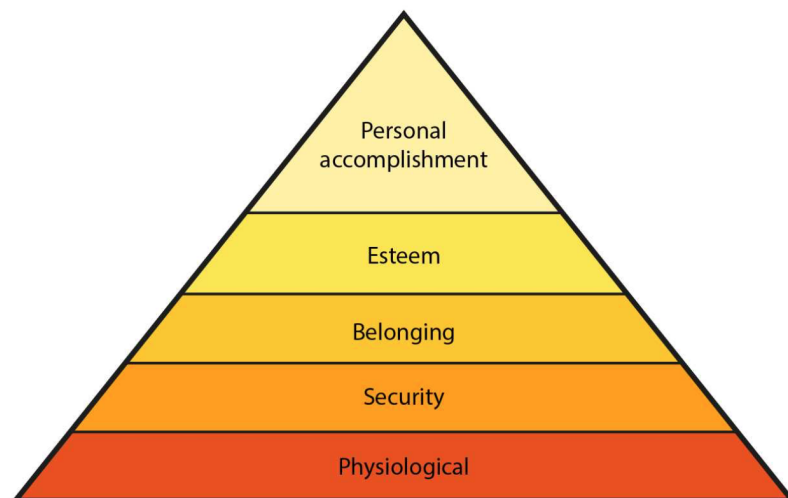
Starting at an early years setting at the age of 2 is a significant transition for the child. Crivello, Vogler and Woodhead (2008) would consider this a vertical transition. They believe it is important for transitions to take place as it allows them to grow as a person. By making these life changing transitions, their ability to adapt to the change and evolving environments will affect their identity long and short term. Likewise, Piaget (1978) believes transitions are important for child development as they are natural and progressive transformations that develop the holistic development of the child. These are formed through the interactions with the new experience.

The needs of the child

A practitioner's main priority is the needs of the child. They must ensure they are well educated on their role, how and why children do what they do and build a relationship with the child. (Donaldson, 2015).

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs

Pichére, (2015) states that Maslow created 5 levels of needs. A practitioner will need to be aware of these needs and provide them for the child. The first level consists of physiological needs. These will cover the child's basic needs for example eating, drinking and sleeping. A child who is provided with these will have a sense of security and esteem. The second layer is the security needs therefore the physical integrity and protection against things including theft and damage. This will supply the child with security. Next, the third layer is social nature, involving love, affection and social relations. Providing this, gives the child a sense of belonging. Maslow's fourth layer is the need for esteem, consisting of status, employment, power and money in society. Finally, the last layer is personal accomplishment. The previous four needs all involve others, however this need relies on the individual and their personality. (Pichére, 2015). Shao *et al.*, (2018, pp. 1023) supports Maslow's ideas and believes that if a child's needs are not met they will suffer repercussions preventing their development. This is likely to make them hostile and prevent them from exploring new places resulting in a difficult transition. As well as the practitioner ensuring these needs are met, the carers will also need to apply this hierarchy to their children at home.



Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs. (Pichére, 2015, pp. 5-6)

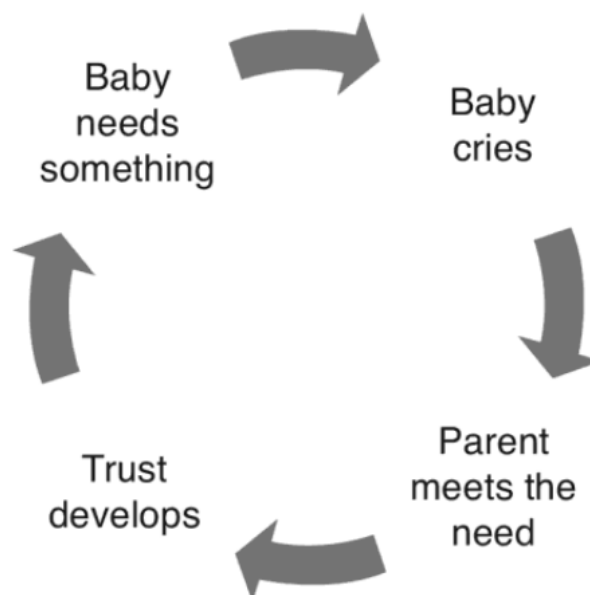
Why do children need to play?

Naudeau *et al* (2005) states that children need play. Play is essential in the holistic development of a child, especially spontaneous play. They learn new skills that are transferable and allow them to become more flexible which is beneficial during

transitions. Cooper, (2013) shows that play will develop their communication which enables development as interactions allow turn taking and responding for friendships. To support this, Piaget (1978) found that children form a schema that represents their understanding of the world. They learn from experience which then shape who they are and become. In addition, Vygotsky, (1978) sees children as an 'active agent' in their own environment. He found they learn from the world around them and create learning opportunities for themselves. However Piaget, (1978) believes you have to reach a certain developmental stage before the learning can occur whilst Vygotsky believed that both learning and development happens at the same time. The new idea of Planning in the Moment, where children lead their own activities and create their own learning and development (Ephgrave, 2018) supports both of these theories.

Why should practitioners know about attachment theory?

To provide a smooth transition the practitioner will need to build an attachment with the child and their families. Bowlby, (1988) developed attachment theory. He believes there are 4 types of attachment: secure attachment, when the parent has been responsive, consistent and sensitive to their child making them feel confident, comfortable, happy, loved and ready to explore. Ambivalent attachment where the parents have been inconsistent, sometimes sensitive and sometimes neglectful creating their child to be anxious, insecure and angry. Avoidant attachment, which involves the parent being distant, disengaged and neglectful, meaning the child is likely to be withdrawn, quiet and not want to explore and disorganised attachment, when the parents are frightened, passive and extremely frightening resulting in their child becoming depressed, angry, passive and unresponsive (Bowlby, 1988). This shows how important the role of the parent is in the development of children and how every child and family will be different. Therefore, it is likely the transition will be more difficult for children with insecure attachments. O'Connor, (2013) states that attachment is significant for a young child to form with their parent or carer and enables them to form new attachments with their key workers and friends as they grow up. (O'Connor, 2013).



Gott's model of The Regulation Cycle demonstrates the attachment cycle of a baby. (O'Connor, 2013, pp 4)

When a baby or young child gets distressed they will cry for help. If responded to continuously an attachment will begin to form with the parent or carer. The child will rely on their response and it will create a sense of security for them. Although not all caregivers will respond for a variety of reasons and this results in the baby or child feeling distressed and uncomfortable. These children may take longer to form attachments as they've lost their sense of security (O'Connor, 2013). Children need attachment as they will feel loved and secure. They will create a memory of their parents or carer as someone who makes them feel safe. O'Connor, (2013) continues that when the child arrives at the new setting they will feel anxious, over time they will understand that the carer will always come back and begin exploring the new setting, creating new attachments with friends and practitioners. This is an emotional development for the child called 'emotional resilience' which develops their well-being. (O'Connor, 2013).

Brumariu and Kerns, (2013) demonstrate the importance of secure attachment on a child's development and transitions. Insecure attachments are more likely to cause the child to develop anxiety and have trouble expressing and understanding their emotions. This highlights the difference between every child and their families' needs. Additionally, insecure children may find it difficult to socialise and form potential friendships and attachments. This shows the child is more likely to suffer when transitioning if the parent does not fulfil the children's needs. Insecure children may have to create an attachment with the caregiver before exploring, others might subconsciously avoid the attachment as they have never had one before. Parents with a strong attachment may find this transition distressing. The practitioner will need to get to know the child and families to ensure they are both at ease. To help the parents on arrival the practitioner should ensure they are as stress relieved as possible by ringing frequently updating on how the child is settling, send a picture with consent and possibly start off with smaller sessions and gradually extend the session. According to the Welsh Government (2022) positive relationships and attachments are based on mutual respect.

The Role of the Adult

Leaders should ensure that all staff are interacting positively with the child and their families as a main priority (Welsh Government, 2014). The qualities and responsibilities of a practitioner is to welcome the child and family, remain positive, act as a role model and provide a sense of belonging to the child. These will allow the child to happily settle into the new setting. Birth to 5 Matters, (2021) expresses the opportunity transitions give the practitioner for professional dialogue in the setting. Practitioners can communicate with other professionals that work with children such as colleagues or health visitors and create the best plan to meet the needs of the individual effectively, providing the best service to their ability. In recent years children are more likely to attend more than one setting. Children might attend nursery before or after sessions therefore it is significant that practitioners pass any information that is needed about the children to the nursery staff, if consented by the parents. The role of the adult will involve playing their part in the multidisciplinary partnership (page 9).

Every child is unique

Vygotsky, (1978) states that transitions are tailored to meet the needs of each individual child. Although some children might have resilience with change, others are more vulnerable to uncertainty. Therefore, practitioners need to be inclusive and consider that not every child is the same. (Birth to 5 Matters, 2021). A positive transition results in a high quality experience. If this is a consistent and continuous experience for the child they are more likely to have successful transitions in the future.

Clough and Nutbrown, (2013) state that ALL children have the right to be responsive, to have a respectful education, to be clean, capable and many more. The practitioner will need to ensure the children's rights are being met. Jones and Walker, (2011) share that rights are created by the United Nations Conventions on the Rights of a Child (UNCRC). The UNCRC created economic, social, cultural, civil and political rights that are split into 4 broad categories. These are the right to survive, the right to be safe, the right to belong and the right to develop. Parents, carers and practitioners all have the role to ensure that every child's rights are adhered to in the best interest of the child. Clough and Nutbrown, (2013) say to ensure practitioners are being inclusive they need to respect that every child is going to be different, practitioners will need to respect their:

- ★ Language
- ★ Cultures
- ★ Families
- ★ History
- ★ Abilities
- ★ Needs
- ★ Ways
- ★ Essence
- ★ Disabilities
- ★ Health Needs

Settings need to be inclusive with the staff, leaders, parents and children.

Role Model

Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory: An Introduction (2003) shows how children learn through reactions and actions of others. For example, if a well dressed formal man crosses the road at a red light everyone is likely to follow, however if the same man dressed poorly crosses the road people will make a judgement and not cross. They watch adults and let it shape their ideas. This is useful for practitioners as they can see their mood actions will be copied therefore they need to remain positive and be a good role model to the children.

Communication

Dunhill, Elliot and Shaw (2009) believe communication is essential when working in early years as practitioners work alongside the child and their families daily. Dunhill says communication involves "listening, questioning, understanding and responding". This is important during transitions as the practitioner needs to communicate to learn the needs of the child and the families. Practitioners also have to communicate with non verbal children, families or/and carers. Evans and Dale, (2018) found that facial expressions are a very successful way to communicate non-verbally in addition to emotions. Brodie and Savage, (2015) highlight the importance of speaking and listening to create an inclusive setting. Not only does this allow children to be heard but it enables language development and improves familiarity. This applies to defining terms and allowing questioning, ensuring each child feels heard and included.

Partnerships

There are many services and professionals involved in a child's life. These play a key role in a child's transition and the passing of essential information. Brooker (2008) found that children often attend childcare, transition to and/or from nursery or to/from a different form of childcare and transition home. Cleaver *et al*, (2009) says the professions working together have the aim and the responsibility to promote the welfare of the child and ensure safeguarding all while ensuring a positive experience for the child.

Parent and Practitioners Relationship

It is important to a child that the parents and practitioners create a positive relationship. The practitioner creating a consistent plan and rules with the parents is more effective for the child and their behaviour. The consistent plan provides familiarity to the child further helping with transitions. Cleaver *et al*, (2009) develops this by saying that parents know key information about the child that they can share with the practitioner, resulting in the practitioner knowing the child on a deeper level. When creating a relationship with the parents, practitioners need to:

- Treat all family members with dignity and respect.
- Ensure that family members are aware of the settings priorities
- Ensure family members are clear about the practitioners professional power
- Respect confidentiality and listen to concerns raised by children and their families
- Consider children within their family relationships and communities.
- Use easy and understandable language.
- Remain open and honest about your concerns and responsibilities continuously.
- Allow time for children and families to understand concerns and process them.
- Always respect personal feelings, values and beliefs

(Department of Health, 1995)

Multidisciplinary Approach

Gasper, (2009) states that multidisciplinary is when the childcare setting works closely with other professionals to meet the needs of the children and their families. Waller, (2009) states practitioners will need to understand and know their children to pass on information to other professions as required. All the professionals involved in the multidisciplinary system need to respect and understand perspectives passed on from each professional. Effective communication is essential. A barrier is that practitioners can feel inadequate compared to powerful professionals but it is important that they have a voice and voice any concerns. Practitioners will have the opportunity to pass on relevant information regarding the child to their nursery to set up activities that the child enjoys, enhancing the transition. All professionals will work as a team to help the child develop and create new beneficial targets as a team. If the child is not developing as they should, additional help can be put in place. (Waller, 2009)

Interventions

The practitioner will need to put different interventions in place in preparation of the new child starting at the daycare. They need to make sure they are considering all the children's needs in order to create the best transition possible. To limit the distress for both the child and the parent, the practitioner can set up interventions such as:

- Birth to 5 matters, (2021) suggest to assign a key worker to each individual child so the key worker can get to know the child and their in depth and all their specific needs.
- The assigned key worker can visit the child at a safe and familiar setting such as their house so that both the child and parent have met the key worker and all parties become more familiar. The practitioner could also set up activities similar to what they observed at home. (Birth to 5 Matters, 2021)
- Before arrival the new child and family should be given an 'all about me' sheet with their registration forms. This provides an opportunity for the parent and child to create a fact sheet about themselves to make sure all the practitioners working get to know each child and their individual needs.
- Have transition sessions to settle the child in, consisting of attending with parents to look around and become familiar with the setting and the practitioners. Then attending a session with their parents to have an opportunity to explore the setting and routines with their attachment there. Then start short sessions without their attachment and slowly extend the sessions throughout. It is important for the parents or carers to be aware of the settling in policy. (Welsh Government, 2000)

These interventions are optional. Discuss with your setting what the best intervention is for your children. Incorporating some settling in policies is more likely to meet the children's needs and their families providing a positive transition.

Reggio Emilia

Gaspar (2009) discussed Reggio Emilia in Italy. This focuses on child centred activities which values the imagination of the child and allows them to become creative and create their own experiences. They lead the activities and are responsible for their own learning. Planning and observation are very important to early years and it is essential that the practitioners are well educated in order to encourage the children to be the best they can be.

Proposed Outcomes

Foundation phase provides effective education so practitioners need to understand the child and assist their holistic development. (Welsh Government, 2018). Similarly the New Curriculum for Wales focuses on the unique child. It suggests the schools write their own curriculum based on the children's skills. It contains 4 purposes.

1. Ambitious and capable learner who is ready to learn throughout their lives.
2. Enterprising, creative contributors that are ready to play a part in life and work.
3. Ethical, informed citizens of Wales and the world.
4. Healthy and confident individuals who are ready to lead fulfilling lives as a valued member of society.

To support this, according to Lee *et al.* (2013) the educational framework from Te Whāriki in New Zealand is a strong curriculum with connections to families and the wider community. It focuses on equity and respect for children's rights and the main aim is to support children raised in democracy. Te Whāriki includes children from 0-4 years old. The key aspect is for the child to learn from their surroundings and develop holistically.

Recognising a successful transition

A smooth and successful transition will be evident by the outcome. A practitioner should observe if a child is happy, settled and confident in their new setting. They would be expected to share memories of previous settings happily and willingly whilst feeling safe and secure in their new setting to share personal information. New attachments will be formed and the child will continue to progress and not regress in any developmental areas. Parents and carers will feel happy dropping off their child and not feel stressed.

Reference List

- Birth to 5 Matters (2021) *Transitions*. Available at:
<https://birthto5matters.org.uk/transitions/> (Accessed: 1 December 2022)
- Bowlby, J. (1988) *A secure base: Parent-child attachment and healthy human development*. New York: Basic Books.
- Brodie, K. and Savage, K. (2015) *Inclusion and Early Years Practice*. 1st ed. London: Routledge.
- Bronfenbrenner, U. (1986) 'Ecology of the family as a context of human development: Research perspectives', *Developmental Psychology*, 22(6), pp. 723–742.
- Brooker, L. (2008) *Supporting Transitions in the Early Years*. 1st ed. Maidenhead: McGraw-Hill Education.
- Brumariu, L. E. and Kerns, K. A. (2013) 'Is Insecure Parents–Child Attachment a Risk Factor for the Development of Anxiety in Childhood or Adolescence?', *Child Development Perspectives*, 8(1), pp. 12-17. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1111/cdep.12054>
- Clough, P. and Nutbrown, C. (2013) *Inclusion in the early years*. London: Sage Publications.
- Crivello, G., Vogler, P. and Woodhead, M. (2008) *Early childhood transitions research: A review of concepts, theory, and practice*. Available at: Early childhood transitions research: A review of concepts, theory, and practice (Accessed: 30 November 2022).
- Department of Health. (1995) *Child Protection: Messages from Research*. London: HSMO.
- Dunhill, A., Elliot, B. and Shaw, A. (2009) *Effective communication and engagement with children and young people, their families and carers*. London: SAGE Publications.
- Ephgrave, A. (2018) *Planning in the Moment with Young Children*. Oxfordshire: Taylor and Francis.
- Evans, M. and Dale, G. (2018) *Successful Nonverbal Communications*. 5th ed. New York: Routledge.
- Frances Davidson (Producer), & Davidson, J. (Director). (2003). Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory: An Introduction. [Video/DVD] Davidson Films. Retrieved from <https://video.alexanderstreet.com/watch/bandura-s-social-cognitive-theory-an-introduction>

Gasper, M. (2009) *Multi-agency working in the Early Years: Challenges and Opportunities*. 1st ed. London: SAGE Publications Ltd.

Jones, P. and Walker, G. (2011) 'Inclusion and Development in Early Years: Making Inclusion Conventional?', *Children's Rights in Practice*, 11(2), pp. 99-102. Available at: <https://web-s-ebshost-com.ezproxy.uwtsd.ac.uk/ehost/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?vid=0&sid=7b70b999-8854-42ee-809a-09205a27b2a7%40redis> (Accessed: 3 December 2022)

O'Connor, A. (2013) *Understanding Transitions in the Early Years*. 1st ed. Oxon: Routledge.

Naudeau, S. et al. (2005) *Children's Play*. California: SAGE Publications.

O'Connor, A. (2013) *Understanding Transitions in the Early Years*. Oxon: Routledge, pp. 4, illus.

Piaget, J. (1978) *The Equilibration of Cognitive Structures*. Oxford: Blackwell.

Pichère, P. (2015) *Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs: Understand the true foundations of human motivation*. Available at: <https://www-vlebooks-com.ezproxy.uwtsd.ac.uk/Product/Index/744508?page=0> (Accessed: 2 December 2022)

School Week. (2022) Available at: <https://schoolsweek.co.uk/5-things-schools-should-know-about-early-years-education/> (Accessed: 29th November 2022).

Shao, J. et al. (2018) 'Parent-Child Cohesion, Basic Psychological Needs Satisfaction, and Emotional Adaptation in Left-Behind Children in China: An Indirect Effects Model', *Frontiers in Psychology*, 9. Pp. 1023-1023.

Vygotsky, L.S. (1978) *Mind in society. The development of higher psychological processes*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Waller, T. (2009) *An Introduction to Early Childhood*. 2nd ed. London: SAGE Publications.

Welsh Government (2018) *Foundation Phase Framework Revised 2015*. Available at: <https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2018-02/foundation-phase-framework-revised-2015.pdf> (Accessed: 4 December 2022).

Welsh Government (2019) Curriculum for Wales 2022

<https://gov.wales/curriculum-wales-2022> (Accessed: 4 December 2022)

Welsh Government (2022) *Curriculum for funded non-maintained nursery settings*.

Available at:

<https://hwb.gov.wales/curriculum-for-wales/curriculum-for-funded-non-maintained-nursery-settings> (Accessed: 1 December 2022)