

A handbook for keyworkers in early years settings during childhood transitions.

“Transition should be viewed as a **process** rather than an event that involves children, practitioners and parents together, it has been described as an **ongoing journey** rather than a destination.”

- (Earlyyearsmatter, 2020, no page number)



- (Source: clipart library, no date)

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Introduction

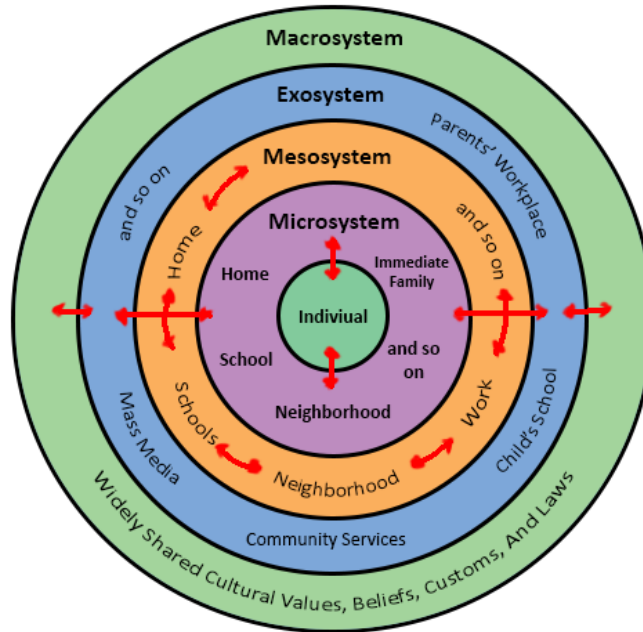
“A transition is the process or a period of changing from one state or condition to another.”
(Oxford dictionary, 2020)

A transition is an event which can also be referred to as change, meaning it is inevitable in everyone's lives, no matter the age or person. Transitions can be minor, such as a change to a child's daily routine, or it can be larger, such as moving from nursery to school. Teach Early Years (no date) states that young children will experience a number of emotional and environmental changes before they attend school, these changes will shape the children in how they act in situations and similar environments in future.

Change can be seen as a positive thing, whereas some may see it as a more challenging, difficult aspect of life. Parent Zone Scotland (2020) refer to transitions as the changes and moves children make from home, to an early year setting, for example. Throughout their childhood, children will experience numerous transitions, which will have an affect them, which is why it these transitions should aim to be as efficient as possible for the children.

It is fundamental that practitioners work closely with the children and those in their microsystem, to ensure the child is able to learn and develop effectively throughout these transitions. Bronfenbrenner (1979) uses the term microsystem to refer to the immediate contacts in the child's life. These individuals will play a fundamental role in ensuring the child is settled, welcomed and comfortable throughout their childhood transitions. The way a child adjusts to change will vary, which is why it is important that those within the child microsystem understand the child. Practitioners should create a warm, welcoming environment, as Bronfenbrenner (1979) also refers to the fact that environments play a role in a child's ability to learn. He states that a child the environment of which the child is transitioning into, will have a significant impact on their ability to learn effectively.

A diagram of Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological systems theory can be seen below. The diagram explains the relationship between the different levels linking to the socialisation of an individual.



- (Source: Bronfenbrenner, Pinterest, 2020)

According to Teach Early years (no date) effective communication is key when ensuring transitions are effective for the children both verbal and non-verbal communication can be used to ensure the child settles and adjusts well to the transition of which they are experiencing. Strong relationships give the foundation for a positive transition. An initial positive transition is extremely important, as if the child had a negative experience this may traumatise them, which will affect the way they act and behave in future. The little Albert experiment by Watson and Raynor (1920) supports this statement, as this theory shows that classical condition can be used to create a phobia, this can link into transitions. For example, if a child has a negative first day school, they may remember themselves being emotional and they may, therefore, have a fear and find going to school very difficult.

How to use this handbook

According to the Learning and Teaching Pedagogy by the Welsh Government (2008), young children are always learning, from the moment they are born. Children's earliest experiences have an enormous impact on their learning and development, this highlights the importance of this guidance handbook.

The purpose of this handbook is to aid keyworker when helping children during childhood transitions. The handbook has been designed for children aged 3-4 years old who are moving from their home environment to the school setting. This handbook should be used by the keyworker, to help inform them of the importance effective communication during the transitioning period, to ensure it is as smooth as possible for the child.

This handbook has been designed to broaden keyworkers understanding of the importance of effective communication, after reading the handbook, practitioners should understand how communication affects young children's learning and development during transitions. Nursery World (2006) discusses how effective transitions within the Foundation Phase depend on how committed the team within the setting are when communicating with one and other. This supports and demonstrates how important it is that keyworkers work effectively throughout childhood transitions.

Baumrind's (1971) discusses different styles of interactions between adults and children, one being permissive approaches by both parents and early years practitioners, she suggests that this style could have a negative impact and may make transitions more difficult. She states that when children are highly dependent on adults, this could lead to anti-social behaviour, which would then affect childhood and educational transitions. O'Kane and Hayes (2006) support and expand on this point, as they found that teachers often identify children with these behavioural difficulties as those who may experience challenging and difficult transitions. This evidence highlights the importance of strong communication skills between, parents and practitioners during transitions. Practitioners need to work together with the parents/guardians

of the child is fundamental throughout these childhood transitions, the importance of these partnerships is discussed throughout this handbook.

This handbook has numerous different sections, it will go through the role as the adult, and the needs of the child. In addition to these points, the handbook will also discuss partnerships, interventions and proposed outcomes. These sections are fundamental for keyworkers to understand the importance of communication during transitions, on the development and learning of children.

By using this guidance and through general good practise, keyworkers should be able to manage transitions effectively, whilst understanding the importance of effective communication throughout. Transitions should be carefully planned, whilst remembering each child is a unique individual.

The role of the adult

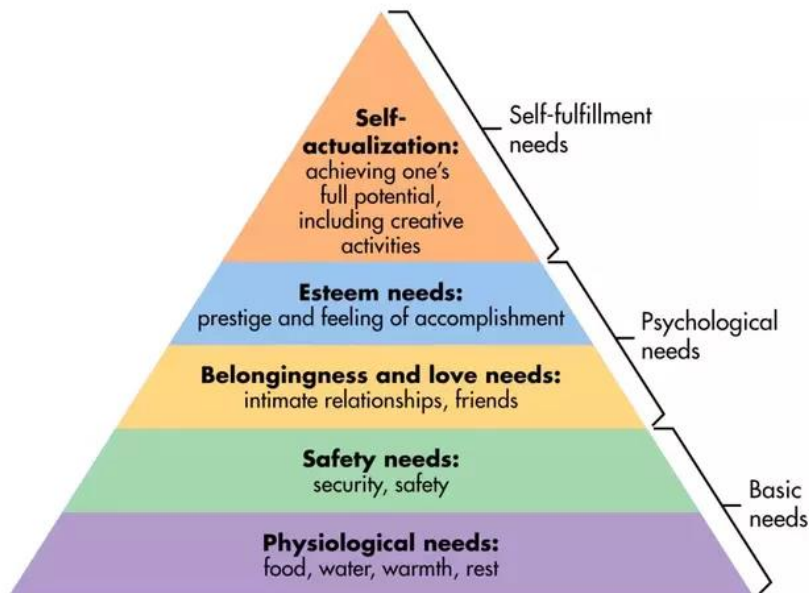
According to the Welsh Government (2008) early years practitioners play a fundamental role in ensuring all children experience a smooth and comfortable transition. They must be able to welcome the new children within the setting and ensure they have all relevant information about them. As well as ensuring the children are settled and comfortable when transiting to their setting, it is also the practitioner's responsibility to prepare the child for their next transition. For example, after experiencing their first transition, from home to school, those working within the early years setting should work towards making the children confident individuals, which will then make future transitions easier.

"Practitioners must understand how children develop and plan an appropriate curriculum that takes account of children's developmental needs and the skills that they need to grow to become confident learners." (Welsh Government, 2008, p. 5).

Erikson's (1958) supports the statement made by the Welsh Government, as he discusses the importance of a practitioner understanding the different developmental stages which occur through childhood. This is a fundamental role that practitioners should hold, as they will have to guide, plan and help the child within the setting, to enable the child to learn and develop.

A key worker within an early years setting is a qualified member of staff who will focus and have responsibilities for a small group of children within their setting. They will work closely alongside the children and plan activities. Research shows that children flourish when they have a secure attachment with their care giver. Bowlby (1958) theory supports this point, as he initially discussed how important the child's relationship is with their mother, as it has an incredible impact on the child. When a child is moving from their home environment to the school setting, they may feel nervous and anxious at first, which is why their keyworker should work with them to create secondary attachments. Bowlby (1958) states that by having a secure attachment with their care givers, children will develop effectively as well as feel more confident in themselves, which will make future transitions easier.

Maslow (1943) developed a hierarchy of needs; this includes the needs of which should be met to enable the development of the child. Practitioners should ensure they are meeting these needs, as if they do not, they will be unable to progress further.



- Source: Simply Psychology, 2020.

A keyworker should work alongside the child's parent to discover information about the child, which will help them develop a strong relationship with the individual. Throughout a transition, a settling in period may be offered by the keyworker, as this will allow the child to become familiar with the setting. Also, the keyworker should aim to find out information about the child such as, the child's likes and dislikes, any additional needs they may have and also some of their favourite things. All of these factors will help the transition easier, which will have a positive impact on the child.

Keyworkers must follow the policies and procedures in their settings, to ensure they are working in line with the Government guidelines, as well as their settings. Safeguarding is essential and a keyworker within an early years setting must be able to recognise any warning signs.

The environment should be made to be welcoming and nurturing by the keyworker for the children in the setting. Montessori (1912) identifies children's interests throughout their

different stages of childhood, for example between 2-6 years old, she suggests that children will have a natural interest in music, suggesting that this could be incorporated into the settings environment as the child will become interested and intrigued.

Also, a keyworker should have strong communication skills, as well as being a good role model to the children within their setting. Documentation is also important for a keyworker, as they will have to complete daily sheets on the child's progress, as well as more in-depth documents, this ensures that practitioners within the child's next setting will have a solid understanding on what they are able to do and what their next steps should be. They should also be able to provide high quality care for the children, whilst allowing them to develop and learn within the setting.

The needs of the child

Children are experiencing the transition from home to the school setting and some may find it more challenging than others, which is why it is essential the needs of the child are recognised and met. All children should be treated with respect and should all be included and given equal opportunities within the early years setting. Steiner (1907) recognised that children learn through imitation and as the things around them change this means some of their needs will also change. Miller and Pound (2011) have recently supported this idea, as they stated that whatever happens around the child becomes part of the child. This is why it is important all children are treated as individual, as they are all unique. For example, one child may not have English as their native language, this will mean they will need more help when communicating and developing their language skills, suggesting that the needs of the child will vary depending on the individual.

Children should be able to communicate and interact effectively with the adults in the setting. The children will need to feel comfortable with their teacher, the child will need the practitioner to understand their methods of communication, as this will make them feel safe and secure when within the setting. Children should feel secure when in their new setting, as they may be over-whelmed when leaving their parents and they will therefore be looking to make new attachments to the practitioners within their setting. They will have a positive view on education if they have been able to create positive relationships within the setting during the transition period.

Play has a strong impact on the development and learning of children, Vygotsky (1966) considered play to be important for an individual's cognitive development, as Helen Tovey states that, through play children can make their own decisions and use their own judgements, whilst in a safe controlled environment. Froebel (1887) believed that play is how children learn in early childhood. Based on the evidence, children should be given the opportunity to play in

school, as not only does play help children learn it also has numerous positive emotional effects, which will make the transitions easier for the child.

Dewey (1915) believed that children require support from adults, and he sees the teacher as a guide to new learning and new experiences. Each child should have the opportunity to receive help or guidance when in situations they may find difficult. Every child within the setting has the right to help contribute towards decisions. Booth, Ainscow and Kingston (2006), believed that maximum contribution in children will result in a better outcome, as children will feel valued in the setting. Dewey (1915) agreed that as every child is unique, it is important to take into consideration how each child learns rather than just following the curriculum.

As this handbook is aimed at 3-4-year olds, the seven areas of learning in the Foundation Phase, set out by the Welsh Government (2010) is a need of the child, these are:

- Personal and Social Development
- Well-Being and Cultural Diversity
- Language, Literacy and Communication
- Mathematical Development
- Welsh Language Development,
- Knowledge and Understanding of the World,
- Creative Development

Children need to feel welcomed and comfortable when in their early years setting, this is particularly important whilst they are going through the transitions as they will be going into a new environment, with new people. The children should create strong relationships with both their peers and the teachers, by having a secure attachment, it will help improve their self-esteem and make them feel more confident, which will then help them during future transitions.

Partnerships

In order for children to grow and develop effectively within an early year setting, the parents must place a lot of trust in the practitioners and the setting. The Early Years Foundation Phase framework states that a partnership is parents, families and practitioners working with one and other to allow children to learn and develop effectively. Trust is highly important throughout transitions, as not only does the practitioner have to build a relationship with the child, but also with the parents.

Pacey (no date) states that parents should be involved from the start of their child's transitions, all the way through to when they move to their next setting. There are a number of ways to involve parents throughout their child's journey in the setting. Communication is highly important when building upon these partnerships, for example daily chats, sheets and updates are important, as it ensures everyone in the partnership fully understands the child's development progress. It is important to keep parents involved in their child's learning and development whilst in the setting, early year settings often use learning journeys or developmental sheets to show this, as they can then be used in future settings.

According to Early Years Matter (no date) early year settings can also build partnerships with multiagency such as health and social care teams, they will work in partnerships to ensure each child's needs are being met. For example, if a child was not meeting their developmental milestones, the practitioners may want a discussion with the child's health visitor, as this will give them a broader understanding of the child's situation. How this information is shared will depend on the settings policies and procedures.

Working well and together with children can also extend the child's learning, as if the parent understands what the child is learning and is interested in within the setting, they will be able to link this into aspects within their home environment. This would, therefore, have a positive impact on the learning and development of the child.

Interventions

To help during transitions an early years setting may put certain interventions in place. According to the Child Mind Institute (no date), there are a number of ways transitioning can be made easier for children, for example practitioners should create a structured routine as this will make it easier for the child to adjust. Generally, children like routine, as it becomes familiar to them and they will therefore know what to expect, which will consequently make the transitioning period easier for the child.

Also, in terms of communication, handover is important, as Bronfenbrenner (2015) believed that parents/guardians and teachers should have a positive relationship and share information, to ensure the child is able to develop and learn effectively. As, for example, parents evening is an important event, as it gives the opportunity to share information about the child, as well as voice any concerns or worries. In addition to these verbal forms of communication, written forms of communication can also be just as useful, a daily diary may be used or an app which allows the practitioners to inform the child's parent/guardian on what the child has ate throughout the day and what activities they have done. It is equally as important that the parent informs the practitioner of any changes, for example, if a child had a restless night, this information should be passed on as it may affect the child's behaviour throughout the day. This ensures that both the teacher and parent are up to date with all information about the child.

Early years settings often use 'all about me' sheets, which include information on the child, Vygotsky (1934) states that a practitioner must fully understand the child, as this will enable them to set activities and tasks, based on the child's ability, as well as what interests them. These sheets are helpful, as they give background information on the child, which may then make it easier for the children and the practitioner to build a relationship, as they will understand the child. An example of a simple 'all about me' sheet for young children can be seen below.

All about _____

I am _____ years old

One thing I like is...

One thing I don't like is...

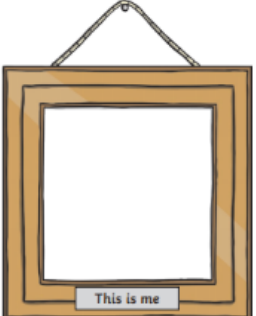
This is my family

My favourite colour is _____

A word that describes me...

When I grow up I want to be...


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- (Source: Twinkl, 2020)

Proposed outcomes

If interventions are executed effectively, it will have a positive impact on those involved in the transition. The child should feel happy and comfortable when in the setting, this will show that they have settled, bonds with both the practitioner and other children will be made and this will demonstrate that the child has settled within the early years setting. Also, a child who is settled should be developing throughout their time in the setting, this can be monitored through documents such as a learning journey or developmental sheets.

The British psychological society (2015) uses the term 'school readiness', it is an outcome that children should be supported and guided to become ready for school, as it will enable them to flourish in the setting. Early year settings will see how effective their interventions have been through documents such as, child observations and assessments. Montessori believes that the best way to observe a child is to simply sit back and watch, this will enable them to assess their abilities, meaning they will then be able to develop their next steps from these observations.

Practitioners should be able to recognise positive changes in the child's behaviour if the interventions are carried out in an effective manner. This is the main outcome, as not only will it make the current transition smooth for the child, but it will also help them in the future.

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