TRANSITIONS IN EARLY YEARS:

Communication

Transition into Reception guide

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Purpose of this handbook.

This handbook will give an insight to parents/carers with children starting Reception. Providing information, promoting effective communication and guidance to help children feel comfortable and happy with this new transition.

(Education, 2016) explains how collaborative working, gaining understanding of the readiness of the child starting school, results in meeting the needs of the child and gives everyone the tools to an effective transition, enabling a continuum of learning.

(First, 2023).

This can be an exciting time for children but also a time of uncertainty and change. Early Years Matters (2023) explains how transition is a process in which a child must experience in a positive way to ensure it has a positive impact on the development of the child. Children should feel happy and excited to start this new journey. If the child does not feel comfortable, happy, and secure within their new environment, they will not feel ready to learn. Children are more likely to adapt better to other transitions later in life if they experience positive experiences.

Aline Wendy Dunlop and Fabian (2011) explain how as adults, understanding how to ensure the children feel safe physically and emotionally, by effective communication can ensure they gain a sense of belonging in their new environment. Furthermore, this will also aid the adult into a positive experience of this new change. Which in turn will support the wellbeing of the child.

Introduction to Transitions

In early childhood, children can experience a range of different transitions. Clarke (2020) explains that there are four main areas transitions can affect, such as Emotional, Physical, Intellectual and Physiological**.**

- **Emotional** transitions can be losing someone close to them or even a loss of a pet, starting a new environment such as school or moving home. Parents circumstances changing such as separation or divorce. It is important the child can express how emotional change is affecting them.
- **Physica**l transitions can be changing a new environment or simply moving from one activity to another.
- **Intellectual** transitions can be the process of moving from home to childcare then through the school system.
- **Physiological** transitions can be change in their bodies such as puberty or medical conditions they may have.

Preparing children to understand the process of transition and getting them used to the idea of starting a new environment would be a holistic approach to starting Reception.

Pacey (2006) talks about how by explaining to the child this is an exciting time for them and being positive towards the process will build resilience. An example of this can be of asking the child to draw themselves wearing their new uniform and asking them what they think they may learn when starting school? Allowing time for children to explore their new environment by attending settling in days and arranging group activities for children to interact together.

Children experience different types of transition in their lifetimes.

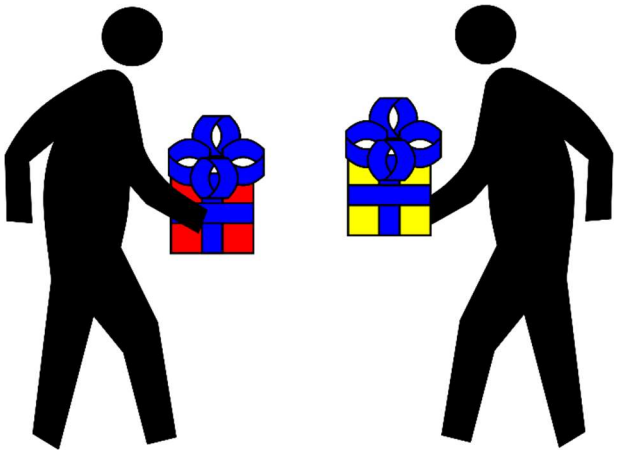
- **Horizontal transitions** such as routines (Daily transitions) and
- **Vertical transitions** such as moving from one state to another, key changes, and significant changes in a child's life.

Children may not feel ready for these changes, they may not want it to happen, feel unprepared and not in control. Young Minds (2021) explains how being part of this change and supporting children through these times will enable a positive experience with everyone.

> 'This needs to be considered during the settling-in process when children are adjusting to what behaviour is expected of them in each different situation or for each activity and the associated rules (e.g., putting on an apron when painting, sharing toys when playing, sitting down to eat, where to hang coats etc). If a child is unsure of the rules or norms of the setting/school, it may prevent them from accessing learning opportunities.' (www.rctcbc.gov.uk, No date)

Meeting the Needs of the Child

According to Brown (2018) meeting the needs of the child by modelling a system of reciprocity by identifying what the child needs and responding in an appropriate way, can gain a positive relationship within practice and a mutual benefit to all involved.



Starting reception will involve a new environment, new routines, and longer school days, so tailoring to children's needs will ensure children are more perceptive to new change. Resulting in a smooth and successful transition.

Current practice is influenced by number of theories of development. According to Cloke (2023) Abraham Maslow arguably has the most influential theory of human motivation. Maslow's theory has formed a basis for other theorists who expand on his hierarchy of needs. His explanations and interpretations are still useful today when trying to understand the behaviours and motivations of humans.

This can be extremely useful when addressing a child's personal needs. Maslow believed a child would not be able to reach their full potential without their needs being met. As seen in Figure 2, Maslow believed a child requires basic needs such as good health, to be well fed and have plenty of sleep to feel safe and happy. They will in turn feel love, affection and have a sense of belonging. Without this a child may not be ready for this new transition.

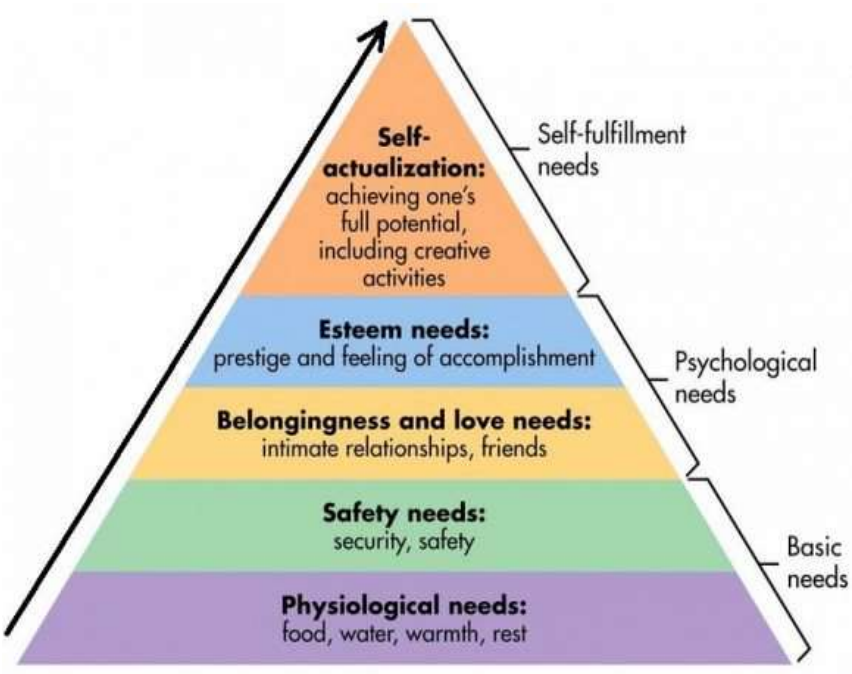


Figure 2: (Source: Brave Heart Education, No date).

Importance of play

Within practice there are indoor and outdoor spaces with enhanced provision to allow children to have options of both learning inside and outside of the environment. Outdoor areas are to be safe, clean, and linked to all areas of learning.

Within the setting the learning environment will be child led. Kinteract (2022) explains activities will be open ended, have meaning to the child and allow for exploration. Using playdoh for example can allow the child to build what they choose to, using paints and colouring pencils to allow the child to freely be creative, playing dress up with props so they can role play and using water play with utensils. Key workers will provide observation and guidance to support a child led approach.

Friedrich Froebel promotes the learning through outdoor play. According to Thomas (2022) Frobel's theory is one that is used widely in children's development today. He promotes using outdoor space as a learning environment by letting children be together in unity, be connected through playing and discovering. Frobel believed by learning about the outside world it opens for inquisition about the wider world such as climate change and sustainability.

Frobel's 'Garden for Children' links to the whole of child by allowing children to feel one with nature, plants and animals and learn at their own pace. Bradbury and Swailes (2022) determine that children live in a world of technology and promoting hands on learning and discovery through the outdoors and its wonders by taking appropriate risks is important for children.

(Source: Outdoors Group Ltd, 2021).

Davies (2016) explains how Montessori theory of learning through independence and the 'unique' child promotes using natural resources such as leaves and sticks and pouring and scooping water and sand. Being creative with the resources we naturally have in the world. Within the setting forest school is available for children to grow holistically within the world around them. Making campfires and using sticks and leaves to build and create.

Observations

Observations are key in preparing and supporting the development and wellbeing of the child. Children mature at different rates and some children may find change harder than others. Nursery story (2021) suggests with careful preparing and planning, relaying a lot of children's fears beforehand will enable the transition to be seen as a process and something the child can easily forget has happened.

According to Neaum (2019a,p.88), we can determine that each development area of a child is interconnected and if one area is not met then the other areas of development will also be affected. Embedding holistic development from the very start of transition ensures the child is happy in their new setting and will settle quickly.

Meeting the needs of the adult

Wilson (2016) explains it is important as parents to communicate with keyworkers to support development through understanding of what the child enjoys and what their skills and capability entails. Gaining this shared understanding will nurture and provide everyone involved with a whole child centre approach to development.

Working collaboratively before the child starts reception will ensure the child, parent/carer and keyworkers are ready for this new transition. Sharing common knowledge of the fears and worries the child may have before starting Reception can ensure everyone has empathy for this new change.

Collaborative working

Early Years Matters (2022) explains how as adults it is important to understand how these changes affect children and by working collaboratively with effective communication can ensure children smoothly settle into their new environment. Having a good understanding of how theories and other factors in a child's life can influence these changes by using a whole child approach. This will in turn enable a smooth transition for both children and adults.

Importance of Environment

Bronfenbrenner's work enabled an intervention programme to support his theory that different factors surrounding a child influences every part of a child's life. School and home environment stand close to the individual's needs. His theory is made up of many different factors and key people which are interlinked, and all contribute to the child's development. Furthermore Cherry (2023) explains it shows a child can develop over time based on how they interact with these environmental factors. The key people closest to the child need to work holistically together to ensure the child has the microsystem around them to deal with these factors.

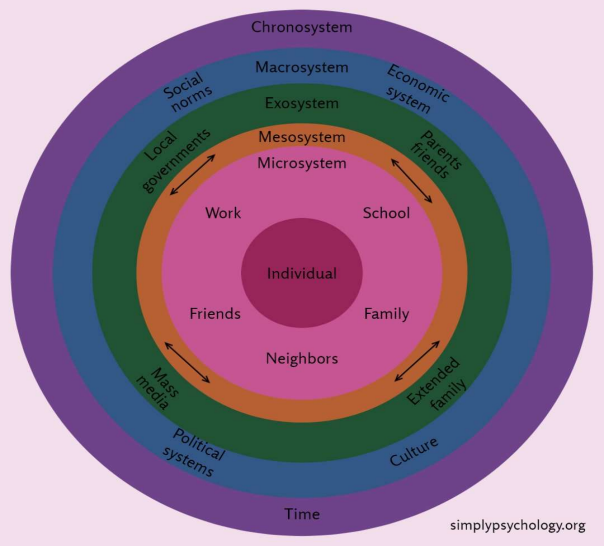


Figure 1: Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory. (Source: Simply Psychology, No date).

Figure 1 shows how Bronfenbrenner's ecological theory interlinks. Explaining how the environment influences a child's development, where the keyworkers and parents/carers interact with one another to enable good communication. Indirect and external sources such as events around the child in the local community. Factors such as current financial, political climates and what historic period the child is born into can all affect the child developmentally.

Albert Bandura's theory believes behaviour is learned from the environment through the process of observational learning. Bandura believes that children will imitate and copy behaviour from their peers without being told to do so and just by observing them. Bandhura's experiment with an inflatable clown doll shows us children copy the same behaviour they have witnessed before them. Bandura's findings were unexpected and show children can be strongly influenced by how others behave. His findings did go

on to show that as children mature, they develop a capacity to reflect what they see, and they develop empathy.

Keyworkers recognise the importance of modelling appropriate behaviours, and this social learning theory has had important implications within the setting.

Gray and Macblain (2015a, p.114) state by modelling good behaviour and praising good behaviour, using verbal and nonverbal communication such as body language, will enable clear communication between everyone. Building strategies such as encouraging children to do the right thing can build self-efficacy which are also rooted within this social learning theory.

Having self-efficacy show how children have the need and ability to be motivated, develop in their environment, and display positive behaviour. This system plays a large role in how situations are perceived and what behaviour is used towards it.

Relationships between children and keyworkers need to be positive to support emotional and social development. Main (2023) describes how children build relationships will affect how they do so in the future. Children need to have secure and consistent attachments to keyworkers. If this is not successful, the child may have problems later in life with mental and behavioural issues.

Attachment theory

> Attachment is a clinical term used to describe "a lasting psychological connectedness between human beings" (Bowlby, 1997)

Bowlby's theory of attachment is between children and their primary carer. His theory has the idea of belonging and closeness. As keyworkers have a duty to provide a positive environment that children can feel safe ensuring a bond is established. When a child feels safe, they will gain trust and are more willing to explore, becoming more resilient and can cope with fluctuations within their lives.

Nspcc (2021) explains how it can be detrimental to the child if these attachments are not made in the early stages of their lives. It can affect their neurological, psychological, emotional, and physical development.

The article by Macdonald, Gealy and Tinney (2019) explores the occurrence of Social, Emotional, and behavioural problems in areas of deprivation in Wales and how intervening with adult interaction affected the outcomes. The article highlights early intervention with child-adult interaction and gaining secure attachment, resulted in propitious results for emotional, hyperactivity and peer issues and development in pro-social skills.

Winnicott's theory of a baby is not a baby without its mother links into Bowlby attachment theory of children needing a connection with their primary carer. He believed the baby would need the primary carer to enable to survive.

Barrett (2005) explains the importance of having procedures in place within settings to build positive relationships between children and keyworkers. Bowlby's theory links to attachment styles and how children can fall into them.

- Secure
- Anxious- ambivalent
- Disorganised and
- Avoidant.

Avoidant children may want to try and avoid having secure relationships with keyworkers whereas ambivalent or resistant children may be more anxious. Children will learn value from gaining a secure environment in which they will feel safe and receive care from keyworkers.

(Source: Kidsattuned.com, 2011).

Within practice keyworkers need to use 'professional love' to tune into children's needs to build trust and positive relationships. Davies (2021) discusses how a professional

relationship should complement one of the parents by supporting the child within the setting with their emotional needs. Gaining trust and substituting the love and care they receive from home and by providing care routines as a daily occurrence.

Partnerships

Having strong relationships between home and school can ensure a positive experience for the child when transitioning into reception. Strong bonds between parents and school staff can build trust and confidence that the child's needs are met, and they are happy and ready to start reception.

Communication is key.

Tomas (2019) suggests that building on respect for both parties using communication and feedback. When relationships have respect, they are more open to discussions about the child and their needs. Gaining a mutual understanding of the process will alleviate any worries prior to starting.

Supporting good communication by asking any questions that may need to be addressed before the child starts school. This can be done via email, face to face or by telephone. Any questions regarding wrap around care or after school clubs that are available to support working parents.

Reggio Emilia approach links parents as the essential part of a child's learning experience. Working together with parents can enable keyworkers to provide the learning rich environment that the child needs. According to the research (rpnskids,2014), we can determine that the Reggio approach allows children to become critical thinkers. It allows for self-expression and to be able to work outside the lines. It allows parents to be brought into the curriculum.

Interventions

All parents will receive a handout of important information and dates prior to the child starting reception. This will alleviate any worries to both parents and children and will provide reference to refer to for reassurance.

By understanding Bronfenbrenner's theory of linking the children's home life with school will ensure the child's wellbeing is being met. Within practice parents are asked to provide information to the setting beforehand of the child's likes and dislikes. This can be done by a 'Flower handout', which tells the setting all about the child. Understanding what ignites the child's interest can provide strong relationships with children and keyworkers.

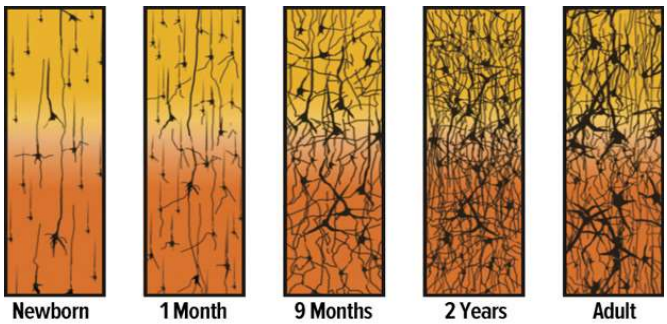


Figure 3 (Source: Urban Child Institute, 2023)

Understanding brain development within children can allow parents/carers and keyworkers to support the management of emotions into transitions. It can also support how the child deals with future experiences.

Gray and Macblain (2015b, p.113) explain how environmental factors such as poverty, social and emotional difficulties and even stress can affect child development. Providing a rich learning environment for the child will give a positive effect on the development of the brain.

Figure 3 (Urban Child Institute, 2023) shows how these synapses from birth all grow and link together with new pathways created by learning experiences. This can be sometimes called pruning and blooming which promotes how the brain processes new information.

Proposed Outcomes

Welsh Government, (2020) explains how the new curriculum in Wales has set out four main purposes which all schools and their learners should aspire to become,

- Ambitious capable learners.
- Enterprising, creative contributors.
- Ethical, informed citizens of Wales and the world.
- Healthy, confident individuals.

Arnerich (2019) suggests building resilience in children by ensuring feelings are validated through the transition process. Talk about how they feel about the experience and what they are expecting to happen, reassure them that it is normal to feel that way. Understanding what is happening can build resilience and support wellbeing.

Settings to provide a child led approach to activities to allow for creativity within learning. When children are happy, they should play happily and independently within their setting as they are familiar and content.

Ensuring their wellbeing is paramount and tuning into this big change will ensure children are healthy and confident. According to Hawthorne (2022) creating a physical, social, and emotional environment and allowing the child to become familiar with their new environment is important. Providing a nurturing environment will promote the child to flourish and without this it can hinder their ability to learn because they do not feel safe.

Ongoing monitoring and observations will enable keyworkers to ensure children are settled and provide evidence it has been a successful transition. Piaget's theory of development determines at what stage and at what age each child develops. According to Courses.lumenlearning.com (No date) as the pre-operational stage (age 2-7 years) develops, play becomes a big part of children's learning. Keyworkers will observe:

- Friendships being made through role play and playing child games.
- Who they play with and

- If they play happily.

Routines

Neaum (2019b, p.44) details how routines are also a holistic approach to development. Having consistent and regular tasks ensures children are comfortable and adaptable in the setting. Trying together (2021) recommends:

- Good routines can reduce stress and increase stability because of children understanding what they are doing, when they are doing it and how they are supposed to do it.
- Children build stronger bonds (with keyworkers and other children) and gains a sense of identity through the continuity it provides.

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