

**A Handbook for Early  
Year's keyworkers during  
childhood transitions.**



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<https://earlychildhood.qld.gov.au/early-years/transition-to-school/supporting-successful-transitions>

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## **Introduction:**

The definition of 'transition' is '*a change from one form or type to another, or the process by which this happens*'. Another definition for transition is '*changes, which may be social, legal, or medical, that lead to someone living their life as a person of a different gender to the one they were said to have at birth*'. (Cambridge Dictionary, no date found).

The aim of this handbook is to help the user, Early Year's Keyworker, in preparation, or reflection, to help children make easy transitions.

*A key person is a named member of staff with responsibilities for a small group of children who helps those children in the group feel safe and cared for. The role is an important one and an approach set out in the EYFS which is working successfully in settings and in Reception classes. (EYFS, 2007)*

*Early years in Wales refers to the period of 0-7 years old. 'The early years is defined by Welsh Government as the period of life from pre-birth to the end of Foundation Phase or 0 to 7 years of age. These years are a crucial time for children. Children grow rapidly and both their physical and mental development are affected by the environment in which they find themselves in. (No name found, 2014)*

Specifically, this handbook will focus on the first major transition in a child's life away from the home/main carer into the pre-school setting.

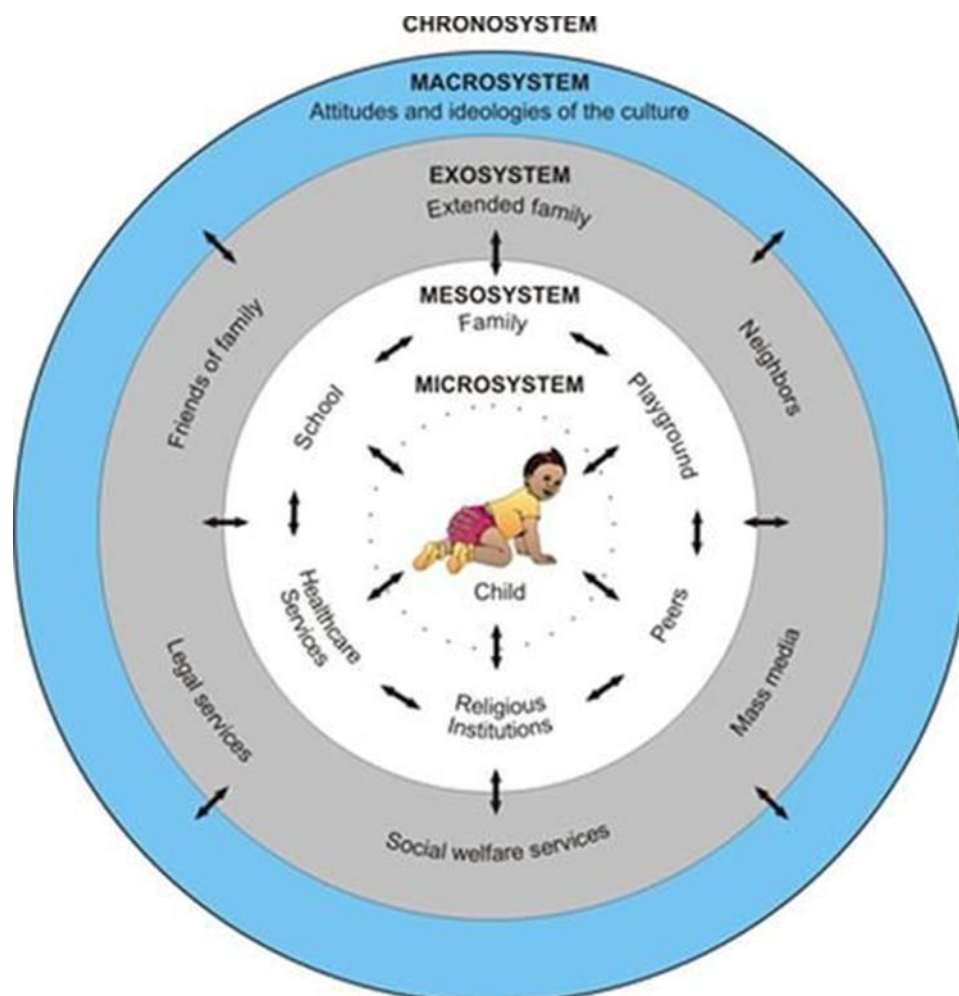
Whilst children undergo transitions before this, for example, from parent/guardian to nursery carer or nanny, this handbook considers the specific transition to a more formal setting because this is

something that all children will be expected to do (with the exception of those who will be home-schooled).

The easier a child finds a transition then the quicker the child can settle in to their new surroundings and thrive. Difficult transitions can have lasting consequences.

Although the handbook makes specific reference to the home to pre-school transition, any other Early Year's transition would essentially follow the same guidance.

*Bronfenbrenner's Bioecological Model of the Human Development focuses on the impact that the environment, in addition to biology, has on individual's development. (Bennet, 2014)*



## **How to use this handbook:**

Ideally, the user should read the whole handbook to get an overall idea of the 'big picture' involved in the specific transition being talked about, whilst being able to apply to other transitions as needed.

The index allows the user to focus on certain areas, ideally for when the handbook is being used for reference, when not looking at the 'big picture'.

*The aim of the guidance is for keyworkers and practitioners to understand how they can effectively manage smooth transitions during the early years from home into pre-school, as well as transitioning from pre-school onto the foundation phase at primary school, when the child is ready to move on at the age of three. It will look at your role as the adult as well as the needs of the child. Partnerships, interventions, and proposed outcomes will also be looked at to guide the keyworker, who has a duty to plan and manage the transition smoothly. (Welsh Government, 2018).*

The more aware the Early Year's Keyworker is about their essential role and the needs of the child, the better the transition. Everything is aimed at successfully managing the transition to help the child reach their full potential. Communication, clear understanding of individual roles, intervention where necessary are not things that should be second guessed. There is clear guidance as to best practice and these should be utilised for the benefit of the child; the child and its development is key to everything.

## **The role of the adult:**

An Early Years Key worker is someone who is involved at home for example, their parents, guardians, grandparents, or childminders. They are examples of primary carers which are carers that are mainly from home. You also have other agencies for example social services, doctors, dentists and many more.

*A primary caregiver is someone who is faced with the duty of taking care of a friend or loved one who is no longer able to care for themselves. Primary caregivers may be caring for children, a senior, a spouse with a terminal illness, or any friend or family member who requires assistance with daily activities. (Stringfellow, 2018).*

All the roles of an adult in a child's life must ensure that the child has all their support throughout the transition process. Their families must also show that they are there to support the child.

*Key person – A practitioner who is mainly responsible for providing lead support, contact and communication for a child and their family within the setting, with the aim of supporting close attachments between individual children and staff. (Daly, Byers, Taylor, 2004)*

A parent/guardian role is obviously the main role in a child growing up: children always look up to their parents and tend to behave like them. If they have good role models as parents, then that would have a good impact on the child's behaviour. Whereas if they do not have a particularly good role model to look up to their transition is even more important in presenting to them, for perhaps the first time, how they should behave. For example, with the other agencies such as a dentist, that would not really have a big impact on the way the child behaves because the child does not see that person a lot.

The definition of a role model *“a person who someone admires and whose behaviour they try to copy”* ( Cambridge Dictionary, 2020).

Everyone has a role model, not just when you are young. Although when you are young the people you look up to are important because you tend to follow what they are doing, as when you are older you do not follow people as much because you are more aware of what is right and what is wrong.

An example of a role model is not just a parent or someone you know but perhaps you have an interest in life you want to peruse within the future so you look up to them as a role model.

To be a good role model you would want to support the child and the child's families as much as you can. You would want to give as much reassurance to the child and their family. You would want to have good communication with the family to be able to keep them updated and informed about the child.

Sometimes children find being separated from their parents difficult, even just to go to school. For example, when they are younger and getting dropped off some children find that extremely hard because of separation anxieties. Therefore, the communication between the parent/guardian and the teacher is especially important. They would need to put something into place to distract the child once they have been dropped off for an example an activity to keep them busy, so their mind is busy and focusing on something else. The parent/guardian and the teacher would have to keep their communication on-going to make sure that the child feels cared for and feels as safe as possible. All adults involved should have the best interests of the child at heart, and a clear safe-guarding policy should be adhered to.

*Child Protection is part of safeguarding process, protecting individual children identified as suffering or likely to suffer significant harm. This*

*includes the child protection procedures which detail how to respond to concerns about a child. (No name found, 2016)*

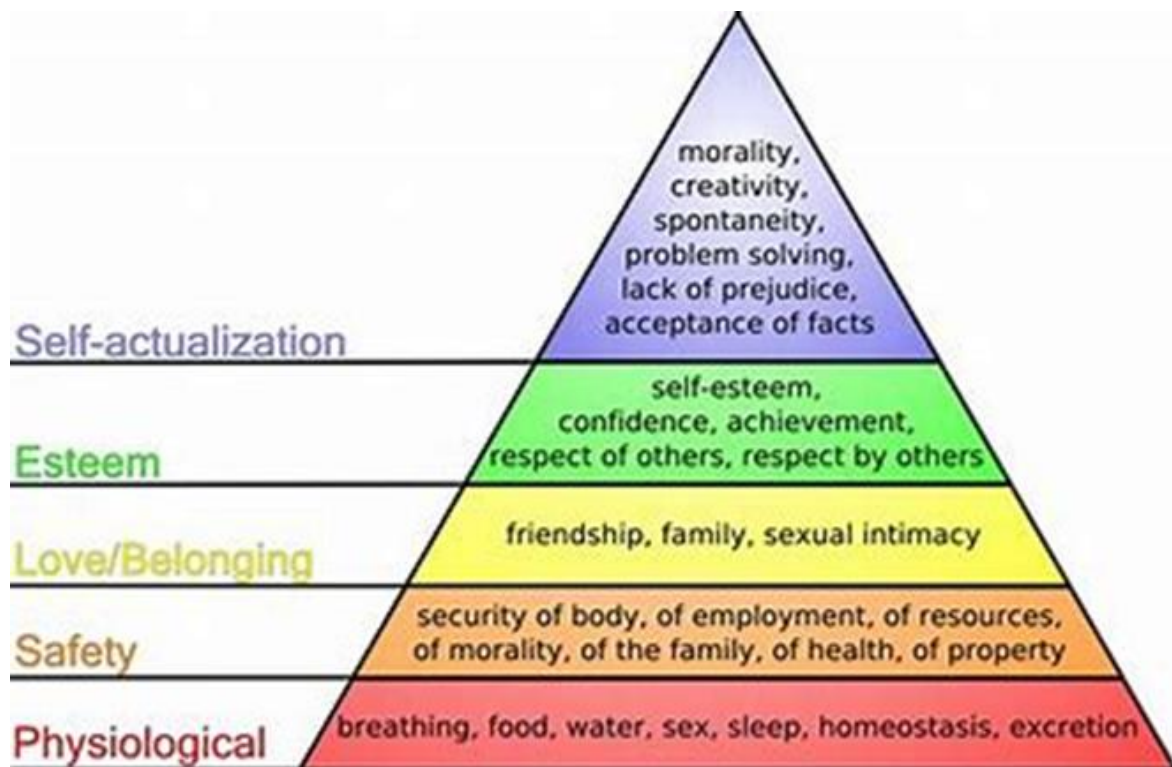
## **The needs of the child:**

All children should come from a safe loving house; however, some children are treated differently to others. There can be some extreme cases. Every household is different, but no child should feel or be excluded from any of the below, for example their ethnicity, their religion, their culture, or their gender. Every child has different needs. For example, if a child has a disability, they will need more care from their family and from within school.

*Transitions happen when your child must stop doing one activity and start doing something else. Examples of transitions include:*

- *getting ready to leave the house*
- *putting away toys before bedtime*
- *turning off the television or computer*
- *getting out of the bath.*

*Your child probably needs to make transitions many times a day. But transitions can be hard, especially if your child is happy with what she is doing and does not want to stop. (No name found, 2018)*



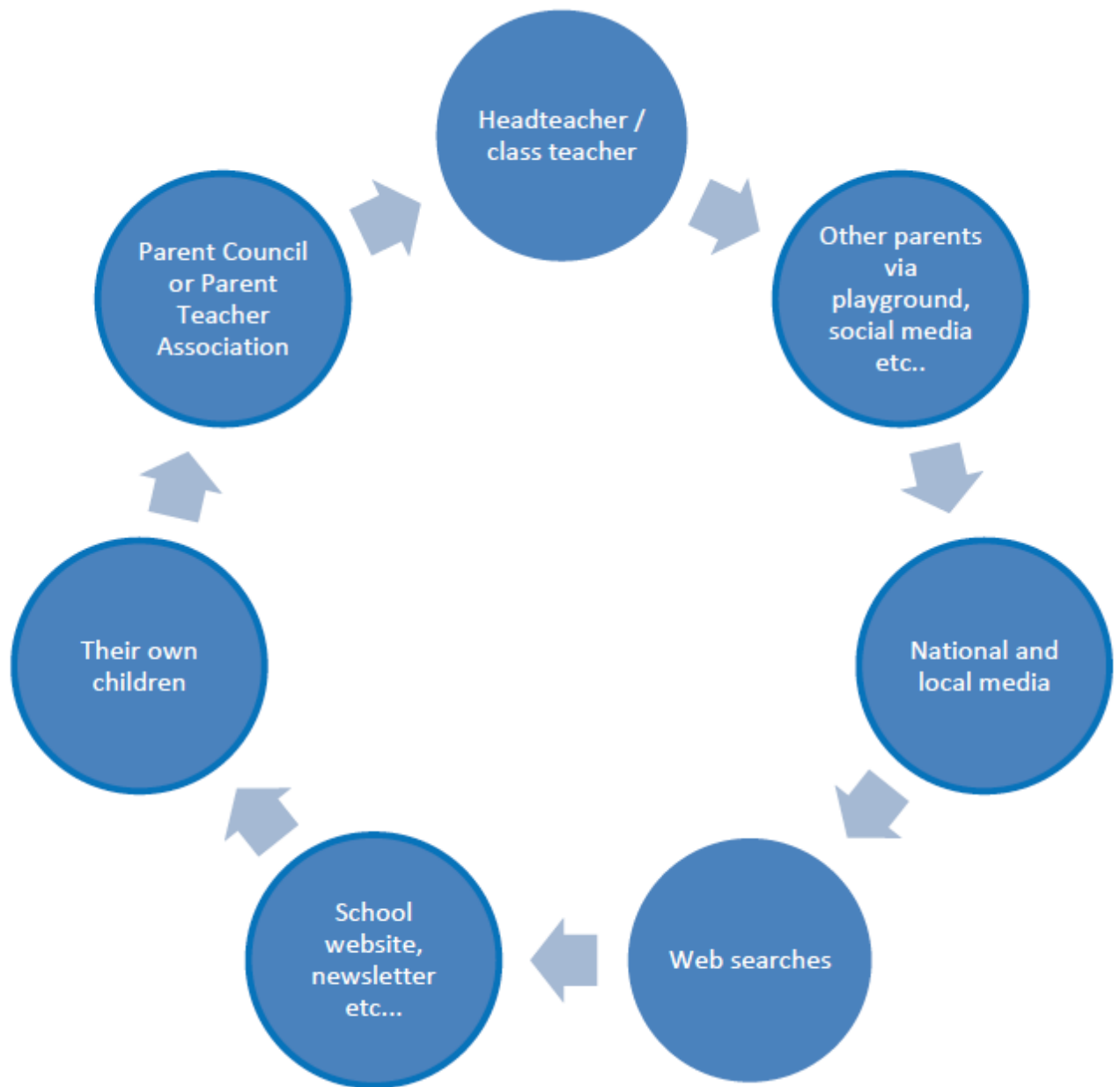
(Maslow's Hierarchy, 1943)

Sometimes children have carers, for when parents/guardians go to work for them to be looked after. The communication between the carer and the parent/guardian is an especially important one. They need to put the child first in every situation. The change between from this and then the child starting school is a big transition. Some children will find this difficult. Therefore, the parent/guardian and the teacher need to talk to each other if the child is finding it difficult and put distractions in place so that the child will find it less difficult. The child needs to feel secure and safe; the child needs to be reminded that they are okay.

*Practitioners need to develop policies and procedures to ensure that they support children to make smooth and successful transitions. Evaluate communication and correspondence with new parents, ensuring information is clear and welcoming. Hold story times or drop-in sessions so new families can get to know the provision before their child starts. Encourage children to bring a familiar object from*

*home, such as a teddy or blanket. Have a planned review or parents' evening to assess how the child is settling in. Review how each child is settling in on a daily basis with parents/key worker and use a settling-in diary. (No name found, 2019).*

## **Partnerships:**



*The transition from an early year setting to a school setting is a much-researched area of early years practice. One aspect of this transition, however, appears to be undervalued – how parent partnerships can support positive transitions for children. Transitions do not always have to be a challenge; they can be fun, exciting and provide a pleasurable experience if supported appropriately. (Thomas, 2019)*

As a keyworker you should always make sure that the child's families are involved and kept up to date with how the child's transition is going on. By keeping up to date with their parents or carers then they can help and take care of the child as well and support the child as much as they need to. For example, if you are the teacher and see some problems with the child you should let their parents or carers know so they can help. The link between the teacher and the parent/guardian is an especially important link, whereas the link between a dentist and a parent is not as important.

*Daily chats are vital way of communicating to build these strong, trusting relationships as well as sharing of resources, events, and information sessions. Communications with the parents need to be flexible and you need to be mindful of adapting to different situations where English is an additional language, or the parent may have a specific learning need. (Pacey, 2018).*

Methods of communication would need to be put into place. As an example, the teacher would require the parent/guardian's contact details as well as the parent/guardian needing the teacher's. Also, emergency contact details are needed, just in case. Therefore, everyone will be up to date with how the child is getting on, and they can help each other for the best outcome of the child. All policies need to be made clear prior to the transition so that everyone knows where they stand and know what they need to do.

Partnerships with social services should be adhered to all with the best interest of the child at heart in clear safe-guarding guidelines.

## **Interventions:**

The definition of intervention:

*the action of becoming intentionally involved in a difficult situation, in order to improve it or prevent it from getting worse (Cambridge Dictionary, no date found).*

There should be a clear guidance as to when intervention is needed and what that intervention should be.

*Early intervention can take different forms, from home visiting programmes to support vulnerable parents, to school-based programmes to improve children's social and emotional skills, to mentoring schemes for young people who are vulnerable to involvement in crime. While some have argued that early intervention may have its strongest impact when offered during the first few years of life, the best evidence shows that effective interventions can improve children's life chances at any point during childhood and adolescence. (No name, no date)*

Early Years intervention workers are specific key workers to help with any identified problems.

*Early intervention means identifying and providing effective early support to children and young people who are at risk of poor outcomes. Effective early intervention works to prevent problems occurring, or to tackle them head-on when they do before problems get worse. (No name, no date).*

Safeguarding standards are in clear place and usage in any formal school setting and there are specific things that may ring alarm bells:

- It may be the child is able to verbalise something that raises attention: some children will be unaware that what they think is 'normal' is not normal behaviour.

- It could be marks/bruises inconsistent with explanations. It could be a distinct change in their behaviour.

It is not always that the place of education that needs to be aware of changes: parents/guardians may notice something at home that indicates a problem at school that needs following up, for example, if the child starts wetting bed for no other clear reason, there could be bullying taking place, or a potential staffing issue. Therefore, communication is key, yet again.

It could be that intervention is needed on a medical basis and therefore key staff should be made aware of the child's medical history. This would then allow a teacher or doctor to be more fully aware of the picture and the child's health. When children go to school medical forms must be filled in so that the school/school nurse is aware of issues. It must be maintained in case the circumstances change.

*Adverse experiences in childhood, such as abuse, neglect or difficult household situations, are associated with an increased risk of health and social problems in later life, with the prevalence of a range of these problems increasing with the number of adverse experiences suffered. (No name, no date)*

*Research into adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) has usefully raised awareness of the importance of early years experiences on child development, and of the potential consequences associated with childhood adversity or trauma. The ACE framework helps to provide a common language for early years practitioners working in different sectors. However, the simplicity of this framework and the non-deterministic impact of ACEs mean that it should not be used to guide the support offered to specific individuals. (No name, no date).*

## **Proposed outcomes:**

Every child develops at different stages.

All children have different skills and abilities in life therefore they adapt differently. The role of the adult should be closely tailored to meet the needs of the child. No two children are the same.

Therefore, the adult must adapt their strategies accordingly and change them as the child changes.

Everything should have the child reaching their maximum potential in a happy, caring environment as their ultimate goal.

*These transitions need to be carefully planned, as if they are not, they can be a very confusing time, causing anxiety and preventing children from engaging quickly and fully in the learning opportunities on offer. Transitions should therefore be the highest priority for schools and settings, planned with individual needs in mind, building confidence and resilience through gradual change, so there are bridges to cross and not hurdles to jump over. (No name, 2017)*

Having read about things that can happen to children and how it can affect them long term, I have found that anything that can intervene to change the course of a child's life for the better to be so important. It is critical, however, that any decisions made, or conclusions arrived at, are evidence based and with the child's best interest at heart.

The child should appear happy and content from the result of the transition. The parent/guardian should also be content with the transition. The parent/guardian should also be confident with the care which is being provided. There should be clear safeguarding in place to identify any potential problems. Good communication should be in place as a matter of course, not just for emergencies.

Clear intervention policies should be in place and they should be followed properly.

**In conclusion, everything that is done should be in the best interest of the child to get the best transition it possibly can safely and correct.**

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Picture

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