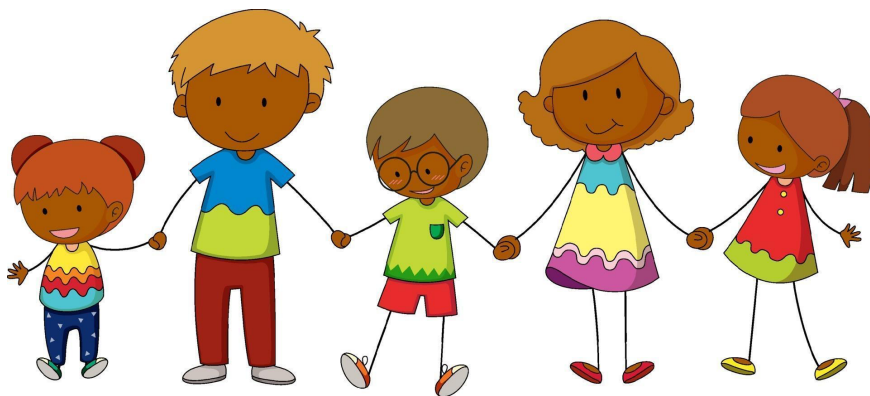


A handbook to assist Early years practitioners through transitions



(Source: Vecteezy (No date))

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Introduction:

Aim:

This handbook is specifically designed to enable practitioners to assist both babies and young children who are beginning their first transition into a childcare setting. Throughout the handbook there will be information on what transitions are, the role of the adult, how to help ensure that the transition period is positive and also highlight some of the main theories that support transitions within an early years setting.

What is a transition?

Early Years matters (2021) states that transitions are a big event in every child's life and therefore have an effect on their development. Although they are exciting times that provide new opportunities and growth for children they also come with uncertainty as the surroundings and routines are different also at the beginning the faces within the setting are unfamiliar. They also describe transitions as a journey rather than a singular event. It states that by parents and practitioners working together through the transition period they can ensure the best outcomes for children and therefore have positive effects on their development. Early years matters put an emphasis on ensuring that transitions are carried out correctly and in a positive way. According to Dunlop and Fabian (2007) transitions are as such a sense of leaving ones comfort zone and entering the unknown. For many children when they are at home surrounded by familiar faces, they are confident and feel safe. Entering the unknown such as a new setting with unfamiliar faces can be daunting for most children. By practitioners working together with parents they can ensure the transition is a positive one that can also be exciting.

The Role of the Adult:

Positive transitions into a childcare setting are often heavily dependent on building good relationships between children, parents and practitioners.

Early education (2019) states that for many babies and young children that are beginning their transition into a nursey setting it is often the first time that they are away from their primary care giver for a substantial amount of time therefore the role of the adult is key to ensuring that children create the positive attachments in order for them to feel safe, secure and content in order for then to begin to explore and learn to aid their development.

Key worker

Within the setting a child would be allocated a key worker this would be the person who the main care giver hands the child over to in order for them to care for and ensure that the child's needs are met whilst within the setting. The key worker would be an allocated practitioner that has been given the responsibility to ensure that the child's individual needs are met whilst in the setting and the person that works with the main care giver to share any information on the child. The information shared could include what the child has done within the setting during their day, any concerns or information on their learning and development. The key worker would be working to get to know the individual child their likes and dislikes and routines to best help implement them within the setting to ensure that the transition period goes as well as possible for all involved (PACEY, 2021).

Lindon (2012) states that attachment is a critical part of the healthy development in young children. Attachment is when two people create a bond of affection which feels secure and committed. It is through the theory of attachment that the key worker was introduced into settings in order for children to create secure attachments to their care giver in order for them to feel safe and secure whilst in the setting.

Boyd and Bee (2013) discuss Bowlby's attachment theory as being a bond within a relationship in which the child feels safe, secure and comfortable. Within the attachment the baby or young child would use their adult as a secure base where they know their needs will be met and they are provided with the security in which they are able to go off and explore so long as their attachment figure is near. Through a baby or young child experiencing positive transitions into a new setting and creating a secure attachment to their key worker they will then feel safe and secure and would be able to explore their environment and experience new opportunities which would have a positive effect on their development.

Parents

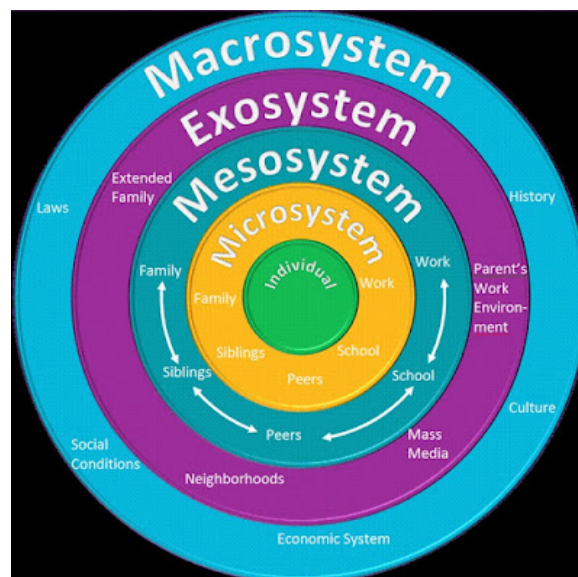
During a child's transition into a new setting the parent's role is very important. Transitions can also be daunting for a parent, leaving their child in the caring hands of a practitioner within a setting can be difficult. As a practitioner it is important to build up trusting relationships with parents to ensure that they also have a positive experience during transitions. By practitioners working with parents and creating a trusting relationship the parent will then feel more comfortable leaving the child in your care. A good relationship will also then make the sharing of information on a child easier. Parents know their child best and will be able to inform the practitioner on the child's like and dislikes, their routines or perhaps any strategies they can put into place to best help the child settle into the setting. By working together, we can also ensure that there is a continuity of care for the child.

Brooker (2008) explains the importance of effective communication between a setting that a child attends and their home. Through effective communication the parent and key worker can ensure that the child's experiences of the setting are positive and therefore they receive the best outcomes.

According to Bronfenbrenner's theory in order to successfully support children during the transition period not only does a practitioner need to get to know them and their parents but they also need an understanding of the outer circles around the child in order to get to know their dynamic and provide the best support. During his study of

human development Bronfenbrenner looked at factors that had a direct effect on the child such as the environment and the system of relationships within it.

Bronfenbrenner developed the Ecological Systems theory; within this theory he places a great emphasis on the balance between nature and nurture. His theory based the child within the centre then surrounded the child with circles with each circle filled with a variety of different factors that all influence the child.



(source: Susan Marie 2017)

The above image gives a visual understanding of the Ecological theory.

Both Bates (2019) and Aubrey and Riley (2019) explain each of the sections:

Microsystem: This first system is made up of individuals closest to the child that have a direct influence on them, for example immediate family and friends. Within this circle the child spends most of their time and it is where they have built up positive attachments and long-term relationships therefore they feel happy and safe and this in turn has a lasting effect on the child's development.

Mesosystem: Within this system the wider surroundings are considered for example their extended family, education and community. This circle also has a big influence on the child's development although not as strongly as the Microsystem.

Exosystem: This system consists of people and an environment that the child is not directly a part of but still has an effect on their development. Bronfenbrenner suggests that these could include the neighbourhood, media, politics or the government.

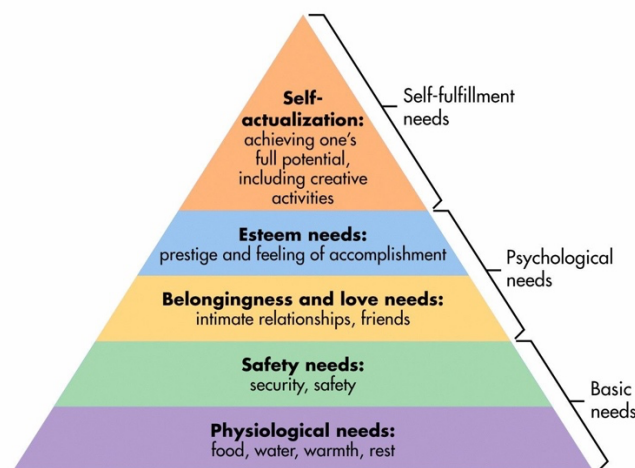
Macrosystem: This system is even broader than the others and consists of the outer layer of the child's environment. Bronfenbrenner states that this layer is different to all the others. The macrosystem consists of laws, values customs and cultures. These do not have a direct impact on the child but they influence interactions within the other systems.

Communication:

Communication is a big part of our job role as practitioners working within the early years. Being able to communicate effectively with other agencies is key to supporting individual children's development. Being able to communicate effectively with other professionals/ settings that a child is attending is very important in supporting development. By being able to communicate with other practitioners, sharing expertise and information and working together we can help create a holistic view of the child. The sharing of information and working together would help us to best support the child's individual needs and help aid their continual development (Trodd, 2012). Working in partnership with other agencies will benefit a child's transition as a practitioner would be able to apply any knowledge shared to the transition period to best support the child and their needs.

The needs of the child

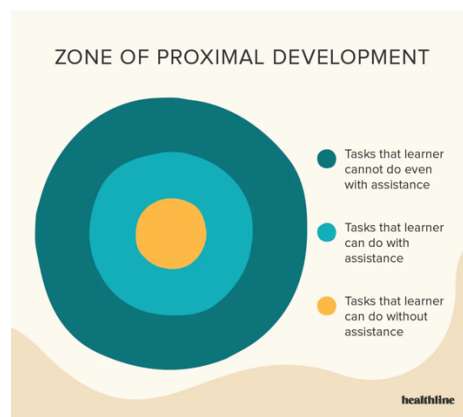
During the transition period it is key to ensure that we as practitioners are able to meet the needs of each individual child. Scharer (2018) states that positive transitions into a childcare setting are often heavily reliant on the building of relationships between practitioners and the children. Practitioners and a child can begin to form positive attachments when a child feels that the practitioner is perceptive of their signals and therefore responds appropriately to them and meets their needs. By children building these positive relationships/ attachments as soon as possible they will feel more settled within the setting and will therefore begin to explore, learn and develop.



(Source: Simply Psychology (2020))

Maslow's Hierarchy of needs is a model that is created based on five levels of needs from the most basic needs of food and sleep up to the highest level of self-fulfilment needs. As practitioners within the early years we aim to aid children in order for them to work their way up to reach the top level. When doing so it is key for us to understand that all children are individual and therefore not all their needs will be the same and they will reach the different levels in their own time. Pichere (2015)

discusses Maslow's theory and states that in order to reach the next level one must fulfil the one before it. This theory has a clear link to transitions as in order for children to learn, develop and form positive relationships within the setting they first need to feel content, safe and secure. The aim during the transition period is for children to feel safe and secure with their key worker in order for them to be comfortable to go on and reach the next level and therefore reach their full potential. Positive transitions can help children reach the next levels faster which will also result in improvements in their development.



(Source: Healthline, 2020)

Vygotsky created the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) theory. Within this theory Vygotsky states that children's knowledge and development is constructed through social interaction with teachers, parents and peers. Key workers would be able to recognise a task or activity that a child has an interest in and recognise what the child can already achieve and then through shared thinking and support the child would then be able to reach the next level (Aubrey and Riley, 2019). By key workers interacting and playing with children in the setting they will be able to extend their play and learning. This also helps create a bond between both the child and key worker whilst the child is calm and engaged. Through providing the child with a supportive environment through transitions they are enabling the child to thrive.

Play is a large part of children's learning and development and can also have a positive effect on a child's transition. Moyles (2010) emphasises the importance of play being initiated and led by the child, this play is creative and open ended. The adult's role is to ensure that there are resources available to the child to extend their play and therefore further their development. The UNCRC recognise the importance of play Article 31 states that all children have the right to play and activities that are age appropriate for them and are able to participate freely (UNICEF).

Interventions

Before a child begins at a setting there would be many different interventions in place in order to assist them throughout the transition period. Different interventions apply depending on the type of setting, each setting will have their own settling in policy which they follow. Each of these are aimed to help practitioners and children create positive relationships and for the child to feel safe and secure.

Home Visits

Before a child starts in a setting they are often offered a home visit. Within a nursery setting the settings manager and child's keyworker may visit the child for the first time in their home environment. Pacey (no date) states that there are many benefits to this visit. By carrying out a home visit the key worker is able to get to know the child whilst playing with them within an environment that they feel safe and comfortable in. They are able to engage with the child and get to know their likes and dislikes in order to recreate those within the setting. It is also beneficial as the settings manager along with the key worker would be able to speak to the parents in a relaxed way. They would be able to complete a consent form and also discuss policies and procedures that the setting has.

Settling in sessions

Brooker (2008) suggests that at the beginning of a transition period for a young child into a nursery setting they could feel distressed. Although over a period of time through settling in sessions they will begin to become more familiar with their new environment and begin to form attachments to their key worker within the setting. Nursery settings offer many different settling in sessions throughout the transition period. Brooker (2008) puts a great emphasis on the importance of creating links within the setting which can be strengthened. This can be implemented by the parent

spending time in the setting during the beginning of the transitioning period this provides reassurance for the child. The parent then would slowly remove themselves from the setting as the child becomes more familiar and they would attend a few sessions for half an hour- an hour intervals while they settle. Each child is individual therefore the amount of settling in sessions needed in order for them to settle within the setting would vary from child to child.

Welcome pack/ All about me

In many settings before a child begins they will send out a welcome pack that may also contain an all about me booklet, this may be during the home visit or in the post. Within the welcome pack they may include information about the setting and the general routines- meal times, nappy changing or outdoor activity times. They may also include an image of the child's key worker which can be shown to the child and with positive explanations could help the child recognise their key worker and begin to create the bond from the beginning of them creating the association between the setting and key worker.

The all about me booklet would be for parents to complete with information on the child that the key worker could learn in order for them to get to know the child better. For example all about their family, favourite toys or activities and foods they enjoy. Through using the all about me booklet practitioners would then be able to plan activities that the child would enjoy/ is familiar with during the settling in/ transition period in accordance to their likes and dislikes. This would then help the child feel more comfortable within the setting



(Source: Twinkl (no date))

Proposed outcomes

The aim during the transition period is that all children have a positive experience throughout the settling in period and for them to feel safe and secure whilst creating positive attachments to key workers within the setting. Although at the beginning some children will find the transition distressing most will be settled and content within a few short weeks (Brooker, 2008). Each child will settle at their own pace and in their own time, by understanding that all children are individual and with the key worker getting to know each of the children and creating individual plans the children would feel supported and hopefully settle quicker in order for them to begin to feel comfortable and content in order for them to explore and develop within the new environment.

A practitioner is able to recognise when a transition period has been successful when a child is happy, engaged and feels confident enough to be able to explore and learn within the setting without the need of the key worker to be at their side the whole time but instead within the area.



(Source: Graphicriver 2021)

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