Handbook: Practitioners Guide to Transition

Welcoming new Children into Nursery

Contents

1. Introduction to transitions
2. Role of the adult
3. Needs of the child
4. Partnerships
5. Interventions
6. Proposed outcomes
7. Reference list

Introduction:

This handbook has been written to provide practitioners with vital information regarding transition within the early years.
The handbook will explain:

- what is meant by the term 'transition' and the process
- the role of the practitioner to understand what the child needs
- the needs of the child during transition
- working in partnership with parents and carers, and other agencies
- interventions for practitioners to use to ensure transitions run smoothly
- proposed outcomes of smooth transitions

The focus of this handbook is supporting transition from home to Nursery and how practitioners can support children and their parents/carers during the child's transition and settling in period. The aim is to ensure that a child's introduction to Nursery is stress free as possible for both the child and their parent/carer.
The transition into Nursery begins before a child's first day until they are fully settled in, and then throughout the different rooms of the Nursery, and until they start school.

Each child is different, and it all depends on the individual child as to how long it may take for the child to settle in.

A dedication to building strong communication links among all professionals involved is necessary for smooth transitions within the early years. It is critical that all professionals concerned adopt a common strategy in order to foster continuity for all children going through transition.

What is Transition?

Transition is a change from one key stage to another, whether it be the environment or a situation.
In addition to serving as an effective integrative framework for study, transitions are now acknowledged as being essential to young children's experiences and wellbeing (Vogler, Crivello, and Woodhead, 2008)

The three primary types of transition are as follows:

• Horizontal - The numerous transitions that take place during the day, from inside to outside, from playtime to dinner.
• Vertical - The significant changes that affect families and may involve social and cultural adjustment to new circumstances, schedules, and expectations, such as when a child transitions from home to setting or from setting to primary school
• Multiple - In any given day or week, some children may transition more than twice or three times. For instance, there may be many transitions from home to breakfast club, nursery to breakfast club, nursery to grandparents, and grandparents back home.

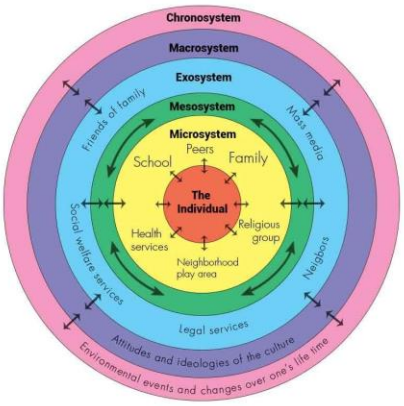
These events have a significant effect on a child's development. Transitions can be exciting for children and their families; however they can also be overwhelming as the environment is new, routines are different, and children are introduced to and left with new people.
It is important that practitioners ensure that transitions are carried out correctly and the process should be seen as opposed to an event that involves parents, practitioners, and children (Early Years Matters, 2022).

Children can be especially at-risk during times of change. Moving a child from home where they feel 'known', safe and secure to a setting where they feel 'unknown' and insecure might cause concerns about getting their needs and entitlements met. While some children are resilient enough to handle change, others are more susceptible to unpredictability (Birth to 5 Matters, 2021)
It is imperative that practitioners are aware of their role in supporting and easing a child's transition experience and development. This handbook is a useful tool to support practitioners.

The Role of the Adult:

In the very early years of a child's life, they will form a strong bond with their primary carer, which is usually the mother or father. This is known as attachment. When a child starts Nursery, they will need to form new bonds with the practitioners caring for them. This would be a child's secondary attachment.
Having healthy attachments is essential for a child's development (Dowling, 2014).

Bronfenbrenner's (1977) ecological theory examines how a child develops in connection to the network of relationships that make up their environment. According to Bronfenbrenner's hypothesis, there are many 'layers' of the environment that have an impact on a child's development.
He named these layers the microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, macrosystem and the chronosystem.



Microsystem is the child's immediate environment where they spend most of their time and build attachments and relationships which are long lasting. A child will feel, confident, safe and secure.
Mesosystem is a system of microsystems which includes effective communication between a child's parents and the setting.
This also includes settings, school, and extended family, friends and community.
Exosystem includes formal and informal social structures that don't directly concern the child but have an indirect impact on one of the microsystems because they have an impact on that microsystem, such as media, neighbours and parents' workplace.
Macrosystem are the cultural factors including financial class, income, poverty, and ethnicity which can influence a child's development.
Chronosystem is made up of all environmental changes that take place over the course of a lifetime and have an impact on development, such as significant life transitions and historical events.
Because of the interconnected nature of the five systems, the impact of one system on a child's development depends on how it interacts with the others.

Nutbrown (2012) believes that practitioners must give children the warmth and love they require as part of their emotional development in order to promote children's wellbeing.

Before a child starts their journey in Nursery, practitioners allow children and their families to become as familiar as possible with the setting, the room they will be based in and who they will be forming relationships with. The Nursery ensures that staff are assigned to a particular base room to ensure continuity for the children.
Bowlby (1969) states that children that have a strong attachment relationship with secondary attachment figures are those who are well-known to their primary attachment figure.
Once a place has been offered for a child, the parents/carers are invited into the Nursery for a two-hour visit for the child and parent/carer to familiarise the child with the Nursery staff within their base room, the environment, and the other children. During this visit staff need to be open and welcoming and give the child an opportunity to take part and engage in a range of activities. Do not bombard children with activities and resources while they are settling in. Give them time to watch activities before inviting them to participate (Welsh Government Flying Start, 2017). Parents/cares may be asked to remain to help their child settle.

It is imperative that during the first meeting parents are open and honest regarding the information they pass on about their child. They are the best experts on their children. It is imperative that knowledge of each child be valued, sought after, and recognised by practitioners in order to properly understand what each unique child is interested in, capable of, or struggles with (Smidt, 2015).
This is especially important if a child has special needs as practitioners need information about their condition (including crucial reports from professional agencies) and parental guidance on strategies that are effective with their child.
According to Welsh Gov (2017), the transition process should be inclusive, and requirements of the child and family should be planned for, taking into account any additional needs.

For example, if a child is hearing impaired practitioners will need to discuss with the parents what the child is able to do and adapt the environment and activities accordingly. Ensure that the child is encouraged to participate in activities and ensure that the child always feels included.

For staff to be able to assist in a child's transition, they need to remain up to date with their knowledge on child development and theories.
A fundamental component of a Froebelian approach is early childhood educators who take an active role in their own development and value ethical and reflective behaviour. Froebelian educators help and guide. They study children closely, provide them meaningful real-life experiences, and encourage and extend their interests through 'freedom with guidance' (Froebel Trust, no date).

Needs of the Child:

In order to meet a child's needs, it is important to see all children as individuals. Practitioners need to work closely with the children in their care, spend time with them to learn about their likes and dislikes, interests and their routines and specific requirements. Bowlby talks of the 'fear of strangers', and it is our role as practitioners to ensure that we make connections and form a relationship with the children to ensure they feel secure and safe when dropped to Nursery by their parents.

Lindon (2012) believes that practitioners need to be knowledgeable of varied theories based around child development. These theories can then be implemented into practice and assist practitioners to give the best quality of care to children to meet their needs and support each child's development.

Maslow's hierarchy of needs is a psychological theory of motivation that includes a five-tier model of human needs. This concept is sometimes shown as tiers within a pyramid.

The needs are physiological (food, clothes, warmth), safety (security, social stability), love and belonging needs (friendship), esteem, and self-actualization, going up the hierarchy in order. Prior to addressing needs higher up in the hierarchy, individuals must attend to the basic needs lower down.

Maslow's (1962) theory of the hierarchy of needs has had a significant impact on classroom management and teaching in schools. Maslow (1970a) takes a holistic approach to education and learning rather than reducing behaviour to a reaction to the environment.
To ensure that all children have the chance to meet their physiological and psychological needs before being expected to be motivated to learn and advance, teachers and schools should alter their approach and put support in place (TES, 2019). In addition to meeting children's physical and safety needs as outlined by Maslow, it is crucial in accordance with attachment theory that children have a secure relationship with the adults who are responsible for caring for and educating them.

This would be the same concept for a child starting Nursery. A child who is hungry and tired will have trouble concentrating which will affect their learning and development. To advance and realise their full potential, children need to feel welcomed and comfortable on an emotional, physical, and social level in the Nursery.

Staff spend time getting to know children and their families during the initial two-hour visit which is informal. During this visit staff will complete a child information form which lists everything the child needs for their routine during their time in Nursery. This includes:

- Comforters
- Sleep routine
- Nappy changing arrangement
- Bottle feeding/drink arrangement
- Food arrangements
- Allergies
- Dietary requirements
- Cultural beliefs

This is to ensure that staff are aware of the child's basic needs to ensure they are met.
The visit also allows parents to share further information regarding their child, such as their likes and dislikes, their development and any difficulties they may be experiencing.

Article 12 of the United Nations Conventions of the rights of a child (UNICEF 2019) states that children should have their voice heard and their feelings to be taken into consideration. This helps build a child's self-esteem.
If a parents shares that their child likes something or shows an interest in something in the room on their visit, a practitioner could play with that child and engage with them at the child's level to make themselves familiar.

Welsh Government (2016) states that practitioners should ensure the learning environment meets the specific needs of each child and allows them to explore and apply their knowledge in practical ways.

Partnerships:

It is essential to collaborate with parents and outside organisations, especially when implementing early intervention programmes. Effective early intervention planning and approaches depend on a good stable connection between parents and caregivers (Tickell 2011).

Building parent partnerships is a key component of the early years foundation stage's (EYFS) statutory framework and development matters document. Strong parent-child relationships are useful for a child's growth on many levels, including their emotional development.

Parents are provided with a 'Parents as Partners Policy' which states that the Nursery practitioners will work with parents as partners in providing quality care for their children. It is the policy of the Nursery to ensure that parents/carers have the opportunity to actively participate as partners in the delivery of quality childcare to their children.

The Nursery aims to achieve this by:

- Ensuring that parents/carers have the opportunity to review their children's progress on a regular basis with practitioners.
- Ensuring that parents/carers are informed about changes to the policies, procedures and guidelines of the Nursery.
- Offering parents/carers the opportunity to participate in curriculum, festivals and all Nursery events.
- Ensuring that parents/carers can meet with practitioners and other parents/carers to discuss relevant issues and concerns.

As an individual, every child has unique requirements. Some of these requirements can only be met by people with the appropriate training, but others can be met by anybody with the necessary knowledge and commitment. It is vital to understand the capabilities of a range of organisations and experts. For the benefit of children and their families, settings must successfully collaborate with them.

The practitioner is to know when and how to refer children to specialists for help. They also interact and collaborate with professionals and outside organisations including physiotherapists, speech and language therapists, social workers, health visitors, and coordinators for additional learning needs (ALNCo). To ensure that children are given the best opportunity available, settings will need to collaborate with both these experts and parents/carers. External assistance is crucial, especially if a child has developmental issues or is developing slowly (WJEC 2019).
If a practitioner feels that a child may need some further support from an outside agency, this must be discussed with the Nursery manager to ensure the correct steps are taken to meet the needs of that child.

Interventions:

When introducing a child and their family into Nursery there are a range of interventions to ensure a smooth and positive transition.

The Nursery staff follow a Settling In and Transition Policy which has been developed to ensure that every child's introduction to the setting is as stress free as possible for both the child and the parents/carers.
Each child is unique, and it all depends on the individual child as to how long it may take for the child to settle. The requirements of each child and family must be taken into account in all elements of the transition process and supported in a flexible and compassionate manner (Welsh Government, 2017).

Communication in early years is key. According to Dyer (2018), collaboration with parents should be the objective. In general, discussions with parents are positive and supportive, with a focus on providing information about their child. The primary educators of their children, as well as significant partners in supporting their growth and learning, are the parents.
Verbal handovers are given at the end of a child's session and a daily diary is completed to ensure all information of the child's day is accurately recorded and passed on to the parents.
Research demonstrates that the most crucial aspect in assisting some children to succeed regardless of background is including parents and caregivers in their children's development

When child first starts in the Nursery parents are encouraged to bring any comforter from home. This is something that Froebel refers to as a 'transition object'. According to Froebel, children find it soothing to routinely transfer a particular object between their house and nursery since it can act as a bridge between the two locations and thus improve their level of comfort while attending nursery.

Children should be seen as participating actively in the transitions. Children should be observed, and staff members should ask them about any worries they may have. The information that practitioners need to care for children is provided via observations, which assist professional practice and help with providing exactly what a child needs and how to facilitate this during transition and the settling in period.
During these observations practitioners are also able to see where a child is developmentally and how they can support them to further develop.

Developmental milestones (HSE, 2018)

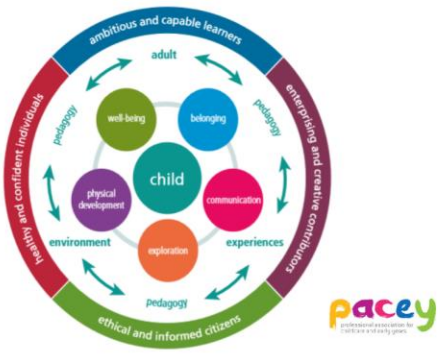
- Physical – Crawling, walking
- Communication – talking, listening
- Fine and gross motor skills
- Problem solving skills

This connects to Vygotsky's model of the zone of proximal development, which claims that a child can be guided by an adult to communicate and learn within their current understanding.

Since each child is unique, they will all have various needs. Some of these demands can only be met by skilled experts, but others can be met by anybody with adequate knowledge and commitment. It's crucial to understand what different businesses and experts can provide. For the benefit of children and their families, settings will need to collaborate with them successfully.

Proposed Outcomes:

By following this handbook practitioners will have the tools necessary to provide smooth and stress-free transitions for children and their parents/carers. Children and parents will find comfort coming into a welcoming environment. Children will be happy and settled, feel valued, safe and secure, and able to build up relationships with multiple caregivers.
Parents will feel involved and confident in discussing their child and their development, and will clearly understand the routines, care and education provided for their child.



The above image has been introduced within the New Curriculum which incorporates four main purposes:

- ambitious, capable learners, ready to learn throughout their lives
- enterprising, creative contributors, ready to play a full part in life and work
- ethical, informed citizens of Wales and the world
- healthy, confident individuals, ready to lead fulfilling lives as valued members of society

(WG, 2020)

The Nursery will endeavour to implement the New Curriculum in order for the child to gain engaging experiences and learn through play both indoors and outdoors, to enhance their well-being, boost their self-esteem and resilience.