An Early Years Practitioners Handbook:

A Guide To Transitions

(Source: Cheqdin, 2018)

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Introduction

This handbook is for practitioners working in the pre-school setting with children aged 0-3 who are starting nursery for the first time. Practitioners should use this handbook as a guide to help children have successful transitions that will set them up for a positive experience when facing change and also prepare them for the transition from nursery to school. It should also help to promote effective communication in the setting. Using this handbook as guidance and with good practice a practitioner should be able to effectively communicate and build strong relationships with the child/parents/ guardians. Forming these strong relationships can make the difficult situations such as transitions easier on everyone as everyone can work together to find an outcome that works best for each party especially the child.

This handbook will highlight the importance of following government guidelines and children's rights to support the child's transition and highlight the importance of effective communication. As well as discussing theorists and their theory on supporting children through transitions.

Key points for the practitioners to remember throughout the handbook is considering the child and their family throughout the whole transitional period and ensuring each child is treated as an individual. The welsh government (2017) states that practitioners should consider children and families from different ethnic, cultural and faith groups. The Welsh government (2014) UNCRC supports this in article 14 where it states, "children have the right to think and believe what they want and to practice their religion, as long as they are not stopping other people from enjoying their rights." The Welsh government also suggest that partitioners should also plan ahead and be flexible for any children with specific and additional needs. Which is supported by article 23 by the Welsh Governments UNCRC (2014), which says that "children who have any kind of disability should have special care and support so that they can lead full and independent lives. This highlights the individual and unique child and how as a practitioner it is important to support each individual child and their family.

Transitions

Transition – "The process or a period of changing from one state or condition to another". (Oxford dictionary, 2018). There are 2 different transitions that this handbook is going to explore these are horizontal transitions and vertical transitions. Horizontal transitions are transitions that happen on a daily basis such as leaving school for the day and going home (a movement) or taking a Monday off school because it's an inset day (a change in routine). Vertical transitions are transitions that don't happen regularly and in some cases you only do once such as starting school for the first time or moving to a new house as suggested by Vogler et al. (2008).

Children may experience many transitions during the first 5 years of their lives. These could be starting a pre-school setting for the first time or starting school. All children may react to these transitions differently some children may be confident and thrive during new transitions, but other children may be nervous and need some extra help to adapt to these new transitions. It's important that young children have positive experiences surrounding transitions as embracing change and adapting in new environments is a skill, they will carry into adulthood with them.

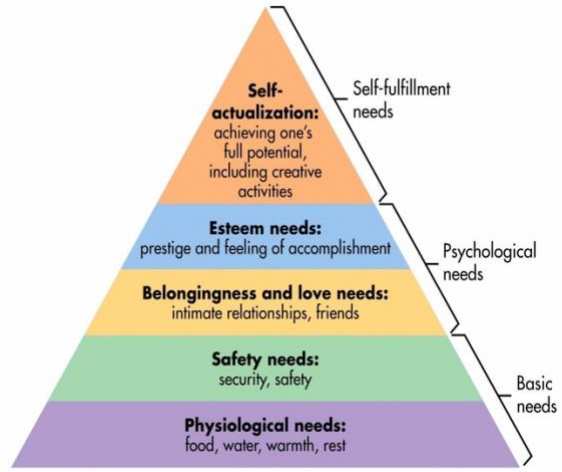
It's important for practitioners to be aware of the factors involved for a child to have a successful transition. Dunlop and Fabian (2006) state that the success of a child's transition into childcare can be a critical factor in the child's future progress and development. When a child enters a childcare for the first time they will be faced with new faces and a new environment this may be overwhelming for a child therefore ensuring that the childcare is safe, welcoming and supportive should be a practitioner's priority for every new child that enters the setting. Shärer (2018) suggests that a child's transition to a childcare may have a widespread impact on the whole family. In addition to help families with this transition effective communication and support between the family and the practitioners may be essential to ensuring a successful transition for everyone.

A child-centred approach may help in providing a successful transition. A theorist who believed heavily in the child-centred approach is Maria Montessori. Aubrey and Riley (2019) states that Maria Montessori's child-centred approach allowed the child to take control of their environment and learning and that the role of the practitioner was to follow the child's lead and encourage and promote their independent learning. A child-centred approach also means making the child the priority when making decisions that affect them. A child-centred approach would need the practitioner and the family of the child to work together as a team to make sure they are making the right decisions for the child and listening to what the child's needs are.

The Needs Of The Child

A practitioner should be aware and understand the need of the child and how to assist in the child's development. Practitioners may be inspired by different child development theorist to help guide their practice to success.

Maslow's Theory

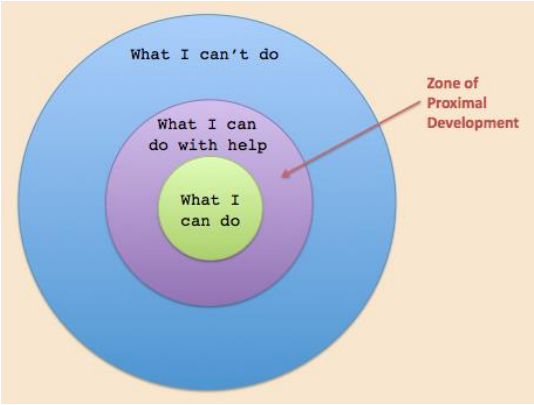


(Source: simplypsychology.org, 2020)

The pyramid of needs is a visual representative of the needs of a human. At the bottom of the pyramid is the basic needs such as food and water and at the top of the pyramid are more fulfilling needs for example self-improvement. An individual can't move up the pyramid until every need has been met. Humans can move up and down the pyramid of needs as well as being stuck on the same stage for long periods of time.

Practitioners can use Malow's pyramid of needs to help understand the needs of the child. If the practitioner is fulfilling the child's basic needs by feeding the child, putting the child down for naps and providing the child with a warm environment then the child may begin to feel safe and secure with the practitioner. Although not all children feel safe and secure at the beginning of transitions therefore the pyramid may have the opposite affect for example due to the child not feeling safe and secure and the child's needs not being met the child may not want to eat, drink or nap. This would then result in the child not experiencing more fulfilling needs like forming relationships. A practitioner should do their utmost to help the child move up the pyramid and meet their full potential.

Vygotsky's Theory Of Cognitive Development



(Source: instructionaldesign.org, 2021)

Vygotsky believed that children developed through socialising with more skilled and experienced members of society, Crowley (2014). Vygotsky's theory believed in the zone of proximal development. This is the area between what an individual can do without help and what an individual can achieve with guidance from a more skilled and experienced member of society as stated by Mcleod (2019).

A practitioner may apply Vygotsky's theory of cognitive development in the setting. In this situation the practitioner is the more skilled and experienced member of society to the chid. Therefore, it is the practitioner's job to use the scaffolding skills to help guide the child to learn and develop. The scaffolding skills requires the practitioner to know the child's abilities and listen to the child's needs. The Practitioner would help the child by giving the child activities to encourage problem solving and then the practitioner would guide the child to success. The aim would be to give the child the confidence to eventually attempt these problem-solving activities on their own, as Aubrey and Riley in [2] (2019) have indicated. Practitioners could use this theory and the scaffolding skill to help children to overcome any fears of transitions.

Play

Play is viewed as important and vital in early years education as stated by Bennett, Wood and Rogers (1997). Play gives children the opportunity to navigate through difficult concepts and play gives children the opportunity to socialise with peers, this skill could benefit a child and help their transition. Practitioners should understand and encourage play in every opportunity.

(Source: babipur, 2021)

Practitioners should ensure that the setting encourages play and gives children the freedom to play. Practitioners could enhance play by inviting children to play with materials such as loose parts these can be either natural or manmade materials. They're open ended therefore children can use their imagination to play with them. Natural world materials such as leaves, shells and sticks can be used in play so children can learn about the world around them. Lastly Practitioners could offer role play materials and dressing up costumes so children can improve their imagination and creativity as well as being able to act out real life scenarios.

Outdoor play is also beneficial in the early years. Allowing children to play outdoors gives them an environment that is open which children view as more accepting and less controlled. Children feel free outside and feel like they can be themselves and it's proven that when children feel this way, they are more likely to achieve more as stated by Bilton (2010).

Overall Partitioners who encourage play will be helping the child through their transition. By allowing the child to feel free to be who they want to be and play how they want to play will show the child that they're in a safe environment.

Attachment Theory

It's important for children to develop healthy and strong relationships with practitioners to ensure they feel safe and secure in their caregiver's absence. Children need to feel safe, secure and supported to be able to learn. Primary attachments represented by practitioners and teachers are important for young children as it encourages academic motivation. Pacey (2016) suggests that building strong and secure attachments with the child will help the child have a smooth transition. Pacey also states that children who form these bonds with their practitioner will more likely enjoy being at the setting a lot more and feel encouraged to do the activities on offer. When a partitioner is forming these relationships it's important to be aware that the child is relying on the partitioner to meet their needs and respond to their cries, consistency is key in developing trust.

(Source: family.co, 2021)

The Role Of The Adult

There are many adults that play a key role in a child's transition. This handbook will explore the many adults and their role in the child's transition.

The Role Of The Parents

The role of the parent is to impart important information to the practitioner, for example the parents should inform the practice of any health issues the child may have. The parents should also work in partnership with the practitioner to ensure the child's best interests are being met. When parents and practitioners have a good relationship, it helps the child to trust the practitioner as they can see that mum and dad trust the practitioner. Good relationships with the practitioner will also help the parents feel more involved in the child's day as they will feel comfortable to ask the practitioner questions about the child's activities and achievements.

The Role Of The Key Practitioner

A practitioner needs to be aware of how important it is to ensure the child's transition is successful. It is the key practitioner's job to make the child feel safe and secure in the new environment and ensure the child's needs are being met. The practitioner should also be working on forming a strong bond with the child.
The Key Practitioner should establish a strong foundation for communication with the child's parents/ family and keeping them up to date with the child throughout the day by messaging home pictures of the child as well as keeping notes on the child's nappy changes, nap time and food consumed throughout the day therefore the practitioner can inform the parents at the end of the day.
Observation is also an important role of the practitioner. Isaacs (2010) suggests that Maria Montessori believed that the role of the practitioner was to observe the child and discover what the child is interested in through observation. Once the practitioner understands the child's interest, they can provide the child with materials that will help the child to develop that interest further.
Practitioners should also be observing the child to see if the child is going through a schema. Schemas are repeated patterns of behaviour that children need to go through to learn and explore their environment. If a child is going through a schema the practitioner should be able to observe and identify which schema the child is going through and offer materials to encourage the schema. An example of a schema is the transporting schema, children who are in the transporting schema may become intent on moving objects from place to place, a child may push many toys around in a pram, or bring the practitioner toys one by one, or they may carry many things around at once. A practitioner could support a child going through this schema

by setting up an activity outside where the child can move sand around in a wheelbarrow or by doing small world play with vehicles such as dumper trucks and transporting building blocks in dumper trucks. By observing the child and supporting the child's schema will strengthen the bond between the child and the practitioner and could help the child have a successful transition.

The Role Of The Manager

The role of the manager is to ensure that all the correct policies and procedures are in place and are being used correctly. Policies and procedures are in place to guide everyone in the practice to promote the best outcomes for everyone including the children, practitioners and the families as stated by Childcare Committee (2021).

Role Modelling

Children look up to parents and practitioners to help shape how they behave. Practitioners should be aware of this and promote positive role modelling. Bandura believed that children learned through observational learning, therefore children would copy the same behaviour that they witnessed from the adult as stated by Aubrey and Riley [3] (2019). Practitioners should be aware of their behaviour and introduce good modelling behaviour to children by watching their tone of voice and not shouting when dealing with conflict, being positive and respecting the child for example remember to say please and thank you to them. Role Modelling can be beneficial for a child going through transitions as if the role model is positive and confident about the transition then it is more likely the child will be positive and confident.

(Source: social-engineer, 2014)

Interventions

A setting should have interventions in place to help a child's transition go smoothly. These interventions may begin before the child's initial start date in the setting.

All About Me Board

An all about me board is an activity the setting gives the child's parents to fill in at home with the child before the child starts the setting. An all about me board gives the parents and the child the opportunity to do an activity together where they can discuss starting nursery and prepare the child for the transition. The parents and child would complete the all about me board together which would have subjects to fill in such as who is in the child's family, has the child got any pets and what's the child's interests. Then the child would bring the all about me board with them on their first day at the setting and it would give the practitioner something to talk about with the child.

(source: Maria Kampen, 2019)

Personalised Materials

The setting may create a name tag for the child with a photo of either their favourite tv character or their favourite animal and place this above the child's coat hanger. This will give the child a sense of belonging when they enter the setting as they have a place which they know is theirs for their bag and coat.

(Source: Quizlet, 2021)

Introduction days

Introduction days are when the child comes to visit the setting for a few hours before their start date. Usually, the child's parents will stay with them during this introduction day as well. This introduction day gives the child the opportunity to familiarize themselves with the setting and meet the practitioner as well. Introduction days help the child feel less overwhelmed as they are already familiar with the setting and the people.

(Source: Clipart, 2016)

Proposed Outcomes

The best proposed outcome for the child, family and practitioner is a successful transition where the child has had a positive experience with change and has developed skills to better prepare them for future transitions they will experience in their life.

A child who has had a successful transition will be settled and confident in their setting and may no longer be crying at drop off. The child should be beginning to develop new friendships and no longer need as much reassurance from the practitioner. The child should also be happy to participate in group craft activities and get involved in group music and song sessions.

The family of the child should be able to identify the success of the transition by communicating with the key practitioner and agreeing that there are no longer any concerns regarding the child's transition. It should also be evident to the parents that their child is happier and more confident at the drop off compared to the beginning of the transition. Parents may even start to begin to see developmental changes in their child for example their child's speech may be improving due to social interaction with peers.

The success of the transition should be evident to the practitioner by the strong bond that is beginning to build between the child and the practitioner. The practitioner should be happy with the child in the child's development since joining the setting and confident in the child to handle future transitions successfully.

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