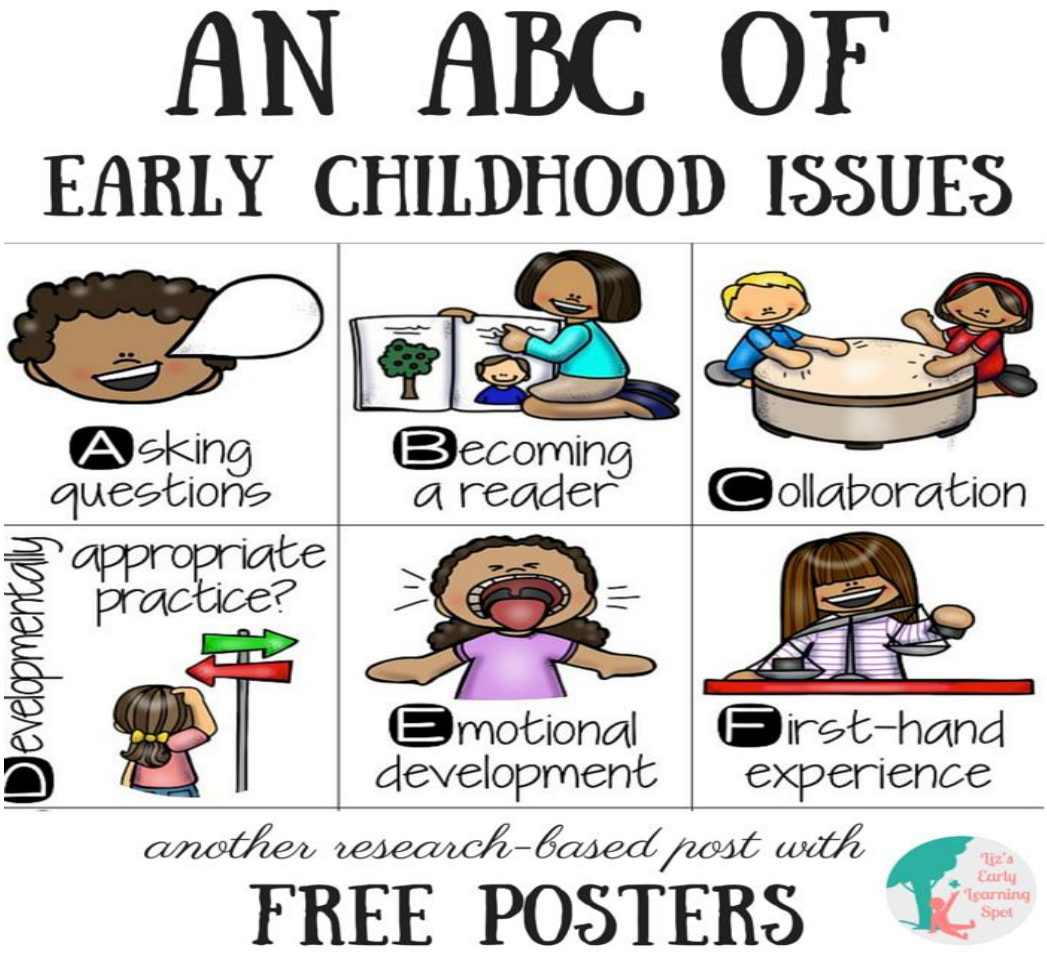
KEYWORKERS HANDBOOK



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TRANSITIONS: THE IMPORTANCE OF EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION FOR YOUNG CHILDREN'S LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT

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INTRODUCTION

This handbook is an educational tool to give information and guidance for the transitioning journey of any child entering an early year's setting. It will be focused on a child's transition from their home setting to a nursery setting.

This handbook can be made available to parent's, guardians, and agencies, and will be updated accordingly with any new relevant information or any changes in guidelines.

Coronavirus has had an impact on prior guidelines, so this handbook has been updated to meet current guidelines.

WHAT IS TRANSITION?

Collins's dictionary (2021) defines transition as 'the process or a period of changing from one state or condition to another.'

Transitions should be seen as a process and not as an event, that should involve the children, parents, and practitioners. These events or changes happen through life, but a child's extent to manage change may be affected by their first experiences of transitions. (Welsh Government, 2017).

Building on the relationship between parent and practitioner and effective communication from all parties, such as discussing a child's fears and the parents' expectations from the nursery setting should affectively lead to a successful transition. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) (2017) has stated that the Welsh Government has an objective aim that all children and parent's receive pragmatic and moral support as they go through the transition.

(Schlossberg, 2011, p.159) defines transitions as any event or non-event where the outcome is different in a relationship, routine, assumption, and roles. Although the theory was based on adults it can be interrelated to a child's early years.

Schlossberg's theory identified four types of transitions:

- Anticipated - Events that are foreseeable such as starting school.
- Unanticipated - Events that are not planned or random such as a divorce or death of a loved one.
- Non-events - Events that are planned but do not happen such as a cancelled doctor's appointment.

There are two types of transitions, horizontal and vertical.

Horizontal transitions tend to be less formal and are activities that are part of a child's everyday routine. These could be things like going to nursery from home or moving to the carpet at story time. Vertical transitions on the other hand are when there is a major change to a child's routine. These could be things like parent's separating, death of a loved one or starting school or early years setting for the first time. (Flying start, 2017).

HOW CAN WE SUPPORT A TRANSITION?

- Speak with caregivers about any concerns.
- Encourage the care givers to ask questions.
- Handing out information about the setting, such as what snack's they will be eating and what activities will be happening. These could be days like wet Wednesday where the child will need weather appropriate clothing.

A case study by the National Day Nurseries Association (NDNA) held at The Mill Childcare Centre Ltd and published by OECD (2018) described how a child's transition from home to nursey is first established. The childcare setting offers a free session for new starters to establish a bond between the child and the key practitioner, and for a relationship to progress between the family and the nursery. The study also includes ways in which the child is integrated into the setting with pictures of each child on a coat peg and on the water bottles to make them feel independent and included and a sense of belonging. The setting also asks the family for information about each child's routine. Children are also urged to bring a special comforter for security in the early days.

The Needs of a Child

No child should be made to feel left out or deprived because of ethnicity, culture or religion, home language or family background. Children with Special Educational Needs (SEN) will need additional, flexible support.

Individual children and minors should not be discriminated against when these rights are realised. This covers both direct and indirect discrimination. (United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), 1989, Art:2).

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) (1989) set out the rights of every child in the world to:

- Survive
- Grow
- Participate

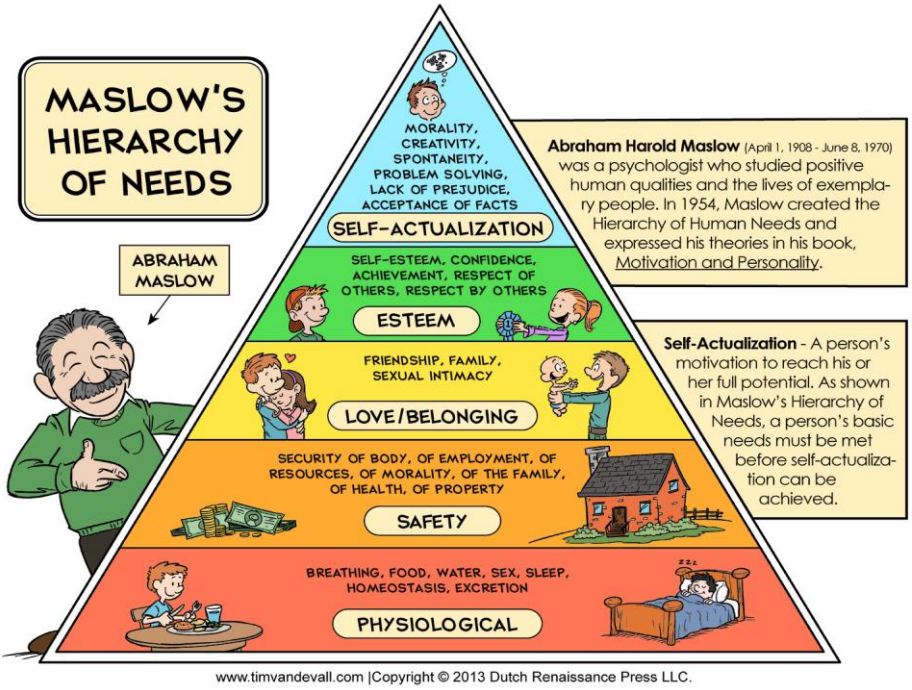
- Fulfil their potential

It sets the quality for education, health management, social welfare, and criminal legislation, and it creates the right of the child to have voice in any decisions that shape them.

The United Nations Treaty Bodies (UNTB) (2020) in response to the coronavirus pandemic has stated that now more than ever, we need to make children and their rights a priority. Consultations with children all around the world must be made to make their voices heard. 'They know their rights; we bear the responsibility to respect and defend them.'

Maslow (1943) theorized that a series of basic needs should be satisfied before they are able to proceed to the higher tier. He proceeded to say that the basic goals are interconnected and are subsequently arranged in a hierarchy of ascendant.

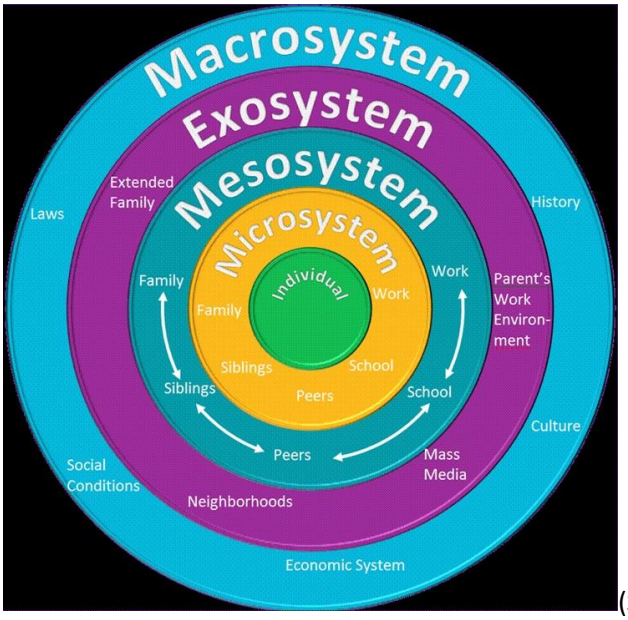
His theory the 'hierarchy of needs' initially gave 5 basic stages to a child's development.



(Source: Bing.com)

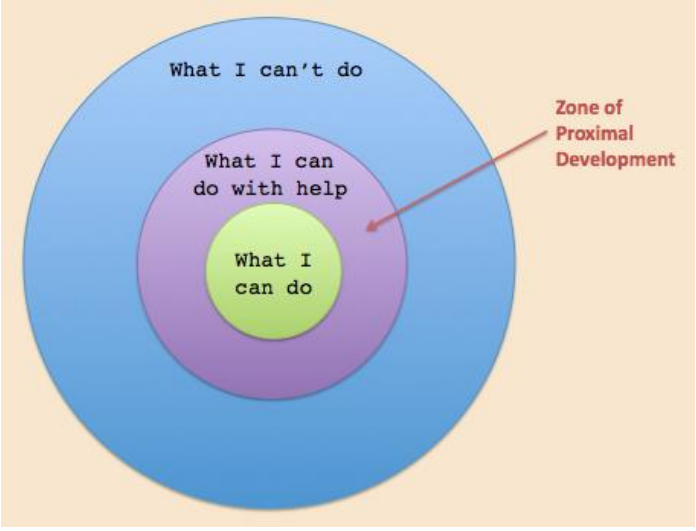
Maslow (1970) later developed a holistic approach to his 'hierarchy of needs' and believed that an individual that is more than the sum of its parts and that an individual's basic needs should be met to fuel motivation.

Bronfenbrenner (1979) on the other hand believed that a child should always be centre and that everything in a child's life and environment affects their growth and development. He subsequently developed his own model, the ecological system theory. In which he described it as 'a set of nested structures, each inside the other, like a set of Russian dolls' (Bronfenbrenner, 1979: 3).



(Source:blogspot.com).

Vygotsky (1978) has stated that a child's learning process creates the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), and that learning stimulates an array of internal development processes that can operate when the child is interacting with individuals in their surroundings and in unity with their peers. The ZPD is the distance between what a learner can do without help, and what they can achieve with guidance and support from someone more knowledgeable.



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(Source: granite.pressboks.pub).

Woods, Bruner, and Ross (1976) scaffolding theory were distinctly influenced by the work of Vygotsky. His theory was that children need support and to be

assisted actively by parents and teachers if they are to mature into independent learners.

Every child is unique

The Montessori method (1964) believed that every child goes through a unique development process. That each child is unique and can learn within their capacity. Montessori classrooms are designed purposely for the children and according to their physical characteristics. Their purpose is to make children independent.

Piaget believed that every child is actively involved in the development of their own thinking, and he saw the search for knowledge as something that they do and want to do for themselves and not just for the sake of it.

Montessori equally to Piaget (1962) expressed the environment as a primary reason to a child's unconstrained learning.

OUTDOOR PLAY

Learning through play in an engaging and spontaneous environment was seen as the way to help young children develop. (Isaacs 1954, McMillan 1930).

When children are given the choice, they repeatedly prefer to play outside. The environment should contain a range of equipment, even a small area should be catered for a child's differing needs. (Dowling, 2010).

(Source: Pinterest).

The Role of the Adult

‘A key person who provides the essential sensitive link between child, parent and outside agencies is crucial.’ (Bertram & Pacal, 2010).

The museum of London (NDA) furthermore states the first years in a child's life, parents and carers are their first and most important teacher(s).

Practitioners

Practitioners play a significant role in the child's and family's life as they support and scaffold while they steer their way into new environments. (Ministry of Education, Te Tahuhu o te matavranga, 2021)

Essex County Council (2021) states that practitioners must acknowledge every child's arising needs and inquisitiveness, by guiding their development through welcoming and positive interactions. They must consider individual needs,

interests and stage development of each child and use relevant information to plan.

The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) (2012) has four themes at the heart of their guidelines:

- A unique child – Continuously learning and can be adaptable, competent, assertive, and composed.
- Positive relationships - Discover to be accomplished and individualistic through supportive relationships.
- Enabling environments – Experiences respond to their characteristic needs, develop strong relationships between practitioners, parents, and carers.
- Learning development - Flourish and learn in diverse ways, the structure covers all children's education and care in the early years setting, including children with special needs and disabilities.

They state that practitioners should be observing children as they act and interact with play, planned activities and everyday activities but to also engage with parents about what the child does at home. They should note down all information. Practitioners should follow on from that by assessing the information noted down and by analysing the observations that were carried out and referring to the guidance given. Once all these steps have been taken a plan should be drawn up about what is needed for the child to develop and learn.

PARENTS

'You may not be able to leap over skyscrapers or defeat evil monsters, but you'll certainly make their world a better place'. (Briers, 2008).

Parents have unique understanding and information about their child, and many parents want the best for their child. Gathering as much information about them is imperative so that the support is effective and relevant.

Some parents may have their own issues which may make it harder for them to attach to their child and to be able to provide stable and sympathetic care. (National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC), (2021).

Children can shape attachments with more than one caregiver, but the most important and lasting relationships are the ones with people who have provided conscientiousness from early childhood. (Bowlby, 1997).

Communication between caregivers and the early year setting is a vital part of the child's transition and development. Pacey (2021) believe that consistent interactions with parents is a crucial moment to gain valuable information. Parents may feel like they are missing their child's day but talking to them can be comforting.

Communication with parents can take many forms, such as:

- Daily logs
- Letters
- Phone calls
- Social media

Some parents are less portrayed than others. These may be fathers, parents that live apart from the child and working parents. This could mean a different plan of action may be needed for involving them and a discussion is imperative to find out what works best. Additionally, families that require information in

another language, have specific needs or have basic skills should have the material provided. (Nursery resources, 2021).

Abbott and Langston (2006) stated that parents are important to their children. Collaberating with parents constructively will ensure that practitioners provide confidence to both them and their child.

(Source bing.com).

PARTNERSHIPS

Multi-agency working is vital to successful safeguarding and child protection. (Sidebotham et al, 2016).

‘Section 28 of the Children Act 2004 enforces a duty on local authorities and other agencies such as the local police board, local health boards, NHS Trusts, probation boards and youth offending teams to ensure that their responsibilities are clear to observe the need to safeguard and promote the welfare of children’. (Welsh Government, NDA).

HM Government (2018) has stated that integral part of a practitioner's job is sharing information. How much information is shared to whom and when can have a complex result on individual lives, but such information shared can secure that the correct services are given to the individual at the opportune moment can avert a need from becoming more drastic and difficult to meet.

INTERVENTIONS

The Early Intervention Foundation (2021) defines interventions as ‘identifying and providing effective early support to children and young people who are at risk of poor outcomes’.

A report by the House of Commons (2018) found there was a volume of data that clearly indicates a relation between affliction suffered during childhood and a greater frequency of health and social problems later in life. However, the report went on to state that when interventions are delivered successfully, there is compelling evidence that it can significantly improve people's lives.

Some children may find entering an unfamiliar environment challenging so an early year's settings may find it beneficial to make interventions. One of these may be a transitional object, common examples include dolls, teddy bears or blankets.

Winnicott (1953) believed the leading role of a transitional object is to ‘start each human being off with what will be important for them: a neutral area of experience which will not be challenged’.

Another intervention could be photos of the setting, where a family may have been able to visit the setting in person, coronavirus has impeded that strategy. The setting may also (with the parents' consent) take pictures of the child during the session.

PROPOSED OUTCOMES

The proposed outcome of this handbook is that practitioners have a clearer understanding of transitions and the communication prevalent within settings.

Children should be supported through the process as should their families. And any concerns raised accordingly with the relevant agencies.

Children that are supported when they display any negative connotations, and are praised for succeeding when given opportunities are likely to have fewer behavioural problems and a better sense of self-assurance. (Sharma and Cockerill, 2014).

To concur with The City of Edinburgh Council (2001), as an early year setting, we must entail we 'Get it Right' for the children throughout this influential time of their lives.

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