

Transitions



A child's experience with us will be a building block for life and by working together, we will enable and empower every child to fulfil their full potential

Introduction

This Handbook is to be used by practitioners to assist transitions between Daycare one and Daycare two, when a child turns 2 years of age. In this Handbook we will look at the importance of successful transitions in early years, what they look like and how we can achieve a positive transition. We will also look at the importance of communication throughout the transition programme and how the relationships formed between all involved with that transition is paramount to making it successful.

Contents Page

- Rationale
- The Role of the Adult
- The Needs of the Child
- Working in Partnerships
- Interventions
- Proposed Outcomes

Rationale

According to the flying start guidance (2017) transitions are key events in a Child's life, which is not dictated by a time scale, but how long it takes that child to make that change. All children are unique and will develop and settle at their own varying rate. All those involved in the child's well-being will be key to that Child's successful and effective transition. This favourable outcome will heavily rely upon effective communication between all those involved as well as a carefully planned and managed transition.

Transitions are a term given to periods of change that are experienced by all children as they progress through different periods of their lives. Transitions are a journey that is constantly evolving, they can be a vulnerable period in a Child's life as it is a significant change to their world or micro system as discussed by Bronfenbrenner in his ecology model. A child will need time to get used to a new environment, new adults, different children and a new routine. We need to also ensure we ease any parental concerns or anxieties by ensuring that the primary caregivers are aware of any upcoming changes to their Child's experience with us and that they are kept fully informed of what is happening and how their child is dealing with this change. Our aim is to ensure that all transitions are a positive experience for children and their families, in a rich, nurturing, stimulating environment and to facilitate their wants and needs during their time with us until they are ready to transition to the next period of their life. As Bowlby suggested the quality of healthy relationships or attachments will shape the child's ability to form healthy relationships in later life (Pacey 2014).

The role of an adult

The National Minimum Standards for Regulated Childcare (2016) explain that every child should be provided a key worker who has the daily responsibility for them and ensures any relevant information is shared with their primary caregiver. They also insist that the care given should advocate warm secure relationships in a responsive nurturing environment which promotes independence and confidence in children. These relationships should always be authentic, purposeful interactions, not tokenistic. Freud discuss how children develop confidence in themselves because of their interactions with others.

Nutbrown (2011) suggests that a key person is someone who has specific responsibilities for a child and forms a close relationship with the child and their primary caregiver while supporting any needs or development during their time in the setting. Nutbrown (2011) also states that a key worker system ensures the views of the child are listened to and respected which concur with article 12 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) which state that all children must have their views, feelings and wishes considered and respected in matters that affect them. (UNICEF 2017). This can be a challenge especially with the younger children during transitions, which is why having that clear knowledge and understanding about your key children which is clearly communicated is pivotal to a successful transition.

The foundation phase (2015) states that it is crucial that key workers work together with primary caregivers to identify any additional needs to ensure the child is fully supported with these which is why full, honest, open communication between a key worker and a primary caregiver is essential especially during such an unprecedented time such as a transition for a child. The foundation phase (2015) therefore implore that a child's family is central to a Childs wellbeing which aligns with Bronfenbrenner's ecology model as discussed by Crowley (2014) which agrees that the Childrens family is their immediate world or micro system and as key workers it is our role and responsibility to ensure we support children through this time of transition and ensure it is a positive experience for them and their families.

The key worker as a professional need to have an understanding of child development as well as the individual child, their identity and their understanding of themselves and the world around them. The Foundation phase (2015) states that practitioners must comprehend the rate of a Childs development through their early years journey, ensuring they acknowledge that all children are unique with their own individual set of needs whilst being aware of any additional needs that may need support. This aligns with Vygotsky who talks of practitioners understanding a Childs level of knowledge and extending that learning through accomplished mentoring, as well as Dewey who recognises the uniqueness of the individual child and how that individual child engages with activities or experiences around them in different ways to the next unique child. (Gray and Macblain 2015). Practitioners need to be aware and work to the policies of the setting and ensure where appropriate communication is shared being mindful of our safeguarding and confidentiality procedures.

Relationships are a fundamental factor of a child's development and as discussed by Manotti (2012), Winnicott talks of the importance of building a relationship in creating a facilitating environment which in turn will give the child a healthy state of identity. Winnicott endorses the importance of relationships by declaring that when describing a baby, it is impossible to just describe that baby we are always describing that baby and someone. Winnicot further suggests that if a child has this positive relationship, they will feel confident and secure in their identity and this will have a positive effect on how they develop. Alternatively, if an environment is not sufficient for a child their

development will be distorted, which is why it is so vitally important to build that rich secure environment for our transitioning children to ensure a positive outcome.

This theory aligns with Bowlby's theory of attachment, as discussed by Feeney and Thrush (2010) which describes a caregiver, in this case a key worker, as someone who provides safety and security, a secure base, for the child and enhances the Child's chance of survival. Bowlby talked of needing that secure base to create a confident Explorer of the world, because that positive relationship will give the child security and a sense of trust, which is so important during a child transitioning with a new keyworker. Bowlby recognised that positive relations had a direct impact on a Child's development. As the Welsh government (2015) state in one of their four purposes of the new curriculum all children will be healthy, competent individuals who form positive relationships based on trust. In contrast to Bowlby theory of attachment as acknowledged by Scharer (2018), there is a concern of unhealthy over-attachments developing which we must be aware of. As practitioners we must ensure that all children are cherished, and no child is favoured over another. Elfer (2012) found some educators were anxious about the appropriateness of attachments in early years.

Vygotsky believed that the role of the adult in a child's life was of the utmost importance as that adult decides what it is a child learns. He also spoke of the importance of children learning through dialogues with more experienced members of society. He believed that a child was an active learner, but that child could do and learn more with an adult help which would support a Child's development. He therefore stated that an adult's role was to assist children carrying out tasks which if doing alone would be beyond their competence. (Crowley 2014).

Vygotsky believed that in the zone of proximal development, a child would be supported and encouraged to do what they can't yet do, with a key worker's guidance, we as Keyworkers need to understand the child and plan activities using their own interests to support the child to reach their full potential. However, without good communication between key workers and primary caregivers this will not be able to happen as the key worker will not have that key information about the child; their likes, dislike, wants and needs to be able to plan and scaffold the Child's learning to facilitate that rich learning environment for the child. (Garhart-Mooney, 2000).

As discussed above the Child's keyworker is a vital component in the transition process especially when we are thinking of the communication needed for a successful transition. However, there are many other adults that ensure this positive experience is secured. As stated in Article 3 of the UNCRC when making decisions regarding a child the Child's best interests must be a priority. (UNICEF, 2017).

All practitioners have a responsibility to ensure every child is settled and secure during their time at daycare, this is especially crucial during a Child's transition period where feelings might be heightened. Any concerns must be communicated with that Child's keyworker. All practitioners must recognise that feeling confident and secure will protect the child from feelings of failure which will inevitably affect a Child's further learning and development. Practitioners must encourage decision making in children to develop independence by having appropriate activities and materials available as encouraged by Froebel as discussed by Tovey (2017).

It is critical that caregivers understand the importance of secure relationships and their impact on children's future wellbeing. Agreeing with other theorists about the importance of relationships Erikson theory suggests that in infancy trust of those around them is pivotal and will have a negative effect on a child's development if that trust or reliability isn't consistently met. A child is trying to establish what or who is safe in their immediate world and all future relationships will be based on these early outcomes Erikson also implores practitioners to boost a Child's confidence instead of

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‘shaming’ any mistakes, again this will empower that child and solidify that relationship and the child will feel safe and secure. (McLeod, 2018)

There is an incontestable link between brain development and the relationships we as practitioners form with the children in our setting. Harvard university (2011) explains that the key to creating strong brain architecture is to ensure care givers consistently engage in serve and return interactions with the child. Neurological connections are derived as the child naturally serves to an adult and it is then our role to return or respond to that serve in an appropriate, positive and consistent manner in order to build those connections and to want to continue to build those relationships. This brain architecture builds the infrastructure of what all future development is built upon. Skinner facilitates development by reinforcing desired behaviours through serve and return followed by a positive reinforcer encouraging that child to do it again. This is referred to as Skinners operant conditioning. (Aubrey and Riley 2019). It is impossible for a Childs brain to develop without physical experiences which and intrinsically linked with the relations we build and the interactions we make. There is evidence that new neuronal creations depend on the strength of richness in your environment. (Jessell 2008)

The Childs primary caregiver might feel uneasy about their Childs transition to a larger room with older children and as keyworkers it is our role to reassure those primary caregivers and as considered by PACEY (2014) if a primary care giver has confidence in you and trusts you, the transition for them and the child will be more straightforward. Harvard University (2016) declare that multiple attachments can encourage Childrens social and emotional development and attachments with secondary caregivers would not interfere with the primary relations that child has already developed.

The needs of the child

Shea (2001) suggests that if we fail to ‘get it right’ for children in early years we are essentially ‘failing children’. From then on all we can do is try to ‘restore and revive’ rather than building on that foundation made.

During a Childs transition, that child will need consistency, security, positive reassurance and trust. They will also have a specific individual set of needs which will need satisfying for that transition to be a successful positive experience for them, therefore we need a clear understanding of that individual child and their individual needs to ensure this happens. Bowlby talked of relationships constructing a platform for secure development and even suggested that if attachments are not formed in a child's early years, then this could impact future relationships and even cause delinquency or behavioural problems in adolescence (Smith al 2015), which aligns with Maslow hierarchy of needs theory where the basic needs of the child such as security and safety must be secure before any other needs can be considered, (McLeod, 2018) with a fundamental aspect of these theories being love and belonging. Which again concurs with Bronfenbrenner's ecology model which links the importance of relationships in the microsystem with a foundation to which all future relations are based. (Aubrey and Riley 2019).

As declared by the UNCRC (2017) article 2, every child must be treated equally and there must be inclusion for all no matter on gender, ethnicity, cultural background, language, religion and so on. Nutbrown (1996) agrees that educators must be wary of ensuring all children are respected and treated fairly as opposed to concentrating our efforts on the ‘easy to work with’ children.

The setting must be a child centred enabling environment, with the activities aimed at the Childrens interests and needs of their holistic development. As mentioned by Gray, C and Macblain, S. (2015) Piaget discusses how an environment should be rich and stimulating with rich and stimulating practitioners who engage with children and support their development. Piaget also discussed the importance of child centred learning through his theory of discovery learning, ensuring that child sized furniture and a facilitator of learning was preferential to the Childs development. Montessori and Dewey both concur with this ideal of placing great emphasis on the Childs environment in which it learns, ensuring the Childs interests form the basis of that learning. This also aligns itself with the ethos of the current foundation phase (2015).

Working in partnerships

As discussed, it is imperative that we work in partnership with the children in a keyworker system. As Tassoni (2013) proposes the bond between a child and their keyworker is an 'emotional safety net' which in the absence of their primary care giver must be strong enough to 'catch' the child. Tassoni (2013) suggests that if the transition has not been a positive experience then it will cause stress and anxiety to the child, causing deep rooted issues in their learning and development.

It is also just as crucial to form a strong, mutually trustful relationship with the primary caregivers to ensure any information is shared and that they feel at ease when leaving their child in our care. According to the Department of Education (1990) a Childs primary caregiver are their first educators and can share invaluable information about their child which could only benefit a keyworker when ensuring the child transitions effectively. It is the keyworkers responsibility to ensure open communication is mutually shared on a daily basis, where applicable.

The Welsh Government (2014) implores that information where appropriate must be shared between our setting and relevant outside agencies and is key to providing a holistic and accomplished structure to meet family needs, whether that being a development or safeguarding issue. They discuss the advantages to the child of multi agencies working together to support the child and promotes The Wales Accord on the Sharing of personal information (WAPSI) as the single sharing framework for sharing the personal data between multi agencies. This is especially significant when the child is transferring to a new room to ensure a consistency of care is given.

Bronfenbrenner ecology model as discussed by Crowley (2014) also demonstrates the importance of working together and offering a consistent support approach to the child. Bronfenbrenner believed that a Childs development was affected by everything in their surrounding environment and placed these in relevant areas, with the child being at the centre of that model. He also implored that we looked at that child as an individual but also holistically. The microsystem which includes our daycare setting is the most influential level of the theory as it is the Childs immediate world. If the different areas of the microsystem work together, for example the parents and keyworker, Bronfenbrenner declared it would have a positive effect on the child, alternatively a negative effect would occur if those mesosystems didn't work together. We must ensure that when something enters or leaves the Childs microsystem, in this case daycare one, their peers and their keyworker will be leaving the microsystem and again daycare two, new peers and a new keyworker will be entering the Childs microsystem, that transition must be a smooth and positive experience as that change is a significant immediate change to that Childs world potentially causing a vulnerable period of time for the child. Bronfenbrenner insists that a Childs development is directly influenced by what is happening in the Childs environment.

Interventions

Interventions which are used to assist in a smooth transition period include;

- Where possible children should transition in a small group to ensure some consistency in their peers, this could potentially mean a child transitions slightly after their 2nd birthday.
- Full and complete communication between both daycare rooms, prior to transition, during transition and once transition is complete.
- An All About Me form which will be completed by daycare one and the Childs primary care give to ensure a complete picture is achieved. Ensuring all allergies, sleeping routine are updated.
- An induction of the room for the child with their primary caregivers with any concerns discussed. Bronfenbrenner states that a childs home, education setting and community must work together for the child to develop. (Benjamin, 2015).
- Ensuring the environment is a rich, nurturing environment prepared to welcome all children, with both indoor and outdoor relevant play activities are available as advocated by Froebel, which Tovey (2017) discusses, that a child should have the freedom in those rich provisions to think and make choices for themselves. Froebel encouraged engaging with nature in all its glory through the process of play and implored that practitioners must provide opportunities and whole experiences for children.
- Gradual stay and play sessions, which will start with an hour, including both new and old keyworker, and will build up to a full session, ensuring that if the child becomes distressed that session is ended. As described by Brooker (2008) settling in sessions allow children to become acquainted with their new environment and begin their new relationship with their new keyworker and peers. Brooker (2008) states that recent research implies most children following this system will settle within the first few weeks.
- Full and open communication with the Childs primary caregivers daily to ensure all parties are happy. Ensuring their primary care giver receives full details of daycare two including routine and contact number, as part of our open-door policy.
- Observations of the child from day one in daycare two to ensure we see any behavioural changes as encouraged by Montessori who indicate that the primary role of the adult is to observe children to assist their development. (Garhart-Mooney, 2000). Also agreed by the foundation phase (2015) who state that practitioners must understand Childrens development and be able to observe and respond appropriately.

Proposed outcomes

The Welsh Government (2015) stresses that it is a significant adult's responsibility in a Childs life to assure children receive the best outcomes. Fundamentally as practitioners it is our role to support children, through their feelings and to provide a secure environment, this is even more profound when it comes to transitioning children as we have discussed it potentially being a vulnerable period

for the child. Bronfenbrenner (1979) wholly agrees with this as we are such a significant person in the Child's life, we have the upmost responsibility to support their development, especially when the Child's immediate environment is changing, and the child could potentially feel quite overwhelmed. It is essential that a child has a positive transition experience and feels included and valued within the setting during transition. A positive transition has a positive impact on their learning and development and the way that transition is managed will have a significant impact on the Child's capability of coping with changes in later life. Happy well settled children will have a higher well-being. The more encouraging and nurturing the environment for a child is the better their development.

We can measure the effects that the transition is having on the child by monitoring their behaviour and comparing that to the behaviour of the child from initial assessments and information given to us from daycare one. Regular daily communication with their primary caregiver will also inform us how that child is doing and whether there have been any changes at home in their behaviour. Four weeks after the transition a parental questionnaire will be completed by the primary caregivers to ensure both parents and child are happy.

Observations are also key to seeing how successful the transitions are. Pacey (2016) suggest observations assist us in building a complete picture of the child, to help us understand the Child's wants and needs, likes and dislikes and where they are in their learning development which will help us to understand the individual needs of the child and their unique qualities. Montessori (year) agrees with how important observations are especially in the transition process as well as Freobel who states that observations are vital in early years and practitioners should be aware of what to observe and how to use those observations. (Aubrey and Riley, 2019).

Children learn through doing and if they are an active participant in their learning they are more likely to be fully immersed in that learning which ultimately aids their development, as agreed upon by Piaget and Dewey (Gerhart-Mooney 2000). Throughout a Child's early year in daycare, especially during a transitions period, play has an unequivocal role to play in assuring a successful transition. Play is a vehicle for learning that they naturally engage in and during play a child feels that they can act out emotions, test situations and find their feet all whilst under the umbrella of playing, meaning if that child feels safe and secure, they understand that there will not be any consequences whilst in 'play mode'. This gives us as a keyworker an invaluable insight into how that child is settling into their new routine and how they are processing that transition. (Sutton-Smith 1997). Play also supports relations especially when sustained shared thinking is being utilised. As researched by Anna Freud, Midgley (2012) discussed that play reduces anxiety and stress and heals emotional pain. Freobel states that play gives a child joy, freedom and contentment, ensuring that during an uncertain time for a child such as a period of transition children can reach a happy outcome through the medium of play. (Gray and Macblain, 2015). The right to play is enshrined in the UNCRC and naturally happens in all children. (UNICEF 2017).

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