

An Early Years Transitions Handbook for Childcare Practitioners



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Introduction

This handbook will be a guide for childcare practitioners and professionals and will provide more information on childhood transitions, how to deal with transitional situations in childcare settings and how to work alongside parents and carers to ensure best outcomes for children.

1. Transitions

“Transition – The process or a period of changing from one state or condition to another.”

(Oxford’s Learner’s Dictionaries, 2022)

The key to successful transitions is plenty of communication between all parties involved such as children, parents and practitioners. Many settings may have a transition and transfer policy which should be adhered to by practitioners as precisely as possible. A child’s holistic development could be affected during different transitions and this could either be positive or negative which will also have an effect on how a child reacts and responds. The aim of any transition is for a child to be settled and satisfied with all outcomes whilst entering new atmospheres and creating new experiences. (Daly, M. and Byers, E. and Taylor, W., 2009)

What are transitions?

Transitions are changes and a part of everyday life which can occur from an early age in a childcare setting to primary school, from foundation phase to juniors, primary schools to secondary school and

further education onwards. Sometimes, transitions are not always a positive experience and especially for children and young people. In different settings, it is important that practitioners ensure that support is offered to parents and carers to aid transitions to go smoothly. (Education Scotland, 2022)

Practitioners should be made aware that transitions for children especially from home into nursery school is a crucial experience and that the child needs to feel as relaxed and appreciated as possible in the process so that the child feels valued. Transitions like this are shaped by social formations and involve parents, children, practitioners together so that the best outcomes are identified for the child. (Education Scotland, 2022)

For transitions such as children progressing from home to nursery school, this must be started earlier on for parents and practitioners to be able to plan and prepare for the best outcomes of the child.



(Family, 2022)

There are many different types of transitions such as moving house or schools, new sibling or a death within a family. These transitions are equally as important as each other and especially in a child's life. All of which will enable children to feel all sorts of different emotions, so practitioners and parents must offer support to children to create a

warm and happy environment for the child whilst dealing with transitions. (Education Scotland, 2022)

2. The Role of the Adult

It is essential for practitioners as well as parents to chat with children to explain about what will be occurring in the near future such as moving up classes in a setting or moving house. Encouraging children to ask questions and explain any problems that the child may have will show curiosity and allow practitioners and parents to help to put minds at ease so children do not feel worried. (Education Scotland, 2022)

There may be some children more vulnerable in transitions such as those with low self-esteem and confidence and children with learning disabilities. Children who fall under categories such as these may require extra support in settings to feel at ease and happy during transitions.

Young children who are due to start nursery school may feel very scared of any new surroundings. An adult such as a parent or carer will need to visit new settings with the child to ensure that individuals are more relaxed and associate the new experience with a positive and happy feeling to feel more confident when attending. Stay and play opportunities should be offered in settings to create a positive atmosphere for all and will also ensure that children are influenced into being autonomous learners. Especially as this may be one of the first times a child is away from a parent for a few hours a day. Processes of transitions should be adapted and customised to fit the needs of all children in unique ways. (Froebel Trust, ND)

Parents play a vital role in a child's life and make a significant difference to outcomes for children. It is essential that practitioners ensure good

relationships with parents and carers and good communication to help gain the best possible care for the child.

It is important to recognise that effective transitions are more of a process than an event and should be planned for as much as possible. Practitioners should ensure that relationships are built with children, parents and carers to offer support and guidance throughout transitions. (Birth to 5 matters, ND)

There are different types of transitions such as horizontal, vertical, education based. Horizontal transitions may be less significant during life and may be an everyday and regular occurrence. This type of transition may be a part of a child's routine so may be almost normal for them. Vertical transitions are the opposite being more large key changes such as moving classes so moving up as children get older so moving on vertically. Education-associated transitions can involve changes outside of settings that may affect a child's development. These transitions can also shape the way children experience different parts of own lives. (Vogler et al, 2008)

3. Children's Needs

Younger children such as babies or toddlers require adults and practitioners to be more conscientious and delicate in responding to needs and wants of the child. Practitioners should ensure that their observations are completed to find out different ways of listening to these young children and allowing individuals to be heard. (Welsh Government, 2018)

Children benefit from a secure environment, especially in settings as well as adult support. Such support will help to aid self-esteem levels and will also encourage children to feel at ease when visiting settings. Positive interaction with children ensures a stable and healthy

development as reliable relationships are formed and children will feel safe and secure around practitioners.

It is essential that all children and young people are looked after in a loving and secure atmosphere and that no child should be discriminated against or excluded due to different cultures, religions or special educational needs.

Children should have opportunities to create secure attachments with key workers such as teachers and teaching assistants. Children starting nursery preschool may be withdrawn and upset as this may be the first time individuals are leaving parents for a longer period of time since birth. Forming a secure attachment to a practitioner will ensure that a child feels more settled and happier when attending the setting. (Smidt, 1998)

Children's needs must be met whilst attending the setting, practitioners must ensure that observations are completed to identify a child's interests, capabilities and dislikes to ensure a smooth transition. After this information is sourced, practitioners should plan for suitable activities for the children based on interests and the child's level of development to ensure needs are being met and that experiences are fun and educational so that children can have a happy and healthy well-being. (Smidt, 1998)

4. Theorists

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs



Maslow's hierarchy of needs

(McLeod, 2022)

Maslow's Hierarchy of needs covers a child's holistic development including physical, social, cognitive, physical and language. It is important to learn that for a child to be happy and healthy, all aspects of developmental needs must be met for the individual to reach higher and full potential. (University of Reading, ND)

In the hierarchy of needs pyramid, there are five key points which are made up of physiological needs which are concerned with the correct amount of exercise, rest and a balanced diet, safety needs which are involved with a feeling of security physically as well as emotionally, esteem needs which are feelings of being in control of own life and the sense of achievement and recognising own self, love and feeling that a child has a sense of belonging throughout life as well as during transitions and self-actualisation which is the feeling of reaching higher and full potential and finding individual voice. (University of Reading, ND)

John Bowlby

John Bowlby believed that events and occurrences in a child's early life can be responsible for mental health and behavioural problems later on in adulthood.

Bowlby's theory of attachment suggests that children are born ready to create attachments and bonds with other people for survival instincts. John Bowlby believed that behaviours based on attachment could be brought on by any sort of atmosphere that may come across as life threatening such as being frightened and separation fears. (McLeod, 2017)

Bowlby also believed that based on how a children's primary carer treats the individual, which could be the mother or father in most cases, will influence children's personality traits.

In settings, children may form secure attachments with practitioners or keyworkers especially during transitions so it is essential that these adults ensure a sense of security and belonging for children in the setting by being patient and kind so that children feel settled. (McLeod, 2017)

Jean Piaget

Jean Piaget devised a theory in 1963 of cognitive development that concentrates on the ways of how a child sees the world themselves, Piaget believed that children's cognitive development is improved due to interactions with the world around and not an attribute that a child may be born with. (McLeod, S. A., 2018)

Jean Piaget was a psychologist and one of the first to produce a structured study based on children's cognitive development. He believed that children build upon own knowledge and understanding about the world independently rather than sitting and listening to someone explain right from wrong.

Piaget believed that understanding children's opinions and thoughts about the world was to be able to visualise it from a child's point of view. Detailed observations of children and tests took place that resulted in the different cognitive capabilities of children and young

people. Piaget conducted research into how children worked with mathematics including number and time (McLeod, S.A., 2018)



(First News Education, 2020)

In settings, children may undertake many sorts of class-based tests especially before moving up to a different class or group. By carrying out such tests, practitioners are then able to see if additional support is needed for certain individuals which will aid children's development. An example of these tests could be spelling or reading tests as many schools will complete regularly. These sorts of tests may be worrying for children as the results will end in different transitions. It is important for practitioners to show encouragement to ensure that children feel settled and at ease when participating in many tests. (McLeod, S. A., 2018)

Friedrich Froebel

'Play is the highest expression of human development in childhood for it alone is the free expression of what is in a child's soul.'

- Friedrich Froebel

(Froebel Trust, ND)

Friedrich Froebel established the first ever 'kindergarten' pre-school in 1836 for children aged 7 and under to learn through play and action. Froebel believed that learning through play is the pinnacle of a child's childhood development and that it allows children to develop own knowledge and understanding of the world. (Froebel Trust, ND)

The Froebel Trust is an organisation that inspires early learning and for children to become autonomous learners through exploring the world in own ways.

Children are all different and will have various capabilities. Children learn from first hand experiences from the world, and this will allow each child to become more self-aware of learning. The Froebel Trust values children for being natural and for own efforts. Reflection is also an important part of learning as it allows children to choose achievements and improvements that need to be made which furthers own learning and development. (Froebel Trust, ND)

Lev Vygotsky

A theorist by the name of Lev Vygotsky believed that children are active learners. Vygotsky recognised that children need interactions with others who had higher capabilities to be able to further own knowledge about the world. Social interactions with others help to further cognitive development and allow children to work above individual abilities but within own proximal zone. Vygotsky believed pretend play was important in childhood as it allowed children to take on different roles active in adult life, such as a shopkeeper or a bus driver. (Daly, M. and Byers, E. and Taylor, W., 2009)

5. Partnerships

It is essential that practitioners ensure effective communication between parents and carers to show child's progress and how learning

can be supported. The curriculum for Wales plans for a two-way engagement with parents and carers and the larger school community. (Welsh Government, 2018)



(Hope Worldwide, 2022)

It is important to recognise that parents and carers make a vital contribution towards children's outcomes. When professionals work alongside a child's parents, the benefits are far greater as discussions can be created as to how a child can be supported both at home and in settings. Partnership working between the two parties can ensure good understanding of a child's needs and how to meet these requirements which will lead to the best provision within the setting and a high standard of supported learning and development at home. (Birth to 5 Matters, ND)

Parents are seen as children's advocates of learning and development throughout life. Families will attend childcare settings with observations already in mind based on what children get up to and how individual children act at home and ideas of the best ways to support children. Practitioners must take into account parents own knowledge of children and how parents ideas can be added into good practice in settings. (Birth to 5 Matters, ND)

6. Interventions and Inclusion

All early years settings represents all cultures which are created by young people, adults and practitioners. These different cultures allow children to have a sense of belonging, which is centrally important to well-being. An essential part of a smooth transition is to ensure that a child feels a sense of belonging and security in order be content. (Welsh Government, 2021)

In settings, practitioners may plan and prepare interventions for children which could be made up of additional support, learning plans and journals and visits that may aid a smooth transition. Additional support such as precision monitoring for those who have difficulty with fine motor, speech and language skills will help raise self-confidence and increase developmental rates in children. By giving children extra support, this will allow them to feel at ease in settings. For children who may have autistic difficulties or difficulties in general the use of or next boards or visual timetables, when it comes to transitions are a useful tool as it allows the child to visually see and imagine what will be happening next during the school day. (Lambeth SEND Local Officer, 2022)

7. Proposed Outcomes

Adults who are present in a child's life are significantly important in a child's development. These adults such as parents, carers and practitioners are responsible for helping children to reach full potential and that the best outcomes for children and young people are planned and prepared for by these adults who are significant to the child. By planning for each best outcome of the child, all children can be encouraged to reach potential and visualise self worth. (Welsh Government, 2008)

Children are all different and will have various developmental rates compared to other children. All young people have many different skills, personality attributes, abilities and backgrounds which will allow individuals to adjust to new routines and transitions in different ways. Practitioners should ensure good practice by highlighting the importance of transitions by planning and preparing for each one. After each successful transition, practitioners should expect to see happier and settled children at home and when visiting settings. (Welsh Government, 2008)

Another proposed outcome is for practitioners and professionals to ensure that children along with parents and carers have the opportunity to experience both physical and emotional guidance and support throughout all new transitions and routines to ensure enhanced provision of well being, support for development and ensuring positive reactions and experiences to change and new experiences. This will allow transitions to run smoothly both for children and adults. (Welsh Government, 2011)

Graham Donaldson produced a report consisting of an independent review of the Welsh Curriculum. Donaldson believed the curriculum had become outdated and too complex. This new proposed and updated curriculum for Wales allows professionals working within the childcare sector to become more modern and improve outcomes for all children in the new identified areas. (Welsh Government, 2015)

Transitions and new routines will all play a vital role in helping children achieve full potential and gain these new skills in life.

This report created 4 main purposes of the curriculum which suggests that a curriculum for children should be produced to allow children to have the opportunity to become:

- Enterprising contributors
- Ambitious learners
- Ethical, and informed citizens of the world and especially Wales.
- Healthy individuals who are ready to lead a successful life and become valued people of society.

(Welsh Government, 2015)

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