A Guidance Handbook for Early Years keyworkers during childhood transitions.

(Skelley. A, 2020)

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Human Development

EAEE4003

Contents Page

1. Introduction: Transitions in the Early Years 3

2. How to use the guidance handbook 5

3. The role of the adult 8

4. The needs of the child 12

5. Partnerships 16

6. Interventions 19

7. Proposed outcomes 21

8. Reference list 24

Introduction

A transition is a time of change from one stage of life to another stage of life, this is where a child will face new experiences. These transitions can impact children in many ways; therefore, it is essential to ensure these transitions are executed as smoothly as possible. These transitions require certain adaptations for each individual child as every child is different and handles these changes in different ways (Clarke, V, 2020).

Children's lives are changing rapidly and are slowly becoming more hectic. Introducing children to new settings are big milestones in a child's life. Every new milestone creates new opportunities for growth and development. New transitions can also create anxiety and uncertainty for children, thus meaning it is essential to get these transition periods right. Transitions are a journey not an event (Early years Matters, 2020).

Children often experience their first educational transition when attending a nursery setting. This is when the children learn mostly through play. It is great during this stage to encourage the child as this is where they pick up most of their skills. Usually before children begin this journey, they will make certain number of visits to the nursery beforehand, this allows the child to familiarise themselves with the surroundings and get comfortable with them before they start their transition. Sometimes the key worker may make a home visit in order to meet the child where they are most relaxed and observe them in their own environment. Communicating with the child during this process is vital, this ensures the child does not feel anxious when going through these transitions (Novak Djokovic Foundation, 2020).

After nursery, children will then progress to primary school, in primary school children transition from the play-based learning that they are familiar with from nursery to the traditional style of education. This can be

an exciting time for children however it can also be a nerve racking time for them too as there is sometimes the fear of the unknown which causes anxieties for both children and parents or guardians (Novak Djokovic Foundation, 2020).

How to use this handbook

It is important to understand that the adults in a child's life are accountable to ensure that a child feels supported in their environment, this allows them to fulfil their maximum potential (Gov.Wales, 2017).

This handbook has been created in order to give guidance to key workers who work with children who are undergoing these essential transitions from home to a flying start pre-school within the age category of 2-3 years old. It is important to understand the significance of effective communication within these stages and how

to stay in control of the transition from home to pre-school.

It is vital for the Key workers and practitioners to ensure a smooth transition between the different environments (Gov.Wales,2017).

A variation of strategies must be put in place for this. As children progress to these stages it is important to look at how the key worker or practitioner plan to implement the actions of a smooth transition. A good relationship between practitioner and parent or guardian is essential to lessen the anxiety of transitioning. Forming these relationships can reduce the anxiety for both child and parent or guardian. Forming these relationships will allow the parents/guardian to give the practitioner or key worker a more detailed incite to the child regarding the child's more specific needs which could help with the transition. It is important to remember that these transitions are not something to be rushed, the child will

go at their own pace and they need to feel safe in their environment (Gov.Wales, 2017).

Children which are in the early years stage of their life need to complete tasks at their own pace as each child will be at a different stage of development. The level of trust between key worker and child during these tasks is essential to the child as this will reassure the child that they are not alone during the transition (Gov.Wales, 2017).

The Role of an Adult

During these transitions it is important that the key worker remembers that all children are different therefore the needs of every individual child must be met. It is important that a positive relationship between adult and child is formed in order to rid any anxiety the child may have during this time. These positive relationships enable the child to relax as during these times they are sometimes uncertain of their surroundings and unwilling to relax and participate in activities which will help to develop their skills during the transition. The positive relationships also allow the children to gain confidence in their surroundings and the more the child is encouraged in these situations the more the child feels motivated to be active and participate in activities (Westsussex.gov, 2019).

It is important to remember during these times that not only is this a big transition for the children but also for

the parents or the guardians therefore emotional support should also be given to the these in order for them to feel as comfortable as possible during the transitions as sometimes when the parent or guardian is nervous it can mirror onto the child making the child nervous too. Good communication between the key worker and the parent or guardian can be useful before the child transitions (Croneri, 2019).

What is a Key Person? – A Key person is a member of staff who is responsible for small groups of children, or an individual child, helping them to feel safe and cared for. It is an important role which works successfully with early years and reception classes. Having a good relationship with the child or children can help the transition process (early years matters, 2020).

As the Key worker it is important that children are provided with a smooth transition, while continuing a

professional relationship with the child and the parent. Some ways to ensure this is as smooth as possible are.

- *Developing a safe and trusting relationship between both the child and the parent which will ensure the best transition possible with minimal anxiety from both parent and child.*
- *Holding face to face sessions where parents can drop in and visit the school and the keyworker before sending their child to school. This reduces any stress the parent or guardian may feel.*
- *Encouraging children to bring things from their home such as toys or a teddy in order to have a sense of safety in their new environment.*
- *Ensure that parents and guardians are kept up to date with any progress their child is making in order to praise the child, encouraging their efforts. This will motivate them to keep aiming harder.*
- *Effective communication between parents/guardian and the key worker.*

- *Keeping activities fun, challenging and engaging, reflecting what the child needs.*
- *Showing parents or guardians resources available to them in order to continue the progress at home.*
- *If allowed, use photos of the children in displays etc for them to feel engaged in the classroom.*

(Croneri, 2019).

Albert Banduras social learning theory reveals that children follow behaviour via observation, imitation and modelling. Banduras theory emphasises the importance of the key worker being a good role model for the child as his theory has proven that children often copy and imitate the behaviour of adults. Bandura's theory also shows that children must take part in hands on activities in order to learn and grow (Daly et al, 2012). The Bobo Doll experiments results confirmed that children lead by example, the results showed children who observed the

aggressive model had been far more aggressive towards the doll rather than the children who were not exposed to the violence (Simplypsychology, 2014).

The Needs of a Child

It is important that children are given love, affection and a sense of security during these challenging and unnerving times. It is also important to remember that children learn best through play, so it is crucial to make sure the child gets the time and space they need to repeat the activity in order to grasp what they are trying to learn from it. As the child grows older it is important to communicate with them and encourage their play. Differentiating between what the child likes, and dislikes will be especially useful while they transition as focusing on a task, they like will allow them to be interested and engaged with the activity (Good to know, 2020).

Independence is extremely important for a child while going through these transitions and it is important to encourage their learning. Maria Montessori developed the method of giving children the freedom to learn with the correct equipment and resources for the child to learn freely. She believed that self-directed activities, learning and collaborative play was the best form of education for a child. The Montessori method believes in the child being free indoor and outdoor to prepare the child for exploration and independence (Hodgman. L, 2012). Montessori had The Five Principles for educating a child:

- *Principle 1- Respect for the child- This a major principle. If there is no respect given towards the child then no respect will be returned, denying the relationship between key worker and child.*
- *Principle 2- The Absorbent Mind- This is since children often pick up on their surroundings and can*

act like a sponge and 'absorb' the information surrounding them.

- *Principle 3- Sensitive Periods- There is the idea that children have certain times in their development which enable them to be best ready to learn a skill, this is known as a sensitive period. Montessori believed that teachers must identify this period for their student to excel in this time.*
- *Principle 4- The Prepared Environment- Montessori's method suggests children learn best when given the resources to do tasks independently. It is believed that the key worker should promote free learning and independence.*
- *Principle 5- Auto education- This is arguably the most important belief in the Montessori method. This is the idea that children can tutor themselves. Montessori believed that the key worker should create an encouraging environment for children to*

educate themselves while also being there to give guidance.

(Lopez. K, 2020).

During these transitions it is normal for the child to feel things are 'changing' and it is important that the child receives as much attention and support possible. It is the role of they Key worker to ensure that the child feels important, providing some emotional support to the child and sometimes even parents. The key worker will support the child through transitions and ensuring that the child's needs are met is essential.

It is important to assess if the child needs any extra support due to individual needs, if so, a plan must be put in place after communicating with parents. It is also important to note what outcomes are intended for the

child. During these transitions, the keyworker must ensure that the tasks or activities which have been put in place have been put together to improve the child's:

- *Literacy, Numeracy and Communication skills*
- *Social and personal skills*
- *Creativity skills*

(Early-Education, 2020).

Partnerships

It is the role of the key worker to ensure that parents feel involved in the transition. Communication is vital, arranging meetings, encouraging them to write up any questions they may have. It is important that parents understand what 'role' they have during the transition process, for example, allowing the child to brush their teeth independently, supporting them while they choose their own clothes and what they would like for food. This allows the child to begin to settle into their

environment much better for this process to begin (Nursery World, 2019).

Working together and offering things such as open days allow the parents to access information regarding the transition process (Oxfordshire County Council, 2017).

When parents and teachers create a partnership, it creates a protected environment for the child to achieve their milestones. Forming a partnership early allows the child to see significant and influential individuals in their lives cooperating, allowing them to see the importance of relationships. Urging parents to share their information on the child's specific needs can create a bigger and more gratifying environment for the infant. As important as a parent and keyworker relationship is, ensuring a strong bond is formed between the child is also key. Having a strong relationship with the child and parent will allow for the child to enter their transition as

smooth as possible and with confidence. To begin building positive partnerships it is possible to

- *Allow opportunity for the family to participate in activities which will help the transition.*
- *Accept the parents for who they are.*
- *Informing parents regularly and giving regular updates.*
- *Answering queries, the parent may have*
- *Encouraging the parent to talk about their child to the keyworker.*

(Naptime Academy. 2016)

Building strong relationships with parents can take time. It is important to offer resources to help the reinforcement of good behaviour at home. Sharing these resources can help ensure children meet their milestones (Naptime Academy, 2016).

Interventions

Intervention- A program element or strategies put in place to change or improve behaviour. An intervention uses multiple strategies which will produce lasting changes (health.mo.gov, 2020).

Interventions in the early years aim to ensure young children gain educational experience, preparing them for academic success. Most interventions have been seen to have a positive impact (Early years Interventions, 2020).

There are several benefits of an intervention while in early years, some include:

- *Progress and improvement*
- *Positive learning environment*
- *Better emotional wellbeing*
- *Confidence boost and a raised self esteem*
- *Support provided*

(Hsrpsychology, 2015).

Reggio Emilia came up with an approach containing four major principles, these are:

- *Emergent curriculum*
- *In-Depth projects*
- *Representational Development*
- *Collaboration*

Observing the child during activities and documenting the growth and progress of a child is also an important part of Emilia's approach, this is due to the child's level of concentration while learning. It is important to keep a record of what children have seen, heard and learnt in order to improve their development and understanding. Ensuring that the parents involve themselves during this time can contribute to the accomplishment of these interventions (Stoudt. A, 2020).

Proposed Outcomes

It is important to understand that every child is different, having their own personality is normal. This means they way the child will adjust to new transitions will be different from another. Vygotsky's theory argued that learning is necessary for developing and furthering human psychological functions. Vygotsky also believed that playing while learning, for example, playing house, or playing with toy pots and pans would begin to help them to understand adult life (Simplypsychology.org, 2020).

When a Key worker and a child work together on solving a problem, it can boost the child's confidence and can build on the relationship between key worker and child. Working together on a problem is known as sustained shared thinking, this is advantageous to the key worker as it allows them to view the situation through the eyes of the child, allowing the keyworker to assess the child's

cognitive development and can then allow the key worker to see if any extra support needs to be put in place (Essex.gov, 2020).

Professor Graham Donaldson stated in the Donaldson that the welsh curriculum was assessed and it had been seen that the curriculum was old-fashioned and now was the right time to get the welsh curriculum into the 21st century, which will improve the proposed outcomes of the children's education. The purpose of the welsh curriculum is to support children and young children to:

- *Ambitious and Capable learners- this ensures children will be ready to learn not only now but throughout their entire adult life too.*
- *Enterprising and creative contributors- this certifies that children will be ready to be apart of the adult world and the working world.*
- *Ethical and Informed Welsh citizens.*

- *Healthy and confident persons, ready to live as respected members of the community.*

With the new curriculum coming into practice it will drastically improve the outcomes for children, easing the transition process and helping the keyworker to achieve these proposed outcomes set in place (Gov.Wales, 2020).

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