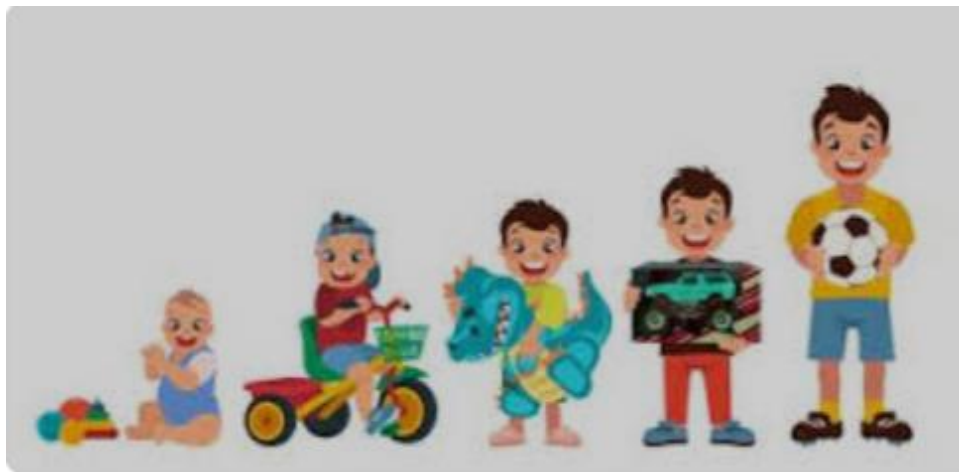


Early Years Practitioner Handbook: A guide to Transitions



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Introduction

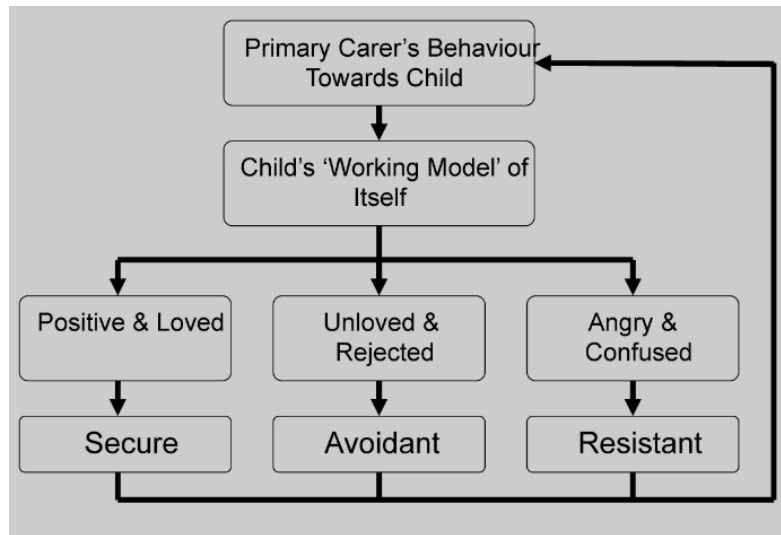
In this handbook the topics that will be discussed are the Role of the adult, The needs of the child, Environment and setting, Partnership working, Interventions and Outcomes. This handbook will also explain what is meant by the term transitions and it will explore theorists and their theories on child development and attachment styles. This handbook may be useful for Early Years Practitioners who are researching transitions and those who are looking to gain a deeper knowledge on this subject, to help support children in an effective manner.

Transitions

What does the term transition mean? The definition provided by Oxford languages, it states that it is “the process or a period of changes from one state or condition to another.” Transitions can occur in all aspects of life both in professional lives and personal lives. Transitions often occur in the daily routine of an Early Years Setting. Some Transitions that may occur could be going from playing to story time, attending the setting to home time or even from moving Early Years settings to a new one.

When children are experiencing transitions, it is natural for them to feel a variety of emotions during this process. Although, every child is unique and develops in their own way, at their own pace, some of the emotions that may be felt are anxiety, happiness, sadness, nervousness, shyness, and many others. As Early Years Practitioners, it is your job to guide the children through these emotions while allowing them to understand their feelings and why they are occurring. All while helping them build resilience to these.

Bowlby's attachment theory supports this as Bowlby believed that children are born with the desire to form attachments to those close to them. This places more emphasis on the importance of the adult's role during the transition period. According to Simply Psychology, Bowlby found that improper support from adult's during the attachment process could affect them in later life, this is why proper guidance through transitions is crucial.



Role of the adult

The role of an adult during the transition is a significant role within this process. Birth to 5 Matters (No date) states that it is important for Early Years Practitioners to know the children well to adjust practice accordingly to suit the child within this process. Early Years Practitioners should view transitions as a natural pathway to the next stage in their lives and their holistic development as opposed to a singular occurrence. Transitions are a continuously developing process that may occur at any point.

When working with an Early Years setting it is important to understand that not all children are the same and require the same approaches or support during transitions. Early Years Practitioners may find it useful to gain a good knowledge of the children within their setting to understand on a more in-depth level on how best to support a child and their family within a transition period. Future Learn (No date) suggests that children may look to Early Years Practitioners for routine and stability. This sense of predictability may help children adjust and regulate themselves as they will have an idea of what will be happening at certain times of their day.

Adults in Early Years settings have many responsibilities. The National Minimum Standards are provided to all Childcare and Early Years Settings to ensure that all settings are meeting good and consistent standards of care to those within their care. The National Minimum Standards are provided to settings by the Welsh Government, and it is the staff within these settings responsibility to ensure that these standards are met and maintained. It is the responsibility of each member of staff not just the staff in management positions to not only know what the standards are but meet them. By doing so, this will help create an inclusive and nurturing environment for the children to develop holistically in.

Another responsibility of the staff within Childcare and Early Years settings is to create a good foundation of trust with children, their families, and other members of staff. The GOV (No Date) states that by encouraging parents to be involved in their child's development it will enable to do well in all aspects of their lives which is a beneficial foundation to lay for children. This source continues by suggesting that staff should

make use of this opportunity of involving families as to gain a wider knowledge of the children and their background. Children can come from a variety of ethnic and religious backgrounds, and it is vital that Early Years Practitioners seek out information on this to provide for the children and families effectively holistically in their setting. This will contribute to the staff being able to build a healthy trust between families and children alike.

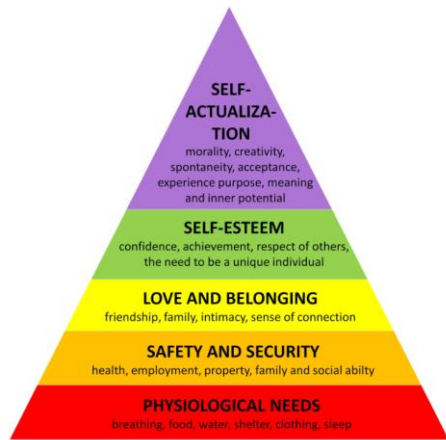
An additional responsibility of the staff within Childcare and Early Years Settings is to establish effective communication between other members of staff within the setting, children within the setting, families of children attending the setting and other multiagency workers when necessary. The GOV states that there are simple steps which can be taken to establish good, effective communication. Daily handovers with families, One Page Profiles, Individual Learning Plans, staff meetings, staff handovers and regular parent/ teacher catch up sessions are effective ways to build communication and gaining knowledge on the children with their families. By the staff acting on their responsibilities this will help create positive environment within the setting for the children to develop in.

The needs of the child

In Childcare and Early Years settings, it is vital that the holistic needs of a child are met to help them develop appropriately. According to Simply Psychology (2024) Maslow's hierarchy of needs are arranged into different layers. The bottom layer is where the physical needs of a child such as food, water, and warmth. The next layer is Safety and Security such as poverty and health. The next layer is Love and Belonging Family, Friendship, and sense of connection. Continuing from this the next layer is Self-esteem, under this comes confidence and individuality. Finally, at the top layer is Self-actualisation. Within this comes, acceptance, creativity, and purpose. All these aspects create the Hierarchy of Needs. These needs must be met for a human to reach their full potential. When Children are in a Childcare and Early Years setting it is vital that all these needs are met. This will not only support holistic development, but it will also fit in in being in accordance with the National Minimum Standards care guidelines.

Another way the needs of a child can be met by Early Years Settings is through providing stimulating environment and activities. By providing this to children within the settings we are supporting the development in a way that children can find engaging. Another way the needs of a child can be meet is by providing a structure and stability within the Childcare and Early Years Setting. This may bring a child going through a transition period comfort. An additional way Childcare and Early Years Practitioners can provide for the needs of a child is by practicing inclusive and enabling practice. All children are equal and should have access to equal opportunities as this is not only in accordance with the National Minimum Standards, but it is in accordance with the rights of the child as a part of the UNCRC.

All approaches taken by the staff in Childcare and Early Years Settings should be individual and suitable to the individual needs of a child. Staff within should be flexible and adjust their approaches in the best interest of the child and their families when necessary. The holistic safety and development of the children within Childcare and Early Years Settings are paramount.



Partnership working

When working in Childcare and Early Years Settings there may be situations where a Childcare and Early Years Practitioner may need to work in cooperation with multi-agency workers and agencies. According to the Early Years Alliance (No date), an important part of partnership working is forming an effective communication between Early Years Settings, families and the other agencies involved. By using this communication that has been built practitioners are able to establish a good working relationship with those involved. A benefit of this will be the result of everyone working together using the same approaches working towards a mutual goal.

When a child is going through a transition, they may be feeling a variety of emotions such as being nervous or unsure. This could result in emotional outbursts from the child as their way of expressing their emotions in a nonverbal manner. It is important for Early Years Practitioners to be understanding and caring in their approach to the children going through transitions. It is important that we also provide support to the families of the children at this time also. As much as it may be unnerving for a child in this stage it could also be just as much so for their parents. Professionals can do this by having regular meetings with those involved. This may be between Childcare and Early Years Practitioners, Teachers, Families, Children, Social workers, and many others.

By ensuring that steps are taken to help the child through the transition period and adjusted, if necessary, we can ensure the child explores this new phase of their life in a smooth and healthy manner. By working with other agencies to grant this will happen, we are building the child's resilience to any future transitions they may face.

Interventions

When a child is going through a transition there are actions that can be taken by Childcare and Early Years practitioners which could help the child. According to Child Mind Institute (2023) there are steps Practitioners and Families of children can take to help in this situation. One Intervention that could help could be the use of Role Play. If a child is transitioning from a preschool setting to a school setting it may be useful to put a variety of local school jumpers and other clothes in the settings role play area. This will allow the child to familiarise themselves with the items which may make going to school less daunting for them. Another approach on this could be by showing the children a transition book on their new setting. A picture book with pictures of their new school, teacher, classroom, and other areas will also allow the child to familiar themselves with their new setting allowing them to be able to relax and feel more comfortable within the early stages of being in it.

Another Intervention suggested by Childs Mind Institue (2023) is by showing enthusiasm and praise when discussing the transition. By encouraging positive reinforcement when visiting or discussing the new school it will allow the child to associate the transition as a positive experience for them. This will help calm any nerves they may be feeling on the matter and will as a result help build their confidence and resilience to change which will be beneficial to the child throughout their lives.

Mentally Healthy Schools (No date) suggests a useful intervention which children may find beneficial is by contacting and working in partnership with local schools and arranging visits for the children transitioning into their setting with practitioners or with the children's family. This intervention will allow the children to experience the new setting with a familiar person they have already built trust with. This may bring comfort to the child and will help them adjust to the setting while having the comfort of their trusted adult with them. The adult will be able to guide the child through the experience and provide comfort and support to the child when necessary.

Childcare and Early Years Practitioners should take steps to ensure that they are preparing the children in the best manner. It is vital for Practitioners to remember that all

children are different and the approach in which is taken to help them transition may need to be adjusted to meet the needs of the child. For example, if a child has ALN challenges they may benefit from more visits to their new setting in order to become familiar with it. Another situation in which practice may need to be adjusted would be if there was communication or language barriers. The child may need to have 1-1 support or an interpreter to accompany them on their transition visit, for them to experience the unfamiliar environment fully and gain comfort when needed.

Outcomes

An important aspect of the transition period for practitioners is being able to observe and acknowledge if a transition is successful. Teach Early Years (No date) states that there are some vital outcomes to look for. One outcome may be if a child is happy and comfortable in their new setting. By being comfortable in the setting, it shows that a child is settled in their unfamiliar environment which will give them the freedom to explore it fully and gain the most out of it.

Another successful outcome suggested by Teach Early Years (No date) would be if a child is building relationships with adults and children within their new setting. If a child is feeling confident in their environment it may show through their actions of approaching new or unfamiliar people and building relationships with them.

Observing children in the new setting can also be a good indicator of if a transition has been successful:

- If a child is expressing their interests
- Exploring the setting
- Approaching teachers for support when needed
- Taking appropriate risks within the environment
- Partaking in new activities
- Developing holistically in the setting
- Reviewing a child's development

All of these can be indicators of a successful transition. Transition periods may take longer for some children than others. It is important for Childcare and Early Years Practitioners to adjust approaches to suit the individual needs of the child. It is important to remember that families may also need support within this period and parent's evenings are an effective way to communicate with the families and give any support they may need.

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