

A Handbook for Early Years Practitioners

A Guide to Transitions for children moving from Nursery to Reception



(Source: Google search, 2023)

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Introduction

Handbook

This handbook is to provide help to practitioners working in the early years sector, to help support children with the transition into nursery. It will discuss what transitions are, the role of the adult, the needs of the child, the importance of partnership working, interventions that can be used by practitioners to help children transition smoothly and the proposed outcomes for children. Throughout the handbook it will discuss some of the theories that can be linked to transitions in early years setting.

Transitions

Definition

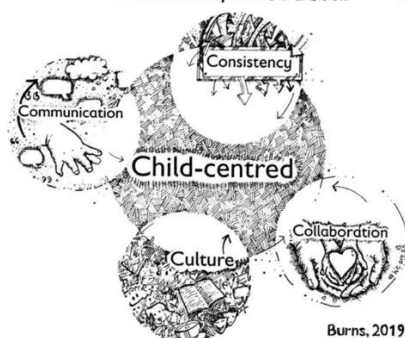
“The process or a period of changing from one state or condition to another” (Oxford learners dictionary, 2023).

Transitions are important milestone events that happen for children, and they can sometimes influence their development. Transitions can be exciting for children and should always provide new opportunities and growth, although this is not always the case. Sometimes transitions can cause uncertainty for children where things such as surroundings, expectations, procedures and people can all change and therefore be unfamiliar to children which can potentially cause upset. Dowling (2014) agrees that children can feel secure when in familiar surroundings and are seeing familiar people. For transitions to be successful for children, preparation for change should begin before the transition is due to occur (Early Years matters 2023). The transition is a gradual

process that will continue until the child is completely settled and will vary with each child's individual needs. For transitions to occur smoothly it is vital that practitioners understand how the transitional period can affect a child's health and wellbeing and how important they are to their development. Practitioners should also consider the child's family and any wants or needs they have during the transitional period too (Welsh Government, 2017). There are many different types of transitions a young child will experience. For example, transitioning from home to a child minder or flying start, transitioning from flying start to nursery, transitioning from nursery to reception or transitioning from reception to Key stage 1. They can all have an effect on a child but if there is an adult present who is knowledgeable of what the child needs, responsive to their needs and caring and loving towards the child, this will help the child to realise quickly that transitions are safe and allow for future transitions to be easier and allow them more confidence when they next occur (Kirklees Council, 2019).

The five 'C's that contribute to a positive transition

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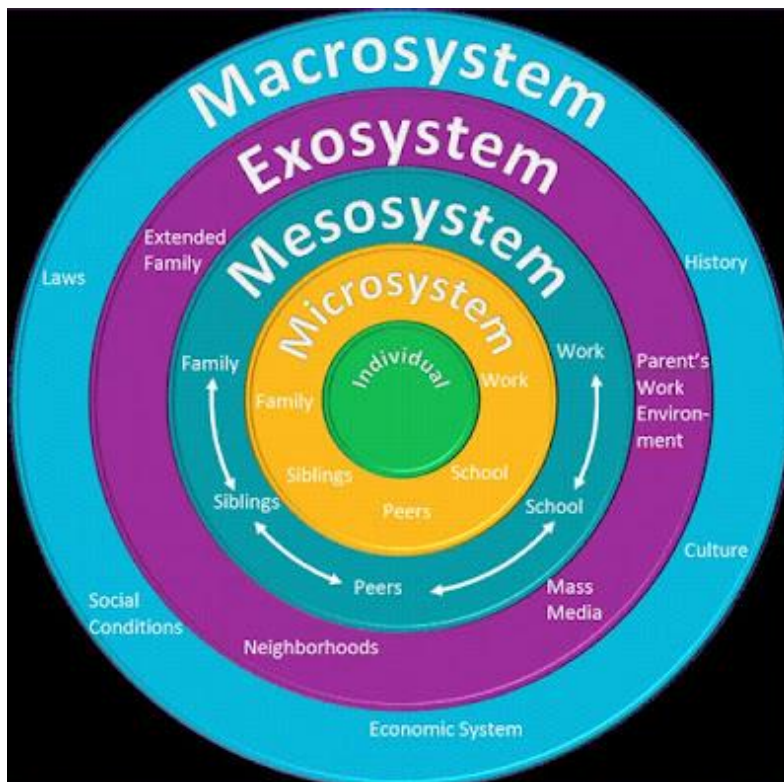


(Source: Burns, 2019, cited as Education Scotland 2020. P.96)

*** Remember that transitions should always include the child, the parents/carers and the practitioner ***

Role of the Adult

When a baby is born, they form a very special bond with the primary care giver, usually the mother, so when transitioning into a setting they then must learn to make bonds with other adults who can be unfamiliar to them. This can be made easier for the child by having a familiar face present to help them settle.



(Source: Susan Marie, 2017)

Bronfenbrenner (1977, cited SimplyPsychology 2023) believed that a child's development could be influenced by several factors ranging from their immediate surrounding such as family, to a much broader range of factors such as societal cultures and laws. He believed that all though they could all impact

a child greatly and all interrelate, that they could be organised into his Ecological system with the most influential factors closest to the individual and less influential working outwards. His Ecological system consisted of five different levels, the Microsystem, the Mesosystem, the Exosystem and the Macrosystem, with the individual being at the very centre.

As stated in the National Minimum Standards (2023) practitioners must follow the seven core aims outlined by Welsh Government that are all linked to the Articles stated in the UNCRC (Unicef, no date), to ensure that all children are looked after correctly, always treated with respect, alongside being kept safe whilst in the care of practitioners. If the seven core aims are considered during transitions, then children will be more likely to settle into the environment.

Practitioner/Key Worker

As shown above in the Microsystem of Bronfenbrenner's Ecological system the Early years practitioner/key worker can be very important to the impact of the child. It is important that early year's practitioners can support a child during a stage of transition. The practitioner should be aware of the individual needs of a child to ensure the correct support is offered to help encourage the child to settle into the setting smoothly. According to Birth to 5 matters (no date), it is helpful to have a key worker. A key worker is a first point of contact for certain children and their families, and they hold the responsibilities to build special, trusting relationships with them both. It is important that the family feel that they can approach and talk to the key worker and deliver any thoughts or concerns they may have about their child and trust that their needs will be met

whilst in the key worker's care. The key worker must meet the child's physical and emotional needs whilst accepting their feelings. When the child feels confident that his needs are being met this is when a secure attachment will be made, allowing for the child to explore the setting at ease and allowing their development to progress. Bowlby (1969, cited in Scharer 2018, p. 247) states that for children to develop their social and emotional skills healthily, they need to have a stable and secure relationship with at least one caregiver. The key worker should be responsible for building a 'triangle of trust' with the child and the family to ensure that they have a special, nurturing person that they feel close to and are willing to share information with, about their child.

Family

John Bowlby's attachment theory (1997, cited Steele, Davidson and Davidson, 2007) suggests that children can form attachments with more than one caregiver at the same time. He believes that if the child is receiving interest and love from the caregiver that this will allow for a secure attachment to form, making it easier for the child to start at other settings like school.

Therefore, it is vital that the family allow practitioners to form bonds and a secure relationship with them and that they liaise with the practitioner sharing all information regarding the child, to ensure that the setting can help and support the child with their transition whilst ensuring that their individual needs are being met throughout. It is important that family are open and honest with the practitioner and share as much information as possible about

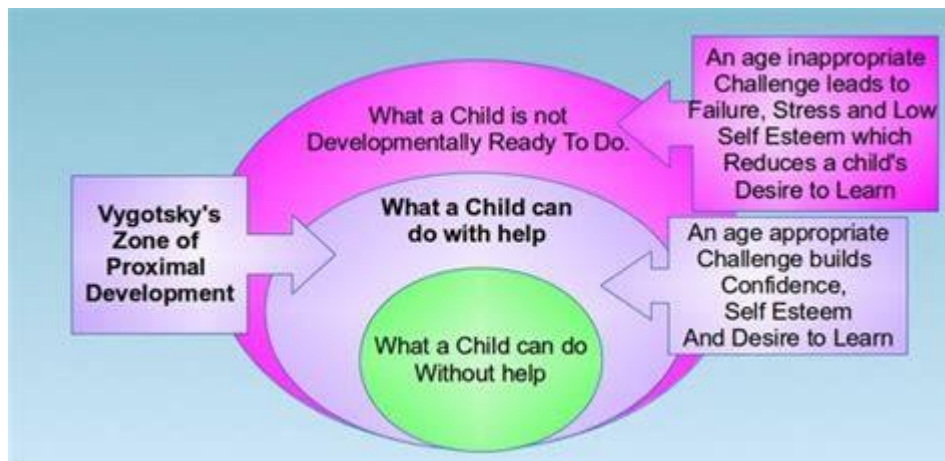
the child so the practitioner can use this information to form a trusting and caring relationship with the child which will allow them to see that the practitioner has a genuine interest and care towards them.

Role model

It is important to remember that all adults surrounding children will be looked upon as role models. Banduras social learning theory (cited learning theories, 2023) suggests that children will learn from adults by observing and imitating their behaviours, attitudes and actions. This is why it is important for practitioners to model the best attitudes, love and care possible to the children to enable them to envision that it is going to be a safe and loving environment for them during their transition. It is also as equally important for the family to show the child that they are happy with the setting chosen and that they trust that the child will be safe and cared for whilst present. If a child can sense an adult's anxiety this could potentially be remodelled by the child making it difficult for them to transition as smoothly as possible.

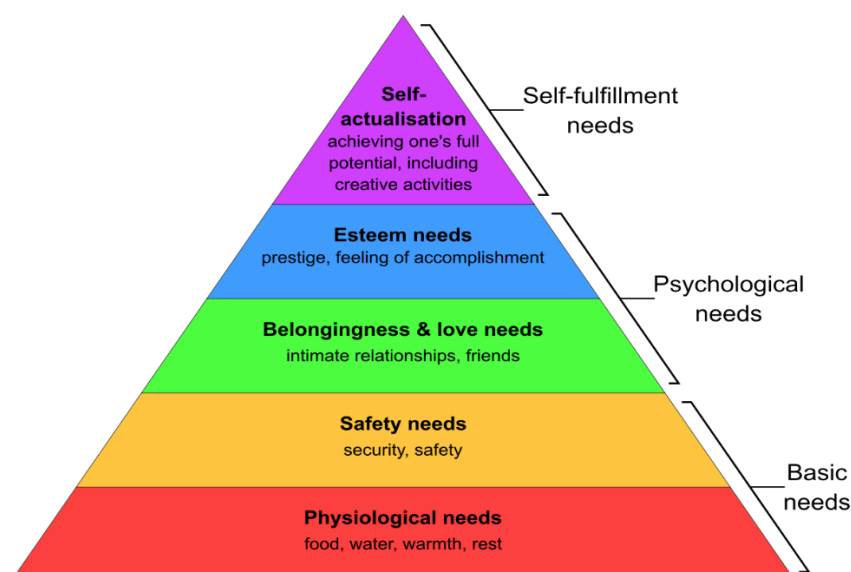
According to Vygotsky (cited Knestrick, 2012) it is important to use a child's Zone of Proximal Development to help them to progress and develop in their learning, especially whilst they are in the early years as this is when brain development is at its highest. He believed that practitioners should use what a learner cannot do, give them challenges using their support and guidance, known as scaffolding, which will allow the child to develop the skills to eventually do the challenge unaided. This can be linked to transitions, as if a child is finding it difficult to settle, and maybe wanting to be close to the adult,

then the practitioner could use the scaffolding method, by allowing the child to be close and gaining their trust and confidence first, until eventually they may be able to explore around the setting independently, meaning that they can then do the challenge unaided.



(Source: Google image search, 2023)

Needs of the child



(Source: Michael Corthell, 2023)

Maslows 1970 theory (cited Mathes, 2023) suggests that there is a hierarchy of five physiological needs, these are known as physiological, safety, love and belonging, esteem and self-actualization, which all fit into three categories of needs that are, basic needs, psychological needs and self-fulfilment needs.

Maslow believed that the needs at the bottom of the hierarchy must be sufficiently satisfied before the next level of needs can emerge. For transitions to be smooth the basic needs of the child need to be met to ensure that the child can progress up the hierarchy and become a happy, confident and secure student who is willing to explore the setting and activities available to become an independent learner.

Practitioners should understand that each child has individual needs that should be met and the best way to enable this is to know the child holistically, his likes, dislikes and any additional needs. This again, is important as if the basic needs are not being satisfied then the child will struggle to move onto the next level of the hierarchy, which could slow down the development of the child.

According to Harvard University (2011) all early experiences shape the way in which a child's brain will develop and allow them to manage with future learning, behaviour and health. They suggest that the connections in the brain will grow and develop according to the experiences received. They believe that if one connection is used less, then it can fade away using a process called pruning.

Serve and Return

Serve and return interaction with adults helps build the emotional and cognitive skills that children need. If the child serves by offering an interaction the adult should return the serve by offering an appropriate response which will then in turn fulfil the need. Continued support by using the serve and return approach with adults helps children to build on the previous stage that has been met by using positive and consistent engagement (Harvard University 2011). When this takes place during transition it will help to develop the psychological needs of the child allowing them to progress onto the top level of Maslow's Hierarchy of needs which then allows for further development to take place.

Childrens rights

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) article 12, states that "every child has the right to express their views, feelings and wishes in all matters affecting them" (UNICEF, no date), this article supports that the child may take a transitional object from home to the setting, that they are attached to or familiar with, to help with the settling in process.

Froebel's key principles showed that he believed that children should have freedom, be connected with their community, have the opportunity to be creative and engage with nature and have the freedom to play. Froebel's

theory can be linked to the UNCRC as it states in Article 13 that children must have the freedom of expression. Article 31 gives them the right to leisure, play and culture (UNICEF, no date). The emphasis on the right to play can help greatly when dealing with transitions as it allows children to be active, curious and creative which enables them to become independent and to follow their own interests.

Partnership

As Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Theory suggests, there are several environmental systems that are responsible for the influence of a child's development. The first system known as the Microsystem, involves the family of the child and the setting practitioners, with the children being at the centre of everything.

Children

It is important to always be inclusive with all children. Children should always feel included regardless of their language, culture, needs or abilities (Nutbrown, 1996). Transitions can be a difficult time for children but if they feel that they are included, that they are respected and loved then they could begin to transition at more ease.

Family

During transitional periods, it is important that there is good communication between practitioners and the family of the child to ensure that the child can settle and therefore progress in their development to the best of their ability. Practitioners should always share as much information with the parents as possible and ensure that parents know what extra help or support is available to them and their child, if needed. It is helpful to ensure that the parents know the daily routines so they can help prepare the child for the day too. Birth to 5 Matters (no date) agree that clear leadership from practitioners whilst communicating with parents is vital and practitioners should consider the level of engagement to ensure optimal relating to the family. There are three types of communication that can be effective whilst engaging with families, they consist of linear communication, transactional communication and interactional communication. It is important to chat daily and share daily progress to ensure the family are aware and feel involved with the child's transition and they know of ways in which they can help support the child's learning or development (Welsh Government 2021). Chats can take place on learning journals such as class dojo or see-saw if drop off and pick up times are inconvenient.

Other practitioners and Multi-agency

To communicate effectively with other practitioners and multi-agency workers it is important to be open, honest and welcoming, professional, inclusive and always positive. Communicating with other staff members and multi-agency worker during transitions can be beneficial for children as it can be a way of ensuring that all practitioners are aware of things such as likes or dislikes of the

child or whether the child has any additional support that is needed. This information can be gathered during observations and shared during staff meetings.

It is vital that practitioners consider any barriers to communication for it to be effective for all included and to ensure that they have support if needed.

Barriers can be things such as English as additional language, additional learning needs or a visual or hearing impairment.



(Source: National Nursery Training.com, 2023)

COMMUNICATION IS KEY

Interventions

To help support children through times of transition, there are several interventions that can be useful. Below will outline some of the approaches that can be helpful when supporting a child who is finding it difficult to settle

into a new setting, that can be used before the child arrives and during the transition time.

Home visits

According to Renwood (no date) home visits can be beneficial during transitions as it allows for the practitioner to view the child in an environment that they are already comfortable and confident in, which then allows for a more accurate observation of the child's personality. Home visits also allow for a good insight into the child's interests and can provide a good picture of their development. Bronfenbrenner (cited Keenan, Evans and Crowley, 2016) suggested that observing children in their own environments can be more beneficial to finding out information.

Renwood (no date) also suggests that home visits ensure that the child can begin to form bonds and build trust with the practitioner on a one-to-one basis which can help to lower any anxieties a child may display during transitions.

As well as being beneficial for children and practitioners, Renwood (no date) also agrees that home visits can be more welcomed by families. By visiting them in a more familiar environment to them, this could allow them to share important information more freely as they may feel more comfortable in their own homes. This would also help to ensure that they can start to develop home school links and enable communication between practitioners, families and the child to start on a positive.

During home visits it is useful to find out as much information as you can about the child so that you can help to settle the child, this could be done using a one-page profile which the family and child could help with. This could also then be updated and passed onto the next teacher at the end of the school year before they transition into reception.



(Source: Waun Wen Primary School, One Page Profile, 2023)

Transition booklet

Before a child arrives at the setting it could be useful for them to have pictures of what the environment looks like and information on where or how to access toilets or entrance and exit doors. This could help support them in transition as they may feel more at ease knowing what to expect.



(Source: Waun Wen Primary, Transition booklet, 2023)

Admissions meeting and Play session

To ensure that families have all the information needed and that they have shared any information about their child that is of relevance to the practitioners, it is good practice to hold a meeting at the school. During this session it would also be helpful for transitions if the child was to meet the practitioner at the setting after the home visit has taken place. This would also allow the child some time to view the setting and give them the opportunity to explore if they wanted. Allowing the child time to play is crucial. According to Welsh Government (2015), whilst playing, children will take risks, experiment and solve problems. These are crucial skills during times of transitioning as they will enable them to adapt to the setting more confidently if they acquire these skills. When children are allowed to play and are given playful experiences, they can find ways to explore their emotions (Welsh Government 2022). This is also important during transitions as they may experience different emotions than they have experienced before.

“Play is whatever the individual wants it to be, either to meet a need, solve a problem or express a feeling” (Smidt, 2011).

Play can be a powerful tool in helping to build trusting relationships with a child

Proposed Outcomes

It will be evident to see if a transition has been successful. When fully settled a child will show that they are happy to enter the setting and portray a confident manner whilst moving around the environment. They will be able to follow class routines with ease and will do so with no worries. The child will be able to engage and interact with peers and practitioners and ask for help if it is needed. When carrying out observations and assessments, practitioners should see some progress in their development and the child's knowledge and understanding should become more consistent, showing that they are learning from their time spent at the setting. A successful transition will mean that the child will play freely and enjoy exploring the whole setting, inside and outside.

Any additional learning needs will need to be taken into consideration when considering the above

A successful transition will be supported by Welsh Government (2022) where they outline the four purposes and state that all schools in Wales should support its learners to become,

- Ambitious, capable learners who are ready to learn throughout their lives.
- Enterprising, creative contributors who are ready to play a full part in life and work.

- Ethical, informed citizens who are ready to be citizens of Wales and the world.
- Healthy, confident individuals who are ready to lead fulfilling lives as valued members of society.

(Welsh Government, 2022, p.1)



(Source: Waun Wen Primary School, 2021)

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