

Early Years Practitioners Handbook: A guide To Transitions



(Source: clipartlibrary.com ,2016-2019)

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INTRODUCTION

Aims

The aim of this handbook is to inform practitioners on how to support early years children going through different transitions. This handbook will go into detail about the needs of each individual child, the role of the adults in the child's life and what they can do to support the child to the best of their ability, different partnerships both in the school and home environment, the environment around the child, some of the physical interventions we can make as practitioners in order to ensure a smooth transition and preferred outcomes. Furthermore, this handbook will also include statistics and quotes from a variety of sources such as books, websites, and articles. To expand I will add the effects of transition on the child's well-being and state of mind. Throughout this handbook I will show an insight into different theorist theory's such as attachment, a child's basic needs and role modelling.

What is a transition?

Transition is a change in a child's or young person's life, the change can be physical, emotional, or social. For example, it could be the child going through puberty which is a physical change. On the other hand, it could be the child's parents getting a divorce which is an emotional change. A change is defined as "an act or process through which something becomes different". **Dictionary, (No Date)**. Many aspects of a child's life can change as they grow up some are expected, and some are not. There are numerous types of transitions that effect a child's development in different ways. Transitions are milestone events for children and have a definite impact on their development. A child can display uncertainty and may be hesitant whilst going through a new change or transition. Transitions can be viewed as a process where both children, parents and practitioners have to work together to receive the proposed outcome. Transitions happen over a period of time and are not something that can be rushed. **Early Years Matters, (2021)**.

Transitions in early years

There is a variety of different transitions that a child can go through whilst attending an early year setting, few of these transitions are expected and some are not. Every child is different and some children may embrace transitions more than others. There are both practical and emotional transitions a child can go through. The main transition I will be discussing throughout this handbook is when a young child transitions from the home environment to a school's nursery setting. In order for the child to settle quickly and smoothly there must be an effective management team within the setting, communication with parents, home visits beforehand and also a visit to the setting, if possible, I realize this may have changed due to covid-19. **Corner-i, (2017)**.

NEEDS OF THE CHILD

The key to meeting a child's needs is understanding that every child is different and has a variety of requirements that need to be met. As practitioners it is our role to support children this is very important as this will most likely be the child's first experience of an education setting other than their home. As stated by (Government UK, 2021) "You should make this a positive, safe and inclusive experience for every child." I agree with this statement and believe every child should feel happy coming to school. Furthermore, the children need to be safeguarded and protected by staff members.

Abraham Maslow created the theory of Maslow's hierarchy of needs, which presents the idea that us as humans are motivated by five different categories of needs. They are physiological, safety, love, esteem, and self-actualization. Hopper, (2020). The needs at the bottom of the pyramid must be met first in order to work your way up to the top. In every setting the children should be provided with a breakfast club and free school meals that they are able apply for. This results in the children getting their basic needs met, before and during a long day in school. This helps to ensure that each child is getting one warm meal a day and therefore is able to concentrate whilst in class.



Maslow's hierarchy of needs

(Source: Hopper,2020)

Communication is very important when trying to build a relationship and strong bond with someone. As a practitioner you need to build a respectful and positive relationship with everyone around you that may be the child, parents, external and internal staff members. Whilst communicating it is vital that you are clear, that suitable language is used for the audience, that everyone who should be included is present, that there are regular updates and that the child's best interests remain at the centre. It is important to stay open minded to others' ideas and respect what they have to say even if you may not always agree with them. When communicating with a child it is especially important to show that you care, are empathetic and take notice of your tone and voice.

A schema is a mental framework that organises and questions information about something such as learning to grasp a pencil the child's mind will then use this previous knowledge to grasp a spoon. A schema allows the brain to store knowledge and information. Furthermore, a schema helps the child build knowledge of the world around them and form mental

representations in order to aid their own learning. Jean Piaget used schema as evidence for his theory of cognitive development. [Psychology unlocked, \(2020\)](#)

Observations are carried out on a daily basis in order to monitor any changes within the children's behaviour. Furthermore, to assess the children's likes and dislikes. It is important to observe the children regularly in order to evaluate their ability as the standard of work may now be too easy or difficult for them. [\(Palaiologou , 2012\)](#) states that it is expected of you as a practitioner to "appreciate the learning environment as a vehicle for all children's development and learning. "To clarify you do not only need to observe the children but the learning environment you are working in so that it meets all aspects of the children's needs.

ROLE OF THE ADULT

During transitions practitioners may carry out different roles from the ones they hold majority of the time. In order to be flexible and respond to the child's needs more efficiently. Practitioners are able to guide children throughout different transitions and as a result of this the child builds up resilience. [Future Learn, \(2021\)](#).

Parents

The attachment theory supports that a very strong emotional and physical bond to one primary caregiver which in most circumstances is usually the child's mother is important to our development as people. If the child's bond with their primary caregiver is strong then they will feel attached and therefore safe to explore the world around them. This can result in the child adapting to transitions and change more smoothly. The primary caregiver gives the child someone who is always there when they need comfort. When the bond with the child's primary caregiver is weak the child may feel cautious, scared to leave, and have poor self-esteem. There is one type of secure attachment and there are three types of insecure attachments. They are anxious ambivalent, anxious avoidant and anxious disorganised. [Sprouts, \(2018\)](#). When the child is going through anxious ambivalent attachment the child will feel emotionally immature, will need constant reassurance, and may have separation anxiety. This then could result in the child being clingy, having poor self-esteem and trust issues as an adult. Disorganised attachment can result in the child feeling depressed, angry and withdrawn all out of frustration as they do not know what is going on one day to the next.

Practitioners

Having adult support can have an impact on the child's overall emotional development and wellbeing. They become much more self-confident and in turn sociable meaning that they can make and maintain friendships easier this will help to benefit their social development in a positive way. Practitioners can help ease the transition of a child coming from home into an education setting in a number of different ways such as visiting the setting beforehand, video tour of the classroom, a welcome pack to take home. The child can also be encouraged to bring a comforter with them for example soft toy so that they have something with them that is familiar.

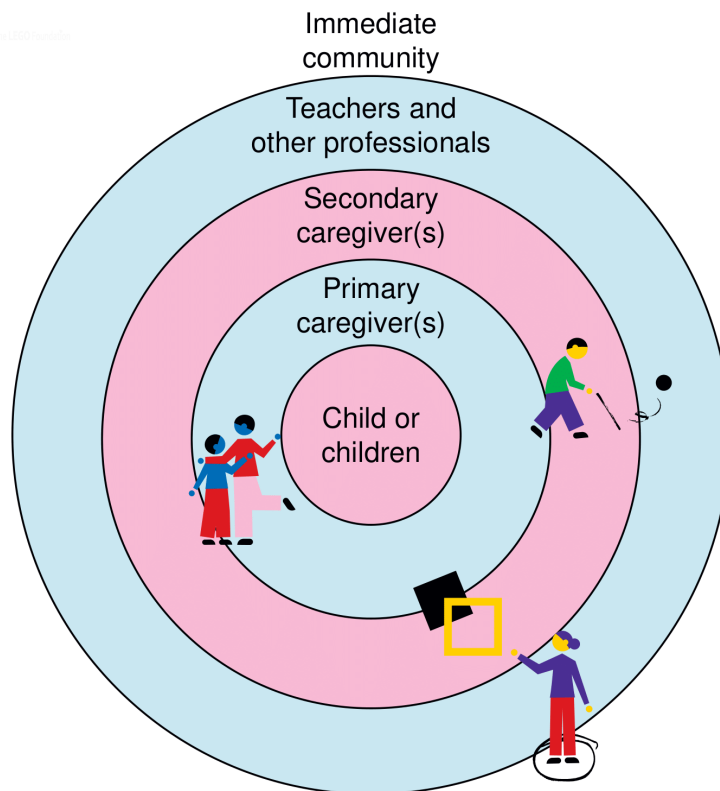
Role Models

Children observe everything and therefore model how you act around them. Bandura carried out an experiment called the Bobo experiment this was named after the Bobo dolls. This experiment's objective was to see if the children would model and mimic adults' aggressive behaviour towards the doll. According to [\(McLeod, 2014\)](#) Bandura Ross "tested 36 boys and 36 girls from the Stanford University Nursery School aged between 3 to 6 years old." The boys and girls were mixed and then split into two groups. One group watched a video of an adult hitting, punching, and pushing the doll over. The other group watched an adult play nicely with the doll rocking it back and forth. The group that was exposed to

aggressive modelling increased the child's attraction to equipment such as the guns and hammers even though they were never shown in the adult's video. The group that watched the positive influence played well with the doll. This theory shows me that it is important to be a positive role model as children do mimic the people surrounding them from a young age.

PARTNERSHIPS

In order to have a strong relationship with all agencies involved everyone must be respected and successful communication is key to ensure that everything runs smoothly and so that there is no confusion or crossover.



(Source: Future Learn, 2021)

As shown by the diagram above the child's best interest should always remain at the centre. The child's primary caregivers are the adults who work the closest with the child such as parents, close family, school, or childcare settings. The secondary care givers are extended family and health services such as a general practitioner. The fourth layer is made up of teachers and other professionals finally followed by the community. All of these professionals have to work together and communicate in order to receive the best possible outcome for the child. This is called multi-agency working. An example of multi-agency working would be a classroom teacher working together with different sectors, professionals, and agencies to help improve the outcomes for children in their development and learning which is a requirement of the early years foundation stage. Another example of multi-agency working would be a child has just joined the setting who requires a speech and language therapist as they find it difficult to pronounce letters and sounds. As the classroom teacher you must discuss this with the child's parents and the head teacher to ensure that the support this child requires is put in place. (Fisher, 1996) Stated that "conversations with individual children are a critical part of the teacher's repertoire of teaching strategies". This shows that teachers have to adapt in order to meet each child's preferences.

ENVIRONMENT

The environment around the child plays a vital role in supporting them throughout different transitions.

Vygotsky believed that children learnt through physical interaction with the world around them and by doing things independently. Vygotsky's sociocultural theory highlights that learning is a social process in which children rely on parents, peers, and caregivers to widen their knowledge of society. Vygotsky was interested in how beliefs, skills and values are passed on to new generations. [First Discoverers, \(2021\)](#)

Jean Piaget's theory of cognitive development explains how a child constructs a mental model of the world. Piaget believed that a child's intellectual development was not a fixed trait and can change based off of the child's interaction with the environment. Piaget's theory suggests that children learn through experience and doing things themselves. Children can learn a lot by completing activities independently however it is just as important to do controlled activities with the children. In my placement it is important to have an equal balance of both.

There is currently a new Welsh curriculum that is being created. This new curriculum allows children to be more ambitious and capable learners that will put their practice into life skills and not just use them in the education setting. The children will become more confident and creative, allowing them to become more valued members of society. A well-planned curriculum results in the children having a wider variety of opportunities both academically and throughout their lives. [Gatley, \(2020\)](#)

Play is when a child performs an activity for self-amusement. Play benefits a child's development in a number of different ways. Play is a child-led activity; this means that the child has chosen what they want to do and when. Play helps the child to understand and make sense of the world around them. Play involves experience, exploration, and experimentation. Play allows the child to build self-worth and gain a sense of their own abilities. Play should be fun, enjoyable, and also engaging for the child. This results in the child learning how to express themselves and their feelings. Children are able to develop their creativity through play. Furthermore, play is for a variety of purposes.

Maria Montessori came up with a theory that encourages independence and choice. This theory of teaching shows that children have an interest to learn and will progress if in a suitable environment. Montessori found out that children understand more complex concepts when they are able to engage all of their senses. Montessori taught the children life skills such as how to get dressed, basic hygiene and grow plants. Alongside few planned activities they were free to move around and play. The children were able to concentrate and over time self-discipline emerged. Montessori revealed that children who worked independently were more self-motivated. [Sprouts, \(2016\)](#)

INTERVENTIONS

In order to support children throughout different transitions a variety of interventions may have to be implemented. These interventions are all aimed at building strong relationships with both the child and their family.

Home visits



(Source: Dreamstime, 2021)

Before the child starts to attend the education setting a key worker will carry out a number of visits to the child's home environment. This helps to combine the child's home life and school life together. It also provides the child with a familiar face on their first day of school. The key worker is able to observe and take notes on the child's personal preferences so that they are able to comfort them in the setting. (BMC Public health, 2013) states that by having more at home visits it improves young children's development and health outcomes.

Welcome pack

The child can be provided with a welcome pack. The welcome pack can include images of the setting, a pencil case with the school logo, a new water bottle, a book (first day at school themed), colouring in book and a booklet with information for the child's parents. All of these little items help to ease the child into the transition of starting school and familiarise themselves with the classroom and school logo.

Settling in sessions

(Childcare, 2021) recommends that the setting should offer two short settling in sessions, so that the child gets the opportunity to get to know you and other children within the setting before officially starting school. It is useful to arrange one of the settling in sessions over lunch time so that practitioners are able to observe the child's eating habits and likes. Furthermore, (Childcare, 2021) also recommends a four-week settling in time frame, staff members may need to extend this if necessary. It is vital that practitioners feel the child is coping well in their care and is happy.

Stay and play



(Source: North Islington, 2014)

The aim of stay and play is to work with both children and families in order to encourage them to play and learn together. This gives them the opportunity to gain more knowledge about each other. In addition, it also helps to improve attachments, strengthen bonds and overall has a positive impact on a child's development. [Early Years Scotland, \(2016\)](#)

Wraparound

Wraparound is when schools provide out of normal hours childcare for example, breakfast club, after school clubs and when the morning nursery stay for lunchtime. The transition from morning nursery to full time can sometimes be a huge jump for the children. By having wraparound in place at lunch time it helps to ease that process of a longer school day.

PROPOSED OUTCOMES

The transition has been successful once the child has shown that they are settled within the setting. In order to receive the proposed outcome, you need to put in a lot of effort with that child. Transitions such as starting school can be stressful for the child and their parents in order to receive the proposed outcomes all parties require support from one another. The parents and practitioners should come up with a plan together of what actions they need to take in order for the transition to run smoothly. Parents should be given information about the setting and make it a happy experience for the child. The key person for example the classroom teacher, should be present so that the child and parents are able to get to know them. This will then result in the classroom teacher having a positive and strong relationship with both the child and their parents. School should be seen as a positive place where the child is safe and feels comforted. Furthermore, the child should be able to bring a comforter into the setting. As a result of observing the child and getting to know their likes/dislikes you will receive the proposed outcome. Spend extra time with that child so that they are able to get to know you on a different level. Throughout this transition especially it is important to keep parents up to date and reassure them. Practitioners can keep parents up to date by sending them an email, having a conversation, keeping a journal, or writing a newsletter. **PACEY, (2019)** By following all of these steps practitioners should receive the proposed outcomes for the child.



(Source: Adobe Stock, 2021)

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