

TRANSITIONS IN EARLY YEARS
THE IMPORTANCE OF COMMUNICATION

A HANDBOOK FOR PRACTITIONERS IN
RECEPTION

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Table of contents:

page

Introduction	3
What is Transition	3-4
Why is Transition important?	4-5
Effective communication and partnership working	5-6
Key factors of effective communication	6
Transition Activities	6-7
Play	7
Needs of the Child	7-8
Role of the adults	9
Interventions and Outcomes	9-10
Reference list	11

Introduction:

The purpose of this handbook is to assist all Early Years practitioners in getting children ready for transition. This handbook makes it easier to make sure that every team member is aware of the rules and regulations that are set within the provision. Positive communication links must be developed by all professionals involved for transitions within the EYFS to go smoothly. All the professionals who work with children who are transitioning between settings should have a common approach to ensure continuity for the children.

What is transition?

Moving from home to an early learning and childcare (ELC) setting, then to primary school, stage to stage, primary to secondary school, between schools, and from secondary to further education and beyond are all considered transitions for children and young people. Everybody experiences changes and transitions in life. Moving on is something that most children and teenagers look forward to. Transitions can be difficult, though, and staff and parental support can make them easier.

A child experiences many kinds of transitions in their life. Moving to a new home or beginning daycare are examples of major transitions. Smaller transitions during the day include switching from an activity to snack or mealtime. Both adults and children can find transitions to be stressful; assisting children in managing these changes and making them go as smoothly as possible will increase their future adaptability to change. **(Pacey, 2016)**

Transitions encompass not only linear movements between environments but also "horizontally" movements within the same environment, such as going from one room to another during lunch or reversing course from home to childminder to nursery to home again within the same day. **(Birth to 5 Matters, 2021)**

According to research, children's development and emotional health can be significantly impacted by transitions. Thus, the way in which these initial shifts are managed may have a substantial influence on the child's ability to adjust to change both now and in the future. **(Nursery story, 2021)**

When children move from a familiar environment to an unfamiliar one, it can cause them to become insecure about their rights and needs not being met. Certain children are more sensitive to uncertainty than others, but some are resilient enough to handle change.

Children's journey through the system and between settings should be viewed as such to guarantee continuity for them.

At times of transition, certain children may be especially vulnerable. These include those whose first language is not English, those who are summer-born or prematurely born, babies who experience separation from their parents for the first time, children who lack confidence or low self-esteem, and those who have simply had to deal with too much change or loss in their early lives.

Early childhood transition is crucial for young children and their parents/caregivers and marks a turning point in the child's development. Early childhood transition can include a child entering an early childhood program, beginning school, or transitioning from the foundation year into key stage 1.

Children may find these periods of transition difficult, and parents and caregivers may experience anxiety. This is especially true if the child is susceptible, has special needs in school, or has a disability that calls for compassion and assistance during the change.

Transition is not an event; it is a process. Remarkable transitions understand how important it is to feel "known." Professional dialogue can be seized during transitions. **(Birth to 5 matters)**

Moving from the EYFS to Reception, which also signifies the start of more formal schooling, is one of a child's most significant educational transitions. Children's adjustment will be facilitated by a smooth transition, which will also set them up for successful learning. A significant shift from Early Years is Reception. Teachers can visit children in their early years setting to gain a better understanding of their needs by observing them in a comfortable and safe environment. They can set up play dates at the new school during the summer term, allowing the children to get to know their unfamiliar environment, meet their teachers, and form new friendships.

Why is transition important?

Supporting smooth transitions in early childhood settings is essential to fostering and preserving high levels of well-being for many reasons. Undoubtedly, a child must feel content, at ease, and safe when they enter any early childhood environment, be it as a newborn, toddler, preschooler, or student enrolled in a reception class or moving to key stage 1, for them to grow emotionally and intellectually. It is critical to get transitions right because the foundations are laid when a child enters the early years. The basis for a child's learning can be laid if they experience importance, support, care, and positive relationships. Encouraging transitions in the early years benefits the child and the comfort of the parents or other caregivers. As a result, transitions will go more smoothly since the child will see and absorb the positivity of their parents or other caregivers. **(Harman, 2023)**

A seamless transition depends on the adult and child developing a strong bond or maximizing an already existing one. As per John Bowlby's book "**Attachment and Loss, 1982**" children with a stable attachment style are more inclined to

"Approach the world with confidence and, when faced with potentially alarming situations, is likely to tackle them effectively, or to seek help."

Bowlby's concepts are known as attachment theory. Famous British psychiatrist and psychoanalyst John Bowlby is credited with developing the ground-breaking Attachment Theory, a theory that has fundamentally changed how we think about early childhood development. This theory suggests that an infant's relationship with their primary caregivers has a profound impact on their emotional and social development. The foundation of Bowlby's theory is the idea that attachment formation is a survival

strategy that is ingrained in infants' biology. These early attachments, which are formed in the first few years of life, are not merely fleeting bonds; rather, they are crucial in determining the emotional well-being and interpersonal interactions of the child in the future. **(Main P, 2023)**

Effective communication and partnership working:

The ability to communicate with a wide range of people is a crucial component of the work of an early childhood care worker. To collaborate with children, parents/caregivers, coworkers, and other professionals, a childcare provider needs to improve their communication abilities. Effective interaction is aided by having effective communication skills. Listening, comprehending, and reacting to others are all necessary for effective communication. You must focus on what is being said if you want to improve your listening skills. To foster a positive working "partnership" between practitioners and parents, the EYFS places a high value on communication with parents. It says that key workers should establish "relationships" with parents, inform them of their child's development, reply to their shared observations, include them in evaluations, and help them to direct their child's development at home. Any personal or professional relationship must have open, honest, and consistent communication. In fact, for a parent of a child in an Early Years setting, it will mean the world. It will reassure, educate, and foster sustained parental involvement. **(Lester T, 2019)**

Parents have a significant impact on their children's outcomes.

Parents are their children's first and most important educators.

Each distinct family must be welcomed and heard.

To make the most of your interactions with parents, consider your level of engagement.

Practitioners are required to work with all families.

Clear leadership in terms of collaboration with parents will lay the groundwork.

Offering children, the chance to grow in a language-rich environment, boost their self-esteem and expressive abilities, and practise speaking and listening in a variety of contexts are all important aspects of communication and language development.

Children should be encouraged to:

- Follow instructions involving multiple ideas or actions.
- Respond to stories and events and ask how-and-why questions about their experiences.
- Engage in storytelling, games, rhymes, poetry, puppet shows, role-playing, and child-initiated activities.
- Talk to connect ideas, explain what is happening, and speculate about what might happen next.
- Recall and relive past experiences.
- Ask why things happen and offer explanations.

Key factors of effective communication:

Effective communication is characterized by the seven Cs, which apply to both oral and written communication. They are listed below:

1. **Clear**- Make sure you are clear about your message or goal when writing or speaking to someone.
2. **Concise**- When you communicate concisely, you stay on topic and do not ramble.
3. **Concrete**- Your audience will understand what you are saying when your message is concrete. Not too many details, vivid facts, and laser-like focus are all present. You have made a strong message.
4. **Correct**- Your audience will comprehend your message when it is delivered correctly. Additionally, error-free communication equates to correct communication.
5. **Coherent**- Your communication is logical when it makes sense. The tone and flow of the text are consistent, and every point is related to and pertinent to the main idea.
6. **Complete**- The audience gets all the information they require in a comprehensive message, enabling them to make decisions and, if necessary, take action.
7. **Courteous**- Polite communication is cordial, transparent, and truthful. No subliminal insults or tone of passive-aggression are present. You consider your reader's point of view and show empathy for their needs.

Transition Activities:

According to Margetts, K 2004, the key to a successful transition process is well-planned transitional activities that address the differences that children and families will encounter. Children and families can learn about the new school and get to know new people and routines through transition activities. Everybody involved feels much more at ease on the first day of school when the children are given multiple play dates and opportunities to get to know the reception class staff.

Play that is deliberate and purposeful must be used to implement each learning and development area. It is necessary for practitioners to prepare for both adult- and child-initiated activities. Practitioners will

continually assess and discuss the appropriate ratio of activities initiated by children to those initiated by adults. To prepare for the transition into reception, the balance shifts throughout the early years from more child initiated to more adult initiated.

Play:

During the early years, a lot of learning occurs through the skilful interaction of adults who know when to step back and when to intervene. As with all learning, adults must interact with children in a warm, encouraging way to ensure that they feel completely at ease as young learners. All children can learn in a healthy way by making mistakes. You should use your mistakes as teaching moments.

The holistic development of a child depends on play-based learning. Helping every child reach their potential in all spheres of life- not just academic ones- is one of education's most significant goals. To be able to achieve this goal, Learning Through Play can be a helpful tool. Play activities foster various development goals in children: self-reliance, self-worth, creativity, exploration, socialisation with peers and adults, and the development of positive attitudes towards education and learning through success.

For reception children, purposeful play is an important part of their educational journey. By providing the right tools and resources, they are sure to have specific learning experiences. Children should be given the opportunities for various forms of play through:

- Imaginative play-such as role play and small world.
- Construction equipment use and games that foster the development of early reading and mathematical concepts.
- Play with sand and water; use playdough, cut, stick, etc.
- Use of technology.

There are four ways that play can help development. These are:

- Physical development
- Cognitive development
- Social development, and
- Emotional development.

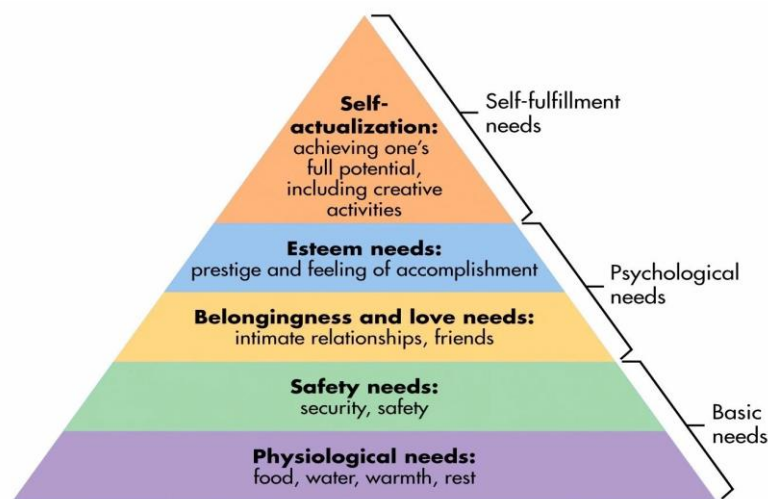
Needs of the Child:

Every child has the right to an excellent education that will help them reach their full potential, encourage high standards, and be appropriate for their needs. As you get to know your children well, you will see that they all learn at different speeds and that some may find it difficult to accomplish tasks that other children may already be proficient in. This may just be a sign that satisfactory progress can be made with small modifications to the teaching strategies or the provision of modest amounts of support, encouragement, and extra assistance. This is all part of normal childhood development. Therefore, it is critical that any early setbacks or challenges result in the appropriate support and are not always interpreted as a sign of a chronic special education need or disability.

Facilitating the full potential of every child is necessary for practitioners to achieve accurate assessments using the EYFS Profile. As such, caregivers need to be aware of the wide range of interests, needs, and inclinations that children have. The provision should allow all children, regardless of their development stage or interests, needs, or inclinations, to demonstrate attainment in ways that are motivating to them, so practitioners should reflect on their observations.

There are a lot of theories regarding young children's development and care. Maslow (1943, 1954) classified human needs into a hierarchy, with physiological (survival) needs at the bottom and more creative and intellectually oriented 'self-actualization' needs at the top.

This is a diagram of Maslow's Hierarchy of needs:



Source: Simply psychology, 2020)

A pyramid is a common representation of Maslow's hierarchy of needs. On the pyramid of needs, the most basic needs are found at the base and the most complex needs are found at the top. Upon fulfilling their basic needs, individuals can proceed to the subsequent tier of needs. Needs become more psychological and social as people move up the pyramid. It is imperative for an individual to fulfil their survival needs prior to addressing their higher needs, according to Maslow. Since we are inherently frustrated by barriers in our environment and relationships, it becomes harder to meet the needs associated with each level higher up the hierarchy.

Role of the adults:

From infancy through adolescence, adults have a significant impact on children's development in all age groups. Children and youth of all ages can benefit from adult assistance in navigating uncertainty and developing resilience by being adaptable and attentive to their needs.

To support transitions, it is crucial to form a secure attachment with a key worker. When children are experiencing severe emotional distress, early childhood educators can play a crucial role in providing them with support. A child's anxiety can be lessened by adhering to established routines, like going to nursery. **(Croner-i,2022)**

Children can be supported by early childhood educators through:

- telling age-appropriate stories about loss or transition
- Watching children to spot friendships, interests, and behavioural changes
- allowing children to express themselves by using dolls and puppets in the role play area
- Giving children the freedom to use paint and markers to express their feelings
- Circular conversation about feelings.

A smooth transition can be aided and supported by interacting with parents and having open and honest communication with them. Inform families about the procedures for settling in and urge them to fill out a "All About Me" transition form with any details they think would be useful about their child's needs. **(Nurserystory,2021)**

The adult's role is essential in encouraging and expanding children's play. Play activities that are thoughtfully designed and adequately resourced and that facilitate a child's cognitive and understanding growth can offer the framework necessary for all the children to live out these ideals. Play progresses as a result of the observation and evaluation of children's abilities, attitudes, and knowledge. Adult's professional judgment, evaluation, and observational skills provide us with important insights into the unique learning styles of each child. This data helps us plan how to best meet each person's needs. Understanding the needs, interests, and experiences of the child leads to progress. It is the adult's responsibility as practitioners to adapt the activities to the developmental needs of the children.

Interventions and outcomes:

In order to ensure that learning opportunities and experiences build on what a child can already do, and that early failure is prevented, children's needs are identified through observations, conversations with families, and the involvement of other professionals. To ensure that every child can participate and succeed, strategies such as adult intervention, modifications to the learning environment, or activities are used to support children. Differentiation and focused support are two factors to take into continuing procedure, and educators react "on the spot" or more specifically through intervention groups, All About Me objectives, nurture provisions, or speech and Support for languages.

Some ideas that could support positive transitions are:

- Schedule a specific period of time so that small groups can regularly spend time with their key person.
- Value the concerns of both parents and children and encourage them to express themselves during the transition process.
- Speak in terms of similarities rather than differences; there is a thin boundary between fascinating and overpowering.

We can facilitate the adjustment process and provide comfort to children and their families by carefully managing transition. The basis for a successful transition is a strong, courteous relationship between parents and practitioners.

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