

Essential Handbook for Practitioners



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Transitions in the Early Years- The Importance of Effective Communication



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Introduction into Transitions

Transition is defined by the Cambridge dictionary (2023) as a [change](#) from one [form](#) or [type](#) to another, or the [process](#) by which this [happens](#).

The aim of this Handbook is to provide practitioners with the information, knowledge and skills needed, to enable a smooth process of transition for children starting nursery school for the first time. The importance of effective communications between all parties involved at the time of transition for the child and the key person involved is vital. The handbook includes the essential knowledge and areas of development of a child and the theories and guidance behind it.

Many people view it as a normal part of children's lives to experience new settings for the first time, move to various locations, start school, or transition to a new class. According to Early Years Matters (2022) transitions mark important milestones in a child's life and significantly impact their development. Pacey (2016) supports this and says it is crucial for every child to have a smooth transition, and it is not something that happens once. Transition should be seen as a gradual process involving children, practitioners, and parents working together, rather than as a singular event.

Birth to Five (no date) suggest that young children may be attending your setting for the first time and although they may be accustomed to being separated from their parents, they will be familiarising themselves with a unique environment and setting, this is supported by Pacey (2016).

Flying Start - Annex Transition Guidance. (2017) believe that these new experiences, along with the parents' feelings of returning to work or separating from their child, can be an upsetting and challenging time for all the family. Creating a sense of trust by welcoming families into the setting and familiarising themselves with the unique environment and allowing time for a positive transitional period, will be able ease the move of transition supported by Pacey (2016)

Children during their first 5 years of their life undergo several transitions. These transitions are developmental milestones, environmental changes and care and education transitions.

Developmental (HSE,2021)

- gross motor skills –
- fine motor skills
- communication and hearing
- social and emotional
- problem-solving, learning and understanding.

Environmental (PACEY, 2016)

- Moving house
- Breakdown in parental/guardianship relationship
- Moving on to nursery or primary school
- the birth of a new sibling.

Transitions happen throughout the day in nursery also-

- Breakfast club to class
- Moving from play to snack time
- From the outdoors to the indoors
- Drop off and pick up and the different carers that are involved.

Care and Education (Early Years Matters 2016) (Flying start 2017)

- Home to childcare
- Cylch Meithrin/ Flying start to Nursery Class
- Nursery to Reception
- Reception to year 1, year 1 to year 2
- KS1 to KS2
- KS2 – Comprehensive school

Children often experience more than one transition at a time. (Early Years Matters 2016)

Below is a useful link providing tips for parents to support their child with transition into school (Pacey 2015).

[Steps to starting school \(Pacey\)](#)

The Needs of the Child

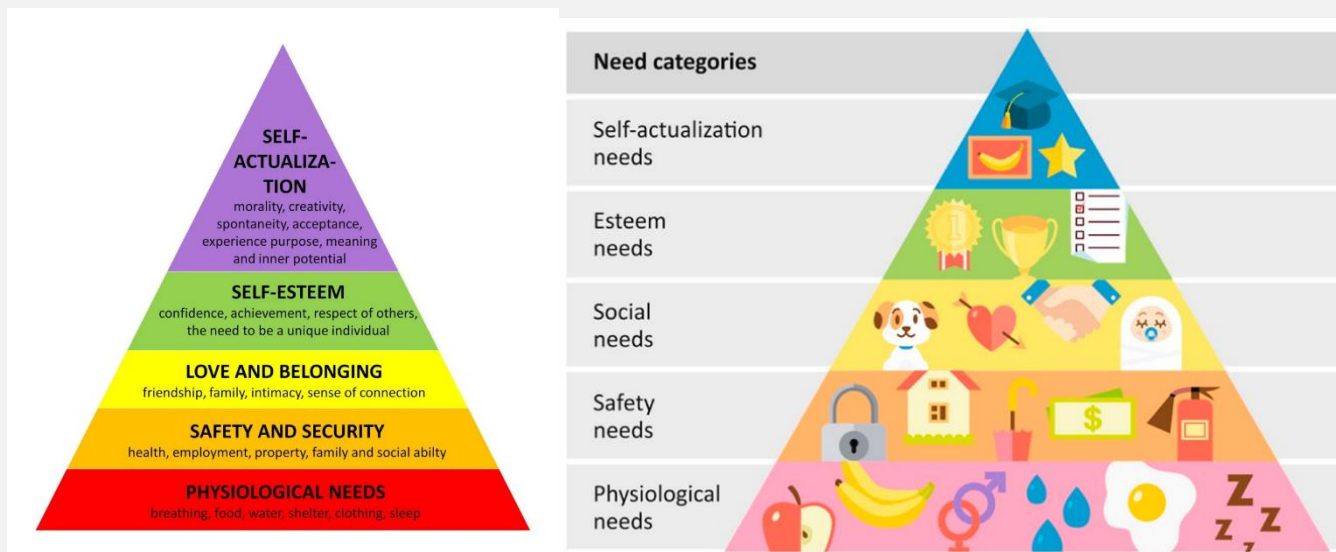


(Net mums,2021)

Maslow (1943) proposed that children need to follow a hierarchy, with basic survival needs at the bottom and self-actualization needs related to creativity and intellect at the top.

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs asserts that there are five layers of human need. Each layer of need must be met before the individual will desire and pursue the next layer of need. It posits that if the first four layers of need of an individual are not met, they cannot achieve the self-actualisation which unlocks their full potential.

The below model illustrates and describes the five levels of need relevant to children`s development. McLeod (2023) reflects this hierarchy of need in the updated image also.



(Source: Maslow, 1943)

(Source McLeod, 2023).

As individuals progress, their needs shift from basic physical survival to more complex psychological and long-term desires. Maslow (1943)

The Children and Young People's Plan published by Welsh Government (2022) is committed to the standards of UNICEF (1989) The Rights of the Child and respect it in all the choices we make. We accept and believe all our children have the right to:

- Have the best start in life.
- Take part in and appreciate learning and have the best education.
- Enjoy a healthy life and be protected from harm abuse, neglect, and discrimination.
- Be able to play and have fun.
- Be treated with respect and to be listened to
- Have a home and community.
- Have sufficient money to support their needs.
-

Physiological and Safety needs

A child needs a balanced diet and water to support growth and development. By September 2024, all children in primary school can enjoy Free School Meals (Welsh Government 2023).

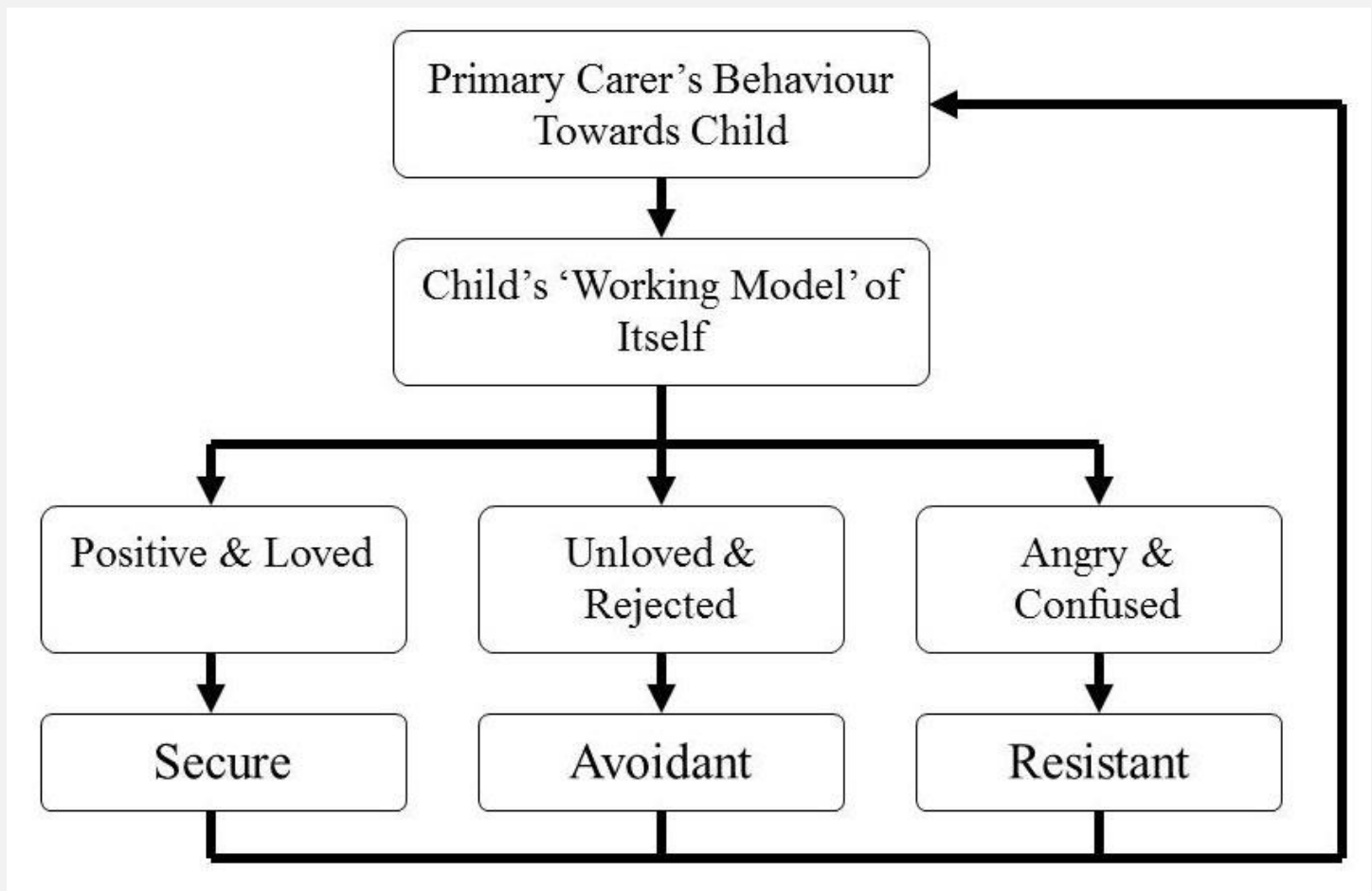
A child needs a home where they feel safe and protected Article 19 UNCRC (2022) with a comfortable living environment, with a bed to sleep allowing growth, cognitive function, and emotional well-being. Article 27 (UNCRC 2022) these are the rights of every single child. A child needs medical care if needed and this is again set out in article 24 UNCRC (2022).

Love and belonging

A child needs to feel love and belonging, and this is fulfilled through family, friendships, and social connections. Positive interactions at this stage enables good emotional development and bonds are made supporting the Child's well-being. Bowlby (1944) attachment theory highlights the importance of building secure attachments in the Child's early years, which influences the Child's ability to transition into nursery and explore and learn smoothly in school.

Bowlby (1944), working alongside Robertson (1952), made observations that a child experienced intense distress when separated from their primary care giver which is usually their mothers. Even when such children were fed by other caregivers, this did not diminish the child's anxiety. Their findings found three progressive stages of distress:

Golding, 2013, p 21-24). Supports this with a book used by teachers to observe children with attachment difficulties.



Simply psychology (2023)

Mary Ainsworth's (1971, 1978) Strange Situation study offers proof that the internal working model is real. Because it has received sensitive, emotional care from its caregivers, a secure child will establish a positive internal functioning primary attachment figure.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m_6rQk7jIrc.

An insecure-avoidant child will create an internal working model in which it believes that because of the negative reaction it received from its primary attachment figure during the critical period for attachment development, it is unworthy. (Ainsworth 1971)

Harlow's (1958) research on monkeys provides evidence in favour of Bowlby's Maternal Deprivation theory.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OrNBEhzig8I>.

Researchers' understanding of attachment was influenced by Bowlby's (1944, 1956) theories, and his belief in monotropy has dominated discussions of his theory.

Golding (2013) supports smooth transition involving secure attachments, when a child starts nursery class they are allocated a key worker and these key workers should recognise that children starting nursery for the first time may have attachment difficulties therefore building a secure attachment between the child and key worker is extremely important to enable social and emotional development

for the child and according to the attachment theory secure relationships at school is vital for their care and Education.(Pacey,2016)

A transitional object such as a comforter blanket, dummy or favourite item is a consideration to make during the Childs transition into Nursery class, according to Abram J (2015) his research into Donald Winnicott (1964) who was a paediatrician who was amongst the first cohort to train as a psychoanalyst in the late 1920s, he introduced the transitional object which linked the Childs inner world to external reality. It was Donald Winnicott' work that contributed to the understanding of early attachment in children.

The Curriculum for Wales (2021) guidance sets out: the curriculum requirements set out in legislation for all learners aged 3 to 16, to ensure all schools cover the same core learning and to secure a consistency of approach for learners across Wales. It is a crucial factor for embedding the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC)(2022) in the experience of learning and teaching for our children and young people and for giving them an understanding of their rights. A defining feature of the Framework is that it requires schools to design their own curriculum and assessment arrangements.

The process of transitioning to the child should be a routine that is consistent, familiar, and positive. (Early years matters,2022) Welcome regular visits to the setting is suggested by Flying start (2017) ensuring the child and family become familiar with the unfamiliar environment and the Key worker in which the child will become to recognise and begin the initial bond for a secure attachment during the process. (Bowlby,1969) These visits enable the child to explore the new surrounding and decide for themselves what they wish to explore and play with, children have the Need to play and the right to play according to Bongiorno (2021) and this will allow the practitioner to sit alongside the child and begin the foundation of their relationship playing with the items that the child chose for themselves for example play dough. This also considers the voice of the child Article 12 UNCRC (2022) which states a child's views and feelings must be considered. Pappas, C. (2023) states that John Dewey (1859-1952) Theory on planning should be based on the interests of the child.

According to Avornyo, & Baker (2021) Research has shown the importance of play in children's education, but there is a discrepancy between research findings and attitudes towards play.

Bongiorno (2021) suggests that Children learn through their play.

Play is healthy, Play reduces stress, Play is more than meets the eye. Make time for play, and parents are the biggest supporters of your children's learning. Play and learning go hand-in-hand, they are not separate activities. Outdoor Play is vital. There's a lot to learn about play. Trust your own playful instincts. Play is a child's context for learning. The Lego foundation (2023) also supports this.

[Attachment \(canva.com\)](https://www.canva.com) NPT- useful information for parents. (NPT,2023)

The Role of the Adult

First Day of School

The first day of school
Can be hard for Mom and Dad.
Part of you feels excited,
The other part feels sad.
For many years you've held their hand,
And have been their loving guide.
Now you know the time has come
To leave them by my side.
But it is only for a little while,
As your child will learn and grow.
And at the end of everyday,
They will share with you all they know.
So as you walk away
Don't worry anymore.
I'll take care of all those precious gifts
When you leave them at my door.

Pinterest, (no date)

Children can access a part time nursery place at 3 years of age at a primary school setting from the start of the term following their third birthday or the day after their 3rd birthday providing there is sufficient room in the nursery. (NPT ADMISSIONS, No date)

Transitions in the early years are important for positive feelings towards future transitions. Professional dialogue and continuity of experience are crucial during transitions. Gathering perspectives from various professionals helps in planning for individual needs. (Bronfenbrenner 1977). Visiting children in their known setting and involving parents in the process is beneficial. The key person plays a vital role in creating supportive relationships. Continuity of learning methods is important during transitions. Feeling "known" and ensuring continuity between home and settings is essential. (Birth to 5 matters, no date.)

At points of transition, the practitioner needs to be fully aware that their role is important in this transition. It is valuable to gather the perspectives of all those who have worked with the child such as other practitioners, speech therapists, health visitors, and educational psychologists and the care givers and Family. These perspectives enable all those involved with the child to plan for their individual needs more effectively. Flying starts transitional guidance Welsh. Government (2017) supports these transitional strategies.

Practitioners can make transitions more seamless by first visiting children in the setting in which they are known and are confident and comfortable. (Birth to 5 matters, no date)

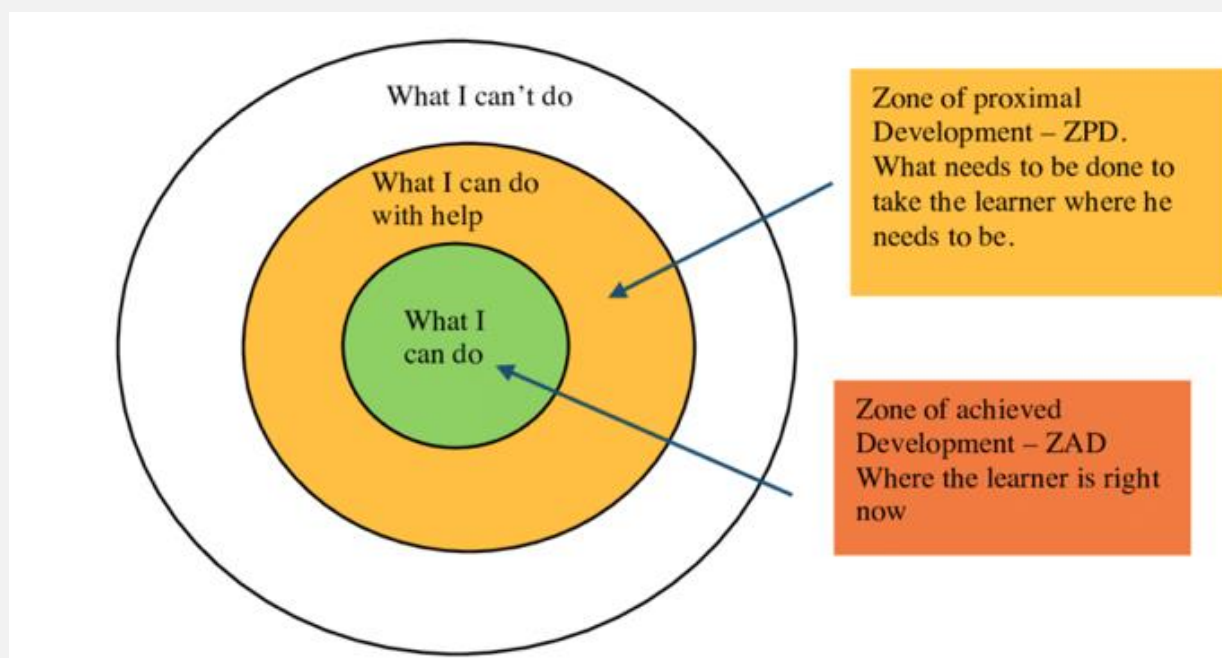
Opportunities to build a relationship with the child begins with the child in their current settled environment. Langston, (2014) suggests The Key person is encouraged to visit the child in the setting and begin to build a relationship.

Visits from the parents, care givers and the child to the new setting are welcomed and encourages. Children need to visit their new setting with a parent and/or key person so their first experience of any new setting is with a familiar and trusted adult. This not being a one-off time, repeated opportunities for relaxed contact with and visits to the new setting over a sustained period can support a positive move. (Pacey, 2016).

During these times practitioners can learn about the child from the parents as well as give information, Early years matters (2022) suggests being fully aware of and responsive to the needs and concerns of each child and their family. When children enter their new setting the task of providing continuity is made easier by a warm welcome from responsive and available practitioners. A child's key person is the essential link between home and the new setting, and is vital in providing reassurance and creating close, supportive, ongoing relationships with families according to Langston, (2014).

Birth to Five matters (no date) suggests that high quality transitions recognise the importance of feeling "known." The important aspect is that children in the early years is experience continuity between home, key people, and the setting, it is the responsibility of practitioners to ensure that children feel welcomed, gain a sense of belonging and are helped to settle happily.

The Zone of Proximal Improvement (ZPD) is a concept according to McLeod, S. (2023) on Vygotsky's Theory that holds huge importance for classroom teachers. It refers to the contrast between what a child can do without direction and what they can accomplish with the direction of a Key worker/Teacher. By deliberately directing understudies through their ZPD, teachers can upgrade instruction and improve learning results.



Main, P. (2020).



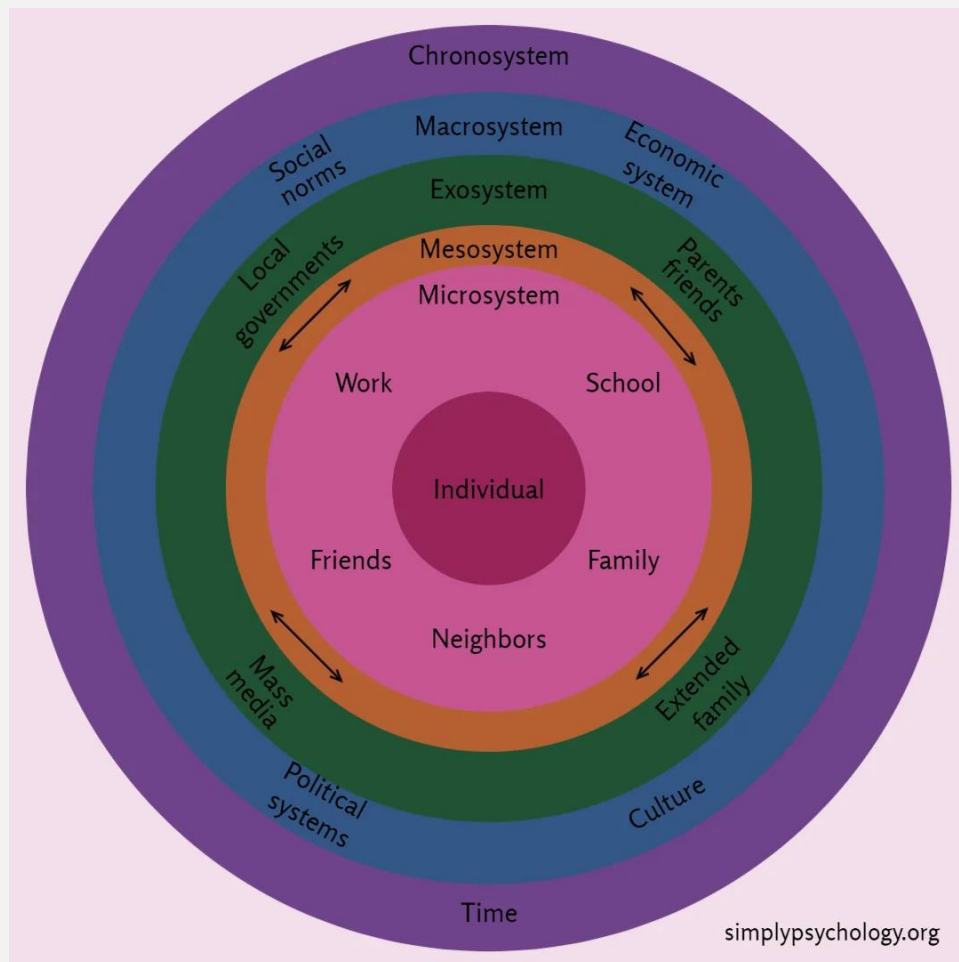
Pinterest, (no date)

[Transition Tips on Vimeo](#) Here is a link to NPT (2023) top tips for transitioning.

Partnerships

The child and their family are placed at the centre of transitions planning and by adapting strong partnerships between parents, care givers, educators and any outside agencies involved with a child the transition into school becoming one of a shared effort focusing specifically on the individual Childs well-being and Development as suggested by Flying start (2017)

Sharing personal information is crucial for partnership and integrated working, as well as for early identification of need or risk. (Safeguarding Wales, 2023) It is especially important when there are concerns about the well-being of a child.



Simply psychology (2023)

According to Bronfenbrenner (1977), a child's surroundings are made up of interconnected components that are one attached within another. He arranged them according to the degree to which they affect a child's development. Image above.

The Microsystem the people immediately surrounding the Childs life.

The Mesosystem, the communication between a child's parents and teachers

The Exosystem includes other formal and informal social structures.

The Macrosystem is the cultural elements that surround a child and their development.

The chronosystem relates to the transitions over the child's lifetime.

According to this theory Bronfenbrenner (1977) argues the Teachers, parents and care givers should maintain effective communication with each other and work together to benefit the child to strengthen the development of the ecological systems in educational practice and teachers being minded full of situations that arise in families.

Children transitioning from a Flying start setting may have a transitioning officer, one page profile and all about me information packs which are all vital in communicating key factors of the development of the Childs individual needs, their likes and dislikes, areas of probable causes of concern which the practitioner can use in the transition into the new setting. (Flying start, 2017).

Brodie (2015) Argues that every single child needs to **be** and **feel** included, and Langston, A. (2014) supports this, the diversity of individuals and communities should be valued and should be respected. Every single child included and not discriminated against. Listening to the voices of children and recognising these are expressed in a range of ways, including non-verbally, is central to inclusive practice. (Birth to Five Matters,2022).

ALN needs of a child can be a difficult subject for parents, according to Brodie (2015) the language terminology used with parents needs to be considered. Some children start school with Multi agencies involved and for others the process may begin once the child has started in the setting. If a child is not making adequate progress, it is possible that the child had additional learning needs and requires specific provisions in place. (ALN, 2020). It is important that settings are aware of Children that start school with ALN and communications with the multiagency surrounding that child as Bronfenbrenner (1977) argues is vitally important and is supported by NPT STRATEGIC CHANGE PROGRAMME (no, date).

Interventions

The transition into nursery should be over a process over time. Mudiad ysgolion Meithrin. (2022) runs a TI a FI, mother and child session that gives you and your child the opportunity to meet regularly along with other parents and other children so that the children can enjoy playing together giving you the chance to socialize over a cup of Tea!.The Children enjoy, singing, socializing and story time through the medium of Welsh. They get the opportunity to familiarise themselves with the new environment with you as their secure care giver aiding transition when they are at the age to start school.

Attending Cylch meithrin. The aim of the Cylch Meithrin is to promote the education and development of children from two years old to school age. At the Cylch Meithrin your child will have the opportunity to enjoy the company of other children and learn through play with competent, friendly and enthusiastic staff. The Cylch meithrin regularly visits the school setting for story and rhyme sessions which helps children transition into the school nursery class. They become familiar with the class and the staff whilst happy and content with their current setting staff. It has been a proven factor that this has helped children settle quicker into the school nursery class. Teachers also visit the children in the Cylch Meithrin settling working on building the initial relationship with the child at their own setting. (Meithrin, 2021)

Nursery classes arranging planned settling in days according to Early years Matters (2022) so children can go along with their parents, care givers and family. They get the opportunities to meet the staff, meet their key worker, familiarize themselves with the classroom and the layout of the new environment which they will be going to are a recommended.

The settling in process for children varies from each individual child. Allow the introduction to your setting to be gradual, Pacey (2016) suggests following the process of firstly, the Child plays with key person while the parent is alongside. Secondly, the Child plays with key person. Parent is alongside at first. But then parent moves in and out of sight, Thirdly, the same process as before but the parent leaves for a few, minutes then returns. Repeating these steps increasing the length of time the parent leaves then return. Eventually, build this up to the child attending for a full session or day.

Outcomes

The new Curriculum for Wales (Welsh Government, 2020) has a new vision that the children will succeed in becoming.

- Ambitious, capable learners
- Enterprising, creative contributors
- Ethical informed people
- Healthy, confident individuals as valued members of society

These are known as the four purposes.

Creating a safe and happy, secure and nurturing environment with age-appropriate activities and resources, the outcomes for children transitioning into nursery class should be children that are happy and settled. (Pacey, 2016) Children that are beginning to build secure relationships and are confident and curious little learners that are aware of their own values as a unique individual (McLeod 2023). Children should be able to approach staff with questions and worries, they should know that there are safeguarding members of staff within the school that they can go to with any concerns. Safeguarding. Wales (2023) They should feel included in their learning and be able to voice their ideas. (Brodie, 2015).

Kennedy (Sean) and Greene (2012) suggest that Transition experiences from home or an early year setting to school have a significant impact on later outcomes for children. Also, transition is best understood as an interactive cultural, ecological, and dynamic process. By making Collaborative decisions a high standard of Continuity of teaching and learning the outcome as suggested by The Department of Education (no date) is that of Successful learners.

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