

A Handbook for Keyworkers in Early years settings: A guide to children's Transitions



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Introduction

This is a handbook produced for keyworkers in early year's settings to support with the transition experience. This will promote the importance of effectively managing a smooth transition for young children and provide the best possible outcome for them during the transition process. It will highlight different theories that recognise and associate transition and child development, and how as early years practitioners it can be applied to practice.

What is Transition?

Transition is the process in which something changes from one state or another. To move gradually from one to the another. (Collins Dictionary, 2022)

In the context of early years, transitions are milestone events which should be planned for to get right for every child. Transition is a process, not an event. (Birth to five matters) This process should involve the child, parent and early years' practitioner to come together to best support the transition experience as sensitively as possible. (Early years' matters, 2022) The ultimate aim is to make the experience of change as seamless as possible. Providing support and help emotionally where a child needs it, as every child is unique they will all show differing needs of support. Coping with change can affect children differently, some will respond confidently whereas others may become very unsettled at this emerging prospect. (Drake, 2006) There must be a commitment from all staff and adults that consider the careful planning of the process, whilst respecting parent's views and input. Flying start transition guidance suggests that supporting children's needs whilst considering parents as partners through effective communication and robust information sharing. Transition will likely be a successful one. (Welsh government, 2017)

In this case, this particular handbook will outline how key workers can manage transition effectively in a Flying start setting for pre-school children aged 2-3years old. For early years practitioners and key workers to use as a guidance through the process from home to Flying start childcare at 2years old. Then from Flying start to Nursery in primary school at 3years old. Throughout this handbook each section will look at the needs of the child and your role as an adult to support the child with transition. Working in Partnerships and the importance of this, Interventions that may be needed and Proposed outcomes what we hope to see within the transition process. There should be a commitment from all staff and an emphasis on good practice of the understanding of how transitions can be managed well and with ease. To then ensuring careful planning in considering the child's needs whilst respecting the parent's opinions this will all support children's learning and the transition successfully.

Children's ability to cope with change in the short and long term is likely to be affected by their first experiences of transition and the way it is handled. Children are likely to feel more confident about the transition into a new setting if changes happen gradually (O'Connor, 2006).

The needs of the child

High quality education in our early years' sector is essential for a child's development to thrive, providing a positive firm foundation. (Welsh government, 2022)

When planning for a transition to happen the first thought must be of the child's individual needs and how they can be met. All areas must be considered as part of the planning process, to make a positive transition happen. During this important stage of the child's life these needs should be considered with families and the setting to work collaboratively in setting out the best plan. With this in mind the aim will be that the child will feel secure and safe in their new environment. This will be crucial for a child with additional learning needs and that extra support can be put in place ready and a more rigorous plan can be set out. All children will be born into different family backgrounds. (Selleck, 2001) Practitioners should be mindful of this during transitions and remember 'not one size fits all' for every child attending the setting. What successfully happened previously during a child's transition does not mean the same process will follow suit for the next. The curriculum for funded non-maintained nursery settings outlines that for many children this transition experience away from home environment could be their very first in their lifetime, only ever being at home with their parent. (Welsh Government, 2022) This familiarity has given the child a sense of belonging providing continuity from a good responsive parent to help make sense of themselves and of their daily experiences. This continuity from the person who knows the child well has been responding to all their needs, ultimately building a good attachment and relationship. For the key worker about to welcome a child into an unfamiliar surrounding the importance of continuing and developing a good attachment and build a relationship outside of the home with children and their families will support both their wellbeing and learning. (Selleck, 2001) As experienced practitioners tuning in and understanding the child's current interests will best support a smooth transition if these are shown and acknowledged in the childcare setting. (Lindon, 2012) However, when children have not formed secure attachments from infancy this can have a detrimental effect on the child's ability to bond and build a relationship with others. The child may show signs of anger, be less secure and confident in a new

environment. The key worker must be mindful of this and can start to focus on these needs to support with the transition.

Handling their emotions sensitively as this will likely be a more stressful and unsettling time for the child. Eventually, starting to provide a secure attachment which will give the child a new sense of value enabling them to settle and develop.

A useful theory for practitioners to consider in practice is that of Abraham Maslow (1908-1970)

Maslow's Theory (1943) constructed a 'Hierarchy of needs'. They show the basic 5 levels of a person's needs suggesting that the lower level of needs must be met before the higher level of needs can be satisfied. According to Maslow, the theory is that a person is motivated by our requirement to satisfy our order of needs, starting with the essential demands for our survival and safety. He was a firm believer in empathy, compassion and kindness, which are all key attributes for practitioners to possess.



Source: Careershoddh (2022)

Likewise, these basic human needs are protected and supported by the United Nations Conventions on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) which promotes the human rights for every child. This framework ensures that children are supported and empowered in

leading a happy, fulfilled and safe life and this should support them and be considered through each stage of transition.

One can agree to a certain point that some of these articles below that are highlighted reflect what Maslows theory suggest, and how they can be connected with transition. For example for children to meet their ambitious self-actualisation 'goal' then one would suggest it would need to be protected for it to be achieved. Furthermore, a child from a disadvantaged background entitles them to still achieve their goals no matter what their family background is.

Article 2 states non discrimination

Article 3 is the best interests in the child

Article 6 and 28 reflects how every child has a right to life and education

Article 29 and 31 is goals of education and leisure, play and culture

The Role of the Adult

A child developing a secure attachment relationship with their primary caregiver is fundamental to their mental health and future ability to develop future relationships (Bowlby, 1969) This is an emotional process arising from a gaze and touch between the adult and child of care-seeking and care-giving. Both are key features to secure an attachment relationship.



(Source: Steemit.com 2017)

When an infant is showing signs of distress and discomfort, and the mother mentally and emotionally responds, this is referred to as containment (Bion, 1962) By containing her infant the mother is sensitively responding through touch, voice tone and proximity. Transforming these anxieties. Bion describes this as a detoxifying process, allowing the baby to get back good feelings, whilst being held and understood. This will enable the child to make sense of the experience and eventually manage their anxieties on their own.

Through the effective implementation of using these concepts from the key workers approach to continue to develop those close relationships with children are highly important. They can support each child emotionally and physically whilst providing safe, secure surroundings for maximizing each child's potential. The key worker can continue to offer this containment through emotional expressions and responding sensitively in a consistent way (Elfer et al, 2003)

Bronfenbrenner (1979) suggests that to fully explore child development, the practitioner needed to take into account the wider environmental influences upon the child. His theory proposed layers that surround a child.

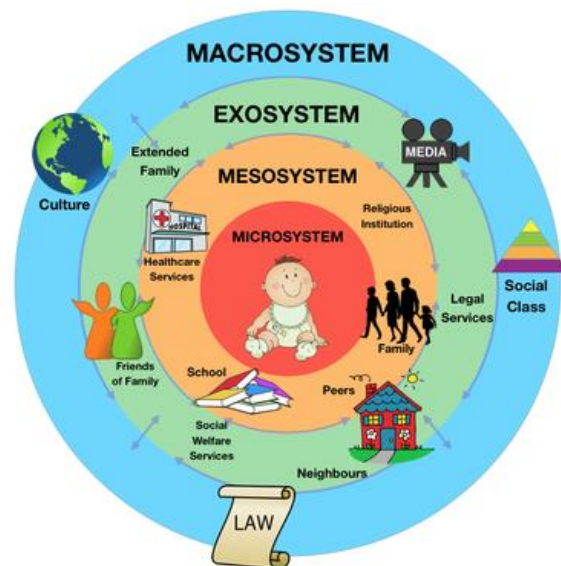
Naming the most immediate and closest layer the 'Microsystem' – within this would be who the child has most direct contact with such as family, nursery and neighbours. This is where the most stable and long lasting relationships lie.

The next layer is called the 'Mesosystem' which constructs the connections between parents or carers and first teacher or school. The child will relate experiences from home and school and draw on these comparisons.

Outside of the Mesosystem lies the 'Exosystem' the wider social experiences. External factors that may indirectly have an influence on the child. Such as government changes , media and economic climate.

Lastly the outer layer is the 'Macrosystem' which can compromise the childs cultural influences, laws , political cultures. These will all effect the inner layers.

As shown in the illustration of Bronfenbrenner's theory, the Bioecological model places the child in the centre and shows how the development of the child is enhanced through establishing mutual emotional attachments, influenced by differing environments and how it can effect a persons development process.



(Source: Urie Bronfenbrenner Ecological systems theory – Study of the mind 2015)

Bronfenbrenner emphasises how as Early years practitioners this needs to be considered with each child and of their wider environment , how children grow up in ever changing situations and how they interact and relate to it. Children will also be very influenced by adults around them and how they act. Being mindful of how we present ourselves as early years practitioners can determine how a child will feel, especially entering a new environment with unfamiliar adults around them. This particular theoretical perspective was that of Albert Bandura (1977) known for his social learning theory. He suggested that children not only observe physical behaviours , but they will also observe verbal behaviours of others, including expectations of them (Linden, 2005) Therefore , children hearing positive and affirming comments will give the child a strong sense of self-efficacy, and will emphasise the key workers relationship.

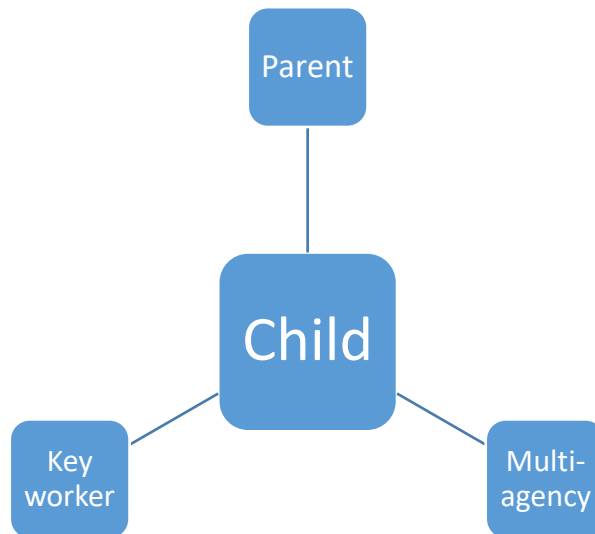
When the key worker is being responsive physically and emotionally whilst providing a secure base, the child will begin to gain the confidence to explore their surroundings. It is therefore the key workers responsibility to make those strong connections. (Welsh government, 2022) Bandura acknowledged that a childs behaviour of new situations will come from the adult from whom they have modelled, meaning that those behaviours from such adults should be appropriate and meaningful. This will reinforce those positive behaviours from the child and in the manner of how they present themselves in social situations. Helping children to cope with transitions and changes in a supportive and sensitive approach, we as practitoners can have a positive impact. Modelling compassion and kindness consistently will maximise a childs learning, whilst delivering a balanced curriculum in a way that can be regularly adapted or refined to suit the childs needs or current fascinations. (Welsh government, 2022) As children interact with others through play it is important for the practitoner to understand and support their development. The Early years foundation stage (EYFS) England states that when a practitoner supports a childs schematic play patterns, this will help build on childrens interests which can in turn support the practioner with observations and planning.

Partnership working

Parents make a crucial difference to children's outcomes, and should be involved with their child's transition from the very start. Securing a way of good communication that works for both you and the parent to explain what the transition will look like is a good starting point. Being mindful where there may be need for change in approach due to language barrier or an additional need (Pacey, 2022) There are benefits from working in partnerships with parents to help develop ways to support their child at home and the setting. Continuing with this way of working ensures good understanding of what the child needs and if there will be need for any further provision and intervention.

Parents should always be listened to and included establishing good relationships by providing a warm welcoming environment so parents will feel comfortable to engage with practitioners with any issues or concerns they may have. (Birth to 5 matters, 2022) Nutbrown (1999) argued that the more parents knew about their children's development the more they would understand about their learning and how they could help enhance further learning opportunities for them. As families are entitled to the Flying start provision they can access many support groups that can be offered at the setting such as Parenting groups, stay and play sessions and parent and toddler groups. There will also be opportunities for parents to have their own voice in ideas for future groups that could be run. This can really aid and guide parents in feeling inclusive and participative with their children's learning journey from before they start childcare and during their time attending, helping the parent with their own preparation for transition. Such as the Reggio Emilia approach parents are seen as central to their child's learning process. The more information given about their child the more it can be used towards their activities and experiences, thus keeping the child's learning as central. (Wenger, 2010)

During induction period parents should be made aware of multi-agency working which could involve information sharing with Health visitors, Early years help workers, speech and language therapists etc. Discussions and parental permission will need to be received first before acting on a multi-agency approach if areas of developmental delay are identified, and which multi-agency will need to be involved. By joining together in partnership will help improve the child's life chances through early intervention.



Good communication with parents is paramount in order to gain the maximum benefits from the provision offered at the setting. Freidrich Froebel (1782-1852) implemented these ideas which continue to be used and upheld in practice today. Froebel recognised partnership working and how parents views were respected, where staff and parents worked together with the children. (Bruce, 2009) Keyworkers should have effective communication daily as this is vital within their role in keeping parents involved with their child. It is the requirement by The National minimum standards for registered childcare (NMS) in Wales that working in partnership with parents is being met and adhered to. Parents will be fully involved in the transition process which will usually start with a home visit followed by an invite to visit the setting. When parents are involved in all transistional activities this will give the opportunity to ask questions and raise any concerns they may have and the chance to be addressed. (Margetts, K 2004) Main barriers to non successful transition will be lack of communication with parents and information sharing. Provided suitable plans are in place to meet the child and families needs these barriers can be avoided. (Kirklees, 2013)

Interventions

To further support a smooth transition for children and their families, it is important that there are interventions in place ready. Families are given opportunities to visit the setting and staff to familiarise themselves with the environment. This will be the start to building close relationships.

All Flying start staff involved with the family can relay information back and forth in preparation for the child entering childcare operating a multi-agency approach. The family will already be familiar with their Health visitor and they will act as a key role in first supporting families between services, as they are co-located at the childcare setting. This allows an easier communication route between staff that is beneficial for transition into childcare and any issues or concerns with the child are highlighted. When Health visitors are fully utilised in providing information about the child's development, forward planning including any staff changes that maybe necessary can be made in advance. Such as an outcome from a targeted intervention following a Schedule of Growing Skills (SoGS) assessment (Welsh government, 2014)

Home visits



(Source: The Incredible Years, 2013)

Once the parent has given their permission for their child to start at childcare. The Childcare manager and Key worker will visit the family in their home. Much like Bronfenbrenner's Microsystem we will have the opportunity to see the child in their immediate surroundings with their parents and how they will naturally behave. These home visits will allow discussions regarding settling in procedures, daily routines and operations.

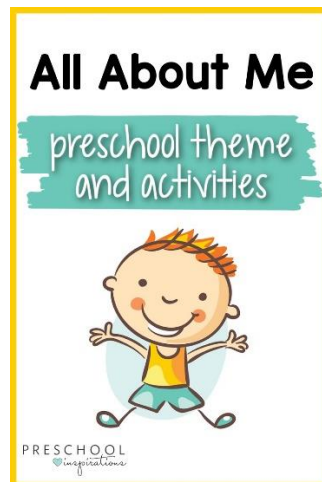
It will be explained that as a setting we will support their child's Personal, Social, and Emotional development and where the parent can make staff aware of any specific needs before starting in the setting. Encouraging families to bring familiar items for their child, explaining their likes and dislikes to help with settling in can be useful.

Families will be made aware how we carry out high quality childcare.

What to expect from the Flying start childcare setting and how with working in partnership we will support children by;

- Encouraging children's independence
- Providing exciting and engaging environments, that recognises the unique backgrounds of the child. That can offer a natural curiosity
- Observations and planning
- Assessments

Parents are supported to fill out all relevant information that is needed. Such as contact details and an 'All about me' form.



(Source: Pre-school inspirations, 2022)

Settling in

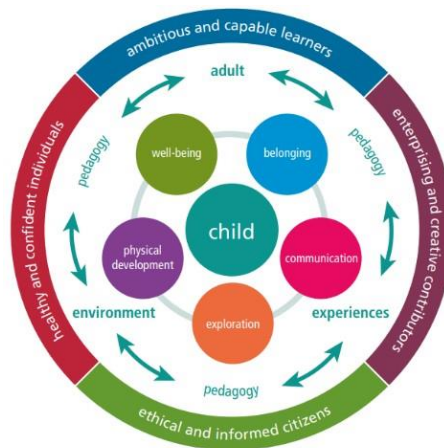
To begin, the parent is encouraged to stay for a short period and then leave together with their child. Alternatively, staggered sessions to begin with where the child can familiarise themselves with staff and setting for as long as needed.

Proposed outcomes

A successful transition should show the child happy and settled. Showing confidence and less reliance on a key worker which demonstrates their eagerness to explore independently.

The new curriculum in wales has included a new foundation learning as part of its framework. Which allows a smoother continuum for children leaving pre-school from 3 up to 16years old. This new curriculum takes a holistic approach to all children, keeping each developmental need at the forefront – meaning this will develop the child as a whole not just focusing on one particular area, as every child is unique. (Pacey, 2022)

The diagram below shows the five developmental pathways with a holistic view.



(Source: New curriculum for Wales - Pacey, 2022)

Such like the principles of Montessori who strongly believed that a child is a unique individual. (Eliot, 1999; Lillard and Quest, 2006). Developing in relation to the environment around them in a way that is prepared to allow natural learning to unfold. Reggio Emilia had a similar approach where the home environment should also be reflected.

Lev Vygotsky (1896-1934) believed it to be essential to see how children develop in a social context. (Tudge , 1992) he made a point that children who are isolated do not develop social relationships and interactions and through these connections they develop into themselves. (Corsaro, 1992) Vygotsky observed how social interaction

involved not only other children but parents, siblings and teachers. Through imaginary play Vygotsky and Piaget agreed that this was self-education, which mainly occurred during the second year of a child's life with adults engaging and initiating the play. Through engaging in sustained shared thinking and effective pedagogy will enhance children's developmental outcomes.

When there is a lack of appropriate support during transition this can have a negative effect on the long term outcome of the child. When the child is always at the centre and necessary adjustments are made through the transition process, it will ultimately have a positive influence and experience for children and their families. (Welsh government, 2022)

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