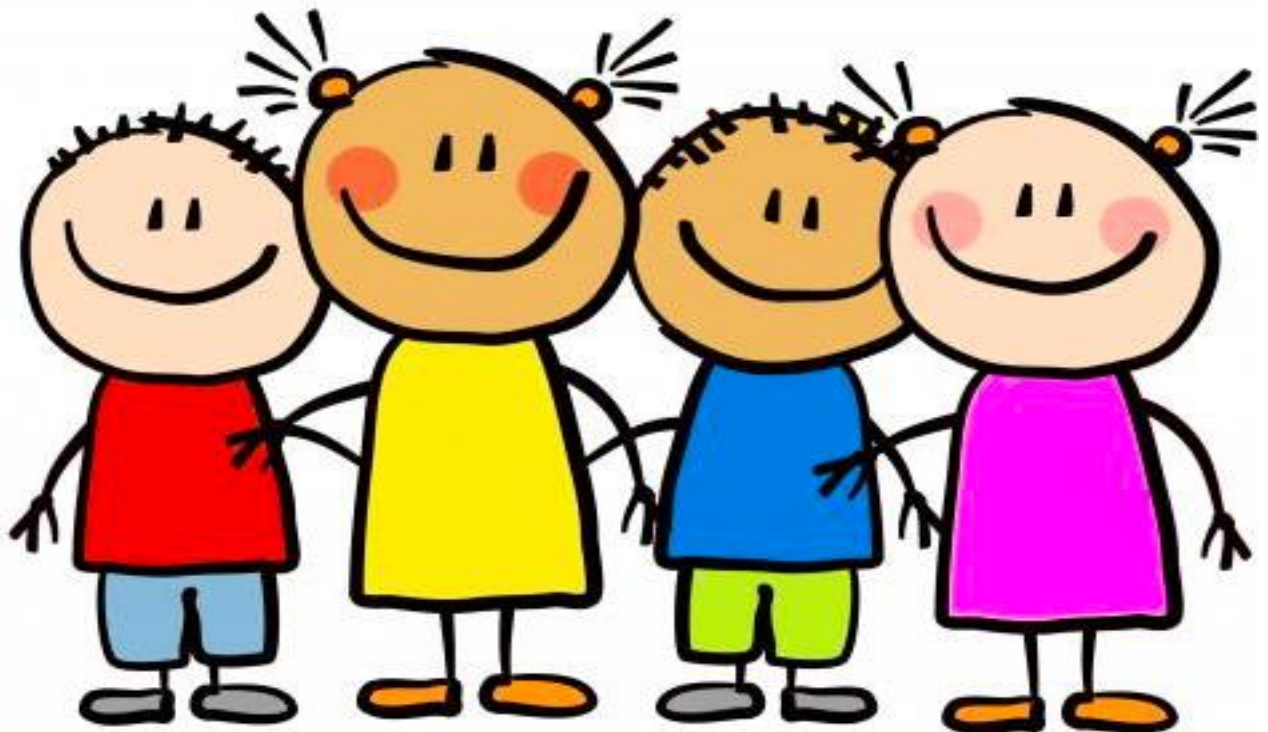


A handbook for practitioners in the Early Years: Transitions



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Handbook overview

Handbook overview

This handbook is designed for practitioners who work in the early years to help guide children through transitions, specifically the transition from nursery to reception. The role of the adult, the needs of the child, importance of communication, interventions and proposed outcomes will all be discussed in this handbook, along with supporting theory.

Introduction

What is a transition?

'Transition is always about change; particularly adjusting to change' states Early Years Matters(2022). A transition is a process more than an event and actually involves the child, the parents, and practitioners working together and communicating effectively. It is the change from their comfort zone in which they know well to a new environment with new rules and routines.

Transitions happen to everyone throughout life and are often seen as a having a positive outcome. For a child transitions can be intimidating because of fear of the unknown such as unfamiliar environments and meeting new people. These children will require more support and it is the adults job to reassure the child and make them feel valued. Even the children who appear on the outside to be coping well with the transitions any change is going to be scary for them because it is out of their comfort zone (Early Years Matters, 2022)

Parents can also feel stressed during transitions and often take longer to accept the change than the child.

Transitions allow children to meet milestones, as they encourage new possibilities for development and growth which builds up the child's resilience for the future.

The role of the adult

Bronfenbrenner's theory

Bronfenbrenner, (1974) has a theory that states that the systems closest to the child are the most influential to them and their development.

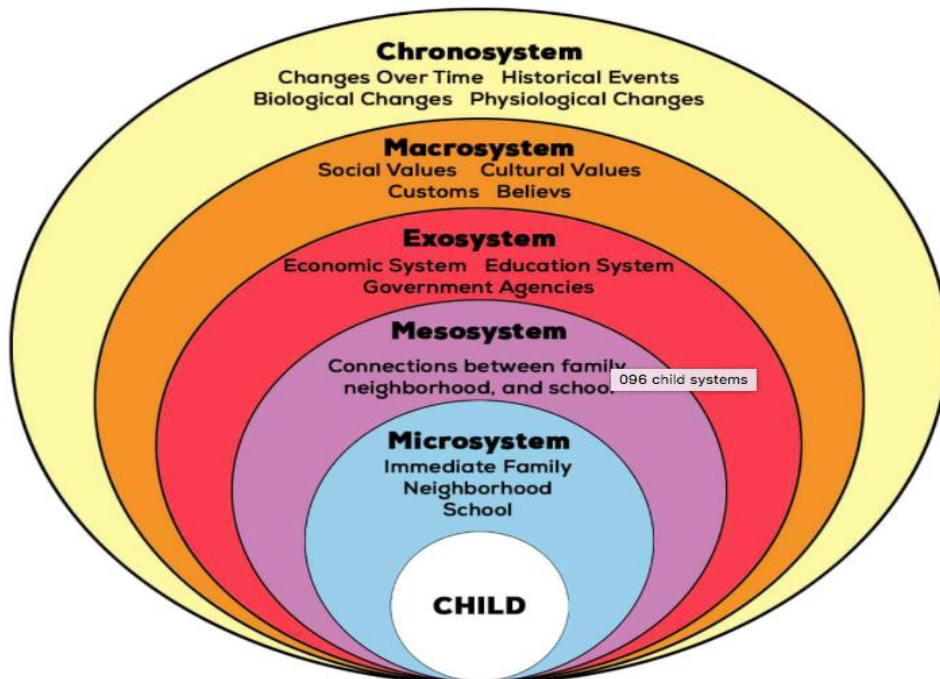
The Microsystem is the closest and includes the child's immediate family, their local area and the school. When children have a positive relationship with their parents, it will have a positive reflecting outcome on the child.

The Mesosystem. This system is the environment that surrounds the child and the interactions between them. For example interactions between the parent and teacher, and if this relationship is respected between both it can have a positive end result on the child's development.

The Exosystem is out of the child's control and includes the factors such as the parents financial situation and the neighbourhood in which they live.

The Macrosystem focuses on poverty, wealth, social status and nationality. For example a child in poverty would develop differently to a child who is not.

The Chronosystem is the effect that all life transitions have on the child, like starting school or moving house. (Simply Psychology, 2020)



Adults who care about the children the most, such as their parents and the early years practitioners can work collectively through the 'mesosystem' to make sure that the transitions through education provide the basis for their social, emotional and academic success in the future Hayes, O'Toole, and Halpenny (2017 p.147).

Role of the practitioner

During transitions respect between practitioners and parents allows for more open and professional communication which helps with the transition process. It is recognised that all practitioners working with the families and children fully understand the transition process in order for it to be successful. Practitioners should create a nurturing and inclusive atmosphere so the children and their family feel welcomed implies Welsh Government- Flying start (2017). By doing this it helps the children feel a sense of love and belonging which is one of the needs of the child according to Maslow.

Role of the parent

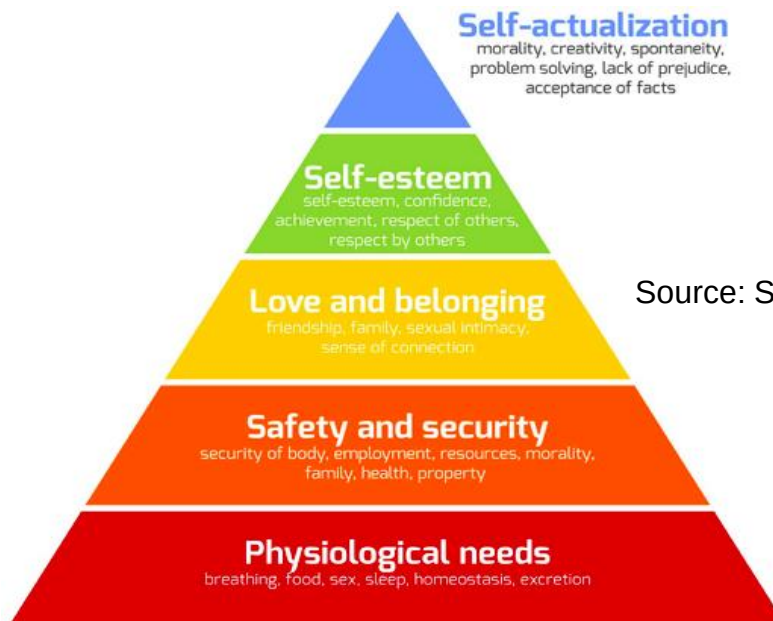
Parents should maintain good communication and a positive relationship with the practitioners to ensure a foundation for a positive transition says Patel, A. (no date). Also, Hayes, O'Toole, and Halpenny, (2017, p.64) imply that positive child-parent relationships result in easier transitions. Studies suggest that parents who interact and listen to their child, the child will be more inclined to enjoy school, like their teachers and have more respect for school which makes the transition process more enjoyable.

The needs of the child

During a transitional period children should be placed at the centre of the planning and seen as unique and important says Welsh Government- Flying start (2017)

Maslow's hierarchy of needs

Maslow created a theory in 1943 and is made up in a five tier model that highlights the basic human needs. Maslow states that the needs at the bottom of the pyramid must be met before moving up the hierarchy. The needs include Physiological needs, safety and security, love and belonging, self esteem and self-actualisation where the child reaches their full potential. (simply psychology, 2022)



Source: Simply psychology (2022)

The physiological needs such as food and water is a need of the child and should be met by their parents and if this need is not met all other needs do not matter. In terms of Safety and security the child needs to feel safe and the child's family and school can help meet this need by keeping children safe from accidents or injury. During transitions children will feel the sense of love and belonging from their new environment, parents and practitioners who care for them, and friendships they make. Children need to feel self-worth, accomplishment and respect to build self-esteem. Practitioners can help build their esteem by praising them in the classroom for example. The last need is self actualisation this is the realisation of their full potential. For children going through a transition, feeling self actualised could be feeling confident in themselves to leave their main attachment and enter a new environment and build new attachments with the practitioners and other children. (simply psychology, 2022).

Bowlby's Attachment theory

Bowlby's attachment theory states that an important relationship is needed between children and their carer in order for healthy development. Children who have parents or carers that are sympathetic and predictable tend to feel safe and loved and can in return value others.

However, children who have experienced neglect might reject the attachment figure. These children may appear more anxious or conflicted. Bowlby believes that with high quality care every child can learn to feel valued says Nursery World (2005).



John Bowlby (Source: Nursery World, 2005)

Children need to feel that at least one person will be there to comfort them when required. Not having the secure attachment means the child is more inclined to be more susceptible to emotional problems implies Nursery World (2005).

Pacey (2014) quotes Bowlby's book 'Attachment and loss' to state that children who have a secure attachment 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". This quote relates to transitions as building strong new attachments to the child or making the most of an existing one is suggested to be key for a smooth transition as the child will be resilient and confident in themselves during the transition.

Enabling Environment

Pacey believes that enabling environments play an important part in supporting children's development. As well as this Pacey says it is recognised that children learn and grow the best in loving, reassuring settings, which acknowledge their own needs.

During transitions if the new environment is warm and welcoming the child will feel a sense of belonging. This is because the environment should be created with the child at the centre and all the practitioners should be aware of the importance of building supportive and nurturing relationships for the child's development. Implies the early years alliance (2019).

Partnerships

Children's ideas of relationships are heavily influenced by their own experiences as Bowlby suggests. For example, if an adult responds to a child's needs regularly this will form an attachment. If the child's needs are rejected they might end up feeling unloved.

**Parents + Teachers =
Student Success**

Source: Kids are special (2015)



Bronfenbrenner's Mesosystem supports this image from kids are special (2015) as he believes that if the relationship between the parent and practitioner is respected it will have a positive effect on the child's development.

Parents and practitioners partnership

Having a professional relationship between practitioners and the child's parents creates an atmosphere for the children where they feel secure and confident during transitions says Tower Hamlets (no date). As Maslow's theory states a child needs the feeling of safety and security before they can feel a sense of belonging. Parents are the most important adult in the child's life and the ones who have the best understanding of their child, so practitioners should use this to their advantage and gather as much information about the child from the parents. Effective communication between parents and practitioners ensures that the practitioners can be well informed about the child, this can include any issues the parents might have regarding the transition.

Practitioners and child partnership

The UK Government (no date) suggest that practitioner-child relationships shape over time and it is this attachment that is important for the child's learning, development, welfare and future academic success. Children develop best in an inclusive environment, where there is mutual respect and every child is valued. Children need to feel comfortable knowing that there is a practitioner that they can trust. When a child has a good relationship with a practitioner they will go to them any time they feel upset or if they are proud of something they have done.

Multi-agency working

During transitions multi-agency working is key. Information sharing between social services, the practitioners and the child's previous setting is required in order to safeguard children. The communication between the nursery setting and the child's new setting is important to allow the new practitioners to gather insight on any needs the children transitioning up may have.

Interventions

Interventions are put in place through the setting to ensure a positive transition for both the child and their family.

1.Welcome meetings

Welcome meetings allow the parent and child to meet the class teacher before starting school. Also, welcome meetings let the children to visit their new environment and explore which can make them excited to come back to school in September. Here the parents have the opportunity to ask any questions they have about the transition. For example parents could ask about dismissal times and how lunch time works. (Nursery world, 2019)



Source: Nimble (no date)

2.Welcome booklet

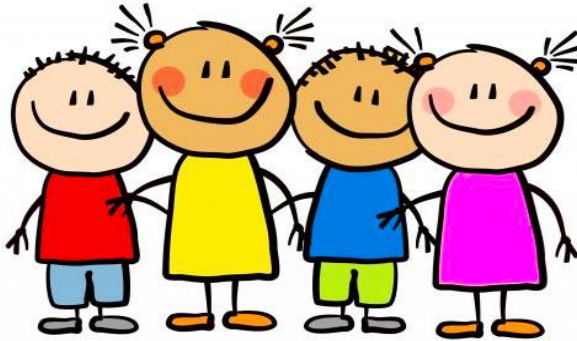
At the welcome meeting at the end of the summer term whilst the child is in Nursery a welcome booklet will be made and handed out to every parent. It will include details of all the teachers and teaching assistants working with the children, the routine of the day, details about snack and lunch time and an overview of the topics covered throughout the year. This can ease the transition process for children as parents can prepare them for what a day in reception looks like.

3.Staggered return to school

A staggered return to school after the summer holidays can help make the transition into full time reception easier. This is because children who are transitioning to reception are only used to being half day in nursery, so being in school all day from day one could cause the children to become distressed, especially in a new environment. An example of this is the first week the children stay in school till playtime. The second week they still in school for lunchtime. And then the third week they can be in all day.

4.Children's relationships

Recognising the relationships the child has made with their friends can help them adjust to the new environment, says Oxfordshire County Council (2017). This supports Bronfenbrenner's theory as the people closest to the child are the most influential to them and friends fall in the Microsystem.



Source: Bright Eyes
childcare Cornwall
(2022)

5.Visual timetable

A visual timetable can be reassuring for children as they will be able to see the structure of the day clearly. This can make children more confident and settled in their new environment as they can predict what is happening next. For example, they will know that every day after playtime it will be time for snack. Oxfordshire Count Council (no date)

6.All about me

This allows the parents to fill in a worksheet about the child's likes, dislikes, interests and information about their home. Also any of the child's needs and the parents concerns can be written. This can help during transitions for the practitioner to gather an insight to the child moving up into reception and can help settle any children who appear to be nervous by showing them we as practitioners have an interest in their interests says Tower hamlets (no date).

Proposed outcomes

As a result of a positive transition both the children and the practitioners should be happy. A happy atmosphere and enabling environment will allow the child to develop and grow best. Also, ensuring that the child feels safe in their new environment is important as one of the needs of Maslow's theory is safety and security.

Children should feel confident in their new environment once the transition process is complete. Confident children will appear more independent and rely less on the practitioners for reassurance. They will also start to develop their own relationships with the other children which results in them feeling like they belong.

Once the children are fully settled in their new routine it is expected that drop off time is kept short to prevent the children from becoming overwhelmed and anxious imply is it time to play (2022). Maslow's theory supports this as the children need to be confident in themselves to leave their primary attachment and enter their new environment which can help them become self-actualised.

Parents and practitioners should also have effective communication with each other and also now have a professional relationship developed. Communication to parents is vital all through the year when the child is in your care not just during the transition phase.

As a result of a positive transition practitioners should now be able to deliver high-quality provision which is important to the children's holistic development says early years wales (2022). The new non-maintained curriculum in Wales aims to supply the basis to support children's beneficial experiences for life long learning.

The non-maintained curriculum was developed to support children to become;

- Ambitious, capable learners
- Enterprising, creative contributors
- Ethical informed citizens
- Healthy, confident individuals

This is an image that outlines the new non-maintained curriculum for wales.



Source: Early Years Wales (2020)

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