

Transition guidance handbook for Early Years Practitioners



www.anationofmoms.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/TransitionintoChildcare-800x800.jpg

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Introduction

This booklet has been designed to support Childcare practitioners in the importance and understanding of creating positive transitions within the childcare profession. PACEY (2016) talks of many transitions' children may experience in their life, and how stressful and confusing they can be for young children. Thinking of transitions in a positive and exciting manner, recognising all the emotions and feelings young children and their families may be experiencing to support the emotional resilience to change both in the present and future times.

Aims

To provide good practice guidance, knowledge of theories and strategies will be highlighted in this booklet to support childcare practitioners understanding and practice to effectively plan and implement smooth transitions into Early Years Childcare, building family's trust, open communication and foster a sense of belonging within the community. Birth to 5 Matters (no date) identifies the importance of high-quality transitions between home and setting as being opportunities for professional conversations to plan effective transitions through a holistic approach.

What are transitions?

Vogler et al (2008) research identifies transitions as key occasions or circumstance that can change throughout children's lives, his research suggests 2 types of transition situations that can be either horizontal or vertical. Horizontal changes are generally less formal in a person's life such as changes to routines, changes from formal to informal ie school to home or indoor to playground. Vertical changes that are recognised in Vogler et al theory are major changes to a child's life, for example starting childcare, school or moving home. Both are valued within the childcare environment.

The curriculum for funded non maintained settings(2022) and the Flying Start funded programme(2007) for childcare for all 2 years olds recognise that transitions are no longer seen as a one-point event and that they are actually on a journey that is shaped by processes and social structure that involves practitioners, parents and the children. (Flying start transitions guidance 2017)

Bates (2019) notes Bruner's scaffolding theory along with Maslow affiliation shown in his hierarchy of needs are key practices to fostering positive experiences as the families begin their education journey.

Using Bruner scaffolding theory to identify what the families can do for transition and then how practitioners can support during the transition process is a holistic approach to fostering effective communications, respect and ensuring the child's voice is being heard, allowing for a sense of belonging, affection and respect.

Getting the transition right is important for growth of every child and family, they can be seen as exciting times of change with new opportunities. Birth to 5 Matters (no date) describes when transitions are managed sensitively it will create positive feeling and build the foundations to a flying start in education and childcare.

The needs of the child

Article 3: the interests of children and young people should be thought about at all levels of society and that their rights should be respected by people in power.

Articles 12 : the rights to an opinion and for it to be listened to and taken seriously.

Article 28 : the right to education.

Article 29 : the right to education which tries to develop your personality and abilities as much as possible and encourages you to respect other people's rights and values and to respect the environment.

The above articles are set out by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, are to ensure all children accessing high quality childcare provision are respectfully treated with integrity and are given freedom of autonomy by the childcare practitioner, that is appropriate to the needs of the child (UNCRC).

As early years practitioners it is our role to supporting these needs of the children as they embark on their first experience of education outside of their home. Practitioners who have a commitment and knowledge of the wellbeing and child development of the children allow for accurate expectations to be met (Lindon 2012)

Article 12 can be facilitated with well-planned transitions where practitioners who value and respect children and families, being inclusive of cultures, family blends, or needs lend itself to children developing their resilience, capability, and self-assurance (Birth to 5 Matters).

Valuing the funds of knowledge that parents and children bring to the environment from home allows the practitioner to facilitate the children voice in planning the environment (UNCRC Article 12). Childcare practitioners can use their child development knowledge and nurturing skills to create environments that allow time for keyworkers to gain an understanding of the children's likes and dislikes, home routines such as sleep patterns, soothers, understanding possible of separation anxiety as they leave parents for the first time are respected to fosters trust and open communication with families (Article 29 UNCRC).

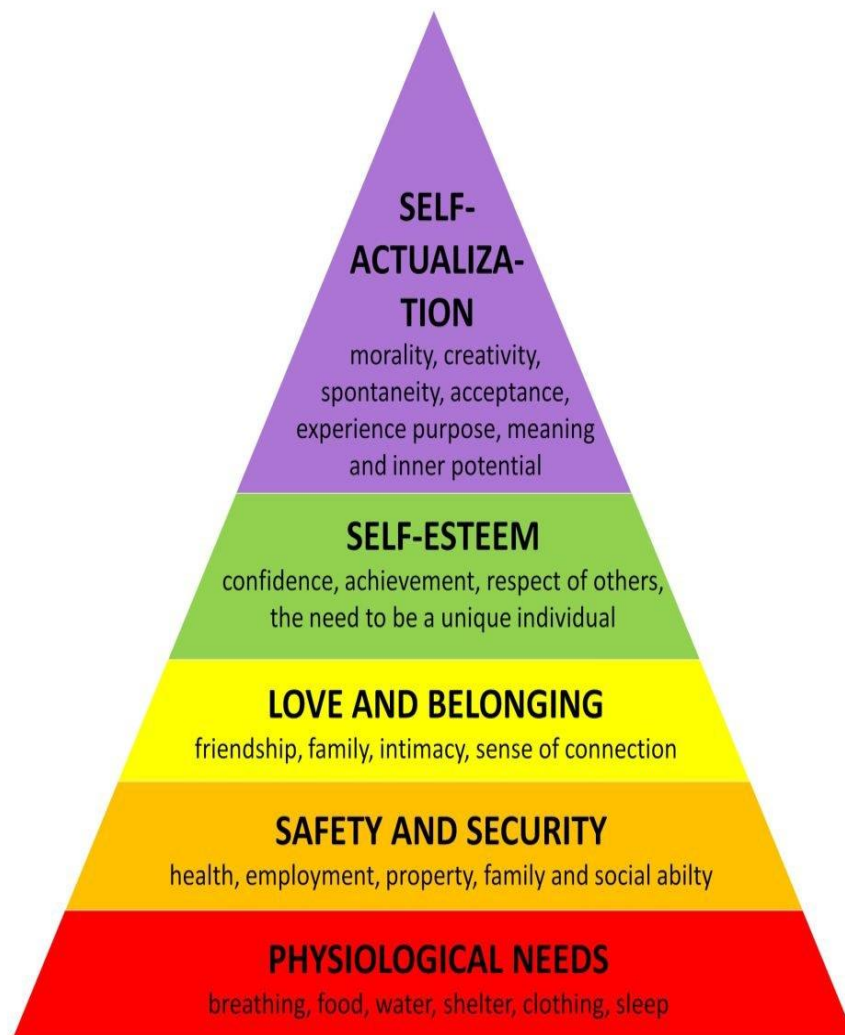
Empowering children to ensure Article 3 that adults must do what is right by the child focuses attention on the recognition of childcare practitioners' own practice, values, and integrity. Banduras (1977) social learning theory believes humans are active information processors and that relationship behaviours can have to its consequences. Bandura's theory considers how both the environment and cognitive factors can influence the humans learning and behaviour (simplypsychology.org)

Maslow's hierarchy of needs research further supports the principles of the UNCRC in enabling the child to reach full potential.

Maslow's hierarchy of needs also focuses on five stages of human needs, his research supports that lower levels needs such as food, water and safety must be met before we can reach of full potential.

The Role of the Adult

Flying Start transition guidance (2017) identifies a core purpose to managing transitions as a childcare professional effectively, with many of their aims such as facilitating continuity of care, supporting the development and learning whilst enhancing the wellbeing and ensuring a positive experience of change for the children and families is also linked to Maslow's hierarchy of needs.



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Respecting families will support and develop the physiological needs of the child, it is critical how the role of the adult along with the parent will combine to promote safety and security, give environments where the child feels loved and have a sense of belonging, which will build on self-confidence and esteem allowing for self-actualization to be reached. The childcare practitioner can do this through a variety of methods.

Family Open Days

Open days are used to support transitions into a childcare setting , Bronfenbrenner developed an Ecological Systems theory (EST) where he identified the balance between nature and nurture to enhance and support children's development. (Bates, 2019) The Microsystem can often be observed during open days as parents and childcare practitioners used their knowledge and understanding of the transitions into childcare gathering lots of information and knowledge of the child to plan an effective environment to reflect the needs of the child and family. Having an understanding that children and families experience are not going to be identical , with each child's needs being identified at these open days are positive ways to build trust and effective communication.

Flying start transition guidance (2017) strengthens Bronfenbrenner Microsystem as they promote frequent Stay and Play sessions within childcare. This continues the nature nurture theory as parents are encouraged to support the child's childcare journey. Stay and Play session celebrate and recognise the holistic approach allowing for open communication and beginning the sense of belonging with the childcare community.

Keyworkers and Handover

Bowlby's theory of attachment identifies that children could become increasingly distressed when separated from their parents (Bates 2019) and could be anxious and upset. Keyworkers are allocated within the childcare to support secure attachments. Over a period and using lots of distraction methods that have been given by information shared from parents on the open day will allow for the child and key worker to start to form secure attachments.

Birth to 5 Matters (no date) recognises that the role of the keyworker goes far beyond record keeping and communicating with professional or parents , it is a special responsibility to supporting a child's emotional wellbeing building trust in a special nurturing relationship. Ensuring the child feels cared for , safe and understood. This is also identified in the Bronfenbrenner(2005) Exosystem, which recognises there is a circle of people who will indirectly influence the child.

Building a relationship with the child and their families are key to creating the triangle of trust. Being attentive, warm, and playful provides a secure base and positive relationship . Hand over at the end or beginning of this session is one the key occasions to begin the transparent communication, given time or private space for confidently conversations when needed.

A recent campaign called Shaping Us (2022) looks at how the brain develops during pregnancy through to early childhood and talks of the importance our experiences , relationships, and how surrounding can shape our responses. Eamon McCorry explains that children are born vulnerable and have an innate instinct to connect with parents and care givers. It is an instinct that kicks in early, so it is important as keyworkers that we respond warmly and positively using the information shared by parents to provide feeling of emotional physical safety to build confidence and reliance to explore the childcare environment. When handing over at the start of the day the information shared by parents will give keyworkers a window into the wellbeing of the child that day. When trust is built with the parents of the child, parents will be more giving of personal information that could have more of a long-term effect on a child's wellbeing.

Settling in session & Stay and Play Sessions

As knowledgeable childcare practitioners, the information shared by parents will be used to facilitate proactive settling in sessions. Vygotsky(1934) scaffolding principle to structuring the building of blocks for a positive transition into childcare is essential in creating the right environment for the child's needs (Bates 2019). Keyworkers will use their knowledge and training along with parental feedback, to plan and create a warm and inviting environment allowing children to feel safe and heard. These sessions are useful to support the change in the child and family's life engaging the families to become familiar with the environment, structure, and routines. Fostering positive holistic relationships with parents feeling relaxed and confident that their child will be happy (pacey.org.uk). Settling in sessions can be used to ensure any cultural or additional learning needs are addressed and an individual learning plan can be in place to support the transition.

Providing opportunities for secure attachments and building Vygotsky's scaffolding blocks encourages the children to feel safe and supported within their environment to explore in an independent and confident style. Secure attachments maintain a healthy balance of the child needing the keyworker and children meeting their own needs. Dr Stella Louis talks of keyworkers allowing healthy struggles, understanding that help that we offer a child must be based upon what our observations show us that they need for their further development and learning, to allow children to become capable resilient learners(Simplepsychology.org). Keyworkers being aware of the importance of serve and return interactions build strong foundations in the child's brain development (shaping us campaign). Keyworkers and children working together highlights a relationship based on the reciprocity, equity, and mutual respect(Pacey 2016).

Stay and play sessions provide opportunities for parents to have fun playing with their children in an early year's childcare setting. Sessions introduce different play and learning opportunities, encouraging family engagement within their community. Key workers use these sessions to support families with possible knowledge of various milestones in their child's development offering reassurance to any parental concerns.(Flying start 2017)

Signposting and advice could be offered with further transitions into formal schooling or independent milestones such as potty training or a range of questions parents may have. This session can be used to promote child development and how parent can be involved with their child's learning, creating a holistic approach to the child's care and development (Flying Start 2017)

Using these sessions to ensuring parents feel heard and valued are key tools toward the continuity of the holistic team.

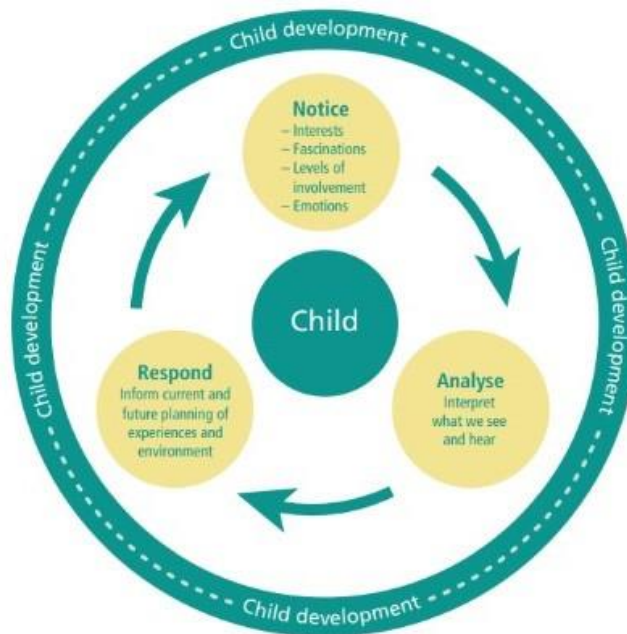
Creating a learning environment and the importance of play

Unicef (2018) research of the past 30 years indicates that from birth to eight as the most important period of development for children, it is during this time when strong foundations for success are developed with adults. Creating an environment which supports positive interactions to play that is meaningful, joyful, actively engaging, iterative and socially interactive are the bases for the Curriculum for funded non-maintained Nursery Settings for Wales. The curriculum was developed by early years educators for early years practitioners, it recognises how important it is for high quality environments are essential for children's development (CFNMNSW). As Early Years Practitioners it is our role to provide a holistic environment that will promote a safe space for the children's voice to be heard, respecting and responding positively to the children's needs.

Friedrich Froebel (1852) research believed "a child is free to determine his own actions according to the laws and demands of the play he is involved in. Through and in his play, he is able to feel himself to be independent and autonomous" (frobeltrust.org.uk). This notion supports the curriculum setting out guidance in creating effective environments both indoor and outdoor to be central to the child's authentic experiences. The learning environment should ensure to be welcoming and inviting, promoting a strong sense of cultural diversity whilst acknowledging the community we live in, include not just the physical needs but to include the emotional climate of the children and families (hwb.gov.wales). Providing a wide and varied experience that ignites curiosity and wonder, will motivate children to develop critical thinking, problem solving and creativity in the environment around them. Dewey's pragmatism school thought also supports the notion of children learning by doing and not by the task of the childcare practitioners. (Bates 2013)

As the enabling adult we need to use our observation and monitoring skills to ensure we get to know the children, focusing on their unique set of skills what the individual brings. Childcare practitioners can use observations in different ways to support their own learning and to extend their understanding of the significance of the children's development. Froebel understood that holistic pedagogy requires holistically educated adults. As such, the role of the adult is central to Froebel's ideas. His insights about supporting babies' and young children's learning through observation remain just as relevant today (Froebel.org.uk) This practice is used throughout the curriculum to support children to become ambitious and capable learners, with resilience and transferable problem-solving skills for the future.

Dr Stella Louis (2022) uses her research of use of observations to identify Schemas and how they closely link to how young children's brain growth. Schemas are repeated actions of behaviour that help children to strengthen and develop understanding of concepts around them. There are many types of schemas, including trajectory, rotations, enclosing, enveloping, transporting, connecting, and disconnecting, that can be observed in children's behaviour. Knowledge of children's schemas will support understanding of their behaviour and style of learning. Understanding how schemas can present will allow for the childcare practitioner to plan an effective environment where the child will feel heard. Schemas such as trajectory may present in a child's behaviour to be items being thrown, being emptied, jumping up and down on furniture, running and whizzing, providing opportunities to explore that include large physical activities that encourage the individual to run, jump, in straight lines or zigzags will support their wellbeing and development (Schema for Parents 2021).



Observation circle from curriculum for non-maintain settings Wales

Interventions & Partnership Working

Using the above circle to observe and plan for children, contributes to any interventions that a child may need. Sharing of observation and working in partnership with families and multi agencies strengthens the holistic approach around the child. Practice will support Maslow hierarchy of needs theory as childcare practitioners , families and agencies combine to foster a positive sense of love and belonging in the environment . Good communication and respect of each other's roles support strong positive links with aims and objectives of any interventions required are clear pathways is central to effective multiagency working (NSPCC 2023). A commitment to implementing inclusive practice within our pedagogical approach can foster combine supportive strategies to supporting the needs of the child, allowing for an opportunity to thrive.

Conclusion /proposed outcomes

Getting transitions into childcare right are one of the most important transitional journeys for families and the children. Transitions are ever-present starting as soon as our lives begin. It is therefore important that a holistic approach by all parties supports the child to easing through the journey, whether it be home to setting or from setting to school (Catherine Mcleod 2023).

Both Froebel research and Maslow's Hierarchy of needs show the child's basic needs will motivate the child's behaviours. As childcare practitioners who can support removing barriers such as Additional learning needs (ALN) or supporting any adverse childhood experiences (ACE) even for just small periods will give opportunities for children to feel a connectedness and have sense of belonging. Respecting family life without judgement giving professional acceptance in the suggested tools listed, are all experiences childcare practitioners can use to promote positive experiences (hwb).

When modelling a joyful approach to learning, encourage and supporting children's natural curiosity, making best use of the teachable moments that occur naturally, as we observe or engage in their play the children will feel safe to explore, learn and build their self esteem reaching moments of Maslow's self-actualization (simplepsychology).

Advocating freedom of play (Dewey) in a rich well organised inclusive environment, whilst childcare practitioners use detailed observations and role modelling (Froebel) to plan and support developmental pathways, will promote children to become enable, resilient learners, with transferable skills for the future (Birth to 5 Matters)

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