Transitions

Handbook for Keyworkers

(Reception to Year 1)

(Source: KiS International School, 2017)

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INTRODUCTION: What is Transition?

According to Supporting Transitions in the Early Years (2008), a transition is a process of change that children experience daily during their lives, from the moment they are born, through to adulthood.

As suggested by BTEC childcare (2009), there are many natural changes that children experience as they progress from one phase of their development through to another. These transitions include:
• home to nursery
• moving from nursery to Reception class
• transitioning from KS1 to KS2
• transitioning from primary to comprehensive school

BTEC childcare (2009) also recognises that as well as natural transitions, some children also experience personal changes which may occur at any time during their lives. These changes include:
• a break-up in the family
• family circumstances
• bereavement
• disability
• illness
• moving home
• a new sibling

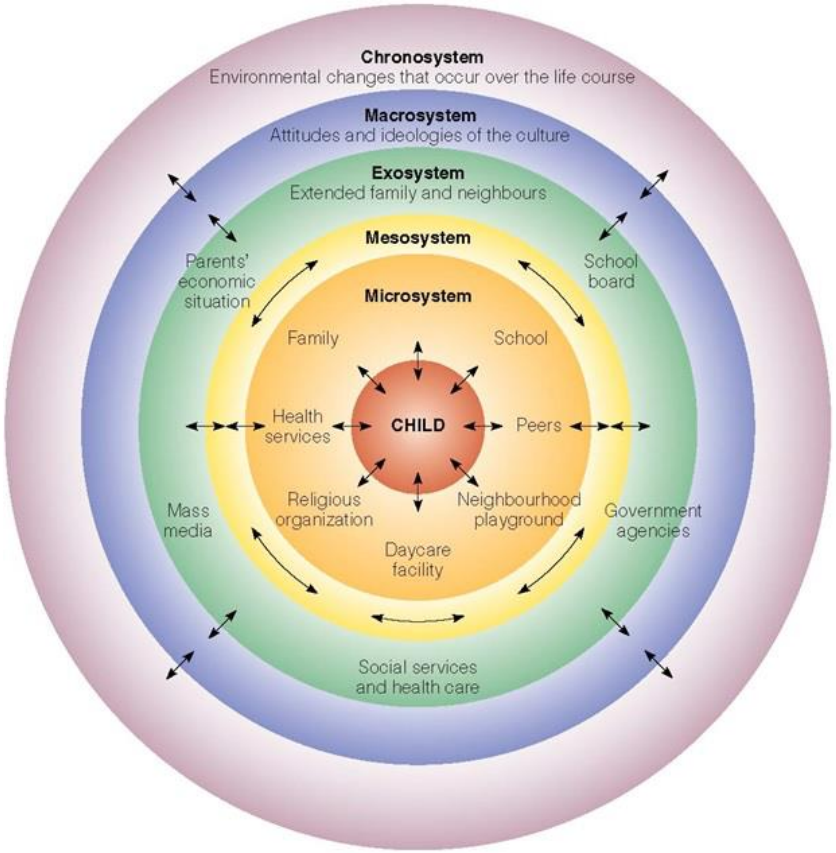
Early Years Matters (2020) believes it is crucial that transitions are managed well and suggests that although transitions are exciting for children, unfamiliar surroundings and people can cause distress for a child and have an influence on their learning and development. Similarly, Croner-i (2019) agrees with this and suggests that a child's ability to cope with a transition is influenced by how well their first transition was managed.

Buckinghamshire Council (no date) suggests that when children experience transitions early in their lives, they are likely to develop positive strategies that will help them cope with future changes.

Cumbria County Council (no date) states that children may take time to adjust to new changes, therefore their learning, development and emotional well-being can be affected. As stated by Cumbria County Council (no date), when children experience transitions that are well managed, they will develop a close relationship with their keyworker, becoming more comfortable and familiar within their new environment and more likely to be ready to learn and succeed.

Belfast Education and Library Board (2011) suggests that all individuals who play a part in the transition process understand their role and how it is connects to the experiences the child has gained, their capabilities and their individual needs, prior to the transition and after, helping children become resilient to change and understand daily patterns.

Gulf Bend Centre (2020) states that Bronfenbrenner is known for his Ecological Systems Theory which he developed to describe how the environment a child grows up in affects their development. As suggested by Jump Foundation (no date), the re-named theory, Bronfenbrenner's Bioecological Model of Human Development, is a more modern theory which argues that a child's biology and the environment they transition in to has a role in their development and in the way they cope with transitions. According to Centre on Innovations in Learning (no date), Bronfenbrenner's Bioecological Model of Human Development can be used by practitioners to personalise a child's learning, as it recognises the quality of the interactions and relationships a child forms in their environment, which supports positive transitions and the development of their physical and cognitive structure.



(Source: Miss Tarver, 2016)

How this handbook should be used

This handbook has been written as a guide to support keyworkers working with children aged 5-6 years, who have the responsibility of planning, preparing and managing the transition from Reception class to Year 1.

The aim of this handbook is for keyworkers to develop their knowledge on transitions and provide them with information on how to aid smooth transitions within their setting, as well as ways of supporting children to settle in well within their new learning environment.

The importance of effective communication will be discussed and how partnerships between children, parents and practitioners benefit the child during transition and their learning development during transition from one stage of school to the next.

Needs of the child

Harvard University (2020) suggests that brain development begins in the womb and continues through to adulthood. The structure of the brain is affected by our experiences and influences the way we learn, behave and our well-being. Poor experiences in early life can have a negative effect on the structure of the brain, preventing the brain from developing correctly.

As suggested by Harvard University (2020), the structure of the brain is moulded by 'Serve and return' interactions. The way an adult responds to a young child's cry, babbles and gestures impacts a child's ability to be able to communicate and socialise with others. It is essential and expected for these 'serve and return' interactions to be responded to in a positive way by the adult through making eye contact, talking to and hugging the child. These types of responses will build neural connections that will support future development of the child's communication and social interaction skills. If the adult's reactions are not consistent or are absent, then the child's brain does not receive the amount of positive stimulation it needs, causing a disturbance in the structure of the brain, which has an effect on the child's well-being as well as their physical, mental and emotional health.

Early Education (no date) suggests that when children are supported well during transitions, they are more likely to be happy and settled, keen to learn and have a better well-being. As suggested by Office of Children's Commissioner (2015), a child centred approach is essential during transitions as it allows a key worker to think about what the impact their decisions have on a child. It is also suggested by Office of Children's Commissioner (2015) that children should be encouraged to give their own opinion on decisions which affect them directly and their learning should be based on their views, interests and rights.

Early Years Matters (2020) agrees that activities in the early years should be based on the child's interests and the knowledge and understanding they have acquired during their lives. It is also suggested that during transition from reception class to Year 1, the keyworker should build on a child's knowledge by providing opportunities to develop their skills through first-hand experiences, using physical resources that are similar to ones they would have already used in reception class, such as:

- sand
- water
- building blocks

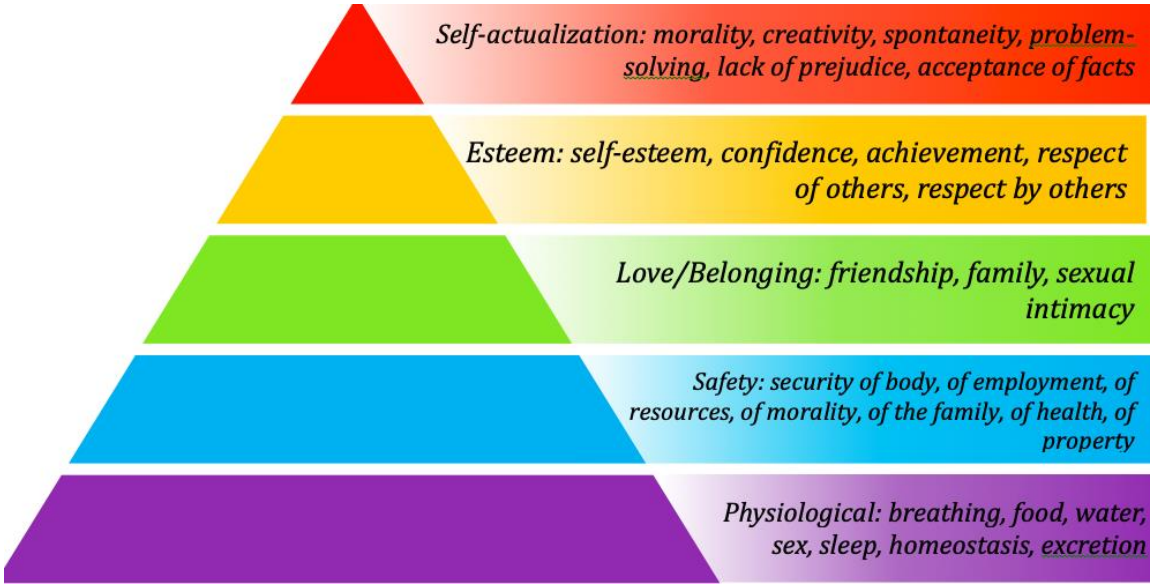
Children and Young People's Commissioner Scotland (2020) states that children have the right to rest, play and to take part in a variety of activities which are appropriate to their age. Family Lives (no date) suggests that play aids a child's development. As suggested by Early Years Matters (2020), play can happen indoors or outdoors and skills such as language, social, creativity, emotional and intellectual are developed. The Welsh Government (2015) agrees and suggests that children learn best by experiencing for themselves, initiating their perception of themselves and their environment. Children's Commissioner for Wales (2018) suggests article 31 of the United Nations Child's Rights enhances a child's experiences, as the elements in the article are an important part of a child's life.

According to the Welsh Government (2015), the seven Areas of Learning (six for Welsh-medium settings/schools) are set out to create an appropriate curriculum to support the development and skills of children aged 3-7 years. It is suggested that the seven areas of learning must link together to give children a cross-curricular approach to learning.

As described by the Welsh Government (2015), the seven Areas of Learning are:

- Personal and Social Development, Well-being and Cultural Diversity
- Language, Literacy and Communication Skills
- Mathematical Development
- Welsh Language Development
- Knowledge and Understanding of the World
- Physical Development
- Creative Development
- Personal and Social Development, Well-being and Cultural Diversity is at the heart of the Foundation Phase and should be developed across the curriculum.

Professional Association for Childcare and Early Years (2016), also known as Pacey, suggests that children learn best when their basic individual needs are met by their caregiver. Pacey (2016) suggests that the safeguarding and welfare requirements of the EYFS in England and the National Minimum Standards for Regulated Childcare in Wales enable practitioners to provide children with the basic needs described by Maslow in his hierarchy of needs pyramid.



Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs
(Source: I Done This Blog, 2019)

The role of the adult

Department for Education (2017) suggests that children should be allocated keyworkers for:
• the care they receive to match their individual needs
• for familiarity
• for them to develop a secure relationship
• for partnerships with parents to be formed

Early Years Matters (2020) agrees and describes a keyworker as a designated staff member who is responsible for a small group of children and who is available for parents to communicate and build positive relationships with. The role of a keyworker is to enable the children in their group feel safe, looked after and to be the person to turn to for reassurance, meeting their emotional needs and supporting their well-being during transition and after. It is also the role of the keyworker to act sensitively to children's behaviours and support their physical needs, such as nappy changing, toileting and dressing.

As suggested by PACEY (2020), a key worker's role includes regular observations. The Welsh Assembly Government (2008) and PACEY (2016) recognise the importance of observation, as it gives an opportunity to learn about the child's likes and dislikes, and to collate information while performing an activity to form clear understanding of the child's learning and development and identify any difficulties.

Croner-i (2019) suggests that it is the role of the keyworker to plan suitable activities that will support children during their transitions. As suggested by Croner-i (2019), further planning may be required for a child with a disability or a special educational need, therefore it would be beneficial for professionals and parents to communicate prior to transition, ensuring enough time is available for the preparations needed to support a pleasant transition.

Pacey (2014) explains that a keyworker should think of ways of building new secure attachments or take advantage of existing attachments between themselves and the children in their care, as these attachments will support a smooth transition.

According to Pacey (2020), Bowlby's attachment theory suggests that secure attachments are made when an adult responds sensitively and consistently to a child's needs, showing they are loved, respected and understood, encouraging higher self-esteem and an emotional resilience as they develop to be able to deal with situations which are out of their control.

Pacey (2020) suggests that a parent is a child's primary attachment and the emotional bond made between them enables the child to feel safe and build trusting relationships with others throughout their lives. Pacey (2020) believes that in order to cope with the temporary separation from a parent, a child needs a secure attachment outside of the home environment. Pacey (2020) suggests that secondary attachments support a child to feel love, safety and reassurance from their keyworker and gain confidence to thrive in their learning.

Kirklees Council (2013) acknowledges that parents have a part to play in aiding their child during transitions and suggests that parents and children should become acquainted with the new environment and keyworkers by being given opportunities such as a home visit from keyworkers and visiting the new environment.

According to NurseryWorld (2020), commencing school or changing class is often more difficult for the parent than it is for the child and these parental anxieties are often passed on to the child without the parent realising. As an early years keyworker, NurseryWorld (2020) suggests that it is part your role to encourage parents to display a positive attitude towards a transition, which will aid a smooth and enjoyable transition, although the child is in an unfamiliar environment.

As suggested by PACEY (2016), children are at school for around 6 hours a day between the ages of 4-16, accumulating to around 2 years of their lives. PACEY (2020) believes that parents are the first people to have an impact on a child's development and the role they play in reinforcing a child's learning is fundamental to their future achievements. PACEY (2016) suggests that parents spend the most time with a child and know them the best, therefore it is important parents contribute to their child's assessments and for the child's opinion to also be heard.

Preparing for change

As suggested by Oxfordshire County Council (2017), children are more likely to feel more comfortable in their new environment and settle quickly if they are prepared for change and it is crucial that positive transitions are experienced.

Croner-i (2020) suggests that when children leave Early Years Foundation Stage, also known as EYFS, the transition from Reception to Year 1 is the beginning of a more formal learning environment and is an important transition in education. Croner-i (2020) recommends that Reception and Year 1 staff communicate prior to the transition to ensure the change is managed well and runs smoothly.

Croner-i (2020) suggests that an EYFS profile for each child is required at the end of the Reception year, which provides staff and parents with information on the child's knowledge, understanding and abilities, as well as the progress they have made over the school year against the expected levels. The EYSF profile will support the Year 1 keyworker to plan and prepare suitable activities to meet the curriculum and the needs of each child in the class, promoting a smooth transition.

(Source: The Restorative Foundation, 2020)

Building Partnerships

PACEY (2020) believes that children thrive when they create strong relationships with those who are accountable for meeting their needs, therefore a key person is essential to a child's development. Early Years Matters (2020) suggests that professional support can be given when partnerships are formed between the practitioner and other agencies who work together to support a child's development.

Pacey (2020) suggests that it is essential that you are known to parents as their child's key person and communicate with them about their child's day and the progress they are making. PACEY (2016) believes that close partnerships between practitioner and families is extremely important as this communication will impact the way children deal with the transition they are experiencing. According to Teach Early Years (2020), parents, as well as children experience separation anxiety, therefore a strong relationship between the keyworker and parent are key to developing comfort and trust with those caring for their child. Early Years Matters (2020) believes that children benefit when relationships are formed between the practitioner and parents, as the children sense a link with home, allowing them to be able to cope better with the separation from their parents.
Children's Workforce Development Council (2010) suggests that communication requires a person to question, listen, understand and respond appropriately. Effective communication is essential when working with children and families, as it develops trusting relationships and builds a rapport by using appropriate methods of communication to meet the needs of the child, such as speaking their first language or using sign language. Pacey (2020) agrees with this and suggests that a keyworker should be flexible in their

approach to communication with parents, that communication should be adapted to suit the parent's needs, such as for those with English as an additional language or a particular learning need.

The Restorative Foundation (2020) refers to restorative practice as building partnerships that are respectful and co-operative. Restorative practice in a school allows children to develop their learning and social skills in a safe environment where there is security and trust, meaning that positive relationships are formed between school and parents, as well as pupils and staff. (The Restorative Foundation, 2020).

Child Mind Institute (2020), suggests that strong parental support, coupled with open communication between the parent, school and other agencies, enables the child and strengthens the child’s learning outcomes.

Interventions

Croner-i (2020) believes that smooth transitions can be achieved by:

- arranging for children to visit and spend time in their new classroom with their new teacher.
- EYFS and Year 1 staff meeting to discuss any individual needs.
- creating ‘buddy’ system for Reception and a Year 1 children to share experiences within the classroom.
- EYFS approach to learning is utilised by Year 1 practitioners to promote learning.
- providing structured play-based sessions.
- supplying parents with clear information on their child’s transition to Year 1, this could be done by holding open sessions for parents to meet new teachers, see the classroom and learn about Year 1 routine.

As described by Scottish Social Services Council (no date), a keyworker should approach the planning and assessing of a child holistically, to ensure physical, personal, social, emotional and spiritual wellbeing and cognitive aspects of learning are considered. This will enable the practitioner to measure the child’s progress and aid in the planning of future activities to support the child’s progress.

According to Child Discovery Centre (2018) Reggio Emilia philosophy of education was produced in Nothern Italy and is used as an approach to teaching, learning and advocacy. It is described as a form of observation used to reflect on children’s learning and ways to support children socially and academically.

Outcomes

As suggested by Swansea Council (2019), when practitioners and parents work together as a team, the child gets the support that is needed to gain positive outcomes. When parents are actively involved in the child's learning and communicate and work as part of a team with the keyworker and all involved, the child is more likely to succeed, according to Child Mind Institute (2020). The child's learning and development is enhanced by these partnerships, which support the child's individual needs and to achieve the best outcome.

Gateshead Council (2018) suggests that the process of transition needs to be flexible as not every transition has the same procedures. It is suggested by Gateshead Council (2018) that the school setting, as well as children, have their own unique culture, therefore, socio-cultural factors should be regarded during transitions.

Gateshead Council (2018) believes that the expected outcomes of a transition are:

- children to have settled well, feel safe with the adults and within their new environment.
- close partnerships formed between staff and outside organisations and the passing of appropriate information and documentation during meetings.
- that information between parents and the school is shared effectively.

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