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# A Handbook for Early years Practitioners, for Support in Transitions during childhood.

(Source: Home Grown Friends, 2015)

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# Introduction

## Aims

The aim of this handbook is to provide support for early years practitioners throughout the process of Transitions. This handbook will explain the term transition, the role of the adult, the needs of the child, the learning environment, Practical Interventions that can be put in place form the setting for the child to promote a positive transition and the outcomes of the transition for the children, families, and practitioners. During these sections of the handbook, it will discuss some of the theories to support the aspect of the transition in the early years.

## What is a Transition?

Transitions are a ‘psychological process people go through to come to terms with a new situation and that, although change is external, transition is internal.’ Bridges (1991). Transitions are a process, not an event, therefore ‘professionals have a duty to ensure that continuity of care is as smooth as can be.’ Sanders et al (1991). Docket and Perry (2005) suggested that if transitions are well managed it is reasonable to expect 4–5-year-olds to adapt to change well. Transitions within the early years sector is a term used to describe the ‘occasions where children begin accessing and transferring between non-home-based settings such as nurseries, pre-schools and school’ Johnson (2013).

Clarke (2020) suggests that young children will need varying help to cope when it comes to the transition period. Clarke also suggests that practitioners should remember that transitions are not just a one-off event, and that careful planning should take place in advance to these transitions to meet the needs of the child and their family as they enter the transition phase.

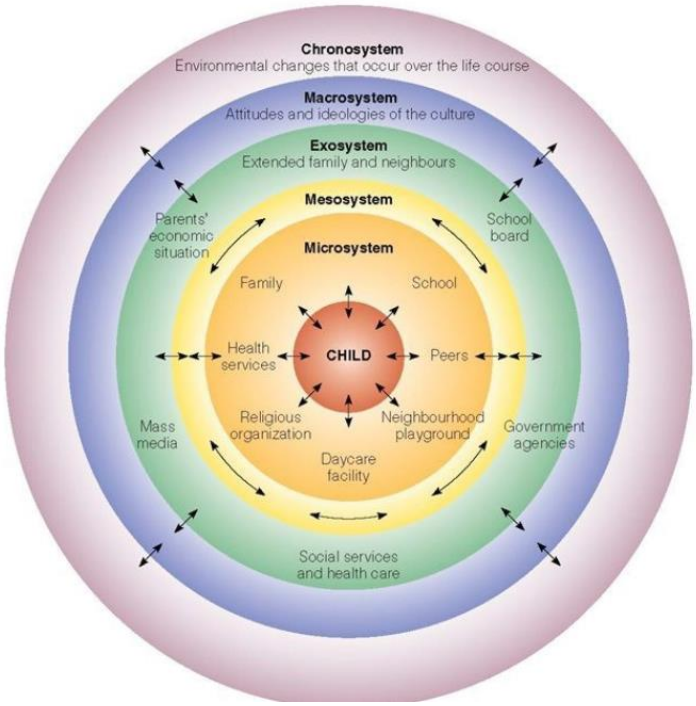
Clarke (2020) further suggests that there are four main areas of development that transitions can affect these being Emotional, Physical, Intellectual and Phycological. The child can be emotionally affected by parent separation or entering or leaving care, physically affected as they are moving to a new setting, intellectually as they may be moving from nursery to primary school and psychologically as this is a new transition for the child. These are all effects of transitions.

# The Role of the Adult and key Worker

During the early years of a child's life, they begin to form strong bonds with their primary care provider, this is typically their mother, this type of bond is known as attachment. Bowlby (Get Date) identified four types of attachment one positive form – Secure, and three negative forms- Ambivalent, Avoidant and Disorganised.

When a child begins these new transitions, they will develop different and new attachments some positive and some negative. These bonds extend further than the family these can be with peers and teachers, MacKay *et al* (2010) suggest that 'Emotional bonds to parents broaden to peer and teach relationships and to the school setting, affecting academic process'

During transitions it is important that the transition is chid centred, this can be displayed in Bronfenbrenner's Ecological System (1977).




(Source: Simply Psychology, 2020)

<u>The Microsystem-</u> this section has direct contact with the child such as parents, siblings, teachers, and school peers. Attachments in the microsystem are 'bi-directional, meaning the child can be influenced by other people in the environment

and is capable of changing the beliefs and actions of other people too.' (Simply Psychology, 2020). Simply Psychology, 2010 suggests that if a child has a positive nurturing relationship with their parents it will have a positive impact on their development.

The Mesosystem- The relationships extend to further environments these are the settings such as Nursery's, schools, and peers etc.

The Exosystem- This section does not directly involve the child but is external environments and settings which can affect the child's development, such as the neighbourhood, parents work environment and media.

The Macrosystem- This section does not focus on environments but the established society and culture, for example, status, wealth, poverty, and ethnicity.

The Chronosystem- This system is the environmental changes over a lifetime this can include major transitions and historical events such as parents getting a divorce.

You can see that Bronfenbrenner suggested that the most beneficial way for a child to develop is to look at the holistic view of the child.

**Parents**

The Main role of the parents in transitions is to ensure excellent communication is happening, this will mean being honest from the start with the setting, this will ensure that the setting understands the holistic view of the child, this will then result in a smoother transition into the setting, as the activities and environment can be tailored to the child's needs. Parents could also be encouraged to talk with the child about the transition so they are aware of what is going on, encourage the child to ask questions about the transition and setting, talk about any concerns they may have, listen to their concerns, and discuss them with the setting and help the child become familiar with the setting.

Erickson (1963) believed that the relationships children hold with their parents is a highly stable quality to our later development therefore this attachment plays a big part in transitions as the child can trust their parents and therefore if the parents trust the setting the child is more likely to as well.

DES (1990) Suggests that 'parents are first and most important educators and should therefore be involved in their early years learning experiences.

(Source: green child magazine, 2020)

**Practitioner**

With the responsibility of being a practitioner of early years it is our job to make the transition as smooth as possible when moving from nursery to reception. As the practitioner it is important that we give the child and parents time to become familiar with this new setting and allow the child to be honest about how they feel and any concerns they may have. This then allows the child to form that other attachment and relationship with the staff. As a practitioner it is your job to ensure good communication is kept between the family and the setting. It is also your job as a practitioner to ensure that the child is involved in every decision and is always listened to, this is their rights as stated in the United Nation Convention on the Rights of the child. Article 12 states that 'Children have the right to give their opinions freely on issues that affect them. Adults should listen and take children seriously.' (UNICEF,2021) Stated in The Children's Act 1989 it states that 'children should feel that they are active participants and engaged in the process when adults are trying to solve problems and make decisions about them.' (GOV.UK, 2021) Vygotsky (1978) believed that it's interactions between parents and children which led to intellectual development taking place in a specific way, he proposed that the concept of the zone of proximal development (ZPD) illustrates how social interactions between experienced members of society and less experienced children would lead to development. Later, researchers such as Bruner (1983), Wood, Bruner and Ross looked into the ways that adults can support a child's development, this is called Scaffolding. Scaffolding is an interactive process where adults adjust the amount of support they offer to the child, this involves the adult encouraging them to reach their ability. If this does not work the child will then adapt the way approach the situation.

When the Child is attending this new setting as part of their transition, they will form a new attachment. 'Bowlby's attachment theory (1997) highlights the emotional bonds with their primary caregivers. Disruption to or loss of this bond can affect a chid emotionally and psychologically into adulthood and have an impact on their future relationships.'

(Source: Bluebell nurseries, 2021)

Having this attachment will allow the child to have a smooth transition into Reception from nursey. As an early year's practitioner, you become a 'key person building relationships with the child and their family and promoting children's emotional wellbeing as well as their development and learning' (Elfer et al, 2012). Another role of the practitioner is to observe the child this will allow them to see their likes and dislikes and the ways that they communicate. This allows them to adapt activities to ways in which the child will enjoy them.

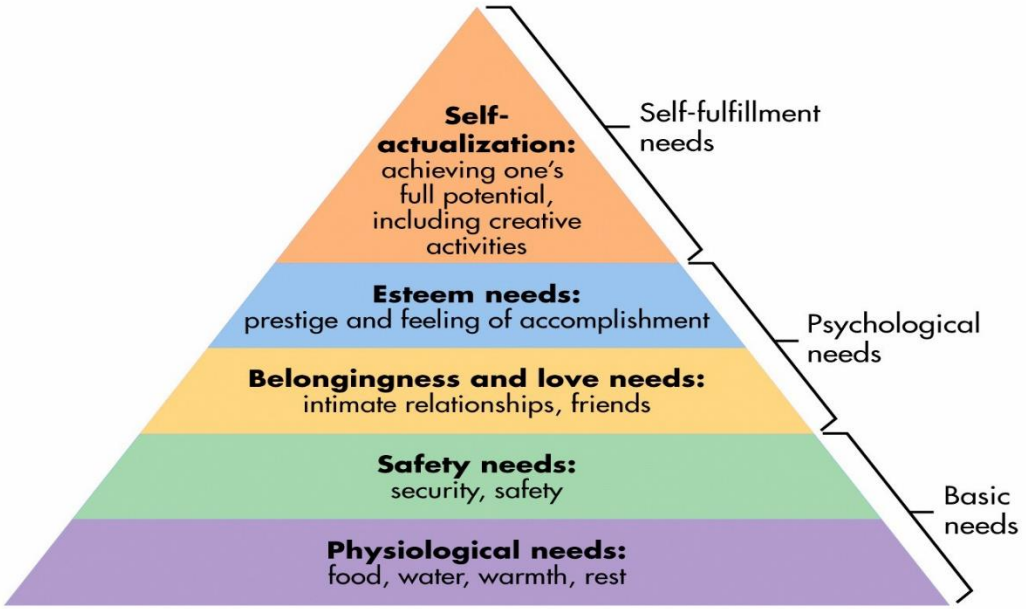
**Early years Setting Manager**

An early years setting manager has a very important role, they are one of the most influential roles within the setting they make sure that there are policies in place, Procedures, Deal with parents, Manage the practitioners, provide excellent communication between home and practice and ensure the child id at the heart of everything. (Early years careers, 2016). The setting manager will ensure that all children are included and that no one is left out. Inclusion is 'the unified drive towards maximal participation in and minimal exclusion from early years settings, from schools and from society (Booth, Ainscow and Kingston, 2006). Managers should work on developing inclusions which involves minimising exclusion. (Booth, Ainscow and Kingston, 2006).

# The Childs Needs

In order to meet the needs of a child the practitioner needs to understand that every child in unique no one is the same. Due to children being unique they may have similar common needs and characteristics that children of a particular age share, but they must be understood by early years practitioners and their parents as a unique child and therefore should be respected. (UK Essay, 2015)

The needs of a child are essential in early years settings as they allow the child to grow and develop. The basic needs of a child can be identified in Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (1943). This Model demonstrates the needs of a child, and the pyramid shows that the child must fulfil the bottom needs in order to move up the pyramid and fully develop those basic needs.




(Source: Get psyched, 2015)

At the bottom of the pyramid, it states the humans most basic needs such as water, food, shelter, and love. Therefore, these needs must be met for the child to be able to move up the pyramid. This is important during transitions as if a child does not have these basic needs, then they may be unlikely to form relationships and develop as a learner with independence.

A schema is a pattern of repeated actions demonstrated by a child; Clusters of schemas develop later into later concepts. (Athey, 2007). Schemas are often

described as children's fascinations sometimes the activities seem strange or irritating to adults but to children it is a necessary for their development. As an early year practitioners' schema can be observed and understood and allow for tailored activities. There are many types of schemas:

- **Trajectory** - creating lines in space by climbing up and jumping down. Dropping items from up high.
- **Positioning** - lining items up and putting them in groups.
- **Enveloping** - covering themselves or objects completely. Wrapping items up or placing them in containers.
- **Rotating** - enjoys spinning items round and round. Likes to run around in circles or being swung round.
- **Enclosing** - adding boundaries to play areas e.g. fences around animals. Adding borders to pictures.
- **Transporting** - carrying or moving items from one place to another; carrying items in containers or bags.
- **Connecting** - setting out and dismantling tracks, constructing, joining items together with tape or glue.
- **Transforming** - exploring the changing states of materials, transforming them from a solid to liquid state and back again.
- **Orienteering** – an interest in positioning themselves or objects in different places or positions e.g upside down or on their side.

(Source: PACEY, 2021)

Communication is a key skill needed in order to communicate with a child, as an early year's practitioner you will need to adapt the way you communicate to each child as some children may display different senses of emotions or have different needs such as Additional Learning Needs (ALN).

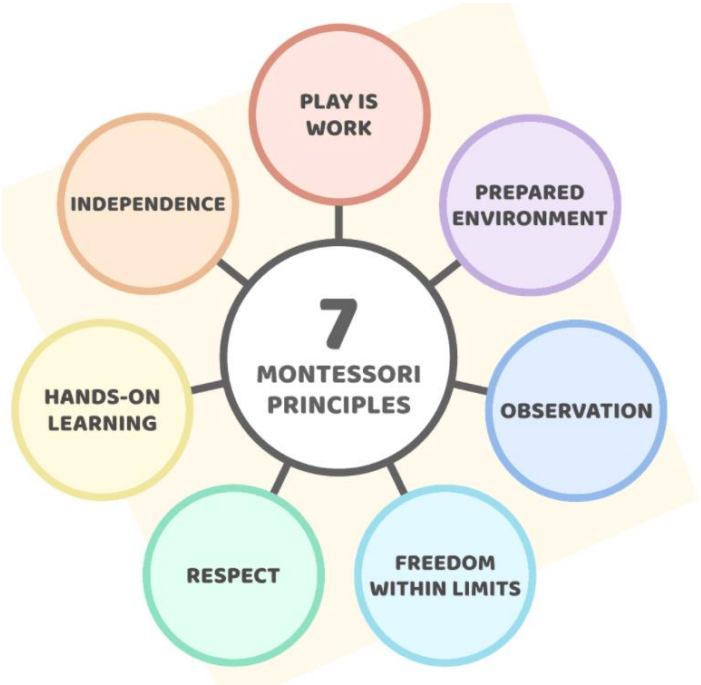
As an Early year practitioner, you will also undertake observations every day. Observations will allow you to plan for activities based on the schemas and progression of needs of the child. Observations will allow you to find 'relevant, valuable and useful information' (Palaiologou, 2019). Palaiologou, 2019 states that observations should be child and activity centred in order to get the most credible information. Observations may be formal or informal, but both allow for monitoring of progress.

# Environment

During a transition the environment which the child attends is a vital aspect to support a chids development as they need to be able to support the childs needs and allow the child to feel comfortable.

Montessori, along with Piaget (1962) believed the environemt  played a key role in the learning of children. mMontessori believed that the environment aids the development of the whole child and should offer opportunities for the development of the potential of each child. Montessori believed the child is an ‘active agent’ of the environemt and the ‘teacher is a facilitator to ensure the environment provides for the development of the needs of each individual child.’

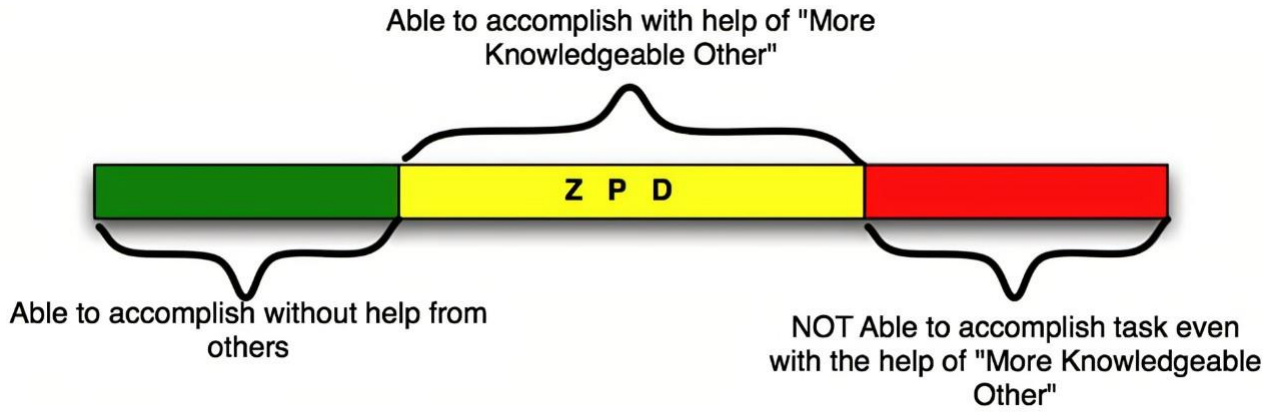
Montessori belived belived that the environment must accesible and avaliable, freedom of choice and movement, reality and nature, beauty and harmony. Therefore should follow government guidelines from the document of the Early years Foundation stage (2008) which then provides the ‘statuatory framework’ for ealry years settings.




(Source: Montessori UP!, 2021)

Similar to Montessori, Vygotsky (1935/1978) believed that a child's environment was an 'extremely important force in their development.' Vygotsky (1935/1978) suggested it was through social interactions with knowledgeable people such as parents, peers, teachers and relatives that children develop skills necessary for society. This allowed vygotsky to suggest that that development was a social process and social interactions within an environment supported this development.

Vygotsky (1978) also developed the idea of the zone of proximal development (ZPD) which states that the social interaction between the more knowledgeable members of society would lead to greater development, this can also be known as scaffolding in the ealry years settings.

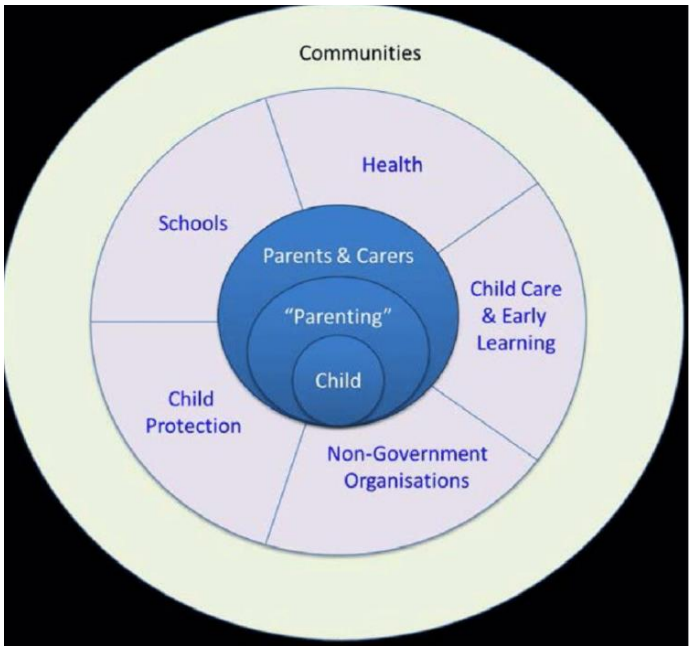



(Source: catwongstudio, 2016)

In order for a smooth transition within the environment it is suggested that children spending time in small groups and making friends allows them to feel safe and secure this is essential as children should feel safe and secure in order to develop. (Patel, 2021)

# Partnership Working

Partnership working is a key part of a child's development, working in partnership is 'two or more groups coming together to reach a common purpose' (Community Change 2010). Working in partnership within the early years means working with a wide range of different agencies as well as the care givers to provide a smooth transition, some examples of the multiple agencies in a child's transitions could be teachers, speech and language therapists, Occupational Therapist and Social Workers.




(Source: Sawyer, Gialamas *et al.* (2014).

This Image demonstrates the child centred approach, which is important with in partnership working and transitions, it shows how each section in the end always has the child in the centre and comes back to the child when decisions are made. Effective communication is therefore made with the child, families and the other agencies to have the child's best interest.

# Interventions

In Order to support a child's transition there are many practical interventions that can be implemented, in order for the families and children to feel comfortable in their transition into Reception from Nursery.

**Arrange Transition pre-visits**

Trodd (2013) Suggests that once a reception class is formed the practitioners should consider allowing parents and children to attend the setting, this will then allow the child to become familiar with the setting allowing them to feel less anxious when they start. This will then allow the child to explore their new environment as they will then be able to develop as they feel secure as they have looked around with their caregiver.

(Source: Vecteezy, 2021)

**Home Visits**

Trodd (2013) Also suggests that home visits are essential as this can allow the chid and the parents to get to know the staff, this can then ease the child and parents' anxiety about starting in a new environment. Home visits will allow the child and staff to form a relationship as they will see that the parents have allowed them into the house so may be more willing to trust the early years practitioner. Keenan, Evans and Crowley (2016) state that Bronfenbrenner believed there is too much emphasis on observing children's behaviour in places for short periods of time. Bronfenbrenner believed children should be observed in actual environments they will be attending.

**'Meet the Teacher'**

Trodd (2013) believes that these sessions are important as it allows the parent to ask about any information, they feel is essential and to understand the school and its expectations. It also allows the parent to inform the teacher about any key information about the child.

# Play

‘Play is the work of children. It consists of those activities performed for self-amusement that have behavioural, social and psychomotor rewards. It is child-directed, and the rewards come from within the individual child; it is enjoyable and spontaneous.’ (Health of children.com, 2021)

Play is an essential part of being a chid it is a way that they learn and develop. It is also a right of a child to play, as stated in article 31 ‘You have the right to rest, Play and take part in cultural and artistic activities’ (save the children, 2019)

(Source: Health of children.com, 2021)

The Welsh Assembly Government believes that play is personally directed and is performed for no external goal or reward and is a part of healthy development. Children use play in their natural environments to learn the world that they live in. (PlayWales.org, 2002).

**Functions of Play**

Physical Development

Play can help children develop physically as it allows them to develop their fine and gross motor skills (Health of children.com, 2021).

Emotional Development

Play can help a child’s self-esteem, it can also reduce fear, anxiety and stress it can also help to heal emotional pain.

Cognitive Development

Play allows children to think, remember and problem solve, this can be done through activities which stimulate the brain such as puzzles. (Health of children.com, 2021)

Social Development

Play can enhance social development as it allows children to understand sharing, models relationships based on inclusion other than exclusion and increases attention and attachments within the setting.

Booth, Ainscow and Kingston (2006) defined Inclusion as ‘the unified drive towards maximal participation in and minimal exclusion from early years settings from schools and from society.’

However, inclusions does come with some barriers these can be Poverty, Physical barriers, Disability, family structure and many more.

Robinson (2008) suggests that ‘play provides the bridge between all the different aspects of learning embedded in a maturing brain become established.’ Robinson also suggest play is a great tool for observations.

Newberger (1999) also suggests that play engages the child, parents and the practitioner and invites them to support the child development.

# Proposed Outcomes

In order for a child's transition to be successful the child must show the practitioner that they are feeling content in the environment. This will become aware to the practitioner during observations as the child will begin to play independently, do not need as much reassurance from practitioner, the child will also be able to develop other attachments with peers and other staff members. The child will also begin to explore the environment and demonstrate understanding of the environment. Once a child demonstrates this it shows that the transition was successful and is now able to develop.

According to Montessori (1988) she believes this process happens over time and the child will develop self-discipline, compassion, generosity, trust and finally respect. Montessori (1988) believes that this is the 'normalised child' she describes this child as one who follows the normal path of development and has fulfilled the opportunities which allowed them to develop their personality and now benefits from a social group.

(Source: Webstockreview, 2021)

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