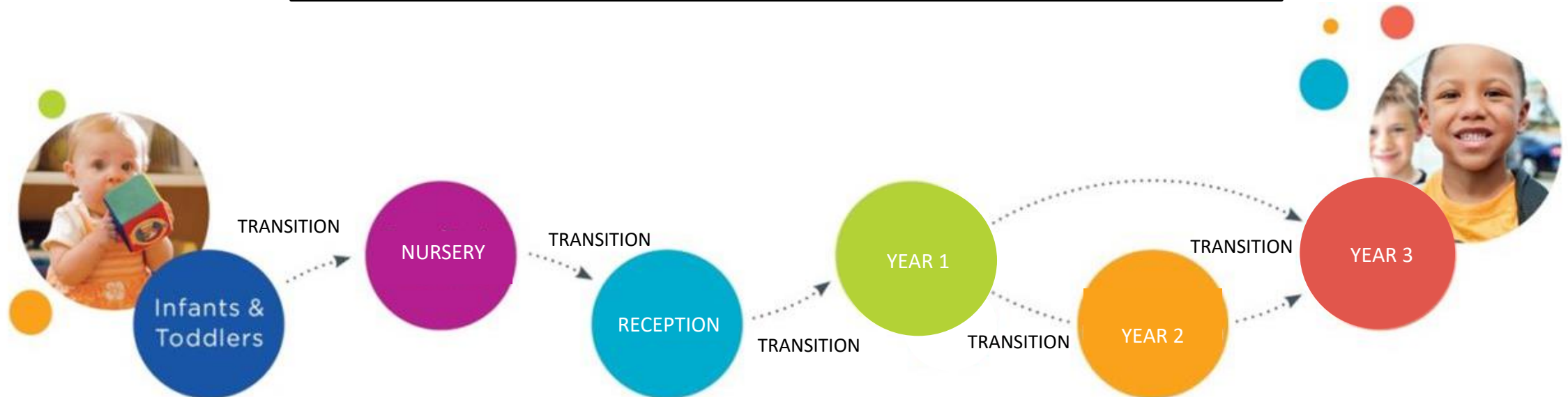


PRACTITIONERS HANDBOOK

The Importance of Effective Communication for Young Children's Learning and Development During Transitions.





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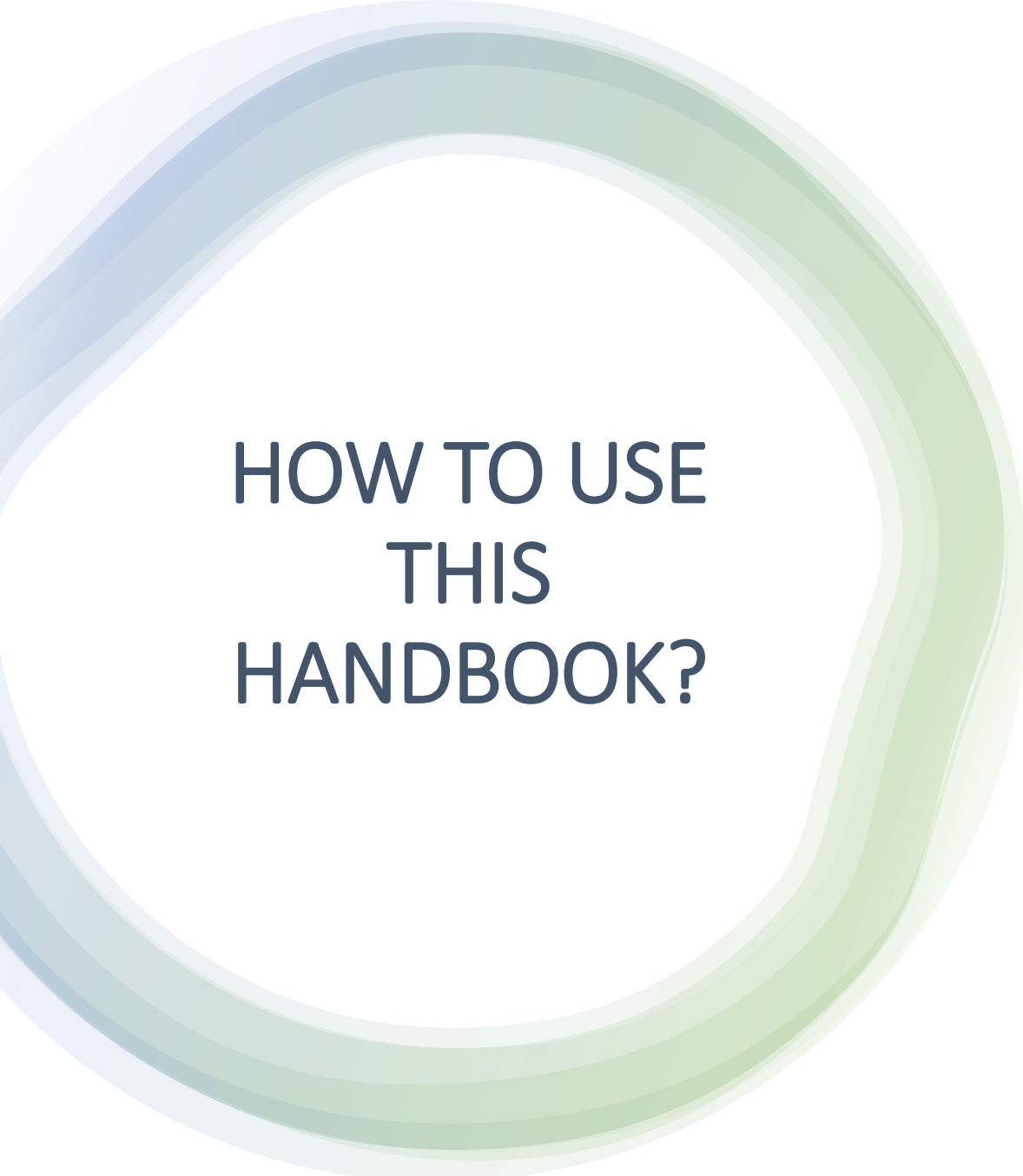
INTRODUCTION

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This handbook is primarily intended for use by Early Years practitioners and the supporting team.

It aids in the understanding of child transitions, focusing on the move from home into an early years environment. It will support theories of work-based practice and educate those practitioners working with young children during these challenging stages.





HOW TO USE THIS HANDBOOK?

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This handbook is aimed at key persons responsible for overseeing the transition stages within the setting. The focus is on the move from a child's home into an Early Years nursery setting (Ages 3 – 4yrs).

The document will guide the key person through a child's transition stages and provides the framework to ensure a smooth and successful passage from home to the nursery environment.

The framework includes the following transitional elements:

- The role of the adult.
- The needs of a child.
- Partnerships.
- Interventions.
- Proposed Outcomes.

WHAT IS A TRANSITION?

“Transition is the process in which something changes from one state to another” Collins Dictionary (2022)

According to the WJEC (2019), when we look at transitions that affect children, the following may have a significant impact:

- Starting nursery.
- Moving from nursery to primary school.
- The birth of a sibling.
- Home relocation.
- Loss of a loved one.
- Separation of parents/guardians/carers.
- Experiencing abuse.

These transitions may give rise to the following:

- **Emotional response** - arising from the loss of a loved one including pets, separation, and divorce, experiencing abuse.
- **Physical response** – changing of a school or home.
- **Psychological response** – prolonged health issues.
- **Intellectual response** – adapting to alternative learning in a new setting.

Although there are many transitions individuals will make throughout their lives, the purpose of this handbook is to highlight the importance of clear communication for those children transitioning from the home environment into an Early years nursery setting (Ages 3 – 4yrs).

According to Early Years Matters (2018), being introduced to a new environment for the very first time, relocating to another one, beginning education or joining a new class are accepted by most, as a common pathway for children. Nevertheless, for the child, these transitions are significant happenings which may have consequences on their development. In new surroundings, a child may feel insecure, particularly where routines and expectations may be unfamiliar, especially when persons are unknown to them. It is therefore essential that a transition of this kind is planned and considered beforehand and does not come as a surprise to the child.

A transition should be a smooth change, a developing journey and not something that “comes out of the blue”. It should include all parties, especially the child, parent, carer, guardian, and other key persons.

Transition is change!

A positive change, to the child, is being unaware that a change has ever occurred. It is a significant adjustment of life for early years children transiting from the home environment to the nursery setting.

Adults often overlook the impact of such a transition on the child. Teachers and carers may not appreciate the depth of what is involved from the child’s point of view. The ideal transition would have early preparation followed by effective communication between all parties. Best practice requires considerate support of the transition process.

Furthermore, Aubrey and Riley (2022, p. 195), assert that it is vital that the initial transition from home to the early years setting is an enjoyable and positive one, creating a reassuring tone for transitions in the future, whilst also improving subsequent engagement in these settings.

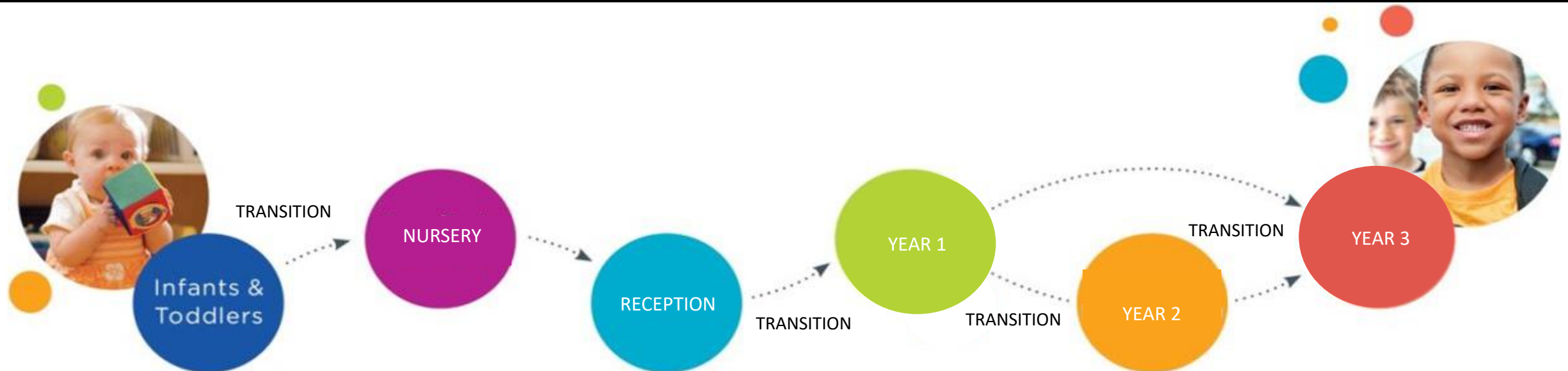
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TRANSITION (CONTINUED)

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THE ROLE OF THE ADULT

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During a transition stage, adults are essential in making the change from home to nursery, as smooth and stress-free as possible.

Effective communication and partnership between all parties are essential attributes.



Source: Microsoft Stock Image (2022)

THE ROLE OF AN ADULT (CONTINUED)

PARENT / GUARDIAN / CARER

The principal role of the Parent/Guardian/Carer in the transitional process is that of communicating all relevant information on the child to members of the early years team.

The parent/guardian/carer will prepare the child for what is to come. This must be presented in a positive and enthusiastic manner where the child will feel reassured, albeit perhaps somewhat apprehensive.

The expected routine and experience should be discussed with the child, and this event emphasised as being an exciting and 'grown-up' opportunity to be enjoyed.



Source: Microsoft Stock Image (2022)



Source: Microsoft Stock Image (2022)

KEY PERSON

The British Association For Early Childhood (2019), states that the key person is there to create attachment and is responsible for the child's well-being whilst in their care.

This individual is appointed to assist in the handover of the child by the Parent/Guardian/Carer.

The key person will:

- Familiarise the child with the setting.
- In due course, form an attachment with the child.
- Communicate with the Parent/Guardian/Carer.
- Ensure the child's safety and well-being and organise the 'settling-in' that will cater for the child's requirements.
- Observe, communicate, relate to, and understand the child.

Many young children may previously have only known their main carer. Most likely, the child may only be at ease and feel attachment, security, safety, and well-being with the carer, and/or a small group of people. In the carer's absence, the child will hopefully form an **attachment** with the key person.

IMPORTANCE OF ATTACHMENT

According to Lindon and Brodie (2016, p. 88), attachment is an emotional feeling and loyalty between a person and important people close to them. Firm attachment within the early years creates the foundations for well-being, but it is not something that is achieved immediately.

Interestingly, NSPCC Learning (2021) affirm that creating an attachment is a gradual process for the child, but a carer may form a special bond even before a child is born.

Keenan and Evans (2016, p. 264), state that Bowlby suggested that an infant's attachment to their parent/carers influences their development.

The NSPCC (2021) highlights that attachment is vital for the emotional bond with a primary caregiver to be successful. Without such a relationship, a child may suffer psychologically and emotionally as they develop into adulthood and later may struggle with forming relationships.

Birth to 5 (2021) states that the key person helps the child to feel welcome, safe, and cared for. This involves a circle of trust between the child and the family. Infants become attached to familiar adults within welcoming surroundings where they feel respected, loved, and safe.

All these elements combine to ensure that the child and carer provide a 'secure base' and platform for a Secure Attachment.

Simply Psychology (2022) defines secure attachment as a feeling of trust and security in formed relationships. Infants who are securely attached and supported by carers/parents/key persons are more likely to have improved child development and be able to form long-lasting relationships.

Attachment is therefore at the forefront of our settings aspirations.



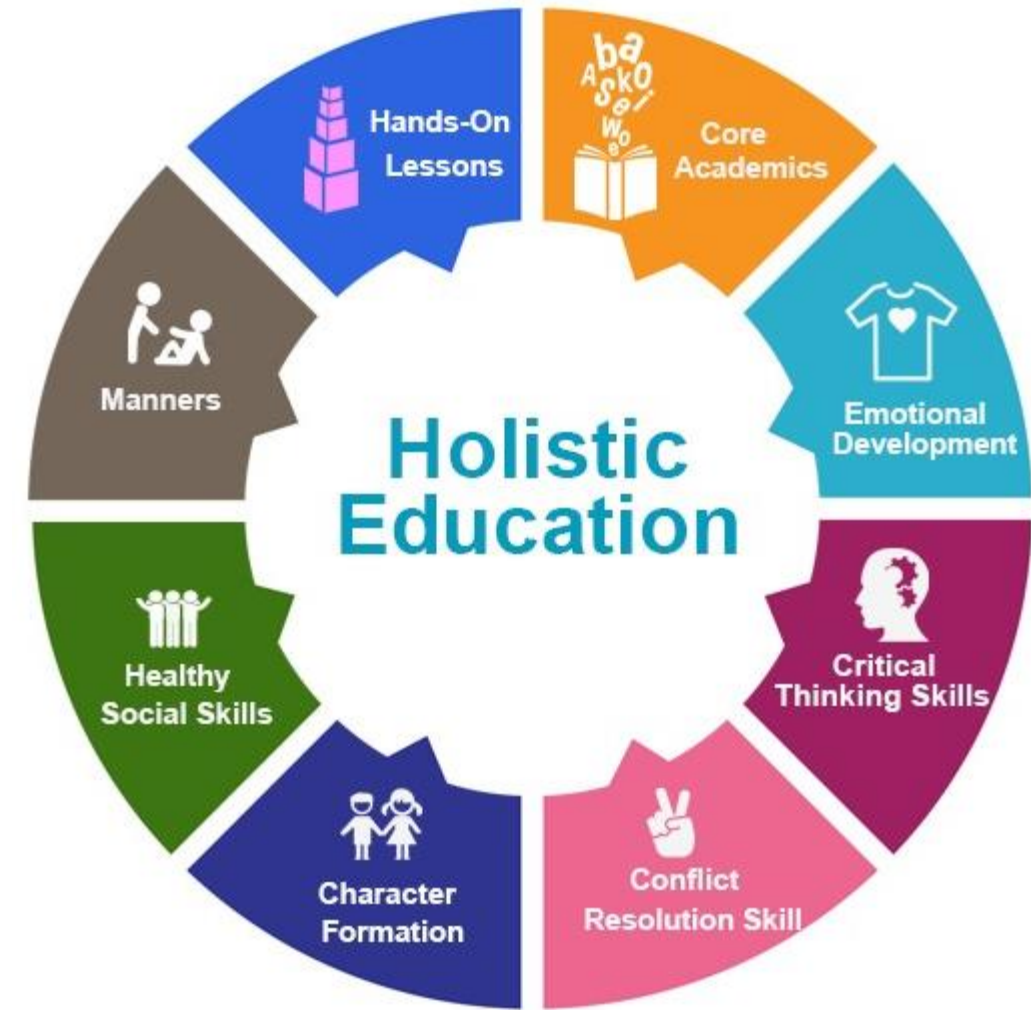
THE NEEDS OF A CHILD

Welsh Government (2017) states that a child's ability to take part in the transition experience is influenced by the degree, quality and involvement of adult support provided. An infant's opinions, choices and concerns can be recorded by listening to the child's ideas.

Within the early years, it is often said that a holistic approach is beneficial.

According to Parenta (2021) a holistic approach to learning, centres on connecting with the 'world at large'. Holistic development within the early years assists children to relate to their environment allowing them to explore, discover, and learn. The basis of this is a child's social, emotional, physical, personal, and spiritual well-being and recognising how all of these are interlinked.

The Institute of Education Science (2020) discuss Maslow's Hierarchy of needs. This pyramid model can be utilised to recognise the tiers of children's needs. Most importantly, those needs at the lower level of the pyramid must be present to allow progression into the higher levels such as education, self-esteem, and personal development.



Source: Norwich Education (2022)

MASLOWS HIERARCHY OF NEEDS

Help Children Live Better (2022) records that there are five tiers of human needs within this pyramid model. These are as follows:

BASIC NEEDS

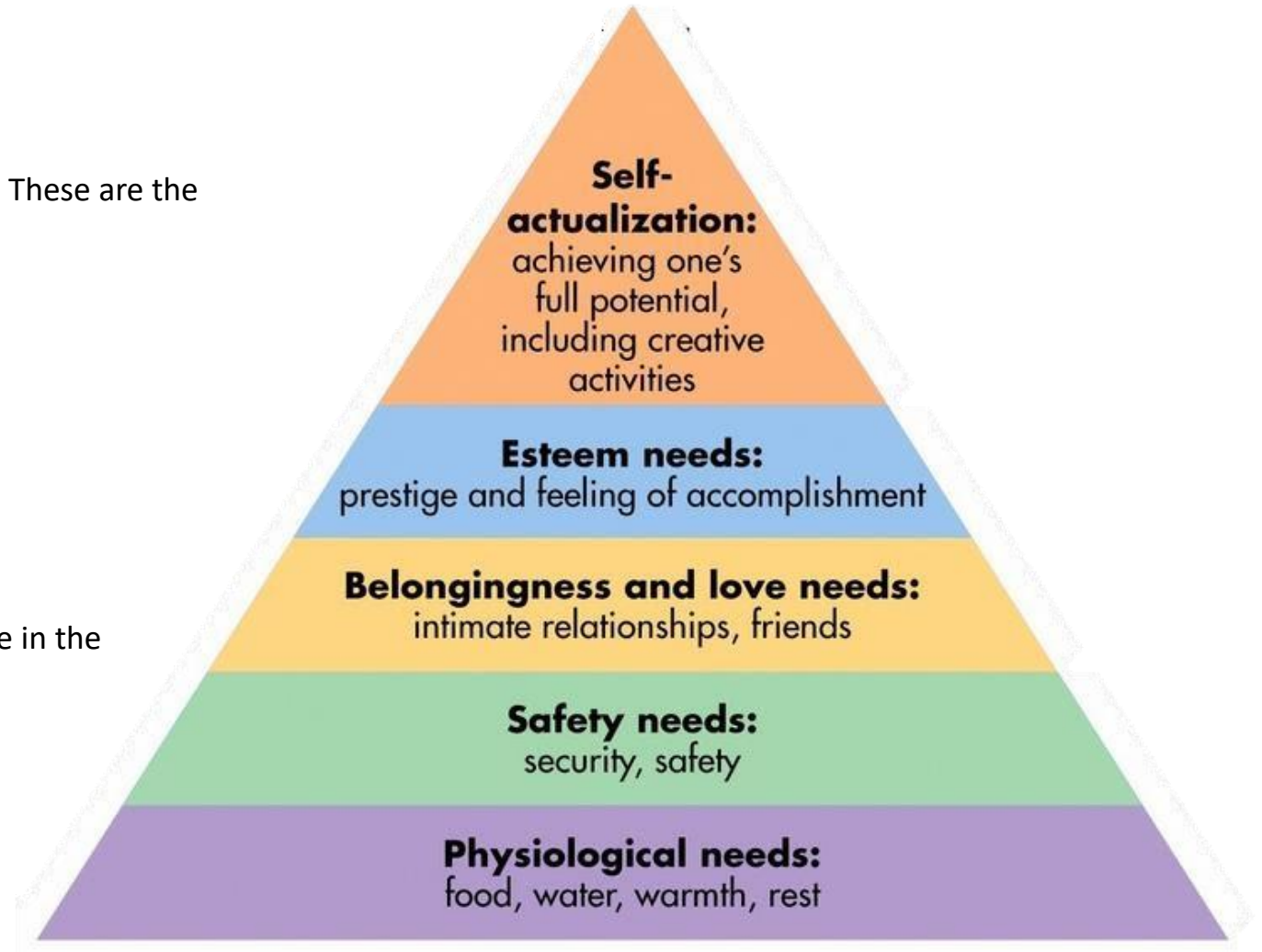
- Physiological needs - Water and nourishment, attire, shelter, sleep. These are the basic needs to survive.
- Safety and security – Safety and security of self.

PSYCHOLOGICAL NEEDS

- Love and belonging.
- Self-esteem – Confidence, the feeling of self, endurance, acceptance in the community and respect from others.

SELF-FULFILMENT NEEDS

- Self-actualization – To achieve to the best of your ability.



Source: Project Maslow (2022)

PARTNERSHIPS (ROLES)

PARTNERSHIPS

Partnerships within the early years setting are an essential element of a child's advancement. Including a range of other relevant parties, as well as parent/guardian/carer, strong communication between all parties will facilitate a smooth transition for the child.

As noted by Nursery World (2022), the extent and scope of the various partners, (multi-agency), will vary depending on the personal circumstances of the family but may include:

Parent/Carer

Key Person / Practitioner

Early years Setting Manager.

Health Visitor / GP / Occupational Therapist / Speech & Language therapists ETC

Social Services.

Conkbayir and Pascal (2018, p. 119) suggest that in practice it is important to nurture partnerships with all parents/carers. This will ensure that the key person is in a better position to assist carers to promote the development of their child.



Source: What Works Scotland (2022)



PARENTS / CARERS / KEY PERSONS

HM Government (2022) states that much research has shown that including parents/guardians/carers in their offspring's learning is the most significant item in ensuring children are successful irrespective of background. Enabling partnership with parents/guardians/carers is paramount to the early years.

The initial introduction may take place at the setting or during a home visit. Partnerships with these individuals will assist in the settling-in stage of the child.

Learning about the child's family, personal history, and culture together with what they wish to learn from the key person and setting ensures they become part of their child's learning journey and respect a parent/carer's role as the main educator. Sharing knowledge, working together, and recognising a child's curiosity, a positive partnership will best help support their learning.

PARTNERSHIP (CONTINUED) - COMMUNICATION

COMMUNICATION

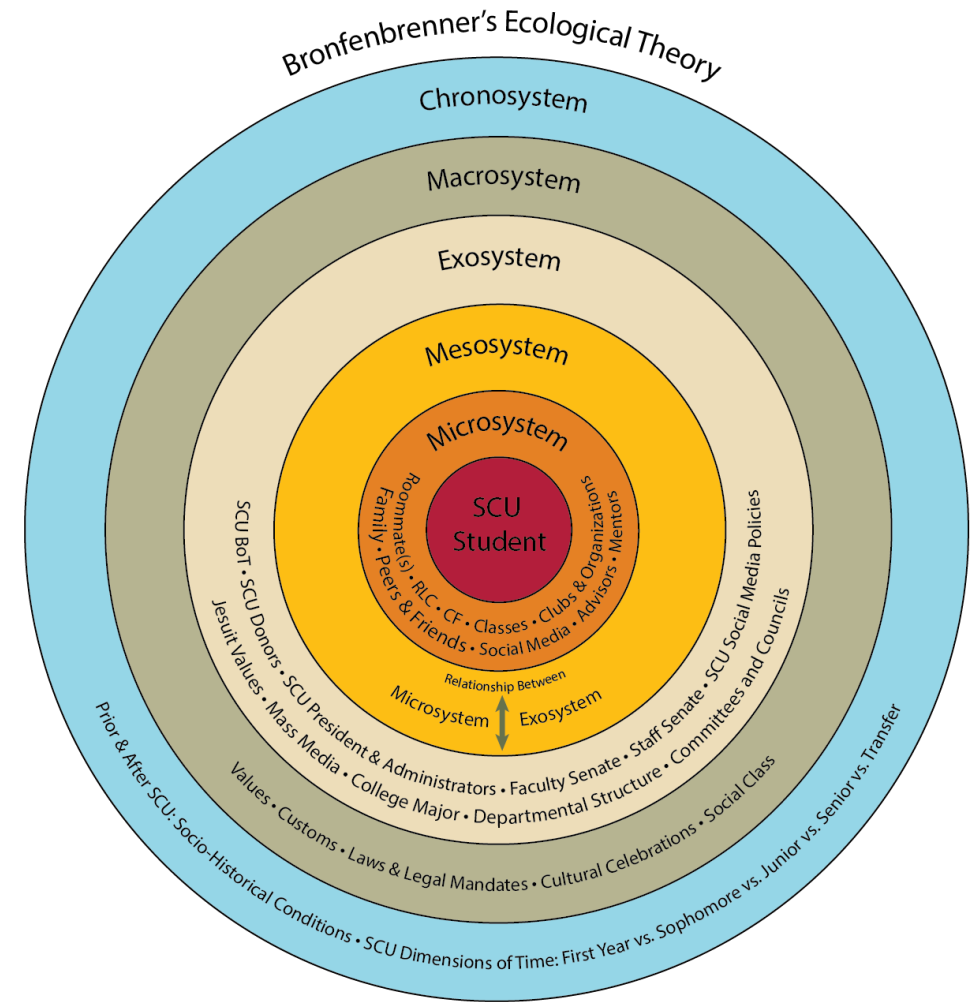
A key attribute of a positive partnership is effective communication.

Trodd (2013, p. 34) states that Bronfenbrenner's Ecological model demonstrates the importance of both-way communications. Details regarding home requirements must be available to the setting and vice versa the early years setting information to be made available to the home.

According to Conkbayir and Pascal (2018 p. 109), Bronfenbrenner's 'systems theory' suggests that child development is not influenced by a single factor but by input from various relationships over a period.

Supporting this, Aubrey and Riley (2022, p. 194) record that Bronfenbrenner's theory opines that it is necessary to look at several settings and how these relate to each other. This theory is paramount to early years and highlights the relevance of several sources collaborating to achieve the best outcome for the child. The importance of this cannot be underrated.

Lindon and Brodie (2016, p. 47) state that this ecological theory reminds us that a child will not develop when isolated.



Source: Project Maslow (2022)

PARTNERSHIP (CONTINUED) – BRONFENBRENNER ECOLOGICAL SYSTEM

The Education People (2021) explain each stage of Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory as follows:

Microsystem

With the child at the centre of this model, the Microsystem represents the immediate environment that a child lives. Close relationships such as family, carers and key persons would likely be situated in this model zone. The child's interaction with these will affect their development. Where these relationships are both nurturing and encouraging, the child will grow more effectively. The quality of relationships that the child has at this level will reflect how the response.

Mesosystem

This shows the effect of a child's microsystem working together to the child's benefit. For example, this may be where a carer becomes involved in the child's early years setting.

Exosystem

This now includes additional persons and locations that the child may not normally be exposed to but may still have a significant effect on the child's development. For example, the carer's workplace, other members of the family, and geographical location.

Macrosystem

The most numerous and remote set of people and items that are encountered still has some effect on the child. It also includes environs such as cultural, governmental, economic and or crises. These can be either positive or negative.

Chronosystems

This includes environmental events and natural changes over time. For example, changes in family structure and socio-historical circumstances.

According to nursery resources (2019), it is usually the key person's responsibility to maintain and distribute the child's development information throughout the day and at relevant meetings. It is parents/guardians/carers who must be kept updated! Ofsted will frequently request evidence that the various partnerships are active and in place. Good communication can benefit a child's development in the following ways:

- Carers/Parents/Guardians are most familiar with their child.
- Carers/Parents/Guardians may discuss issues and concerns and seek support from the key person and staff regarding child development etc.
- All parties to be involved in the learning process.
- Helps create smooth transitions.
- Creates an approachable feel for all parties.
- Open communication enhances the feeling of safety for a child i.e., safeguarding.
- Parents/Guardians being able to openly discuss with each partner. This will bring peace of mind.

INTERVENTIONS

INTERVENTIONS

Interventions are strategies put in place to reduce the impact of a transition that a child undergoes.

Welsh Government (2017) suggests that young children coming into an early years setting for the first time are likely to be uneasy when entering an unfamiliar building, being around larger numbers of children, and engaging in new and set activities/routines. Additionally, not having their carer close to hand for a longer period is likely to cause some concern. It is important therefore that children are actively included in their transition period, and all practitioners should observe, communicate, and listen to any concerns a child may have.

As defined by the UNCRC (NO DATE), every child has the right to express their views, feelings and wishes in all matters affecting them, and to have their views considered and taken seriously. The interventions in our setting have been implemented using recommendations from a variety of reliable bodies and sources. Some of these interventions include preparations prior to a child's attendance. Welsh Government (2022) provide guidance to help support children through transitions as follows:

- Prior to attending, the child and family should be invited to the setting on an informal basis. Home visits may also be considered.
- Welcome handbook to be issued prior to a child's attendance, including pictures of staff and the new setting. This should also include a child information form that will help practitioners to familiarise themselves with each child's anticipated needs etc.
- A range of activities will be provided when a child visits for the first time.
- Using an event as a reference, inform the child when they will be collected and when they will see parents/guardians again, (e.g. after milk time).
- Suggest that parents/guardians/carers bring an item of familiarity to the child, (e.g., toy, teddy, blanket etc.), and have this available to them for the duration of the visit.

Twinkl (2022) support this by suggesting that these transitional objects enable young children to settle within a new environment. Providing comfort, and familiarity, improve separation anxiety and provide some compensation for the missing attachment figure.

- Become familiar with the child's vocabulary in respect of commonly used requests.
- Where children may have additional needs, ensure that all relevant information is obtained in advance. This may include medical reports and/or ways to deal with certain scenarios that have proved successful with the child.
- Remain flexible and always consider the child's needs. Parents/guardians/carers may remain on-site initially to allow for a settling-in process.
- Children's arrival at the setting to be staggered allowing new arrivals to familiarise themselves with their new environment.
- Allow children time to watch activities and other children, not overwhelming them with too many different resources and routines.
- All resources to be prepared in advance ensuring that the location and setting out of the areas remain constant.
- Remain approachable, empathetic, and patient always.
- Encourage, monitor, and familiarise yourself with the child.

According to Pacey (2022), it is recommended that any transition may take around two to four weeks for the settle-in process to complete. However, this can of course be shorter or longer depending on the child.

PROPOSED OUTCOMES

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The child is the most important person in the transition process. The proposed and desired outcome, therefore, is that they come through this without suffering undue stress and anxiety. The child should have a sense of belonging and self and be entirely comfortable with the process and its outcome.

The child should feel that their views have been respected, given consideration and where practicable acted upon. They should feel happy and safe in their environment and ideally have established attachments with their key persons.

From the key person's point of view, they should be equally comfortable with what has been achieved. All involved have competently undertaken their individual responsibilities. As members of a partnership, they have established a sense of well-being and satisfaction whilst maintaining strong links and effective communication with all parties.

A positive transition experience, augers well for similar future experiences!



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