

A Handbook for Early Years Practitioners



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The importance of transitions within an Early Years setting.

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Contents Page

Introduction	Page 3
The needs of the child	Page 4-6
Role of the adult	Page 7-8
Environment	Page 9-10
Partnership working	Page 11-12
Interventions	Page 13-14
Proposed outcomes	Page 15-16
Reference list	Page 17-18

Introduction

AIMS

The aim of creating this handbook is to give guidance and essential information to practitioners in an early year setting. This handbook will provide information about what is a transition and why it is important, it will look at some theories connected to transitions in the early years and specify how communication is effective and important during transitions. By reading this handbook and following the guidance that has been given the early years practitioner will then be able to ensure positive and smooth transitions within their setting.

What is a transition?

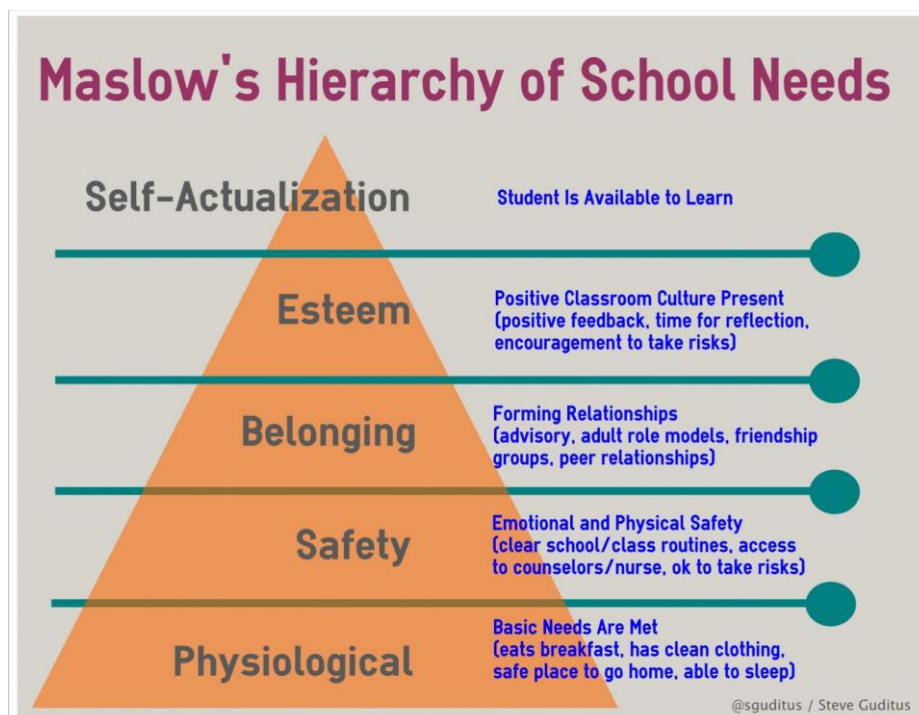
Transition – a change or passage from one state or stage to another. (Collins dictionary 2022)

Children naturally experience many different transitions throughout their early year's development. Some of these transitions are common whilst some transitions are unexpected (twinkl 2022) A transition is all about change and getting transition correct is vital for every child and should be a process rather than an event. (Early years matters 2021). A transition should involve the key worker having a positive and supportive relationship with the child's parent/carer this will help to meet the needs of each individual child. Gopnik, A (2016) suggests that every child develops and grows in their own manner, with some being sensitive while others being resilient. Being an early year's practitioner it is vital that they understand that every child is unique and not every child will experience the same transition.

The Needs of the child

As stated by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) the interests of the child must be top priority in all decisions and actions that affect them and that all children have the right to be listened to. The key to understanding a child's needs is to treat every child as an individual.

Maslow's theory is a five-tier model that starts at the bottom of the pyramid. Maslow (1943) stated for every individual to achieve their full potential they need to have the lower-level needs met before they progress. (simply psychology, 2018)



The five levels of needs are:

Physical – the basic needs which are the most important needs to be met are eating, drinking, shelter, clothing.

Safety – to allow the children to have stability, feel protected and have routine.

Belonging – allows the child to feel loved and cared for if the first two needs are being met then the child will feel a sense of belonging.

Esteem – this allows the child to feel confident and have self – respect.

Self- actualization - this need is personal; this need allows the child to think about a goal and what they would like to achieve.

Many of the methods used in schools can be viewed to be based on Maslow's hierarchy of needs. If the children are seen to have the physiological needs being met this, then allows the child to have the readiness to learn and feel safe and secure.

It is important to consider if these needs are being met and whether the child has had positive attachment experiences. According to Lindon, (2012) attachment is when two people form a bond to build a positive relationship. Aubrey and Riley (2019) States that when a child's attachment isn't strong it can affect their capacity to form and establish bonds with others. Strong attachments promote healthy growth. As a baby you form a bond with the primary care giver, usually this person is the baby's mother. This bond has an impact on the child throughout their life journey. Howe (2011) suggest that it is important that the primary caregiver provides the care and that they are responsive to the child's needs. This links into the physical needs of Maslow's theory.

Bowlby suggests that when children arrive in the world, they are programmed to form attachments with others, as forming attachments is a way to help them survive. Bowlby also believed that a bond between mother and baby in the first five years of life are the most crucial. (Mcloed, 2017). Bowlby As an early year's worker when going through a transition with any child, attachments need to be

given careful consideration. The child needs to feel safe and secure within the setting.

The role of the adult

When working with children in the early years sector you need to make sure children are being fully supported throughout the transition process and ensure planning the transition is appropriately met for the transition.

Early years practitioners must keep in mind the rights of the child when supporting transitions. According to UNICEF (no date) children have rights which aren't discriminated against regardless of their ethnicity, gender, race, language ability or background. It is important that good communication with families and children is kept for the transition from home to nursery as there could be barriers which could obstruct a positive transition. Once the needs of the child have been met it then allows the child to grow confidence and gain independence in their new setting.

When working with children communication is a skill that is required according to the children's workforce council (2010) communication helps to build trust. Visible conversations between practitioners and parents/carers are deeply reassuring to children. (Patel, 2022). When communicating with parents/carers and their child the early years practitioner needs to think about body language and their tone. This allows the parent/Carer and child to see you are genuine and sincere and that you are listening to them.

As a practitioner there will be times where communication in multi-agency will occur, multi-agency communication will take place and will involve the practitioner, child and their families and the relevant services such as speech and language, social services, families first and many more.

As an early year's practitioner working with children once the child has had time to become used to the setting, staff and other peers the staff will then create family groups. Family groups are designed so the child has a familiar adult who will observe and assess them. As a family leader and other staff, it is highly important that you are good role models. By having a family leader, it allows the child to make a connection with a familiar adult and allows the parent/carer to form a relationship and communicate with a familiar face.

Brown, K (2018) suggests as educators our job is to support the children but also support their families as well. This supports the thinking of the new curriculum for Wales as the Welsh government (2021) states that as practitioners you need to support the new curriculum by identifying the needs of individual children, to create respectful and positive relationships with both children and their families and to engage with the wide community.

As the Early year's practitioner you need to allow positive experiences when children are transitioning to your setting.

Environment

the learning environment during transition plays an important role in supporting each child's needs. The environment should encourage shared endeavour, or time in small groups. Try to allow your setting to provide the children with familiar resources and experiences. The child needs to feel like they belong in the setting and that they are safe whilst they are there. As a practitioner you need to allow the families into the environment with their child so they child feels a sense of belonging. (Patel, A (no date)).

Vygotsky considered that children are more active in their social environments, and this enables the child to be active in their own development. Children develop their skills through social interaction with other peers. (Keenan, Evans and Crowley, 2016). Vygotsky's theory of working within the zone of proximal development shows how adults could help children to learn.

Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory of Cognitive Development



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He saw play as a crucial part to child's learning. As the practitioner you will need to know when the correct time is to guide the children's learning. The child will have a time in their setting that they have an area of the zone of proximal development and this they

can guide their self. It is then the responsibility to assist when the child will need to widen their knowledge in a supportive and manner able approach.

Piaget's theory of development suggests that intelligence changes as children grows but not everyone's intelligence develops at the same time. (Mcleod, S. 2022).

Piaget's theory has 4 stages

- Sensorimotor
- Preoperational
- Concrete
- Formal operational stage.

Every child will go through these stages in the same order but not at the same time. Piaget believed that the development is more of an independent process rather than supporting the children.

As the Welsh government (2020) suggests the new curriculum will give the children important life skills and will develop your child's knowledge skills and experiences throughout they journey.

The early years practitioner needs to provide the children with the support and the challenge for children to initiate their own learning. The environment should always allow role play experiences such as a home corner and should have a quiet area where the child could go.

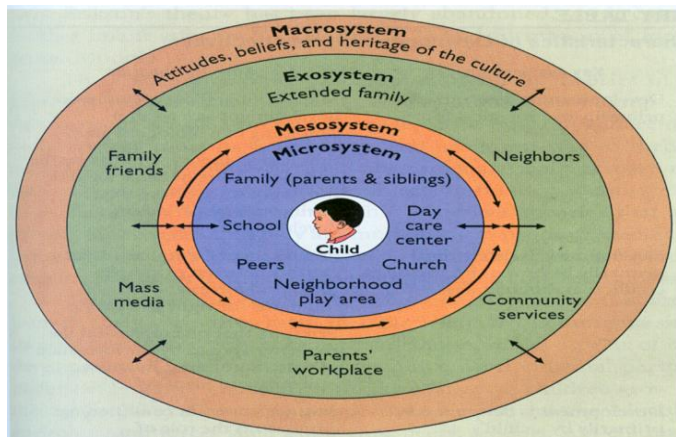
Partnership working

A fundamental component of being committed to a child's development is working in partnerships. To guarantee that a clear development plan is in place for the child, cooperation on behalf of the child is essential. Partnership working with parents as well as other services such as speech and language, families first and many more will allow for a smooth transition if good communication is established.

Partnership working is important and the child being central to all communications need to be maintained throughout the process. As well as the child being central the early years practitioner has a very important role as they need to be communicating with all parties involved in the child's care.

Looking at Bronfenbrenner's theory the child is always at the centre. Bronfenbrenner's theory says that a child's growth and development are influenced by everything both inside and outside of them. there

are four stages to Bronfenner's theory



The Child

Microsystem – this is the closest people to the child such as parents, siblings, family, teachers and close friends.

Mesosystem – wider family and friends.

Exosystem – supports both environments formal and informal do the child are influenced by the actions of people in the exosystem.

Macrosystem – the outer layer which comprised by nationality, beliefs and society.

The structure of Bronfenner's theory shows the child is always influenced either directly or indirectly by their environment. A child who has a positive transition are most likely to transition successfully again throughout their life.

Interventions

This section of the handbook is a guide to help support children through the transition period. Interventions have been put into effect to allow this to happen by building and maintaining close links/relationships with the child and their parents/carers. These interventions can begin before the child starts nursery.



Home visits

Ideally a keyworker meeting a child for the first time should take place in the child's home environment. (Nursery story, 2012). This allows the keyworker to get to know the child in their own environment and to understand their daily routine. Whilst at home visits it is good for the key worker to find as much information as possible from their parent/carer such as their likes and dislikes.

Although the statutory framework for early years foundation stage does not claim home visits are statutory it is suggested that it is good practice to include them into your transitions.



Welcome pack

Each child/ Parent carer before they start their journey in nursery will receive a welcome pack. In the welcome pack there will be lots of information for the parents such as uniform, routines, healthy snack. As well as information the setting will need to know about their child such as next of kin, any allergies and any other important information which is relevant to the school.

Stay and Play

Before a child begins their journey into nursery both child and parent/carer are invited to stay and play sessions. The first stay and play session is a teddy bears picnic, which is outside (weather permitting) this allows the child to bring along their favourite cuddly toy and allow them to explore the outside setting. This is good for communicating with the child as they can tell you about their toy. (Pacey, 2014) suggests children like to use a familiar cuddly toy as a transitional object. As the stay and play continue the children and their parent/carer are invited in to the indoor setting where they have time to explore the environment and see what the setting has to offer. If the child is settled with the key workers, the key leader will take the parents and allow time for the children to explore on their own.

Proposed outcomes

Welsh government (2021) states that they want to support each school to create their own curriculum and that their curriculum should support children to become....

Ambitious and capable

Healthy and confident

Creative and enterprising

And ethically informed citizens

These are called the four purposes

Following on from the new curriculum the Schools have created their own new curriculum and are ready to follow the four purposes to develop children's learning and development. Now using the new guidelines set by Welsh Government (2021) school will be observing and assessing children using the progression steps keeping in mind that every learner will develop as an individual. Being an early years practitioner it is important to maintain observing throughout any transition period and to ensure the child is enabling a positive and successful transition. If the transition you find is becoming more difficult than some as a n early years practitioner you will then allow time to liase with the family of the child about ways forward where you can help. As talked about in this handbook this could include other outside agencies such as speech and language as they may not be able to verbally respond to the early years practitioner which will make the transition period more difficult. As an early years practitioner I hope by reading this handbook you will find the guidance benecifical to support transitions and understand why having a positive transition is so important to each individual.

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