

Transitions



(Source: Portobello Institute, 2022)

The Journey From Home To Nursery

A handbook designed for Early Years Practitioners in aid of promoting effective communication for young children's learning and development during transitions.

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(Source: Pinterest, no date)

Introduction

The definition of transitions is defined as the process of moving or changing from one situation or circumstance to another (Oxford Learner's Dictionaries, 2023)

Although within the Early Years sector, transitions should be carried out as a process not a singular event. Transitions should be a positive experience thus promoting the child's learning, development and well-being. (Birth to 5 Matters, no date).

Bridges (2011) interprets transitions as a process that people experience that can be defined as a psychological process that individuals must endure to accept a new situation and that, although change can be interpreted as an external process, transitions are an internal process. (Bateson, J. 2013, p. 52)

Transitions are a predominant step in a child's development. Transition periods should support and continues a child's learning journey and any previous experiences the child may have should be valued and adapted and or built upon. Targeted support should be provided for those individuals that need further support with their development specifically in areas including their language and communication and being able to support the child in being able to manage their feelings, behaviour and self-care. (Devon County Council, 2022)

There are also many barriers to consider in relation to transitions. Such as if a transition is instantaneous and unexpected not only for the child but also for the family and thus resulting in the family and child not having adequate time to adjust. Transitions that involve any alteration to relationships with individuals that have significant importance for the child and those that they are dependent on the most uncomfortable periods of transition. Another barrier would include if there were multiple different transitions occurring at the same time or are close together such as a breakdown in their family dynamics or a new sibling. Individual children can be seen as particularly vulnerable during transitions if they are suffering with a form of illness or if a child is of a particularly young age and if the child has any disabilities or special educational needs thus including any sensory impairments. Another difficulty to consider with regards to transitions would be if English is counted as an additional language for the child and their family. (Trodd, L. 2013, p. xxv)

Qualities that can support transitions in ensuring that they are smooth, positive and exciting.



- Valuing individuals
- Positive attitudes
- Respect
- Good listening skills
- Physical and emotional well-being
- Diversity (Allingham, S. 2011, p. 14)

(Source: thebluediamondgallery.com, no date)

Needs of the child

When working with children and taking into consideration their needs, Early Years Practitioners understand the importance of ensuring that a child in their care feels secure and safe and they key to this is being able to provide a secure foundation to further adapt a child's development and learning. (The Education People, 2021)

Harold Maslow (1943)

Maslow's theory has a focus on an individual's needs and as part of his theory he had created a pyramid of the hierarchy of needs that consists of five separate tiers and or models. The diagram shown below highlights the different tiers. (The Education People, 2021)



How does this pyramid work?

Maslow suggested the five levels of needs help to describe how individuals are motivated.

An individual would start at the bottom of the hierarchy and aspire to fulfil each need in order. (BBC Bitesize, 2023)

Maslow's hierarchy of needs

(Source: thoughtco.com, 2020)

How does this apply in practice?

If a child's needs such as food, safety, security and love are not being met then their development and growth would be affected.

The National Minimum Standards for Regulated Childcare in Wales states that as practitioners we need to provide the physiological and safety needs that are outline in Maslow's theory to best support the child and their development and growth. (PACEY, 2016)

Areas of a child's development that can be affected during periods of transition.

- Emotional- if a child goes through a time in their life that impacts on them emotionally such as parents separating, bereavement and entering or perhaps leaving care
- Physical- when a child has to physically move from one place or from one activity to another such as moving from one setting to another or a new home
- Intellectual- moving from a nursery setting to a primary school and then the change of moving from primary school to a higher education setting
- Physiological- this would include if a child suffers from a long term medical condition or adolescence. (One Education, no date)

To implement good practice within the setting sessions should be designed to accommodate the needs of the children as individuals. However, the environment, the ethics and values of not only staff but also parents are a component of meeting the child's needs. Transitions that are effective are subject to a positive parent, school relationship. (Ricciardi, A, 2013 p. 36)

Elinor Goldschmied was dead set that children are required to build a secure relationship with a key person within the setting, as this is the time in their lives where they are being cared for outside of their familiar family home. Thus, resulting in having to establish feelings of trust between the key worker and or staff and the parents. If the trust hasn't been established it can result in a parent becoming defensive, gruelling or detached. (Hughes and Read, 2012, p. 17)

Smooth Transition

In order to achieve a smooth transition for the child from home to nursery would begin with ensuring that the key worker and or teacher ensures that they have taken consideration into ensuring that their plans for the day meet the needs of the individual child and make effort to connect with the families to ensure that they are involved in the process. Transitions should be managed in a sensitive manner as change is generally unavoidable, by adopting a sensitive manner, this can help to alleviate any feelings of anxiety or stress. (Nursery Story, 2021)

Additional information on the needs of the child

United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child

The UNCRC sets out the civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights of the child as an individual regardless of their specific race, religion or abilities. The UNCRC contains 54 articles that present the child's rights and informs governments on how they should work together to make them available to all children. (Save The Children, no date)



(Source: classdojo.com, 2014)

Role of the adult

A child develops their very first relationship usually with their parents. The parents are considered as the secure base for children's social and emotional development.

Much of the knowledge and information that practitioners require about the child is held by the parents. Thus, reiterating the importance of developing a strong and trusting relationship with the parents to receive the information that is required. The goal of working in partnership with parents in relation to the child's learning is to develop a collective approach with shared objectives, which both the parents and staff member and or key worker can work towards not only in the setting but in the home respectively. (Ward, U, 2013 p. 20)

When a child has to leave the comfort of their home for the first time it's not only an anxious and emotional time for the child but it also affects the whole family.

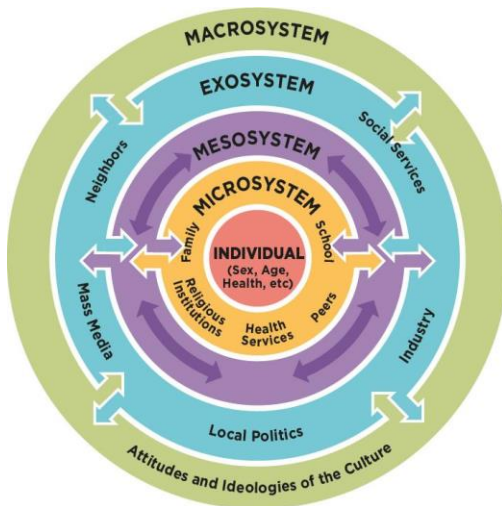
Here are some of the critical areas that practitioners should abide by with regards to transition

- Asses the way in which staff communicate with parents ensuring that the information shared with them is clear and also welcoming.
- Consider planning an effective and clear settling-in policy which could include providing parents with photos of the staff and the setting within their welcome pack.
- Offer for parents and the child to attend the setting on a drop-in session for them to get used to and get to know the setting and what it has to offer.
- Ensure that within the initial first discussions with parents that all relevant and necessary information has been shared such as any routines the child may have in respect of feeding and sleeping to ensure that the individuals needs are cared for.
- Offering gradual and staggered sessions to begin with and allowing the parents the time they need if they wish to stay with their child at first to ensure that both the child and parent feel comfortable.
- Ensure that any activities or experiences that are carried out reflect the child's culture and home life. (The Educator Magazine UK, 2017)

When practitioners need to communicate with parents or family members during the period of transition they are not only simply communicating with them or conveying a message but the communication is about entering into a relationship with them.

When working with parents the encounters that take place no matter how light-hearted or simple they may be, ultimately each encounter is laying a foundation of trust between the practitioner and the parent about a most valued and treasured part of their lives. As part of the communication process there is also the key element of knowing how to listen also. If an individuals listen skills improve or are of high standards then this would improve the ability to influence, negotiate and reassure as well as minimise any misunderstandings. (Hughes and Read, 2012, p.14)

During the period of transition another key factor to take into consideration is the environment in which a child is being introduced to. By ensuring that the environment is nurturing and enabling, thus making it feel like a home from home, will allow the child to feel secure and safe to give the child the best opportunities to develop comfortably. (Bowden, 2022)



Urie Bronfenbrenner developed a theory that argues that the social environment affects human development and that the social environment in which a individual grows up in affects every aspect of their lives. (Exploring Your Mind, 2020)

Bronfenbrenner's theory focused on the impact of the contexts that are familiar to the child such as nursery, school and religious institutions.

The ongoing oppression of society and events that had an impact on the lives of parents, children and society at large included: lack of resources, racism and sexism.

(Source: constantcontact.com, 2021)

Additionally his studies revealed the significance of the various "levels" of a child's position in society and the ways in which they interacted with all facets of this. (Bradbury, 2021)

Unique Child

As practitioners it is important to acknowledge that all children, especially those with special needs such as special educational needs (SEN) or a child that is in foster care, might be especially vulnerable during times of change. Arrangements for those individual children will require more adaptable assistance.

Practitioners should get the individual child ready for change. It is imperative that every child has a favourable transition. With the right planning and comprehension, children are more likely to feel safe and adapt to their new environment more quickly. (Oxfordshire County Council, 2019)

Partnerships



(Source: slideshare.net 2015)

Working in partnership with parents is vital to the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) in England and the National Minimum Standards for Registered Childcare (NMS) in Wales. (PACEY, 2023)

To achieve effective collaboration and or partnership working involves working closely alongside other childcare professionals such as health visitors, speech and language therapists or social workers. By distributing relevant and important information with other childcare professionals will result in being able to gain more of a broad-based understanding of each individual child's needs and difficulties and or challenges and develop a more productive and informed approach to the child's learning and early years education. (Open A Nursery, 2023)

Working in multi-agency collaborative partnerships has several advantages for educational settings. The "gel" that keeps partnerships functioning is Every Child Matters, and the value it brings significantly improves the children's learning and also has an impact on children's well-being.

Some of the benefits of collaborative multi-agency working are as follows:

It can lead to improved outcomes for children through a range of support and advice being available and easily accessible, encourages staff members to support, encourage, and share ideas with one another. This facilitates the sharing of resources, expertise, and knowledge for training and best practices, which results in more manageable workloads. Enhanced service coordination that leads to better connections, more referrals, and the achievement of shared goals and gives working practice a wider focus or perspective. (SAGE, 2008)

Interventions

Children experience different forms of transitions through their everyday life but when children have to go through significant transitions such as starting nursery there are interventions that practitioners can incorporate during the period of transition in order to help promote a positive experience for the children. These interventions could include:

- Ensuring that the parents receive a welcome pack with any key dates or information that they may need
- Encouraging parents to visit the setting in person with their child
- Creating 'special books' that can be made available for families
- Incorporate particular times in the day where small groups of children can get to know their key person (Teach Early Years, 2023)
- Creating visuals containing pictures of the setting so that the child can recall what the setting looked like when they are at home (Ricciardi, A, 2013 p. 34)
- Visual time tables that can be introduced throughout their home life at first in order to get the children used to a structured day in order to adapt to a routine. Other similar visuals to help support children to adapt a routine could include a now, then, next visual. (Bowden, 2022)
- A small token from home as a form of a comforter for the child such as a blanket or soft toy this concept not only provides the child with comfort but it is also a great tool for practitioners to start a conversation with the child in order for the child to easily engage with staff (Bowden, 2022)

Play

Play-based approaches enables the children to extend their thinking and develop ideas are essential to successful learning.

Throughout practice core skills are taught in entertaining and fun ways, and encouraging role play and artwork is seen as fundamental to help a child develop a deeper understanding of the world and of their self.

Areas of play that can be incorporated could include outdoor play, small world play, sand and water play. An example of incorporating role play during a child transition could include a role play where the child must dress up in the settings uniform and could also include a lunchtime role play and a busy playtime role play as for some children particularly starting nursery for the first time may not have experienced these times before. (Teach Early Years, 2023)

Proposed outcomes

Not every child is the same therefore a successful transition may vary from child to child. Naturally each child will partake in their life within the setting differently depending on their personalities. More outgoing children may be more comfortable in participating in activities and be quick to make new friends, whereas more reserved children may be happy to keep themselves to themselves for a little longer. Some children may adapt to their new setting quickly whereas others may take several months before settling in. With so many different factors at play, it is tough to put a time on the transition process. (The Education Hub, 2019)

Other signs of successful transition include the child being acceptant of leaving their parent/carer at times where they are being dropped off to the setting. Also, when a child begins to develop a good relationship with their key worker. (First Discoverers, no date)

Two instruments can be used to assess children's learning and development, according to Laevers (1994). The first is emotional well-being, which can be characterized by a child's level of openness, receptivity, flexibility, assertiveness, relaxation, and confidence. The second is engagement, which entails observing a child's focus, vigor, perseverance, expressions, and contentment.

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