

The aim of this handbook is to inform Early Years Practitioners of the process to support child's transition between nursery and reception. It will provide information on child development and give practitioners an understanding of how to support children and their families through transitions by looking at theories and suggesting practical ideas to help smooth the process. It is important to consider the needs of the child, the role of the adults involved and other partnerships, and what interventions can be put in place to support children through transition.

What is transition?

Transition is a change or movement from one stage or position to another in a child's or young person's life. These can affect various aspects of the child's life depending on their situation or emotional resilience. In Early Years this is a significant change from nursery to reception.

Brooker (2008) states "Transitions as a way of life" explaining that from birth until death, there are many events in life that are due to change. Not only starting school but reaching puberty, getting a job, and becoming a parent. (Common core of skills and knowledge Childrens workforce council) Transition is important because children need change to learn or develop. Children can easily outgrow their environment and a change of this can develop not just intellectually but also physically.

Transitions historically did not involve the child. According to Trodd (2012) it was thought children were better off not knowing what was happening and the advice to parents was to pretend an event was happening to stop discussion on what was really occurring. This can have an effect on children's development with change suffering from separation anxiety. Not being prepared Flying start

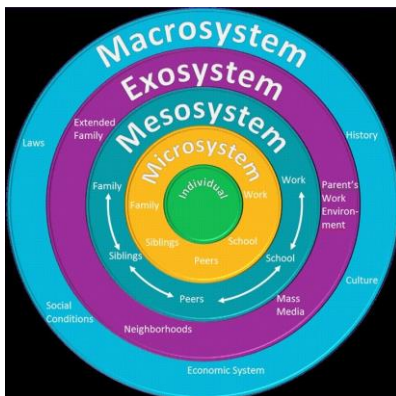
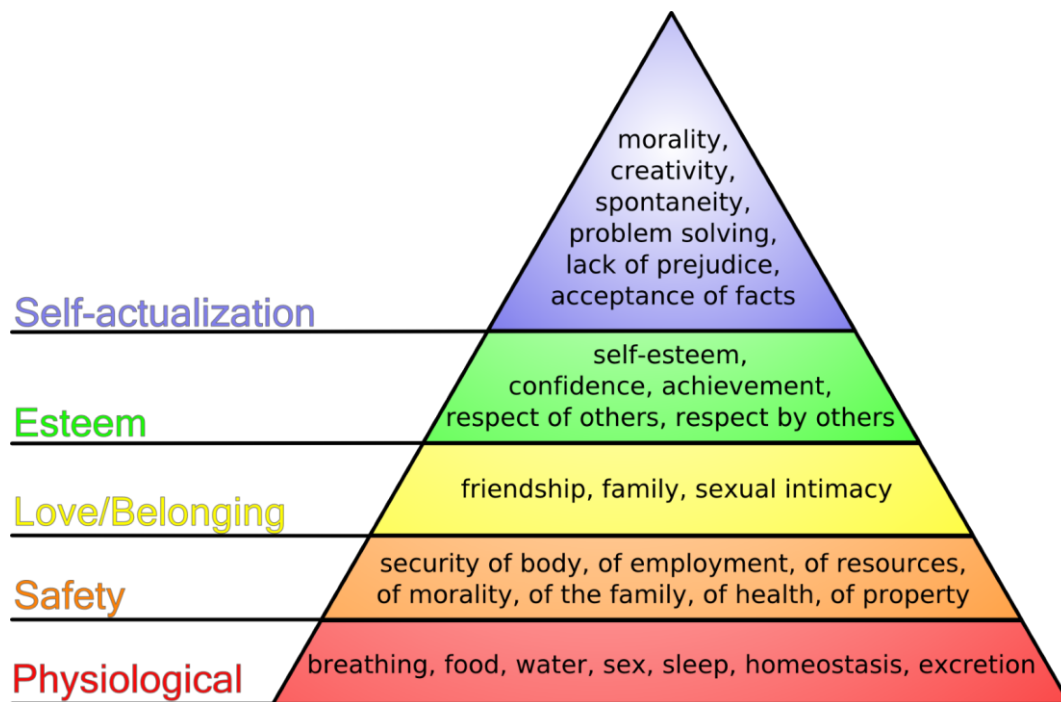
As a result of the introduction of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) particularly Article 12 'Every child has the right to a voice on matters that affect them' there was a change throughout the 1990's in people's thinking, and policies and procedures were put in place for children to transition through significant events supported by an adult (Donaldson, 1992) with the knowledge of what was happening. This is supported by Dunlop and Fabian (2007) who suggest that children have their own knowledge and are experts of their lives. This s

Transitions can be a form of many things. Firstly, the biggest transition in a child's life will be change. From a developmental view which could include reaching physical milestones such as crawling and walking to environmental changes such as a new sibling or moving house. (Birth to Five Matters, 2021) There are also horizontal transitions that occur from routine changes during the day such as snack time or going to the childminders after nursery. (Vogler et al. 2008). These changes can be positive or negative and will depend on the child's ability to move through their environment. At first children may be unsettled but as they become more familiar with their routine, they should adjust and become settled and secure in their environment.

Transitions are unfortunately out of children's control, and they need strong relationships with people to support them. There are many benefits to smooth transitions for children as feeling safe and secure will lead to learning and thriving at school both socially and academically by building strong relationships between families and school. (Be you) According to Birth to 5 Matters (2021) effective communication between settings and information sharing can build on the continuity of care for the child based on the needs and strengths of individual children.

Needs of the child

Maslow's theory of the Hierarchy of Needs is important to consider the needs of the child during transition. Maslow (1962) proposed that for a child to reach their full potential they must have their basic and psychological needs met first. For example, a child being warm, fed and well rested. If they do not get this, they will not thrive. When this has been achieved children can then progress up the pyramid where safety is next. This is an important part of transition as children who feel secure in their environment will explore their new surroundings confidently with the knowledge that an adult may be close by to provide attention or encouragement if needed. Children will find comfort in a routine which will then provide feeling of stability and order. The next level shows belonging which includes love and acceptance. Relationships need to be developed to show the child that other people, apart from their immediate family can show affection which will gain the child's respect and allow for understanding that other relationships can be built with other adults and then peers. This will again allow the child to feel confident in their environment and can concentrate on their learning and development. The fourth stage is building self-esteem which an adult can play a significant role in. As children are learning adults can support their self-confidence and self-esteem by giving praise and encouragement. Once these needs are met children then progress up to achieve self-actualization which is where they achieve their full potential.



Bronfenbrenner (1979) supports Maslow's theory by stating how the child needs to feel safe. He developed Ecological Systems Theory as he thought that the child's development was affected by the surrounding environment. His theory focused on 4 systems and later 5, to suggest that throughout a person's life there may be factors that have an impact either directly or indirectly. The first system closest to the individual is the Microsystem in which the environment has the closest contact. For a child, their microsystem is their home and relationships within the family. As the child starts to attend a setting, that becomes their microsystem too joined by their teacher and peers. Children feel safe in such a small circle and these interactions with adults will develop autonomy. The next stage is Mesosystem which uses interactions between various parts of the microsystem. This can have a positive impact on children's development as systems are working together. Interactions between a teacher and parent show this. Bronfenbrenner claims that links between these systems can be increased by doing home visits and having meetings between parents and keyworkers to provide information about the child's needs and preferences. This is similar for the child to also bring familiar objects from home into setting to offer security while settling in.

Petalozzi (1894) also considers the needs of the child with his theories believing that children should learn by following their own interests. This is important for today's children as the Welsh Curriculum is now focused on learning through play and exploring the child's interests to learn effectively. Macblain (2018) says practitioners in Early Years now plan activities and learning to address the whole child focusing on supporting emotional and social development. This is done by taking time to observe and listen to the children therefore placing importance on ensuring children are happy and promoting their well-being. Linked to new curriculum.

Montessori (1907) theorised that children learn through stages at their own pace which attends to their holistic needs, focusing on the child's learning through observations of their interests. Pound (2008) explains that practitioners are encouraged to step back and observe the children to have a better understanding of their holistic learning and development. Therefore, encouraging children to be independent and take responsibility for their own learning which leans heavily to the Early Years Foundation Stage that is used in England currently. Department for Education (2021)

Role of the adult

Vygotsky (1978) used his theory of the Zone of Proximal Development to illustrate the difference between what a child can do independently, and with a supporting adult. This theory contributes to the present day understanding of the role of the adults in children's learning. Children now work in groups and adults use observation to inform practice. Vygotsky argued for differentiated teaching to cater for zones of development for individual children and considered the importance of play in child development. He suggested that during play children copy the way adults conduct themselves and their behaviour and in doing so can create opportunities for learning. Aubrey, Macblain references

Erikson (1963) believed there were a sequence of eight stages in an individual's life that were strongly influenced by adults and society. Infants are strongly reliant on caregivers as source of warmth, love, and stability which he thought promoted interaction with generations of the family. Between the ages of three to five children begin exploring and asserting control over their environment which leads to a sense of purpose and builds autonomy. During this time adults begin to give children some degrees of choices

Welsh Government new curriculum – adult facilitating learning through play

Staff

Key workers can form significant relationships with the child to support transition. Children's experiences can be enhanced when staff actively support children. (Flying start) Practitioners need to be engaging and listen to the child to make sure their needs are being met. They become close to the child's circle (Bronfenbrenner) and communication needs to be positive giving the child their full attention. Practitioners are role models as children copy adults (Bandura?) Children learn new behaviours mainly through a process of modelling. Adults show their own behaviour how children behave. Not only behaviours but also learn ideas, expectations and internal standards about what to do or not.

Bowlby Attachment theory – How can adults form relationships with children to support their transition. Key worker role

Mackay et al (2010)

Parents

Having effective communication with parents can ease transition for all involved. When talking to parents, practitioners should be approachable and open in their conversations and provide support to ease parents' anxieties through this difficult time. A strategy that could help would be to provide stay and play sessions for parents to meet with practitioners and support their child in their unfamiliar environment by being close by. (PACEY)

Parents can make a difference to their children's outcomes and are important as the child's first and most enduring educators. (Birth to 5 matters – no date)

The UK Government states that partnerships are essential in Early Years for settling children into a setting.

There are several multi-agencies working alongside each other in Early Years. Reed and Walker (2015) states that working with others ensures that everyone is giving support to children and their families to meet their needs and ensure safeguarding if vulnerable.

It is important for effective communication during a child's transition. Lots of people can be involved such as children, staff, parent/families, communities, other professionals, wider school, and multi-agencies.

- Share information
- Learn
- Help others
- Enquire
- Socialise
- Direct

Types of Communication

- Verbal
- Non-verbal
- Written
- Listening
- Formal/informal
- Visual

Nurturing environment

Froebel – established pre-school. The natural growth of children through action and play. Saw children as active, curious, creative. Learn best through activity, play, talk, self reflection. Thrive when emotionally secure and in close relationships with family and wider community. Children had to struggle first through own efforts to achieve freedom. Operates within framework of respect and responsibility to others and the natural environment. Make choices, opportunities to move freely. Support children do challenging things for themselves, think for themselves develop self discipline. Experience nature, reflection and importance of play .

Tovey, no date – Helping children to think for themselves, make choices, solve problems, and pursue own interests. Engaging with nature, free flow, rich provision, proactive resources, . Play helps children reflect and develop awareness. Self chosen play activities to develop determination and being social. Adults as sensitive co-players who offer freedom with guidance to enrich potential. Play as a learning context.

Margaret Rachel McMillan – open air nursery. Chn outside as much as possible.

Partnerships

2-way open communication

Children holistic approach, attachment theory, relationships are key. Montessori – every child proceeds at own pace

Parents, families

Umbrella organisations

Multi-disciplinary team

Other stake holders.

Interventions

Transitions that occur between one setting to another can be stressful for all involved.

Therefore, it is important that everyone involved understand their role to help with the smooth transition. This can be achieved by communicating information to parents about how to support positive transitions well in advance. (DFE 2012)

For a child leaving nursery and entering reception, opportunities can be provided for the teaching staff to visit the child in their setting in which they feel emotionally secure. This enables the staff to liaise with key workers to share information. There may be a transition document to explain what developmental stage the child is at, their interests and any needs or additional support they, or their family receive. If these are

completed before the child starts, it will smooth the process having that prior knowledge and to put procedures in place.

(Trodd, 2012)

If the child attends nursery in a cluster setting or attached to a school, an open day may be available for the child to attend school, meet the teacher, and explore their new surroundings. For the first experience it is recommended that the child attends with their parent or carer

for a stay and play session.

Activities at the school would include lots of resources already familiar to the child such as Lego or painting to ease the process.

This is an ideal time to parents to ask questions and support their child in preparation. After a few more visits, another opportunity may include leaving the child for half hour for a play session and a picnic to build familiarisation of routines. This will enable the staff to see how

children react without their adult close by and then this can be monitored. For those who struggle with anxiety being separated from parents, transition booklets may be helpful. These are for parents to talk through the book with their child throughout the summer before starting reception. It would include pictures of staff, the environment, and a routine of what the day will be like. It is also comforting to include

messages of support and encouragement from the current reception class or perhaps saying what they like about being in school. Some classes have a buddy system where a current reception child will share a book or play with the nursery child.

A home visit is provided for parents to also meet the teacher and discuss any concerns or addressing any anxieties they have sooner rather than later.

(Wilson, 2016) This can build trust with parents and they will feel more comfortable in their own home to discuss any potential private issues.

If a child is showing signs of a change in behaviour this could be an indication of them being affected by transitions. Listen to the concerns of the parents and children and reassure them of what is happening. Practitioners will need to be sensitive to the needs of the child and often

seeing things from a child perspective can be crucial for transition. Helping the child to build resilience to cope with change, understanding their new routines and developing self-esteem will build independence needed for a smooth transition. Parents can assist and support the child in preparation for starting school and it is recommended that this starts as early as January in the year of starting school. (EY learner

support Handbook Belfast education and library board)

Proposed outcomes

New Curriculum in Wales was proposed in 2014 and has been rolled out to schools in Wales from 2022. It now contains the Four Purposes and is used to underpin all teaching and learning in Wales from aged 3-16. (Donaldson report 2014)

These are

- Ambitious, Capable Learners – ready to learn throughout their lives.
- Enterprising, Creative Contributors – ready to play a full part in life and work.
- Healthy, Confident Individuals – ready to lead fulfilling lives as valued members of society.
- Ethical, Informed Citizens – ready to be citizens of Wales and the World.

Alongside the 4 purposes are six areas of learning and experience to provide educational experiences for all children with knowledge and skills to build upon.

These are

- Expressive Arts
- Language, Literacy and Communication
- Mathematics and Numeracy
- Health and Well-being
- Humanities
- Science and Technology

Opportunities for children to develop wider skills are built into these areas of learning and include critical thinking and problem solving, planning and organisation, creativity and innovation and personal effectiveness.

Literacy numeracy and digital competence should also be included across the curriculum ready for being involved in modern society.

Learning is assessed using progression steps where each includes a range of achievement outcomes. There is no longer a need to assess against children's age or stage now referring to their development of skills and knowledge in those areas and support available to children who progress slower. There are 27 statements of what matters which children can explore and develop their learning. There are five points in assessment at age five, eight, eleven, fourteen and sixteen. Children are encouraged to self-evaluate as much as the teacher.

The curriculum also looks at the interest of the child with children deciding how and what to learn about. The foundation stage uses play to

The significant adults in a child's life are called to accept responsibility to enable children to achieve best outcomes. By embracing this accountability young children can be supported to realise their potential (Welsh Gov 2008)