

Handbook for Key Workers in Early Years Settings



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Introduction to Transitions

What is transition?

A transition can be a change in environment, people, identity. According to Trodd (2012, pp.15) “our awareness of the importance of paying attention to children’s transitions is a modern phenomenon.” Trodd says that when a change comes suddenly, unexpectedly, and without enough time for the child to adjust it, it can become challenging. Transitions in the early years are crucial as they play a significant role in a child’s overall development and well-being.

This handbook focuses on a child’s transition from nursery to school, highlighting factors that practitioners should take into consideration. It is designed to give information to support children within the early years setting. A child’s future learning is built upon the experiences of their early years, which includes nursery. Ensuring a seamless transition guarantees that the educational growth established in nursery school carries over into primary school. It is important that the well-being of the child is supported during the transition period. For young children, adjusting to a new setting can be emotionally demanding. When children go from a familiar environment to a new one, a smooth transition reduces tension and anxiety and fosters a positive emotional experience. Also, meeting new classmates and teachers is a common part of transitioning from nursery to primary school. A well-handled transition aids in the social skill development of children by assisting them in forming new friendships, comprehending group dynamics, and navigating social interactions in a broader environment.

“The occasion of a child starting in nursery or reception is an anxious time for families because they have anticipated it ever since the child was small. For parents, their children’s early years always have this milestone ahead, to look forward to but also to fear a little, and studies show that is common for a great deal of thought to go into preparing the child for school over the weeks, months and even years before we start.” Trodd (2012, pp 68).

Trodd (2012) suggests that a child’s transition from nursery to a school setting is an anxious time for parents, meaning that they depend on practitioners to create a welcoming and nurturing environment for their children. She also claims that the

practitioner's role is to establish a rapport with the home care providers who offer a warm and inviting environment for children to experiment with different roles and experiences while receiving the most guidance possible.

Keeping this in mind, this handbook will provide early years practitioners information about the needs of the children, the role of the adult, partnerships, interventions, and proposed outcomes.

The Needs of the Child

As practitioners within the early years setting, it is important that close attention is paid to theories which have a holistic approach to support why it's important that the needs of the children are met. Erikson's (1950) stages of psychosocial development theory was influenced by Freud's (1923) five stages of psychosexual development theory. Erikson (1950) suggest that when a child reaches school age, they reach a stage of industry vs. inferiority matters, also known as school age stage. It is important that they are taught how to handle new social and academic expectations and should be praised highly for their accomplishments. During this developmental stage, it is thought that if successful, the child develops a sense of worthiness and a sense of being useful.

Lindon (2012) suggests that Erikson's (1950) theory states that during this stage, "young children's physical and intellectual abilities allow them to be creative. However, this activity has to be balanced with learning limits, from a growing sense of conscience and boundaries set by adults." This means that practitioners are responsible in ensuring that children should have the opportunity to show that they can be creative through learning by having access to a range of resources that is given to the child.



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According to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), article 3 claims that "the best interests of the child must be a top priority in all decisions and actions that affect children." This means that early years' practitioners play a vital role in ensuring that the interests of the children in which we work with must be paramount. It's important that this is followed in a professional matter so that

the needs of the child is met adequately. Article 12 also states that “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”. When a child does so, it indicates to an adult their needs, and can be acted upon appropriately.

Secure relationships are a certain need for a child. A nurturing and supportive environment should be provided

which promotes positive

reinforcement. This allows the child to

trust in the practitioner and form a

positive relationship. This means that

the child's emotions and needs are

being validated and therefore

promotes a sense of security.



(Source: Simplypsychology 2023)

Maslow's (1943) Hierarchy of needs explains human

motivation and the hierarchy of requirements that go from basic survival to higher-

order psychological fulfilment. presented a hierarchy of needs. These are:

physiological needs, safety needs, love and belonging, esteem and self-

actualization. According to Maslow (1943) “the more physiological needs are

satisfied, the more the safety-security needs will be satisfied.

Physiological needs

Physiological needs are basic necessities that a child needs. Maslow (1943) outlined the basic physiological demands that include warmth, food, drink, and rest. His theory supports the needs to ensure children have access to wholesome food, clean water, appropriate clothing, and enough sleep. For them to grow, stay healthy, and generally be in good health, these needs must be met.

Safety needs

Next in the hierarchy is safety needs. Children require a safe and secure environment. This involves having a safe space, having a predictable home life, and safety from violence. Establishing a physically and emotionally secure environment for children is a critical responsibility of adults, including parents and other carers. This links closely to the next stage of love and belonging.

Love and belonging

Love, affection, and a sense of belonging are basic human needs. Positive relationships with peers, family, and carers are necessary for this. Developing solid, caring relationships gives children a sense of stability and improves their mental health. Having a sense of love and belonging contributes to a child's ability to trust others and for positive relationships throughout life.

Esteem

Next in the hierarchy, Maslow (1943) discusses the idea of Esteem needs, recognition, and achievement. Children require admiration, acknowledgement, and a feeling of success just like adults do. By praising accomplishments, encouragement, and recognising children's efforts, adults may satisfy these needs. Two crucial elements are encouragement and positive reinforcement. Children who feel more valued are more likely to have higher self-esteem and confidence.

Self-actualization

Finally, at the top of the hierarchy, Maslow (1943) discusses the idea of self-actualization and fulfilling potential. Children have the ability to grow, be creative, and discover who they are. By giving children the chance to explore, developing a love of learning, and supporting the development of their individual abilities and interests, these needs can be met by the adult.

Acknowledging Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs enables the practitioner to effectively prioritise and attend to the many needs of children. Adults lay the groundwork for a child's emotional and social development by ensuring their basic physiological and safety needs are met. According to Maslow's hypothesis, when these basic needs are satisfied, children are in a better position to study, form wholesome connections, and reach their full potential.

Attachment theory

The emotional connections that form between children and their primary carers are explained by Bowlby's (1969) attachment theory, which highlights the significance these attachments are to children's emotional and social growth. Bowlby's (1969) theory focusses on the idea of autonomy, agency and belonging within secure

attachment. When an attachment is secure, the child makes their needs known which then gives the child confidence that their needs will be met. In a early years setting, this can be shown by the child presenting themselves as confident when entering (Jacob Ham, 2017, 03:10). In this video, he also suggests that the child transitions to school easily as they enjoy exploring and learning new things. There is also a “sense of confidence and openness.” He suggests that when the child may need help and support within a school setting, they have no problems with asking for help and support and are grateful to receive any help and support from the practitioner.

The role of the adult

The practitioner's role is vital in ensuring that a child's transition and education is effective. When it comes to giving emotional support during transition, adults play a fundamental part. It can be emotionally difficult for children to move to a new setting, so having caring adults around them makes them feel safe and understood. Also, adults provide a sense of consistency during times of change and transition. Familiar faces can allow children to experience and enjoy new environments and challenges that they're being faced with. The adult also models behaviour and serve as a role model to the child who demonstrates appropriate behaviour, social skills and problem-solving strategies. The social and emotional development of children is facilitated by positive adult role models.

According to Lindon (2012) "boys and girls experience the reaction of familiar adults to behaviour that those grown-ups regard with



Image from Google

approval, disapproval or indifference." This means that children are able to learn from experience and are able to decide what is appropriate behaviour and what consequences that may have. Lindon (2012) also claims that adults should find a balance between having a "low level of involvement that children do not benefit from adult's presence." This means that children are given the opportunity to play and work independently whilst adults observe behaviours through observation. On the contrary, she claims the other extreme to be having "such a high level of directive involvement that adults' actions operate as interference." This then takes away the children's ability to think for themselves and act upon situations independently. Lindon (2012) explains the importance of adults being at hand to observe children when they have achieved something that they are proud of such as completing a "tricky manoeuvre on their bike" or being "excited by their large chalk drawing."

Vygotsky's (1962) Sociocultural Theory of Cognitive Development theory focusses on the importance of scaffolding. He believed that appropriate level of challenge should be set by the adult to allow growth within activities and the environment in which the children are in. Also, there should be high level of interest to keep children

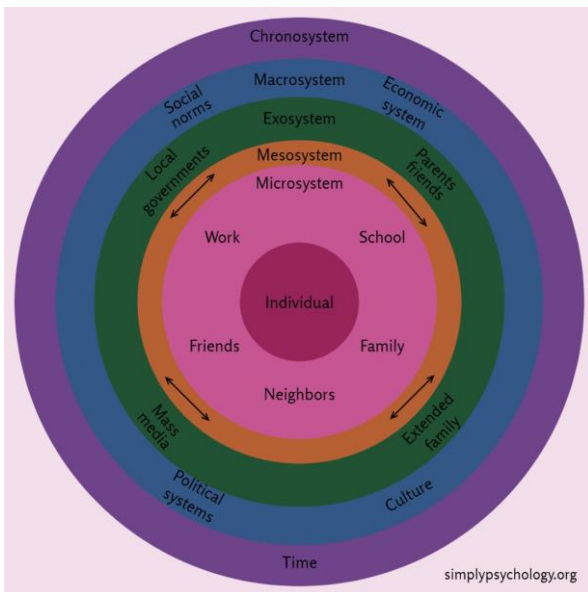
stimulated but still allow risk at the same time. This is why challenge within the environment is considered as important. Vygotsky (1962) claims that the adult should provide children with effective tools on what to think and how to think.

Partnerships

Why are partnerships important?

For a number of reasons, including the fact that they greatly enhance the child's general growth and well-being, parent-child partnerships are essential during the early years.

According to Bronfenbrenner's (1979) theory, the microsystem—a child's family and local environment—is one of the ecological systems that affects their development.



This approach is supported by partnerships in early childhood education, which acknowledge the importance of the family (parents and other carers) as the child's major influence on development.

Since partnerships in early childhood education involve cooperation between parents, carers, and educators, they are intimately linked to the microsystem.

Acknowledging the family as the foremost factor influencing a child's growth is consistent

with the theory of the microsystem. A unified and encouraging immediate environment for the child is guaranteed by successful collaborations, both at home and in the classroom.

Early childhood education partnerships, which entail cooperation and communication between the home and school settings, are closely related to the mesosystem section of Bronfenbrenner's theory. Positive relationships between parents and educators are facilitated by effective partnerships, which provide a network of support that improves the child's overall development.

The exosystem takes external agencies or settings into consideration that may influence the child. This could be the parents' friends, mass media, local governments, or parents' friends. Partnerships involve the larger community and outside resources in addition to the home and school. Community organisations,

support services, and other outside organisations that advance the development and well-being of children may be involved in collaborative initiatives.

Agencies that can support transition from nursery to reception.

- Team around the family
- Families first
- Communities first
- Flying start

Agencies provide support, create beneficial environments, and encourage collaboration among key stakeholders to contribute to the holistic well-being of children during transitions. During crucial times of transition, this collaborative approach makes sure children get the emotional, social, and academic support they need, paving the way for healthy growth and educational opportunities.

Interventions

For young children, moving from the nursery to the reception is a big milestone. During this time, a number of interventions can facilitate a seamless and productive transition. According to the Families First framework (2017), Families First “helps to



prevent young people and families with children of all ages from developing problems which are difficult to overcome.” They offer programmes and materials to assist parents in strengthening strong connections, communicating better within the family, and developing effective parenting techniques which can benefit the child and the transition period. They also carry out parent education interventions, training courses, and workshops

to improve abilities and understanding in areas including education, behaviour control, and child development. Families First also tailor specific interventions and services to the needs of individual children and families.

Flying Start also provides help and support to children and families who are transitioning from nursery to the reception.

The transitions process can be supported by sharing resources such as allotments, gardens or forest schools. To help children familiarise themselves with their new surroundings they should be given the opportunity to join in with circle time or other suitable activities. The Foundation Phase teacher could also be invited into the childcare setting to share stories or song and rhyme time.

Flying Start settings encourage early transition to ensure that the child is supported during what can be a difficult time. In the framework, it states that Practitioners must make sure that the receiving setting/school is informed about the child's development to date as well as any potential needs in order to facilitate a seamless transition. This also means ensuring that there is



effective communication between settings and parents, so the needs of the child are met.

Parents/carers are the most constant adults in a child's life. They are able to ease the transition process for the child, providing they are kept well informed about the process as the child progresses from home through Foundation Phase settings" (Welsh Government, 2008, page 24).

Most settings have already established interventions including Thrive and ELSA (Emotional Literacy Support Assistant) which both supports children with their social and emotional well-being. Thrive is used within the early years and have claimed that "transitions are being managed effectively and children are settling in quickly within schools."

Benefits of Thrive:

- The practitioner is able to help the child learn about their own behaviour and teaches them how to regulate and control their emotions.
- It can help children to engage with learning – also during the transition process.
- It can strengthen links with parents and carers ensuring that children's needs are being supported through a joined-up approach.

Proposed Outcomes

As set out in the Welsh Government Early Years Outcomes Framework (2015) it states that all children (0-7)

- Are and feel safe.
- Are cared for, supported, and valued,
- Are resilient, capable, and coping,
- Are healthy,
- Learn and develop, and
- Do not live in and are not disadvantaged by poverty.

According to Dunlop and Fabian (2007), “transition to school also calls for the development of higher mental functions, often identified as development of meta-cognition or learning motive.” It can be argued that if a smooth transition has taken place, the child will have adapted these skills with no problems. Early childhood transitions that go smoothly are linked to a number of advantageous outcomes for children, parents, and practitioners. The goals of suggested outcomes for a seamless transition usually centre on the child's overall growth and wellbeing.

Ideally, children will go through a pleasant emotional transition that is marked by comfort, security, and a positive outlook on their new surroundings. This will be indicated by the child having reduced anxiety, emotional resilience and positive relationships formed with their peers and practitioners. Also, an indicator of a smooth transition will be sighting of active engagement in learning activities and play, exploring and curiosity, and seeking challenge.

Active parental confidence and involvement is another proposed outcome. By actively participating in the transition process, parents will foster clear communication between the setting and themselves, as well as a greater sense of confidence in their own abilities to support their child's academic journey.

Tailored interventions will have shown to have been successful within the transition period. This means that any intervention that may have been put into place to support the child's transition will have been successful and clear progress will have been shown.

Bowlby (1969) claims that positive and secure attachments are crucial for a child's emotional well-being. A sense of comfort and trust are fostered by smooth transitions, and this strengthens healthy attachment connections. An indicator that this have been successful is that secure emotional attachments between children and practitioners are established during the transition period.

Another proposed outcome of a successful transition would be positive results related to psychological development during transitions. Erikson (1950) stated in his psychosocial theory that successful transitions contribute to the development of trust, autonomy and having a positive sense of identity.

Considering emotional, social, cognitive, and environmental aspects, these suggested outcomes represent a comprehensive picture of child development. Practitioners and parents can acquire understanding of the fundamental theories that facilitate smooth transitions in the early years by connecting these results to relevant educational ideas.

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