

Early Years Handbook- A Guide to Transitions



Source- (Lane, 2018)

“I continue to believe that if children are given the necessary tools to succeed, they will succeed beyond their wildest dreams” (Jones, 2018).

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Introduction

An early years practitioner is a compassionate professional, who possess correct care to children, providing them with exciting opportunities to learn and play. Practitioners specialise in providing support to every child's developmental needs, social, emotional, physical and cognitive (All About Children, 2021).

The Handbook has been created to assist and provide understanding in supporting practitioners with transitions that young children will experience, working closely with children aged 2-3 years. The handbook provides you with insights on specific roles, us as practitioners, adults, partnership working, environment, children's needs and the interventions that can be seen to contribute as successful, to aid children with their personal transitions, with the support of theorists that implemented to the success of early years practice. Transitions for children will always be a recurring fundamental factor that practitioners will support and produce quality outcomes for the children. It will allow practitioners to prepare the child, families and themselves on the transition to the child's new nursery unit.

What is 'Transition'?

The meaning of 'transition' is change that will occur, which an individual will have to process (Cambridge Dictionary, 2020). The word and experience of 'transition' is a milestone for children and practitioners within the early years sector (Birth to 5 Matters, no date). A transition is a factor where the child, parent and all practitioners involved can support and encourage one another throughout the process, as children will encounter numerous transitions as they grow and evolve (Pacey, 2016). Transitions need to be supported with great foundations so children are provided with an effective transition, as every child has their own identity, and will have different outlooks on their experience encountered (Welsh Government, 2017). There are two types of transitions that children encounter, 'horizontal' and 'vertical'. The horizontal transition is when a child goes straight from their family home, into a school environment. A vertical transition is when a young child goes from their home to a childcare setting or to a family member to care for them. The vertical transition is deemed to be the most crucial component in children's transition process (Palaiologou, 2013, p.132). Transitions need efficient planning and supported by all involved with the child, as this will reduce children's anxiousness, reassuring them with a sense of safety (Nurture UK, 2023).

Figure 1- (National School Boards Association, no date).



Transitions are utilised everyday within childcare settings, as we support a child when they are ready to move to a different unit, seen as a big transition. Transitions is not based on the first day of the child settling into their new environment, transitions proceed throughout their time within the unit, children will experience this until they are able to create bonds and feel comfortable to explore and seek attachment (Queensland Government, 2021). Early years settings also provide small transitions, informing children play time is over and it is now time for dinner. These experiences can be upsetting and difficult

for children to understand, which is why practitioners have a duty to prevent uncertainty for the child and provide proficient transitions, providing an uncomplicated vision for future embarkments (PACEY, 2016).

Practitioners must understand, all children are unique, require different needs and care to support their development. Practitioners experience children who are transitioning to a new nursery unit, a sense of fear, uncertainty and no sense of belonging. These feelings, encountered while transitioning, can damage and effect their emotional development, which effects how and if the child is willing to learn and interact with adults and their peers (Welsh Government, 2017). It is vital, that practitioners, are aware that transitions successful or not, will have an impact on a child's overall development (Early Years Matters, 2022).

Bronfenbrenner (1979), a theorist who believed transitions created a vast impact for children if it was a successful transition. It was recognised children who successfully transitioned into their new environment, would evidently be able to undergo future smooth transitions (Main, 2023). Bronfenbrenner (1979) created the ecological system, consisting of five systems. This theory expansively focusses on the environment of where the child spends large parts of their life, he believed that this is a major contribution to children's development and future (Paquette and Ryan, 2021).

The Microsystem- The first environment, centre of the child. This is where the child spends most of his childhood. This structure would be associated with the child's parents, family members within the household. The environment you see the child at the upmost happiest. The relationships the child makes within the microsystem, will provide an established outcome towards their development.

The Mesosytem- The extending environment that the child is associated with. These environments are identified as school, early year settings and family that do not live within their household.

The Exosystem- This is known for environments that do not provide care for the child but can have effect of influencing the child's development. These environments could be neighbours, media and industry.

The Macrosystem- The environments that this system holds towards a child's development, is compromised by different religions, cultures, laws and regulations.

The Chronosystem- The final system consists of the environment the child is situated at certain times that occur throughout their life. An example, is timing of a family members death or changes that occur at different stages of a child, when children age, they may have a different outlook on certain environments than what they did previously.



Figure 2-
Bronfenbrenner's
Ecological
Theory (Parenta,
2018).

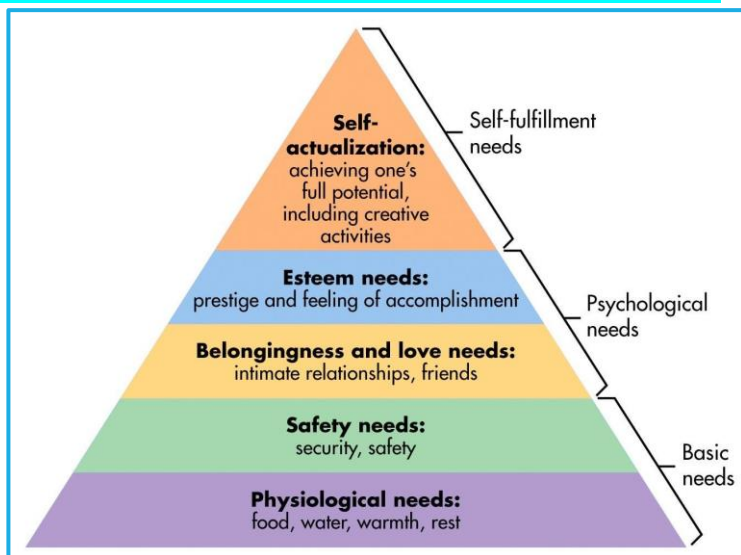
The Needs of the Child

It is important to implement, when meeting the requiring needs of each child, which theorists Piaget and Vygotsky supported, children are all unique and adapt through experiences they are faced (Zhang, 2014). Practitioners must be willing to build relationships with the child, familiarise themselves with their routine and observe what the child is fond of and not. It is important that practitioners work with all individuals involved with the child, parents, carers, outside agencies, so we are able to fulfil the child's potential (Kendall, 2018).

Practitioners must be able to have a holistic view on the individual child and their development, to comprehend excellent practice. A holistic approach to caring for children is where practitioners encourage the significance of emotional, physical, social, intellectual and well-being of the children (Foundation Education, 2022).

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (1943) is a theory that proposed five needs that needed to be fulfilled within humans, physiological, safety, love and belonging, esteem and self-actualisation (Montag *et al.*, 2020). Maslow suggests that for an individual to achieve the top tier of his pyramid, then they must ensure that their basic needs are achieved, based at the bottom, so they are able to progress to the next necessity (Hopper, 2018).

Figure 3- Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (Vaughan-Williams, 2019).



Maslow's theory is a fundamental model to follow within transition process within your setting. Maslow notices that a need for children feeling the sense of safety and is identified as one of their basic requirements (Steenbakkens *et al.*, 2018). If the child does not feel a sense of belonging, they may reject the basic needs, which will cause a domino effect, as they will be unlikely to meet all the needs of the pyramids, not able to form bonds, unable to explore and learn within the environment which will fundamentally not allow them to become self-sufficient learners.

Maslow's theory has had a great input in how practitioners complete their practice. The hierarchy insists that before a child can cognitively develop, they must first succeed in their basic needs before they can learn and develop (TES, 2019). An example of ensuring these needs being met by practitioners are:

Safety- Providing children with affection and a safe environment, that they are able to explore, play and be stimulated within.

This allows the children to progress and climb to the top tier of Maslow's pyramid, self-actualisation. A further theorist that can be recognised for the importance of attachment is Bowlby (1988), influenced by Freud, believed, children develop because of interactions. According to Bowlby (1988), the emotional and social development of a child is achieved by the relationship they receive from their parents. Bowlby suggests that children are able to evolve in this world successfully, if they form secure attachments with caregivers (McLeod, 2023). Bowlby (1988) also believed that if a child failed to secure attachment with their primary caregiver, then this would result in long term effects for the child's development, socially, emotionally and cognitively (Main, 2023).

To successfully transition the child, they need to have a sense of familiar routines that can be created by the practitioner. The adult will be able to succeed, by observation and discovering the child's interests. The children are supplied with rights, UNCRC provide us with 54 articles to attain. Article 3 and 12, to have the best interest of the child, and for the child to always be listened too (UNCRC, 2019) is fundamental when observing and planning. The practitioner must take note of what the child enjoys interacting with, if the child is engrossed with the farm animals on their transition over, then enhance their play, involving yourself, building the start of your relationship.



Figure 4- (Diana's Daycare, no date).

The Role of the Adult

To become an efficient practitioner within early years, practitioners must be knowledgeable of the skills required by the adult, to support a child's development. There will be a number of adults involved in the child's transition to their new unit, such as the key worker and parents/carers.

Figure 5- (Nursery World, 2016)

It is important as practitioners that we communicate and work alongside children's caregivers and previous key worker, so we are able to make the child feel included and comfortable (Essex County Council, 2023). This relationship will only enhance if communication is high quality. The role of adults to support children, is to make sure our communication is adapted to their preferred method. There are 3 types of communication which can be used between adults:

- ⇒ **Linear-** One way communication, no feedback.
- ⇒ **Transactional-** Two-way communication, feedback prompted.
- ⇒ **Interactional-** Digital communication, such as social media and newsletters.



To be able to support the child, practitioners will need to form trust between these adults, which theorist Erikson expressed. Erikson had beliefs in that children can secure a bond with adults other than their primary caregiver, would in fact benefit the child in maintaining relationships with other adult attachments, gaining their independence in familiarising adults, therefore communication will be a fundamental aspect in succeeding, allowing parents to become comfortable in leaving their child within your care (Kelly, 2015). Erikson voiced that if not successful, forming positive bonds, then it may affect future relationships (McLeod, 2023).

As a practitioner you will be able to create relationships by taking interest in a child's likes, involving parents in their development, discussing activities the child enjoys and participated within (Nursery resources, 2019). The relationship that is created between the adult and child other than the primary carer can have a great advantage and develop both of you emotionally and socially. Therefore, as well as assisting children's physical and safety requirements, Maslow's attachment theory, it is essential that a child has a secured relationship with the adults that care and provide them with education.

As practitioners are aware, all children are unique and require intervention to their specific needs. The curriculum in Wales encourages children to become confident, capable learners within their learning environment (Wales Government, 2020). Practitioners will need to identify the child's needs and support them throughout their transition.

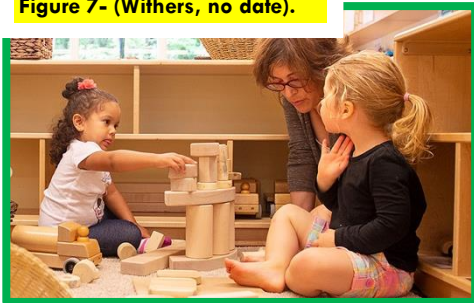
Example- If a child is showing signs of autism, they will show different requirements than another child who is transitioning. Practitioners must make the transition comfortable for the child, making sure they have opportunities to explore sensory toys, there is a calm space they can escape if the unit gets over stimulating, understanding their gestures and cues when distressed, making the child feel included.

Keyworker Role

It is our duty as practitioners to make the move to a child's new unit a smooth transition for child and parent. A keyworker is an adult who is familiar with the child and have secured an attachment, with a sense of trust and safety. A keyworker provides and fulfils the child's rights, United Nations Convention on the rights of the child, ensuring all articles are adhered too (UNICEF, 2019). The Reggio Emilia approach is a significant concept to include within practice, as children may not be able to verbally communicate, but allowing children to express themselves is fundamental, to show their own identity as a child. Reggio Emilia believed that individuals communicated through emotions, ques, gestures and facial expressions and the belief that children are encouraged to communicate through any way possible (Berg, 2020). It encouraged children to feel assured to express their thoughts and be answered. A keyworker will be able to identify if the child is happy with the transition or is struggling, as they are familiar with their body language and emotions. The Te Whariki model is a great facilitator within early learning, it focuses on learning through the child's eyes, allowing children to express and develop their needs, sense the feeling of inclusion (Ministry of Education, 2017).

It is important the environment and continuous provision is enhanced for a child to become comfortable and familiar with their surroundings, being consistent within a transition strengthens the cognitive development of a child, as John Watson identified, the environment the child is situated, contributes to

Figure 7- (Withers, no date).



development, as behaviour is identified and enhanced by environment (Williams, 2018). Piaget, a theorist who also supported, children cognitively develop from engaging and delving into the environment, becoming independent learners (Scott and Cogburn, 2019), which the Wales Foundation Phase enhances in settings.

The child's brain is developed through experiences, it moulds the process of whether a child will encounter a strong brain in later life (NSPCC, 2021). All areas, visual, emotional, language and motor skills all need to be achieved for a child to transition flourishingly, therefore the role of the adult to supply the child with continuous provision and consistency will evidently strengthen the child's brain through an enabling environment. If a child is able to explore and trial the play areas, they are able to trial and error on how to make their tower of blocks not fall down, speculate what materials to use to enhance the tower staying up, allows children to re-evaluate on how they can achieve this, which may mean going to play within other areas, but also given them the opportunity to try again (Cornerstones, 2017).

A keyworker should be seen as a role model for children, Bandura's theory would agree, he believed that children learn through social interactions, not just cognitively. Children do not learn or adapt through only intellectual learning, but from viewing and following behaviours by adults such as parents, siblings and practitioners (Cherry, 2022). It is important to set good examples, as children will watch and mimic your behaviours. Maria Montessori's theory supported the importance of becoming role models and nurturing the children. Montessori's view was that adult's interaction with children was essential, would allow them to interact and engage, viewing behaviours and ques that were key to effective development (Daily Montessori, 2014). This would support the child's transition to their new unit, as they feel comfortable to interact and be in your presence. Practitioners would be demonstrating to the child new skills they would model, such as showing respect, expressing emotions, curious to play and learn (Wales Government, no date).

Figure 6- Key Person Approach (Vollans, 2021).



Partnerships

According to Pacey (2015) working within partnership is crucial to a child's welfare and development. Partnerships work successfully if all adults involved are respectful and value one another's opinions, knowledge and experience. Partnerships within the transitional process for the child may include, parents, keyworkers, social workers and any outside professional agencies. It is important that all involved with the child are all able to communicate, work together and create a development plan to support the child within areas of intervention. By working within partnerships, allow a smooth transition and future for the child, as everyone involved have supplied suitable strategies and wish for successful outcomes (Early Years Alliance, 2017).

Interventions

To support and encourage children through transitions, there has been a number of interventions that are available to suit the needs of the child. The interventions are there to support the child, family and practitioners throughout this period, ensuring everyone involved is happy and settled before the initial transition.

Documentation, observations and handover

Practitioners from the child's previous unit would hand over all the required information on the child. If the child has a comforter, preferred sleeping environment, allergy requirements and if the child requires any additional support through our ALNCo lead. We will have a sense of understanding of what the children are capable of and what we can develop. This will provide practitioners in planning and implementing activities for the child.

Stay and play session

An opportunity where the child and parents are able to explore the new unit, children are able to play with a sense of reassurance with caregivers present. The stay and play sessions allow parents to interact with their children and ask practitioners relevant questions they may want answered before the unit change. These sessions are beneficial to all involved, as everyone is able to learn and make new relationships with children and parents, we are able to interact, learn and communicate with one another.

Settling in sessions

To prepare for the upcoming transition to the child's new unit, initiate settling in sessions a month before the move.

This would ensure that the child can visually see and explore their new environment with a familiar adult, current keyworker. Allowing children to feel comfortable to play and learn. The child will feel a sense of security if the adult they have bonded with can explore and share their transition. This particular practice would connect with Vygotsky's theory, 'the zone of proximal development' (Kurt, 2020).

The practitioner would be able to interact and support the child to further their play and learning, if the child accepts or not, they have the option to continue or take their own route in learning, which is the start of becoming successful independent learners (Welsh Government, 2020). The number of times the children have settling in sessions depends on the individual child. We would start progressing the time once we can see the child is starting to relax and feel comfortable.

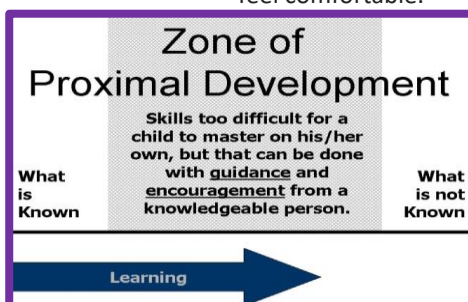


Figure 8- The zone of proximal development (McLeod, 2023).

Importance of play

Play is an essential part to children learning and developing. Play opportunities must be available, play allows us to see children vulnerable, self-choice, trial and error, and overall joining in playful learning opportunities (UNICEF, 2018). Every area of a child's development can be accessed and developed through play. Play allows children to experience every aspect, sensory, structured, non-structured, indoor and outdoor (Raising Children, 2019). Froebel, a theorist who recognised that play is a main factor in a child's development and how they learn, which means it is important that we supply children an environment that enhances play (Welsh Government, 2020).



Figure 9- (Teams of Tomorrow, 2016).

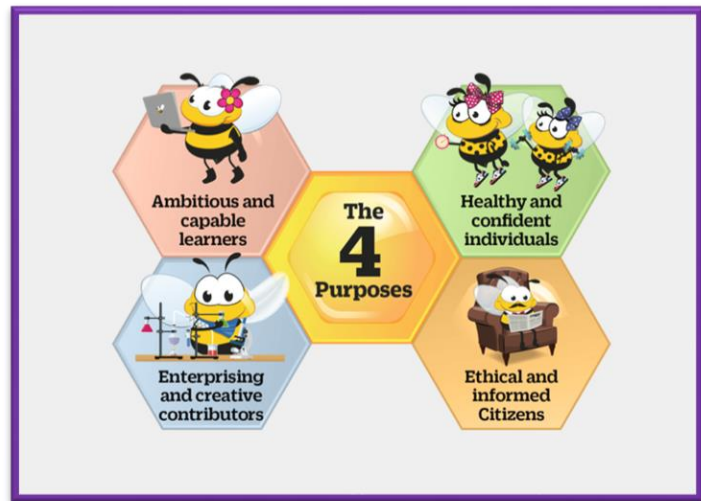
Proposed Outcomes

Figure 10- The four purposes (St Joseph's Catholic primary school, no date).

The transition process has been accomplished by the child, when they are able to show practitioners, they are settled, content and progressing towards the four purposes that Donaldson (2015) wish all children in Wales to accomplish and have future success.

The success of the transition will become visible when the child starts to develop new relationships, show a sense of belonging within the environment, seek reassurance from adults and play with or alongside their peers.

Parents will also progress to the same pace as the children, as when the children are settled, the parent's sense that also, which means they now feel comfortable.



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