

Supporting Children with Transition in the Early Years

Top Tips

Top tips to support children during transitions:

1. **Visit Familiar Environments:** Spend time observing children in their familiar surroundings. This helps you understand their preferences, interests, and needs.
2. **Communication with Key Persons:** Connect with key individuals, such as parents, guardians, and previous caregivers. Gather relevant information about each child.
3. **Invite Children to visit their New Setting:** Familiarise children with their new environment by inviting them to visit. This helps reduce anxiety and allows them to explore the space.
4. **Share Experiences:** During the transition period, create opportunities for sharing experiences. Discuss changes, routines, and expectations with the children.
5. **Create a Photo Book:** Develop a photo book that illustrates the new setting. Use this visual aid to talk to children about the upcoming changes.
6. **Settling-In Bags:** Provide settling-in bags containing familiar items from home. These comfort objects can ease the transition.
7. **Observe and Communicate:** Continuously observe children and engage in conversations.
8. **Comfortable Environment:** Set up a comfortable environment with familiar resources. Maintain consistency by keeping things similar to how the child saw them last.
9. **Answer Key Questions:** Address any questions or concerns the child may have. Consider creating a welcome book or social book to provide information.
10. **Friendship Groups:** Take friendship groups into account. Spend time introducing children to each other, fostering connections and a sense of belonging.

Remember, successful transitions requires patience and time. Each child's adjustment process is unique, so be attentive and supportive throughout the journey!



Transitions are significant moments in a child's life, and they can indeed impact their well-being and development. As practitioners, families, and carers, we play a crucial role in supporting children during these times.

This section of the pack will support you with considering the child's needs during times of transition, providing you with practical ideas and suggestions to help children move from one stage of their learning journey to the next.

Remember, supporting transitions for children in their early years is crucial for their emotional well-being and development. Through thoughtful planning, effective communication, and nurturing relationships during transitions, this can contribute significantly to a child's well-being and adaptability.

Emotional Wellbeing

Supporting children's emotional well-being is central for ensuring smooth transitions.

Understanding and addressing children's emotions during a period of transition is crucial for their well-being. Transitions can evoke a mix of feelings, for example it may create emotions of excitement, but may also create emotions of apprehension as they worry about changes that may happen such as a new adults, friends, environment, and routine. As caregivers, we must be attuned to their concerns.

Listening to children and acting on their concerns is crucial for their emotional well-being. By paying attention, noting their feelings, and taking appropriate actions, we create a supportive environment that helps children navigate change and transition more smoothly.

Below are some key questions, which you may want to consider addressing with children during times of transition:

- **Toilets:** Where are they located?
- **Coat and Bag:** Where should they put them?
- **Tasks:** What should they do?
- **Seeking Help:** Whom can they ask for assistance?
- **Stuck or Problems:** How to handle challenges?
- **Names:** Who are the people around them?
- **Meals and Drinks:** When can they have something to eat or drink?
- **Home Time:** What time will they go home?
- **Injury:** What if they hurt themselves?

To answer these question, you may consider creating a welcome book, which includes some practical information, for example about the environment; illustrates routines and introduces key staff members.



When thinking of emotional wellbeing of children during times of transition, you may also consider:

Friendships

It is important that there is communication between the places the child is transition between. Talk to other practitioners to understand:

- Who the child's friends are.
- Preferred seating arrangements.
- Interactions that make them apprehensive.
- Their usual companions.

You can then use this information to plan new groups accordingly.

Reconnecting

You may want to consider inviting previous practitioners or caregivers back so that children can share their new experiences with trusted adults they know.

Positive Relationships

It is important that we build positive relationships, greeting children with a smile as they enter the setting or new room is a good way of beginning this. You will also need to consider allocating a key person for children to begin this relationship and to support parents through the transition.

Mealtimes

Wherever possible, have a dedicated Lunchtime cover specifically for the room, so children can begin to develop relationships with a familiar adult.

When creating a welcome book, adding photos of the Lunchtime cover with captions to explain the routines will support children to feel comfortable with this aspect of the new routine.

Planning and Observation:

Avoid Rushing into pre-planned topics, take time to observe your children, understanding their interests and needs, planning learning opportunities based on these observations.

It is also important to ensure that the learning environment caters to the individual children's developmental needs, through taking the time to observe the child, you will be able to adapt your learning environment to suit their needs, supporting them to feel comfortable and settled in the new environment.

Home Visits

Home visits are an effective way of:

- Developing strong Parent-Practitioner relationship.
- Sharing information to develop an understanding individual children's strengths and needs.
- Supporting children to develop positive relationships with practitioners in the setting.



Gradual Transitions

Rather than a sudden change, allow children to settle into their new environment and routines gradually. Short, regular sessions can support a child to settle into their new environment.



When thinking about supporting children's emotional wellbeing during times of transition, below are some activities you may consider:

- **Welcome Books:** Creating a welcome book for children to explore which has key information in, this can support them to feel prepared and settled during times of transition.
- **Record Books:** Create a record book to help children explore changes and transitions in their lives.
- **Show and Tell:** Organise sessions where children share objects from their familiar environments.
- **"All About Me" Book:** Ask families to support their child to create a book, all about the child, to help key persons build stronger relationships with individual children.
- **Share Stories:** Use developmentally appropriate stories to speak about change and times of transition.

Environment

When considering points of transition, creating a safe, welcoming, and familiar environment, which reflects the children's lives and cultures, and routines, will help to minimise the impact of the transition and support children to feel more secure.

The importance of the environment in supporting children's emotional wellbeing, learning and development is widely recognised and understood.

The EYFS Statutory Framework 2024 states:

Children learn and develop well in enabling environments with teaching and support from adults, who respond to their individual interests and needs and help them to build their learning over time.

Supporting children during transitions involves thoughtful strategies that create a sense of security and familiarity, to create a learning environment which reflects this consider:

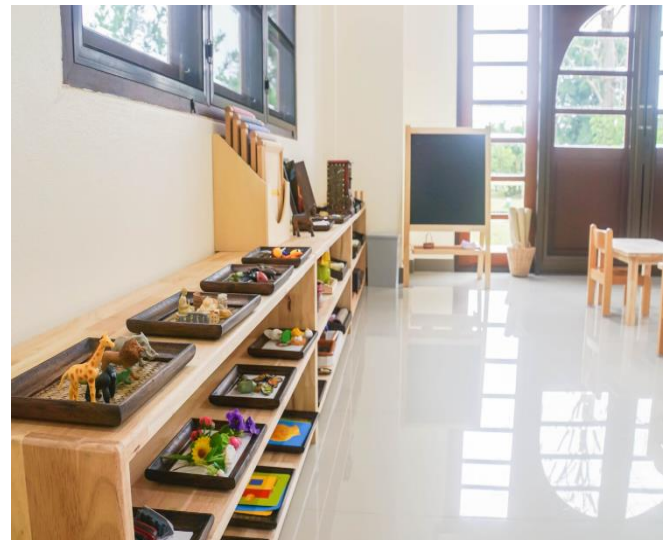
Consistent Routines

Where possible, maintaining a consistent routine can support children during times of transition. Some elements to consider may include:

- **Self-Registration:** Encourage children to participate in self-registration. It empowers them and reinforces a sense of belonging.
- **Tidy Up Song:** Use the same song or rhyme during tidy-up time. Predictability helps children feel at ease.
- **Familiar Rules:** Maintain consistent rules and expectations. Children thrive on predictability.

Visual Aids

Make it visual for children, using elements such as visual timetables and photos of the environment will support children to familiarise themselves with the new environment and routine.



Exploring Similarities and Differences

Create a safe space where children can compare the old and new environments, looking at the visual comparison of what similarities and differences can they notice. This can support children to process the change.

From this, you may want to consider creating a book with the children of photographs and drawings, empowering them, and fostering a sense of control.

Sense of Belonging

Create a sense of the child belonging in the environment by considering elements of personalisation for each child. Some elements to consider may include:

- **Labelling with names and photos:** Place the child's name and picture on the peg they will place their belongings on
- **Adding books about the child:** Displaying books such as 'All About Me' Books and 'Family Books' in the learning environment, such as the reading area.
- **Reflecting children's interests:** Consider the resources within the learning environment and try to reflect children's individual interests through the resources provided.

SEND

Supporting children who have **Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)** is crucial, and it requires a thoughtful and inclusive approach. When supporting children with SEND, it is important that we follow professional advice and support given so that we meet the individual needs of the child.

Developing Relationships

During times of transition, we need to spend time getting to know children's individual needs, taking time to play and observe children with SEND can support this. This will support the child to feel more settled, and support Practitioners to feel more prepared to offer support. It is also important that we speak to people who know the child, such as their current Key Person and Family members.

When considering the transition process, you may consider:

- An individual transition plan for children with SEND.
- Additional transition visits and sessions, when appropriate to support.
- Providing visual images of the learning environment, key people, and routines.
- Try to keep the routine as consistent as possible.
- Use visual communication tools, such as widgets and a visual timetable.
- Seeking advice from other agencies, such as IDS.



Inclusive Environment

Consider your environment and whether it meets the needs of individual child's needs.

Flexibility and Inclusion

It is important that we reflect upon our curriculum based on individual children's needs and modify the curriculum to ensure that all children can participate. We need to be flexible in our approach and consider the individual needs of the child.

Child-centred Approach

We need to be flexible in meeting the needs of children with SEND, considering their unique requirements and viewpoints. It is important that we are open to innovative approaches that benefit all children, including those with SEND, and times of transition may provide us with the opportunity to further develop our knowledge of SEND and support approaches which may benefit individual children. We need to consider all aspects of a children's needs, including their emotional and wellbeing needs.

Peer Support and Collaboration

When developing relationships, establish a 'buddy' system with the Key Person approach, so that children develop relationships with other adults in the setting. Collaborate with other agencies, such as health professionals, IDS and SEND services and support.

Please note: For child-specific transition guidance for children with SEND, advice should be sought from the child's Specialist IDS teacher, who can support in creating a personalised support plan which is effective and tailored, to that child's need.

EAL

There are many misconceptions surrounding children and families with English as an Additional Language (EAL). It's essential to recognise that language and cultural differences should not be perceived as barriers or special needs. In fact, children who speak other languages can enrich learning environments with their diverse cultural experiences, benefiting everyone.

By embracing this diversity, we create inclusive spaces where all learners thrive and contribute to a vibrant tapestry of knowledge and understanding.



Welcoming Learning Environment

Reflect on your learning environment to see if it provides a welcoming environment for all children. You may consider:

- Resources within the environment should reflect the child's experiences. Incorporate materials, books, and visuals that resonate with their cultural background.
- Display signs in the child's home language throughout the setting. This helps children feel recognised and valued.
- Share familiar objects and photos from the child's previous setting. These items provide comfort and continuity.
- Encourage families to use a disposable camera to take photos of their family and environment at home. These photos can then be shared with the child's new setting, helping create familiarity.

Cultural Awareness

As a setting, it is important that we celebrate diversity by sharing cultures. Avoid singling out any child; instead, appreciate each child's unique background. We need to recognise that every child has their own culture, and familial practices may vary.

Individual Approach

To support children with EAL, it is important that we consider an individual approach for children, this may include:

- Collaborating with parents who may not feel confident speaking English, you may choose to encourage them to invite a friend who can translate for them.
- Use travelling bags, in which children put special objects that can be looked at during the session and items from the setting can be sent home to be shared with the family.
- You may also consider a buddy system, by pairing up children with another child.
- Verify the child's name and its spelling. Spoken names may differ from written ones.



Remember, when considering how we support EAL children during times of transition, we need to ensure that these inclusive practices continue beyond initial arrivals and become embedded in the settings culture.