

Leading Thoughtful Transitions

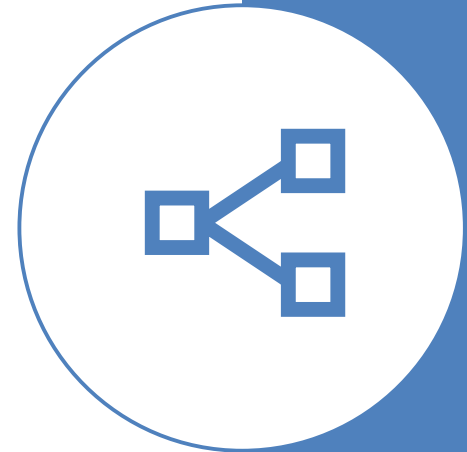
- *These after all are the people who are actually experiencing the change, so we should never make assumptions about how they are feeling about it.'*

(Julie Fisher Early Education Journal 2006 50:10)



Types of Transition

- Milestones from birth that take place throughout life
- Daily routines and events



***How many
transitions did
you encounter
yesterday?***



***And.... how
many transitions
are there in the
course of a day
for a child?***



Types of childcare & education from birth to 5

- *Cared for by parents*
- *Cared for in the family*
- *Nanny/au pair*
- *Child minder*
- *Toddler group*
- *Day nursery*
- *Nursery school*
- *Nursery class*
- *Pre-school*
- *Creche*
- *Reception class*
- *Year 1*

Jigsaws

Laylan

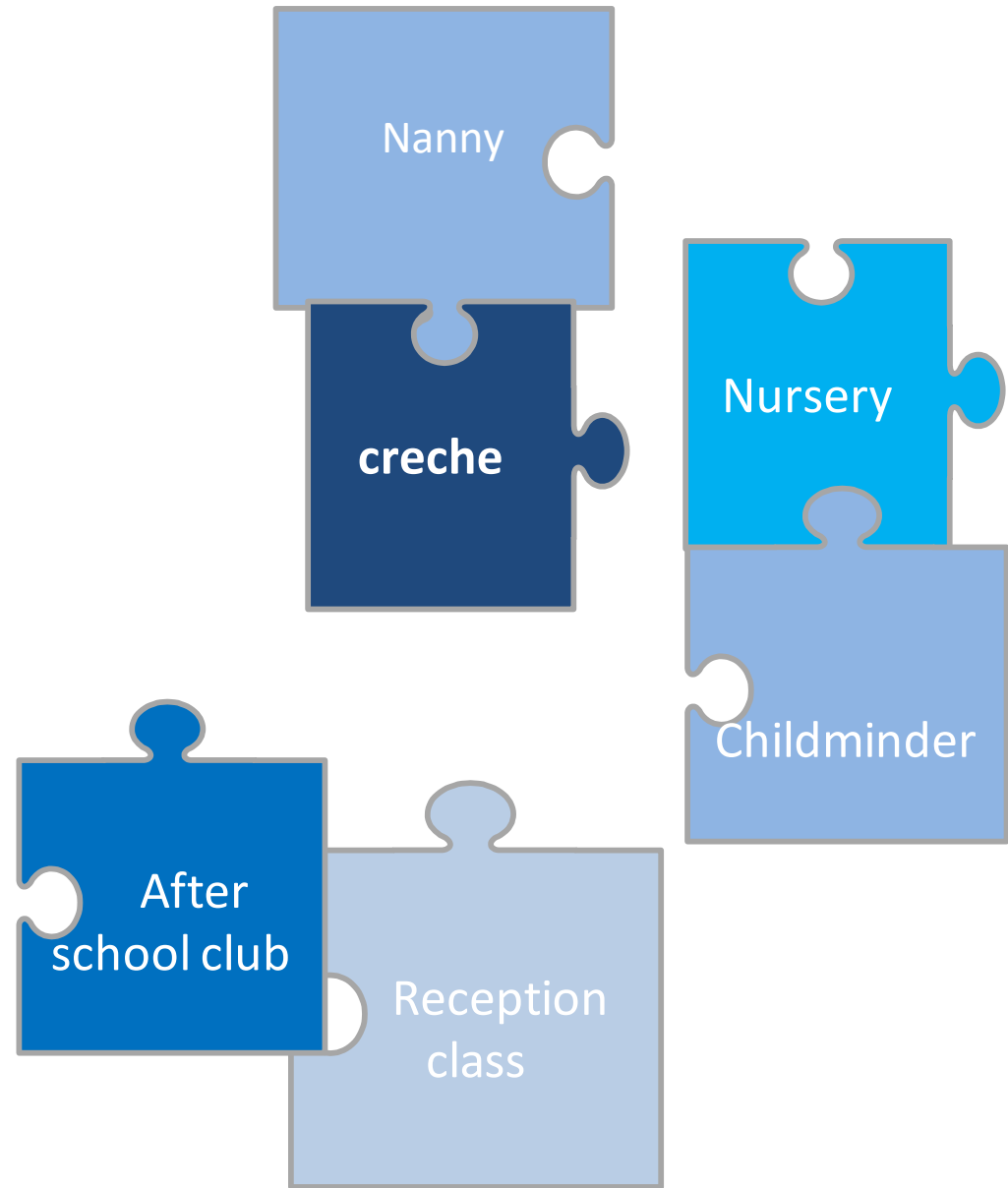
6 – 24 months

Lives with dad who works part time. With Nanny 3 days a week. Goes to work place Creche 2 days.

25 months

Starts Nursery 5 mornings a week. Collected by childminder for the afternoons

51 months: Starts Reception Class and stays at the After School Club



Jigsaws

Amtibah

birth – 20 months (august born)

Childminder 3 days / Parents 2 days

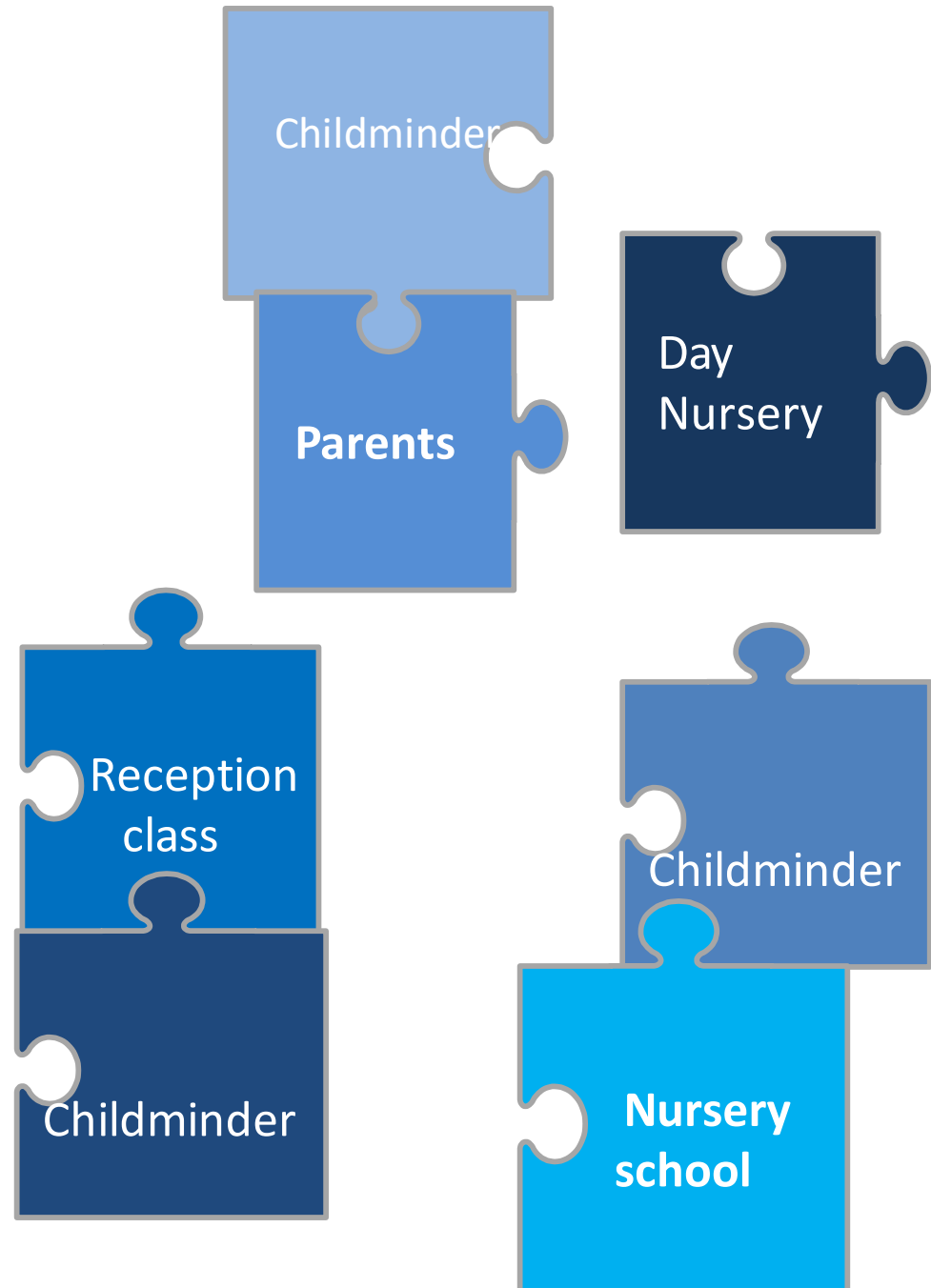
20 months - 36 months

Parents separate, move to a new area,
starts and private day nursery 45 hours a
week

37 months – 47 months

**Moves again, starts at a nursery school
combined with childminder**

48 Months -starts at a Reception Class
and goes to a new childminder before
and after school





Transition Experts ?



Toxic Childhoods ?



- *'Cortisol is a stress hormone. It washes through the body and brain when the child is distressed'* Goldschmied and Jackson 1994/2004
- Depression, anxiety disorders, alcohol and substance abuse, and eating and digestive disorders have all been linked with unrelieved stress in early life



The child for whom being away from home is still stressful, despite appearing to cope is possibly having to function in a high stress level.

What might this look like ?



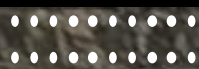
- Lack of attention
- Poor concentration
- Poor attitude or motivation
- Lack of self control / inability to self regulate
- Heightened sense of control
- Behaviour difficulties
- Poor social skills / does not form friendships
- Poor self-help
- Unwillingness to be taught
- Anxiety /fearful
- Needing lots of reassurance
- Poor initiative
- Stands back
- Passively engaged

All fine in the setting?



But behaviours at home

- Bedwetting
- Mood swings
- Temperament changes
- Clinginess
- Loss of appetite
- Nightmares
- Tummy aches etc



A good transition....

- Will enable every child to feel 'held' in mind
- Will build a sense of belonging
- Will allow a child to feel like a 'fish in water'

All of which contribute to feelings of safety and unconditional acceptance which enable them to feel ready, willing and able to make the most of the new situation and to 'hit the ground running'



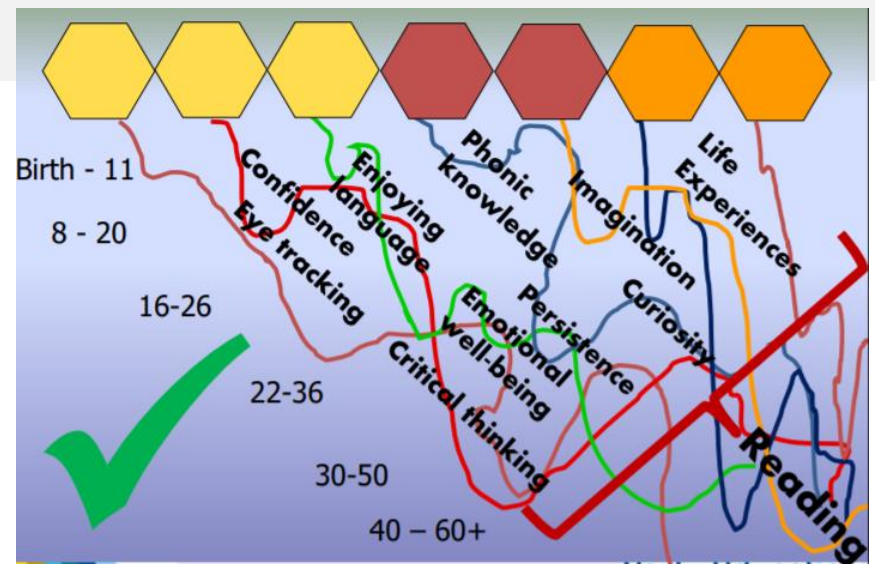
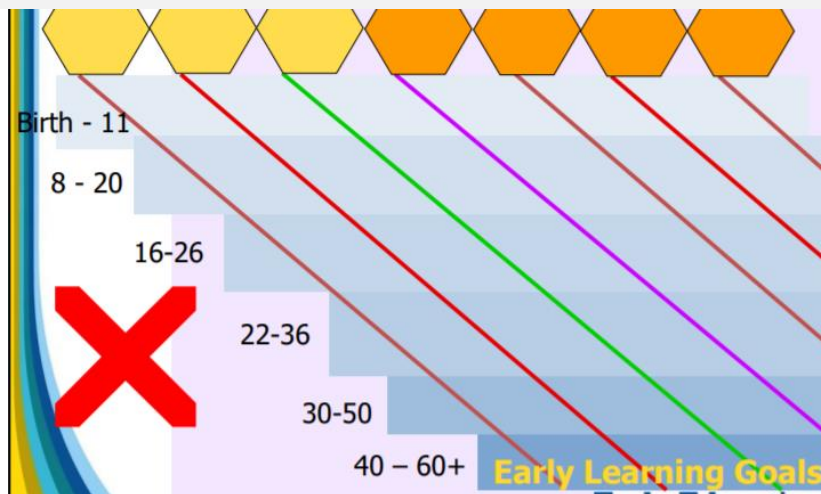
Key Principles for Effective Transition

- *Everyone understands the transition process should be handled sensitively with the children's social, emotional and educational needs placed central to the process*
- *Is planned, well organised and adequately resourced*
- *Information sharing includes as many positives as possible, so children build upon their successes early on in their new surroundings*
- *Positive relationships with families and working in partnership is seen as crucial to the success of the transition process*
- *Partnership with other professionals is integral to reduce the chances of vital information being omitted during the transitional period.*
- *Is flexible and adaptable in its approaches when needed, finding innovative ways to better meet the needs of children and their families*
- *Is understood to be an ongoing process, not a 'one off' event and considers the impact of previous transitions*

Transition, an event or an alignment of practice ?

Principles for Year one

- A whole school approach to successful transition is important
- A **similar environment** builds opportunities for children to continue to initiate learning independently
- Effective assessment continues to plan for the next steps in children's learning building on the summer term in reception
- Parental understanding and awareness of the value of play
- **Emotional environment** and approach needs to minimise additional stress
- Don't forget what we know about 'how' young children learn





Transition, an event or an alignment of practice ?

Auditing practice

*Communication, flexibility and organisation are the keys to a smooth and effective transition process, **Are we ready ?***

Children need adults who: understand child development

- Appreciate the uniqueness of each child
- Match observations against knowledge of child development to ensure accurate transition information is shared

Children need adults who: give them time

- to become familiar with the idea of moving on
- to talk about it
- to express their feelings in other ways
- to reflect on what they already know and have learned
- to absorb new information
- to revisit and remember what went before
- to adjust to the changes
- to make mistakes without the fear of being judged
- to allow for regression as much as consolidation.

Children need adults who: listen to them

- to find out what worries or excites them about a move
- how they might like to influence aspects of the experience
- telling us they need help with the little things as well as the big things.
- honour and accept children's feelings and don't try to dismiss them as not being valid.

Attachment: Children need adults who:

- support and maintain primary attachments through secure secondary attachments
- use a key person approach to support attachment
- Do not judge the quality of attachment in families but have the insight to recognise levels of insecurity and vulnerability and respond sensitively to the way that the family handle transition and separation
- challenge unnecessary moves

Children need adults who are insightful and:

- understand the significance of the 'honeymoon period'
- recognise children's less obvious ways of showing their distress and anxiety during transition and separation.

Children need adults who: respect their way of making it work because they:

- listen to and observe how the child and family handle the separation from each other
- value the transitional objects/ rituals and routines children use to comfort themselves until they are ready to go it alone.

Children need adults who: appreciate what they bring with them and:

- find out and acknowledge learning from home or previous setting, gather, read and take notice of all information passed to them about progress, motivations and interests as well as home culture, language etc.
- are non judgmental or over-focussed on 'correctness', particularly with regard to physical or self-help skills.
- actively seek to make and maintain strong links with home and other settings

Children need adults who: understand emotional resilience

- means having enough resilience to handle the 'tough stuff' (stress) when it comes along
- doesn't develop just from surviving lots of 'tough stuff'
- know it is more likely to develop from having enough of the 'good enough stuff' to feel secure ... and just enough of the tough stuff to build confidence

Children need adults who are emphatic and:

- relate to children's anxieties and concerns around transition
- reflect on the environment and experiences provided and gauge appropriateness for individuals
- able to handle own feelings triggered by a child's distress or anguish during separation and seek out help when necessary.
- don't attempt to dismiss or distract a child (or parent) from their feelings and emotions during times of transition, but acknowledge, honour and accept their sadness or anxiety as a natural and authentic response to separation.
- identify and label these feelings for the child to help to build an emotional vocabulary for the child and to model empathy

Children need adults who: build warm, friendly links with their families and:

- understand children need to see the relationship between home and the setting is strong, supportive, reassuring and strengthens continuity between the different worlds or 'microsystems' (Bronfenbrenner 1979)
- make sure children see warm, reciprocal relationships between their parents / carers and practitioners, who do not assume they know best!

