

Changing places in the early years: A transition resource to support young children with speech, language and communication needs

Why transition information is important



The SEND Code of Practice 0 – 25 years (2015) identifies that “Early years providers and schools should support children so that they are included in social groups and develop friendships. This is particularly important when children are transferring from one phase of education to another (for example from nursery to primary school)”. It is therefore the duty of all early years practitioners and teachers to support children through their transitions. Detailing the child’s individual strengths and needs will help with this process.

The Code of Practice is ‘anticipatory’ meaning that education settings should not wait until an issue is identified before they prepare for it. An early years setting or school should therefore find out whether a child has special education needs and disabilities (SEND) before the child arrives with them. This applies to children with speech, language and communication needs (SLCN) too.

This resource is useful for those supporting children joining a new early years setting or school. It is also beneficial for those working with children moving around a setting to a new group, or with a different adult supporting them.

How the local authority can support transition



There are key mechanisms that local authorities can provide to support children with SLCN and other types of SEND in transitions. These are useful when a child is moving from home to an early years setting or school, and also from one setting to another.

Some local authorities have already developed sustainable transition plans eg. Oxfordshire, Buckinghamshire and West Sussex. Islington also has useful documents that are worth reviewing. Links to all these documents are below.

A local authority can monitor the success of its transition planning by reviewing how many children with identified SEND have been appropriately supported in their new setting. Data about school and early years exclusions is also important in this evaluation.

Parents and schools will also have views about how well transitions have taken place. *Consider how your local authority can gather this data.*

It is worth recognising that good transition practice for individual children is good practice for all children. *Be clear about transition principles for the setting, child and family and identify individuals’ roles and responsibilities in this process.*



How the early years practitioner or teacher can support transition



We all experience a range of emotions when we move from a well-known situation to a less well-known situation, for example, meeting new people or working in a new job. We can make transitions like this easier for ourselves by identifying what helps us to feel less anxious, worried or scared. We can then take active measures to reduce anxiety through things like mapping out the route the day before, getting a good night's sleep, finding out what to expect, etc. These are the same mechanisms that will help children with SLCN when moving from home to an early years setting or a setting to school:

Getting to know the child beforehand will enable the early years practitioner to be as welcoming as possible and also to be prepared for how to support the individual child. Enabling children to get to know the new setting or school by visiting the setting before their first day will also reduce their anxiety about transition. It can also help to share photos of the setting and key staff with the child and family so that they can continue to look at and talk about these together in preparation for the child's transition.

Achievement for All recommends following the key principles in the Early Years Foundation Stage, when supporting transitions:

- A unique child – keep in mind every child is different and some will need more support than others to make successful transitions.
- Positive relationships – work together with other involved adults to make a smoother

transition. It is important for parents, carers and professionals to understand the impact that transition will have on the child. A key focus needs to be on involving parents as an active partner in the process.

- Enabling Environments – take the time and trouble to align practice so that the environments are similar in terms of provision and expectations. For example, use the same way of welcoming children at the start of the session in school as they have experienced in their early years settings.
- Children learn in different ways and at different rates – consider the child's holistic needs around all aspects of care and learning. For example, how are the child's dietary requirements met? How can their culture be reflected in their learning?

The best preparation for a new cohort of children includes the early years practitioners and teachers understanding the cohort's strengths and needs, as well as those of the individual children. Once this is known, it may be necessary for staff to access continuing professional development (CPD) or specialist support. For example if a child in the new cohort has a diagnosis of a condition that the practitioner or teacher is unfamiliar with, some research into that condition would be helpful. There is a range of continuing professional development (CPD) support available through the Early Years SEND Partnership.

After identifying the children's needs, it is possible to allocate individual roles and responsibilities, for example who will be the main contact with the specialists, who will collate and share reports etc. Remember as a practitioner, you have a responsibility to identify needs and support all



children. It is helpful to remember that good transition practice for individual children is good practice for all children.

How the family can support transition



The child's family knows their child best of all. They are experts in managing their child on a day to day basis, knowing what works best and how to enable the child to give their best. The family will also know who else is involved in providing support to their child, both now and in the past.

If you are a parent, you will already be your child's advocate and this is a role that is likely to continue throughout the child's life. This can be managed, in part, through helping others to know your child and helping your child to get to know other people in their new setting or school. A communication passport (as described below) would be helpful here.

Considerations for children with speech, language and communication needs



Children who have some level of speech, language and communication need may have additional difficulties with transition due to their needs.

Some children struggle to:

- Understand spoken information, especially when about something they can't see in front

of them. (This makes talking about the new environment more difficult.)

- Feel secure that their language skills are going to be understood by people in a new environment
- Make themselves understood, ask questions or let others know how they are feeling
- Build relationships and friendships with new people (adults and children)
- Get used to new routines and understand what is going to happen next
- Manage new environments because of their difficulties with speech, language and communication.

Communication passports



Communication passports (sometimes known as one-page profiles) are a useful way of sharing key useful **information** about an individual child. They can have contributions from the previous early years setting or group, as well as from the family.

Communication passports enable the family or early years settings to prepare for the child going to a different early years setting or onto school. A communication passport will also help the 'receiving' setting or school to begin to understand the children who will be part of the new environment, including their strengths, needs and things that support them. The staff in the 'receiving' setting or school will then be able to better support the child to settle, get the most

out of their learning opportunities and respond to their new setting or school in the best way possible.

In the communication passport, it is important to identify useful **strategies** that will help an individual child in their new routine and relationships. For example, it would be helpful to know about the likes and dislikes of the child, what certain behaviour can mean, whether there are any key ways of communicating with the child etc. An example of a communication passport is given on the following page.

It also helps to detail other **agencies** that are involved, such as if the child is receiving support from a speech and language therapist or other professional.

This will help the early years setting or school to liaise with important professionals in the

child's life and find out how best to support the individual child.

The information in a child's communication passport must be **reviewed** on a regular basis as it quickly becomes out of date with the individual child growing, developing and changing.

On the last page is a template which has been developed based on research about other communication passports and one page profiles. There is space to note key information and opportunity for individual families and early years settings to customise it as appropriate.

It may be that the communication passport acts as an 'easy to read' front page with more detailed information behind it.

See last page for an example of a communication passport



Resources and links identified above (in order of appearance)



- <https://www2.oxfordshire.gov.uk/cms/sites/default/files/folders/documents/childreducationandfamilies/informationforchildcareproviders/Toolkit/goodpractice/EYTransitionPack.pdf>
- <https://earlyyears.buckscc.gov.uk/eyfs-best-practice/effective-transitions/>
- https://www.westsussex.gov.uk/media/13932/universal_transition_pack_v2.pdf
- <https://www.islingtoncs.org/node/3876>
- www.afaeducation.org
- <https://councilfordisabledchildren.org.uk/early-years-send-partnership>
- <https://www.specialneedsjungle.com/one-page-profile-can-improve-special-needs-childs-life/>
- <https://www.ipsea.org.uk/news/planning-the-move-to-a-new-school-for-child-with-send>
- <https://www.mentallyhealthyschools.org.uk/risks-and-protective-factors/school-based-risk-factors/transitions/#>
- <https://www.mentallyhealthyschools.org.uk/media/1906/transitions-primary.pdf>
- <https://www.theautismpage.com/one-page-profile/>
- <https://schoolsnet.derbyshire.gov.uk/special-educational-needs-and-disability/person-centered-approach/one-page-profiles.aspx>
- <https://ican.org.uk/shop/moving-on-teacher-guide/>

Other helpful transition resources

- <https://nasen.org.uk/uploads/assets/d120f943-7f8b-48c6-bc5b0d2ab448c54d/transition.pdf>
- <https://mycompass.files.wordpress.com/2020/05/laura2020may.pdf>
- <https://www.afasic.org.uk/help-for-your-child/special-educational-needs/transition/>
- <http://wandletsa.com/weyh/early-years-transition>
- <http://www.sheffkids.co.uk/adultssite/pages/onepageprofilestemplates.html?LMCL=im4Zqi>
- <https://ican.org.uk/shop/moving-on-activity-pack-for-year-6-children/>

All these resources and links include a hyperlink. Just click on the one that interests you to get to the related page.



My Communication Passport



My name is

I was born on

Here is my picture.....

This is what people like about me.....

I am good at

I find these things difficult.....

Please help me to understand what you are saying by.....

Please help me to talk to you by

These things particularly help me.....

You can help me communicate with friends by

My family is

I already have some help from

I feel happy when

I feel worried, sad or angry when.....

I sometimes express how I am feeling by.....

To keep me safe, please.....

This information was written on and will need reviewing by (date).....