



EY Transition Themes

Taken from conversations with participants on the Transition Training and follow up survey results

Background

Over the course of September and October 2020, Dingley's Promise delivered Transition Training to early years practitioners, local authority staff and primary school SENCOs from 84 local authority areas as part of the Early Years SEND Partnership.

Every participant was given the opportunity to meet at the beginning of the course and express their views on transitions for children with SEND in the early years currently, and what they thought would make those transitions better.

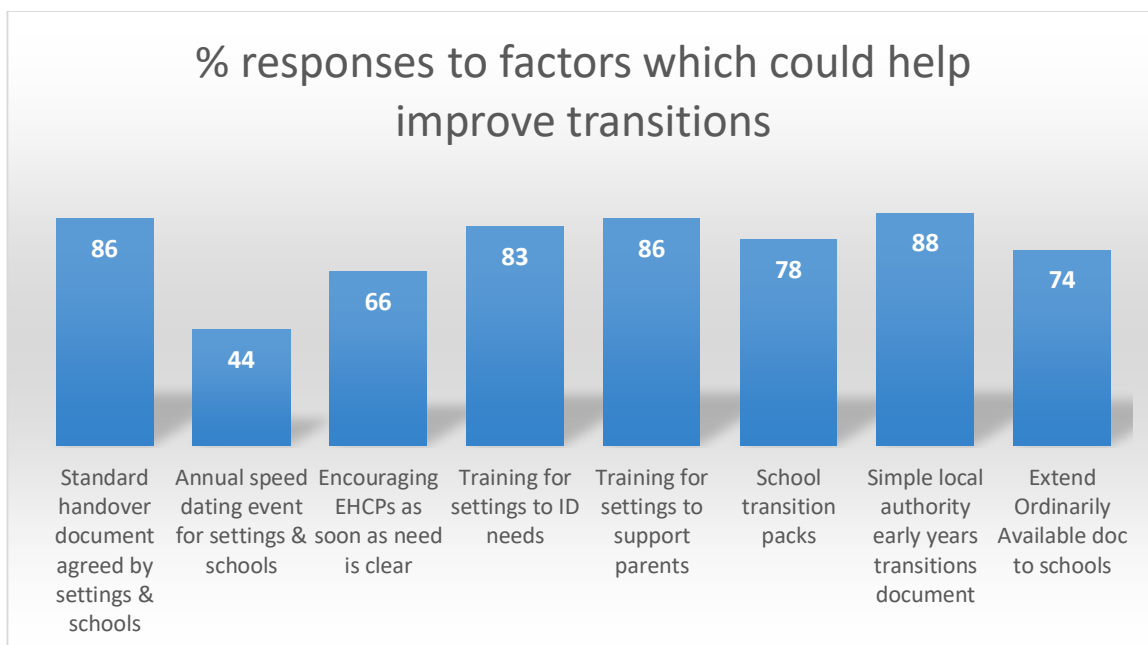
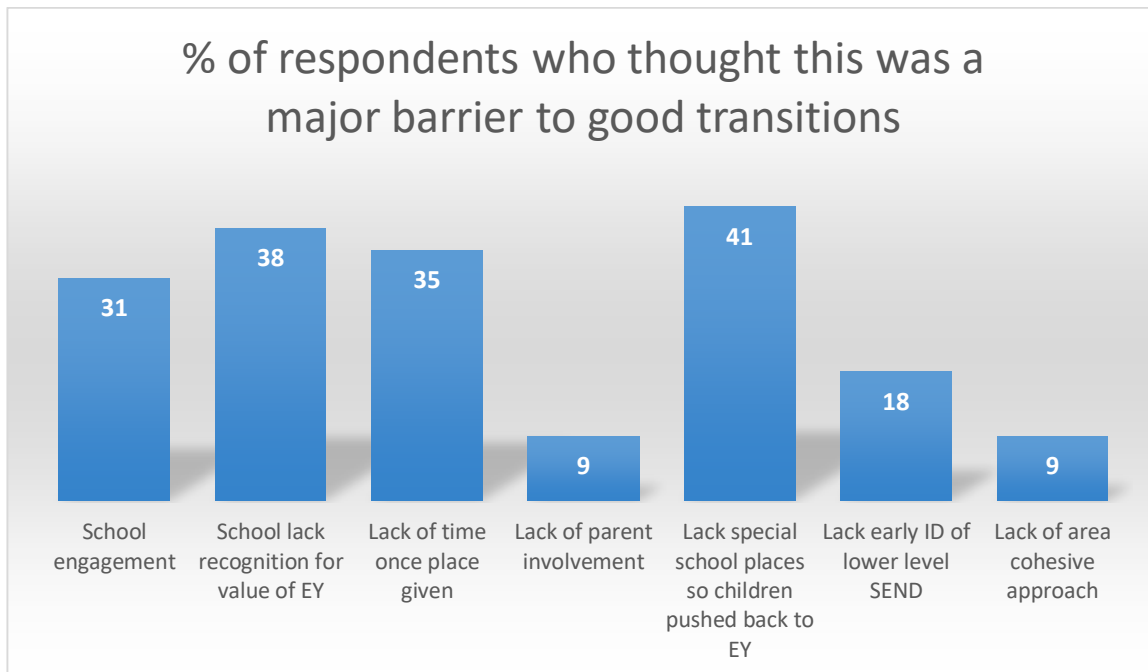
This paper is an overview of learning that we gathered from those sessions and also from the end of course survey that participants filled in and it is hoped that it will prove useful for local authority areas looking at developing better transitions for children with SEND in the early years.

Key Transition Issues

- Misunderstanding and lack of shared drivers and motivators between schools and early years settings. Early years settings feel undervalued by schools and that their information is not respected. Schools feel that they are not given the right information from settings and as a result have no useful information about children with SEND on arrival.
- Systems mean length of transition period is too long, and transitions are often cut short because decisions are made so late. (exacerbated by lockdown, transitioning after summer holidays, time taken to secure places for children that families are happy with)
- lack of shared documentation or shared staffing from EY to school means the two often do not match up, leaving families feeling lost and schools in the dark about the children coming to them.
- lack of investment of time by schools in transition process, feeling of 'wait and see' about issues that may arise in schools (leadership rather than class teachers). Systems like TAC meetings and transition visits could work – but not if schools do not invest in them.
- children delayed in moving to school due to lack of school spaces, or refusing to take children because they can't meet the need or no funding available.
- nature of what is considered 'school readiness' – too much emphasis on cognitive readiness rather than valuing other attributes.
- consideration of when is the best time to transition. Can children start transitions after the summer holidays rather than wait for that time before they can move. The break causes many problems for children transitioning and while families can share resources and prepare the children during the

summer holidays, maybe we could allow them to return to their setting after summer and then transition them with support in the second half term. Questions around balancing inclusion (all children starting together) and the success of the transition.

Survey responses to barriers and good practice



Key Transition Best Practice Examples

‘Speed dating’ style annual events organised by the local authority where early years settings and schools meet to exchange information about transitioning children.

Simple 'about me' documents to give to schools to understand who the children are and how to best support them.

Agreed simple area statement about early years transitions that gives a simple overview and establishes what the local authority expect from settings and schools.

COVID related issues

- Highlighted lack of commonly agreed transition written formats that EY settings understand and can fill effectively, and schools find useful in the transition process. Led to children arriving in schools with little or no information about them and their needs. Ongoing issues with settling due to lack of preparation.
- Surge in setting – family interaction and family engagement in supporting learning of children has helped children. Can this be maintained after COVID? Opportunity to build real learning partnerships between home and setting?
- Children have missed specialist inputs and other key support services during the period, meaning no one really knows their levels as they move on to their next setting.

General EY SEND issues

- children with SEND become concentrated on small number of settings who do it well. This leads to stress in those settings and inability to take more children but does not push other settings to develop their skills and capacity to support effectively.

- belief that 1:1 is gold standard – lack of understanding of benefits of inclusion among families in particular. Often parent groups exchange information about what funding they get, with the assumption that more hours of 1:1 is better for the child. Need to break down that assumption.

- settings often say they can't support a child unless they get 1:1 funding – this also needs to be broken down so that settings understand how to work inclusively to give children the best start in education rather than having an adult constantly with them.

- parental lack of trust in LA's and belief that when they offer inclusion it is to cut costs.

- pressures on local authority leadership lead to lack of investment in early intervention – short term thinking. Need to prove medium term financial impact to show it is a financially sound way of working.

- children with SEND in mainstream often having needs met/ being kept safe but not being supported to thrive in early education. Need for more support and training on meaningful inclusive practice rather than simply on having the child in the room.

Recommendations

1. Establish common transition approach which is flexible but has clear boundaries and best practice. Should focus on establishing common expectations between settings, schools and parents. Should also focus on holistic school readiness (schools being “child ready” as oppose to children being “school ready”).

ACTION: LA to lead consultation with EY, schools and parents to agree simple local transition approach document.
2. Establish common documentation, agreed by schools and settings so that what is needed is handed over, and schools commit to using information coming from the settings. Some areas have done this – but a key issue was that where a format was agreed in the early years and that was working well, it did not translate to schools.

ACTION: LA to lead consultation with EY, schools and parents to understand key drivers and motivators for EY and schools, and encourage the development of practical transition documents that feed into the needs and skills of both settings, and are clear and understandable for parents.
3. Support and develop early years staff so that they feel confident and able to support children inclusively in the early years. This should enable them to:

 - identify needs as soon as possible
 - confidently and positively have conversations with families
 - provide children with the best inclusive support to thrive
 - reduce over-reliance on 1-1 support
 - have confidence in their strategies when handing over to schools.

It is also vital to spread this good practice widely to avoid children with SEND becoming concentrated in a few settings, who then get overwhelmed.

ACTION: LA to ensure support and training is available for their EY settings in inclusive practice, to continually reinforce the expectation that all settings are inclusive. Commit to sharing examples of good practice and success stories with families and settings to show how inclusive practice benefits children. Spreading good practice could also support an ever improving widely accepted set of new norms for “ordinarily good”
4. Support EHCP processes in the early years so that for those children who will obviously need ongoing support, the extra funding can begin as early as possible – and make the greatest impact. The EHCP process should not start because a child is approaching school age, but rather because the child needs it. In the long term this will reduce costs in primary and secondary education, as high quality early intervention leads to better lifelong outcomes, and children who are less likely to need special education.

ACTION: LA to encourage EY settings to start the EHCP process as soon as it is clear that a child will need one for their education. Support should be given to providers wherever possible to identify which children should be in this cohort.
5. Local authorities must ensure there are clear guidelines about what should be ordinarily available, and support and training for settings to enable that to happen. Then for children with lower level needs on SEN support there must be a simple application process for extra funding that is not based on 1:1 support, but on inclusive practice.

ACTION: LA to use national best practice and consultation with EY settings to develop an OA document. This should be promoted to parents so that they understand what should be available for their children in mainstream provision, building parental demand for inclusion.