

Transitions are important in children's lives

What is this nurture principle about?

This principle recognises the importance of how day to day transitions are managed, as well as carefully preparing children and young people (and adults) for more significant challenges and events. Transitions can be difficult because they involve change, and this can cause anxiety. Even small changes during a day can cause anxiety for some.

Why is this important for COVID-19 recovery planning?

All the restrictions due to COVID-19 and moving out of these are major transitions in all our lives. A predictable routine and structure can help ease anxiety about transitions, because it helps us to know what to expect, however COVID-19 has changed all of our usual routines and our ability to predict what the future, even in the short term is going to look like. This is likely to cause a level of anxiety in everyone. Even for the least affected, this needs to be processed or it will continue to have an effect. It is therefore crucial that we find ways to support all with these transitions. Some staff, children and young people and their families will find it relatively easy to adjust, however many will face challenges and may require more support.

What I can do:

- **View all staff, children and young people as new starts**
 - All will have worries about returning to establishments and will benefit from careful planning for this.
 - Plan a welcome back and curriculum that focuses on staff and children and young peoples' wellbeing. Consider ways to listen to staff and children and young peoples' worries and respond to their needs by using this data to construct a curriculum together (see also: Wellbeing principle).
 - Plan a return that allows time for the rebuilding of relationships, trust and friendships.
 - Plan time for children, young people and staff to share and celebrate things they did and achieved while staying at home.
 - Some staff and families will sadly have suffered bereavement. Involve them in planning their particular needs for return (see also: Bereavement and Loss section).
 - In the longer-term plan events to recognise community members who have played a significant role in helping during the crisis, to thank staff for all the ways that they helped families at this time and to remember those who have sadly died.
- **Listen to and validate emotions**
 - Many children and young people will have missed out on experiences and important transitions in their lives, such as school trips, moving from primary to secondary schools, sitting formal exams, proms, etc. Show empathy, acknowledge this loss and associated feelings, such as anger, sadness and the unfairness of what has happened. Plan alternatives to mark 'rites of passage.'

- Some children and young people will have real anxieties about separating from parents/carers. Trauma informed schools UK stress the need to 'regulate, relate and offer compassion, empathy and comfort'. See link below.
- **Engage with staff and children and young people about what the transition will look like.**
 - Communicate information about school routines – model routines via video/ communication friendly resources (e.g. social stories).
 - Virtual tours: to show layout of classrooms, corridors and communal areas, stressing what has been done to try and make the environment as safe as possible.
 - Try to make a personal connection with your class/pastoral group/year group. E.g. video messages, phone calls, post cards.
 - Transition passports- send out to be completed at home.
- **Supporting transitions**
 - Mini-rituals; simple sequences of activity can set the tone of the day and be of real benefit e.g. morning song, mindfulness, music after intervals. For those needing more support, time and space at the beginning of the day to scan their environment, key adult meet and greet and planning for the day, highlighting times that more support may be needed.
 - Transitional objects: allow the child or young person to bring something from home into school. For younger children this might be kept in a 'treasure box' which provides a useful boundary to limit what the child can bring. For older ones it is more likely to be something that they can keep about their person or in their pencil case/bag. We might need to be creative about how we do in the context of infection control.

Find out more:

- Anna Freud Centre: Managing unexpected endings and transitions.
<https://www.annafreud.org/media/11627/managing-unexpected-endings-transitions-may2020.pdf>
- Trauma informed schools UK. Advice about supporting the children of key workers who have difficulty separating from their parents (principles apply to all, not just key workers children).
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fndOOo33_r4&feature=youtu.be
- 'Recovery Curriculum' information:
<https://www.evidenceforlearning.net/recoverycurriculum/>
- 5 ways to help children heal following lockdown (useful trauma informed article):
<https://marymered.wordpress.com/2020/04/14/five-ways-to-help-children-heal-when-schools-reopen/>
- Transition tips for parents/ carers: <https://beaconhouse.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/Supporting-Transitions-2.pdf>
- Bereavement support for children during COVID-19:
<https://www.winstonswish.org/coronavirus/>

Contact your Educational Psychologist for further information about:

- Survival responses: fight, flight or freeze
- Self-regulation scripts
- Renfrewshire's Inclusive Communication Environments (RICE)
- Social stories