

**All children are different.**

**All children matter.**



**Transition support pack for  
children.**

**(March 2022)**

## **The Importance of transitions in children's lives**

The importance of transitions in children's lives is understood by all at Wallacetown EYC. We recognise the importance of how day to day transitions are managed whilst also carefully preparing children for more significant challenges and events. Transitions can be difficult for children because they involve change, and this can cause anxiety. Even small changes during a day can cause anxiety for some. A predictable routine and structure can help ease anxiety about transitions, because it helps us to know what to expect. This guidance will support us to manage the many transitions in a way that supports consistency, fluidity and is centred on child's wellbeing.

We recognise that there are many transitions in the daily life of a child. We firstly need to help the child make the difficult transition from home to school but this is the start of many further transitions. Changes in routine are invariably difficult for vulnerable children and need to be carefully managed with preparation and support. Research in neuroscience tells us that how a child manages their emotions when making transition shapes pathways in the brain, which in turn, create a blueprint for future emotional responses and behaviours. The physiological and cognitive impact that arises from stress can inhibit higher cognitive functions e.g. reasoning, problem-solving and concentration. By working on lowering stress levels we can support the child's ability to manage transitions confidently and successfully. The guide will look at some specific areas of ASN before offering a checklist of good transition practices and strategies.

### **Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)**

Autism is a lifelong developmental disability which affects how people communicate, process and interact with the world. One in 100 people are estimated to be on the autism spectrum and there are around 700,000 autistic adults and children in the UK. Autism is a spectrum condition and affects people in different ways. Like all people, autistic people have their own strengths and weaknesses.

Transitions in particular can be challenging for children especially for children on the autism spectrum. There are strategies that can help to make transitions smoother thereby relieving distress and frustration.

### Visual Aids to support communication and processing of expectations

It is important to give advance notice before a transition is going to occur. Visual aids are a great way of supporting a child's understanding of what is going to happen. Below are some examples of how we can put this in to practice.

**Pictorial timetables:** pictures (perhaps 5 or more) of child's day i.e. getting dressed, going to nursery, home for lunch etc. These could be photographs, pictures or clipart which could be adapted to suit your child's individual needs.



**Picture fans:** these are pictures that can be made into a fan. They may be theme based e.g. emotions, home routines, bedtime routine, travel routine and going to



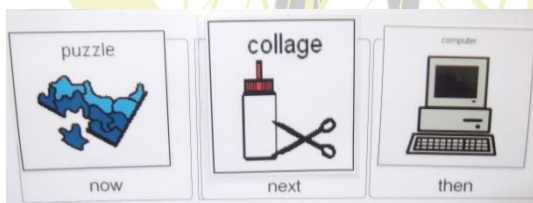
shops.

**Now Next Then:**

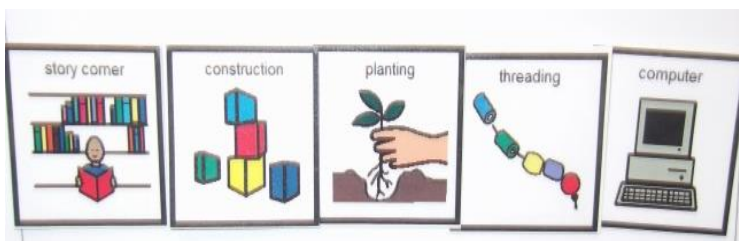
This is a pictorial card where the adult chooses the first activity (**now**) and the child chooses an activity (**next**).



As the child becomes familiar with this routine you can progress to the adult choosing the first (**now**), second (**next**) and the child choosing last activity (**then**).



This can be progressed further to perhaps 5 activities where the child can place adult activities in the child's chosen order with the last activity being child's own choice.





## Objects of Reference

If the child is struggling to make sense of a photo or symbol we can use a real life object (concrete object) that represents the activity we are going to move on to.

It is important to build up your child's system gradually, so only a small number of objects will be used in the beginning. In selecting objects think about what meaning your child will get from it. For example, a teddy bear may indicate bed time but only if your child only has this at bedtime. If it is used throughout the day as a comforter then it doesn't symbolise bed. Here are some examples that you could use;

- Dinner dish
- Drink cup
- Snack biscuit packet
- Toilet nappy
- Swimming Your child's own swimming costume
- Soft play plastic ball
- Table-top activity Empty basket

Your child's Objects of Reference will be kept somewhere that is easily accessible for staff and child. The first step for all Objects of Reference is to help your child build an association between the activity/event and the object. It is very important that the objects are used consistently e.g. every time the activity/event occurs and in the same way. Below is an example of how to use the cup to indicate that it is time to have a drink. The same process should be carried out for all objects.

- Just before giving your child a drink, look at the cup with him. Encourage active exploration of the object, using hand over hand exploration if necessary.
- Give your child a drink immediately after presentation of the cup, so there is an immediate link between the Object of Reference and the event.
- When your child has finished his drink, sign "finished" and let him see you return the object to the box. Once a link has started to develop between the activity / event and the

Object of Reference, you can begin to present the object at an earlier stage e.g. If your child was playing in the classroom but it was time for a drink:

- Gently interrupt your child's playing and show him the cup. Again, encourage active exploration of the object.
- Take the cup with you as you take your child to his chair.
- Continue as above.

### Social Stories

Social Stories are also a great resource for helping children understand the processes of something new and prepare them for change. They were originally devised by Carol Gray and can be used to help children develop appropriate behaviour and responses by preparing them for changes in their routine and unexpected events by sharing accurate information and understanding about a situation.

### Tips for Writing Social Stories

- Use simple story lines with clear pictures
- Are written from your child's perspective (appropriate for your child's developmental level)
- Describe the situation, such as going to a birthday party, starting school or using the toilet
- Give details about what happens in the situation
- Suggest how your child might respond in the situation
- Explain why your child should respond in a particular way

### **Example: Good sitting at story time**

*At story time, the children usually sit on the carpet beside Mrs A.*

*Most of the children sit still and listen to Mrs A.*

*It is good to sit on the carpet and listen to Mrs A.*

*Most of the children learn when they listen to Mrs A.*

*It makes people happy when they see me sitting with the other children.*

*Mrs A likes to see me facing her so that she knows I am listening.*

*I will try to sit on the carpet.*

*I will try to listen to what Mrs A is saying.*



### **Social and Emotional Needs**

How children manage and cope with transitions are often related to their development stage. Their response to transitions will be in line with where they are developmentally including their social and emotional development. Children do well when they can and it is our role to support children to gain the skills needed to manage the many transitions that they will be introduced to within an Early Years setting. Meeting a child where they are developmentally will help us to build on these skills in a way that is manageable for them and allow them to experience success.

The ability to build close relationships with adults and other children is critical for children's healthy adjustment during transition. Developmental research indicates that from infancy, children develop emotional connections and attachments to familiar adults. Trusting relationships with familiar adults provide children with security, comfort, and a strong base from which to explore new environments and learn. This is especially true in new or difficult situations when children need the reassurance and comfort of adults. During transitions from home to school or from one early education setting to another, children separate from their families or familiar caregivers and need to develop secure relationships with new, unfamiliar adults.

Adults can help children feel self-confident and secure through transition by fostering positive, trusting relationships with them. Experiences and routines that build on children's prior and current experiences can help them feel connected and develop a sense of belonging. The use of non-verbal cues, such as gestures, facial expressions, and words that the child is familiar with will help the child understand what is going on and what to expect. The role of the key person is closely aligned to the concept of a child having a "secure base". Attachment theory, as developed by Bowlby and elaborated later by Ainsworth and others, describes the importance of a secure attachment to at least one caregiver in supporting a child's wider developmental growth (Ainsworth et al. 1978; Bowlby, 1969; Howe et al.1999).

Providing a secure attachment through an attuned and warm relationship with a key adult will help the child to more freely explore the world around them and better manage the expectations of an Early Years Centre, including transitions.

### Checklist of transition supports

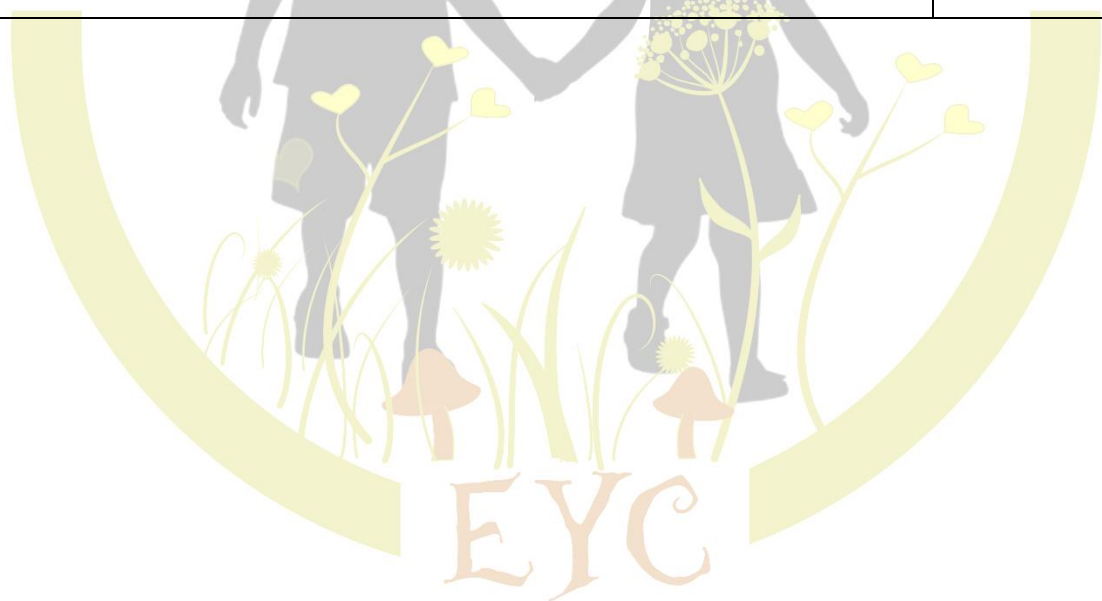
The following are examples of good practice in terms of supporting transitions.

Strategy	✓/ X
<p><b>Consistency</b> is absolute key. As a team you have to decide what the rules and boundaries are and stick to it no matter what.</p>	
<p><b>Expectations</b> ensure children know what the expectations are in advance, this will allow the children to know what is expected of them. When your child starts getting off track, remind them of what they are working towards rather than telling them what you will take away if they don't listen.</p>	
<p><b>Remove the CAN word and be positive</b> – Instead of can you stop climbing on the table try would you like to come down off the table and help me or can you come off the table please. Children respond much better when you tell them “what to do” rather than “what not to do.” Anything you want your child to stop, you can phrase in the positive by giving them a clear direction of what you want them to do. Giving an explanation such as “you can fall” or “that can damage the couch” is often helpful as well.</p>	
<p><b>Use empathetic statements</b> to let the children know that you can relate to how they feel, e.g. I know you are enjoying playing with the dinosaur and you don't want to put it away, but we need to get ready for lunch. You can play with the dinosaur after lunch.</p>	
<p><b>Distraction</b> – distracting children from the unwanted behaviour can work so instead of focusing on the behaviour, ignore it and say would you like to play a game or we are going outside.</p>	
<p><b>Praise Praise and Praise again positive behaviour</b> - Some examples of specific praise include “excellent job picking up your toys,” “you were so focused during story time,” “nice job listening to directions” etc. Specific praise or acknowledgment of healthy behaviors reminds the child of what behaviors you are looking for and reinforces those behaviors.</p>	



<p><b>Two Choices</b> – research tells us that children when given choices leads to improvement in behaviour. Always consider the two choices so that in the end they are ultimately what you are trying to achieve.</p>	
<p><b>Avoid getting into a battle-</b> do not enter into an argument, stick to the rules and don't negotiate just ensure what you are asking or the rules are appropriate for that individual child.</p>	
<p><b>Say what you mean and mean what you say</b> - If you tell a child that they need to pick up their toys before they can play outside, make sure you follow through on your rule and honor your end of the bargain. Stay away from empty threats (punishments that you will never follow through on). The child will come to learn the value of your words. If you don't mean what you say, they won't take you seriously</p>	
<p><b>Pick your battles</b> – don't underestimate the power of this one. Some battles you won't win and they take too much energy. Think about what you are trying to achieve. E.g. you want all the children to go outside and one child doesn't want to put their coat on. Do you A) Battle with them to get their coat on or B) let them go outside without the coat because if they are cold they will want to get their coat on eventually.</p>	
<p><b>If the child is anxious</b> - social stories are also a good way to prepare the child and get them to talk through their worries.</p>	
<p><b>It is good to create safe/cosy spaces</b> – this may be somewhere the child can go when entering the room to build confidence in widening the areas they are happy to go to.</p>	
<p><b>Respond predictably and consistently to children's needs in order to develop a trusting relationship.</b> Use our skills in co-regulation to engage children in warm, supportive interactions. You are the model: rather than just making suggestions or telling the child what to do, a regulating activity will be more powerful when it is actively demonstrated. Show the child how to breathe in and out. Do some star jumps of your own or create something with Lego alongside them.</p>	
<p><b>Help children learn how to manage and express their emotions.</b> Have realistic expectations of children based on their development and temperament. Incorporate the language and lessons learned in our other approaches such as PATHs or Colour Monsters.</p>	
<p><b>Prepare the child for change.</b> With appropriate preparation and understanding, children are more likely to feel secure and settle more easily into their new environment. Stories including social stories can be used to explore the new situations that the child will experience. Stories,</p>	

<p>particularly open ended ones, can empower a child to reason and problem solve independently.</p>	
<p><b>Structure brings calm.</b> Children will feel safer when they know what is happening now and next. This can involve consistent routines for starting and finishing a task, timers/countdowns to prepare for transitions and clear expectations for group activities. Establish predictable routines and set clear expectations.</p>	
<p><b>We need to be respectful of individual differences when it comes to what is calming and soothing for a child.</b> One child may love Lego, while another finds it incredibly frustrating. One may like the structure of 5-4-3-2-1 grounding, while another prefers to focus on just one sense. The use of a “Calm Box” of resources can be so helpful to give a child choice.</p>	
<p><b>Modify your communication.</b> Once a child has reached a distressed state, we need to resist the urge to “talk them out of it”. Instead think about whether our verbal and non-verbal communication is dysregulating. You may need to give the child space and sit further away (unless their behaviour poses a safety risk). Slow down your movements and relax your posture, so that you appear less threatening or antagonistic. Use simpler sentences and a softer tone of voice, if you need to speak at all. Just being present can be enough.</p>	



## **ALL TRANSITIONS**

- Developmentally appropriate and individualised based on the specific needs of the child; using a positive approach by praising children for each step they take
- Know the child's stressors and try to prevent these occurring; share successful strategies with the wider team
- Maintain consistency; consistent approach with routine, strategies, language used
- Promote positive experiences; offering flexible routines to help children cope, using rhymes or songs to inject fun
- Give one direction at a time; using limited language to prevent overload
- Practitioner keeps personal stress levels controlled to be emotionally present and regulate children's emotional wellbeing from the start
- Acknowledge children's feelings and give them strategies to manage and verbally express their feelings, laying foundations for resilience and adaptability during transitions

## **NEW START TRANSITION**

- Build relationships between parent and practitioner; for the child - visible conversations between adults is reassuring to the children, for parents - they take comfort from relationships with those caring for their child, for practitioner - they are provided with information to give opportunities to extend ideas and experiences in the setting
- Visit centre ahead of time, more than once if possible, walk around the grounds, increase child's confidence

- 'All About Me' sent and received ahead of child starting; EYPs learn more about the child before they start, likes / dislikes, allows playroom to be set up accordingly, before new term begins, with resources and toys, home comforts
- Photo books; 'this is my classroom', 'this is my teacher'
- Virtual induction; give parents an opportunity to meet EYPs, practitioner's answer parent's questions
- Video link; for child - practitioner reads a story to the child whilst sitting in the playroom which is then posted on LJ, practitioner does a walk around the room talking about different areas, for parents – video to show parents how to approach the setting, where to stand for drop off and collection, social distancing guidelines
- Use social media for parent engagement
- Build in time for small groups to be with key worker on daily basis
- Environment; soft music, dimmed lights, on arrival, familiar toys, welcome board with photos of home
- Transitional object; favourite toy from home, photograph of family

#### **ARRIVAL/DEPARTURE, INDOOR/OUTDOOR PLAY, SNACK/LUNCH TRANSITION**

- Visual timer or countdown system; giving child advance warning, verbally communicating to the child, using a countdown e.g. 5-minute reminder, then a 2-minute reminder
- Display a large picture schedule with the day's activities on the wall at child's eye level



- Environment; arrival - quiet arrival, soft music, dimmed lights, quiet voices, indoor/outdoor - small groups in corridor to change outdoor clothing, have slow down activities to help shift from active to quiet, slow song
- Transitional object; concrete item such as a cup to represent snack / lunch time

