Transition is a term given to periods of change that are experienced by all children as they progress through different periods of their lives. Some of these changes are natural stages which all children face. They are common transitions that occur when children move on to the next stage of development, such as transferring from nursery to school or changing from primary to secondary school. Some children experience particular periods of transition that are personal to them and may happen at any age or stage of life. This type of transition could be caused by family circumstances such as family break-up or a child’s personal situation or problems such as serious illness or disability.

This unit provides you with the opportunity to explore the different types of transition and ways they may affect the lives and wellbeing of children. You will consider questions, such as why some children find difficulty and need support when adapting to changes in their lives, and others are able to cope well. You will reflect on your own experiences as you find out about ways that adults can work together to support children during periods of transition.

Learning outcomes

After completing this unit you should:

1. know transitions in childhood
2. understand the impact of transitions on children’s wellbeing
3. know factors which influence children’s resilience during periods of transition
4. understand the role of adults to support transition.
Assessment and grading criteria

This table shows you what you must do in order to achieve a pass, merit or distinction grade, and where you can find activities in this book to help you.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>To achieve a pass grade the evidence must show that the learner is able to:</th>
<th>To achieve a merit grade the evidence must show that, in addition to the pass criteria, the learner is able to:</th>
<th>To achieve a distinction grade the evidence must show that, in addition to the pass and merit criteria, the learner is able to:</th>
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<td>P3 Outline family circumstances which may lead to particular and personal transition</td>
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<td>P5 Discuss the effects of transition on children</td>
<td>M1 Describe the effects of transition on children</td>
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<td>M2 Explain the role of adults working together to support transition</td>
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Unit 6 Supporting children in transition

How you will be assessed
This unit will be assessed by an internal assignment that will be designed and marked by tutors at your centre. Your assessment could be in the form of:
- presentations
- case studies
- leaflets
- reports
- written assignments.

Emma, aged 16

Until I studied this unit I hadn’t thought about the effects that changes had on the lives of children. I didn’t understand what the word transition meant but I soon realised, when our tutor asked us to think about the transitions that we had experienced and ways that we had been affected.

What I enjoyed most was using my work experience to find out more. I worked for one day each week at a local nursery and sometimes helped new children to settle in. We had lots in common. I was also going through my own transition, as I had just started my new course and it was my first time at work. Because I was studying this unit I was able to understand how the new children were feeling and that some of the feelings were exciting as well as scary.

My supervisor was really helpful and told me about some of the changes that children experience, and how she supports them and their families. She also helped me to become more aware of the personal transitions that some children face and ways they can affect them. This made me feel much more confident when we discussed transition in class. I also needed to write about ways that adults help children in transition, so I found out about ways that the child care workers at the nursery do this, and how they work with parents to prepare children to move on to their new school. I think this unit is a really important preparation for anyone who wants to work with children.

Over to you!
- Will you be able to use your own personal experience or experience of working with a particular child to help you to understand this unit?
- How will you use your own work placement setting to find out more?
- What can you do to prepare for this unit?
1. Know transitions in childhood

Get set

Responding to change

Write down five transitions that you have experienced. Which ones do you think are natural (i.e. affect most children and young people) and which ones are more personal to you? Consider the ways that you coped with these changes in your life. Did you find some transitions more difficult to cope with? Why do you think that was?

Discuss your examples in a small group. What are the similarities and differences in the ways that individuals in the group coped with each type of transition?

Key term

Transition – a change of passage from one stage or state to another.

Types of transition

All children experience changes in their lives. These changes are part of growing up and should be seen as natural patterns of transition, which are necessary for children to grow and develop. Where these are common and expected most children will cope well and, if there are any ill effects, they are only temporary. When children are well prepared, transition can be positive, particularly when children are moving on to the next stage of their life. Think about when you were due to start this course, you were probably a little nervous but also looking forward to new challenges.

Children may also experience personal transition, brought about because of their own serious health needs or family circumstances. These transitions do not follow a pattern and can happen at any age. These particular or personal transitions are more likely to be unexpected and may have a negative effect on children’s lives and wellbeing.

Transitions may take place over a short or long period. Where there are changes such as moving class, schools or moving house these happen on a particular date. Other transitions may take place over a longer period, for example physical and emotional changes when a child develops their own identity as they progress from babyhood into the toddler phase or a young person as they reach adulthood.
Common patterns of transition

Each time children progress to the next stage of their life they need to adjust to their new experiences. As children progress in the school system, every year they will move to a new environment with a new teacher to get to know. They may have different ways of teaching, new routines and expectations of academic work and behaviour. The layout of the room and resources used could be unfamiliar.

Studies have been carried out on the common transitions that may cause most concern for children. The two main transitions that were identified are the move from the reception class to year 1 and the move from primary to secondary school. An Ofsted report (2004) describes the experiences of children when they progressed to year 1 at the age of 5 years. It was found that although most children settled well, this change may be difficult for some children. One reason suggested is that children’s learning and experiences change as they progress from the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) to the National Curriculum. Children following the National Curriculum are often taught more formally and take part in fewer creative and expressive activities. Imagine the effect on a child who is used to learning through play, suddenly having to sit and work in a more formal way for longer periods.

Did you know?

The Common Core of skills and knowledge for the children’s workforce is a set of common values for child care practitioners. These values include ways to promote equality and diversity, and improve the life chances and wellbeing of all children. Supporting Transitions is one of the six areas of expertise identified in the document.

Key terms

Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) – the statutory framework which sets out the standards for learning, development and care for children from birth to 5 years.

National Curriculum – compulsory learning and experiences which children undertake from the age of 5 to 16 years.

Activity: Transition at the age of 5 years

The point of transition when children move from the Early Years Foundation Stage to year 1 has been referred to as ‘a difficult join’. Why do you think that phrase is used?

What changes do you think children will face in their new class?

Excellence and Enjoyment: A strategy for Primary Schools (2003)
Children must make a significant adjustment as they make the transition from primary to secondary education. The most obvious is the school itself, but there are also differences in the curriculum and the way that subjects are taught. Some children may find that their close friends have transferred to a different school and so they must develop new friendships. You should remember that, although transitions can be difficult, moving on can be a positive and exciting experience.

Common transitions are also related to the natural patterns of growth and development that all children experience from birth until they reach adulthood. The human body goes through continuous change. Around the age of 6 months a baby's first teeth will break through the gums and by the age of 6 years these milk teeth will become loose, begin to fall out and permanent teeth will appear. At some stages children experience significant changes in their growth and development. A baby between the ages of 1 and 2 years will start to walk and communicate with words. They will also start toilet training and be expected to feed themselves. The breast or bottle will be replaced with a feeding cup. This development will have an impact on their lives and routine as they become more independent and develop their own identity.

Another significant change is the period between childhood and adulthood, known as adolescence or puberty. Young people will enter this stage at different ages but usually between the ages of 11–14 years for girls and 13–16 years for boys. Transition at this stage is sometimes referred to as maturation. As children reach adulthood they may find it difficult to adjust to the physical as well as emotional changes. Adults may have expectations of young people, ‘to be grown up’ and take on more responsibilities, at a time when they feel at their most vulnerable and need support.

Key term
Maturation – the process as children move from childhood to adulthood.
Particular or personal transitions may happen at any time in a child’s life and do not follow a pattern. Personal transitions may be related to a geographical move, from a simple move such as into a new bedroom in their own house to moving to a different area. Children who move house may find the transition difficult as they may also move school and have to build new friendships. Children who move to the UK may face a longer period of transition, as they will need to come to terms with cultural and possibly language differences. Children with serious ill health or disability will face particular and personal transitions and are more likely to have difficulty during natural transition. You do not need to know about individual illnesses or disabilities to achieve this unit, but to know the transitions which happen because of changes to a child’s health and wellbeing. A child with a disability, whose condition does not change significantly, may not experience personal change in their life. However, if the child’s mobility or health deteriorates, such as the need to use a wheelchair or if there is further loss of sight or hearing, then they will experience a particular transition as they adapt both physically and emotionally to their situation. Children with chronic or serious ill health may require medical interventions which require a long stay in hospital, so have periods in their life when they cannot attend school, or play or spend time with friends.

Particular and personal transitions may include:
- House move – either locally or to a new area
- Move to a new country, including those seeking asylum
- Chronic or serious ill health
- Disability, physical or sensory
- Change of carer, for example when a parent or the permanent carer is unable to continue to care for a child. This may be a temporary or permanent arrangement
- Issues related to sexuality, for example first sexual experiences or coming to terms with own sexual orientation
- Entering or leaving residential or foster care
- The results of crime, including the outcome for young people who commit crime or the result of being a victim of crime.
Family circumstances

Adults who work with children recognise that personal or particular transitions happen because of changes in family circumstances. When studying the child development unit, you may have looked at

![Diagram showing various family circumstances]

Figure 6.1: How can changes in family circumstances lead to transition for children?
the different types of family structure and the factors, such as finance, cultural background and environment, which may affect families. For this unit you need to think about ways in which the factors and family circumstances may change and how this change may lead to transition for children. A child who lives with one parent may not be experiencing transition as their circumstances remain the same but a child whose parents break-up will be in transition, at that stage in their life, as they come to terms with their new situation.

Financial
Families with parents who are working and earning a good income will be able to afford a more comfortable lifestyle, such as a spacious house, a car and regular holidays. If parents are made redundant, or cannot work because of illness, then the lifestyle of the whole family, including that of the children, will change. It is also important to think of positive changes. Consider how an improvement in a family’s finances could affect a child if a parent, after months of being unemployed, retrain and is employed in a well-paid job.

Environmental
Any change to a child’s environment will also cause transition. A family may move house either into a poorer environment where there may be high incidences of crime or into a better area where there are more open spaces. A child who moves into a new area will leave behind friends and perhaps their extended family.

Death of parent or close relative
Following the death of a parent or someone very close to a child they will experience dramatic transition in their life. Where children live with one parent this may mean a change in carer and perhaps a move into residential or foster care.

Serious illness or disability of a parent
In some families when a parent has a chronic or serious illness the lifestyle of the family is likely to change. The child may also need to help with the care of a parent, leaving less time for their school work, friends and hobbies.

Family break-up or divorce
Family break-up or divorce can be a traumatic period in the life of many children. Both familiar routines and lifestyle will change. Children may be expected to become more independent when there is only one parent.

Did you know?
In 2005 in the UK there were 136,000 children aged under 16 years in families where parents were divorced.

Key term
Lifestyle – how a person lives their life, for example their friendships, diet, education, hobbies and leisure.
Reconstituted families

A child’s life may change when a parent meets a new partner. A reconstituted family is where two separate families move in together to form a new family. Transition occurs as the child adapts to their new family life.

Birth of a sibling

When a new baby arrives in the family, the older children experience change. Younger children often find changes in family life, because of the new arrival, particularly difficult to cope with.

Case study: Jay

Jay is 15 years old. He lives with his mother and two sisters who are 11 years old and 5 years old. The family lived in a large detached house in the suburbs but when his father was made redundant at work the family were forced to move to their present terraced house. This also meant a move to a new school and the need to build new friendships. A year later, when Jay was 13, his parents separated and have recently divorced.

As the oldest child in the family, Jay has always helped out with his younger sisters. When Jay’s mum received hospital treatment for a mental health problem his aunt stayed to look after the children but Jay took responsibility for himself and helped out in the house.

Jay attends the local secondary school. He is progressing well with his school work and presently studying for GCSEs and also a BTEC certificate in Business Studies. Jay’s teachers expect him to achieve good results which his mum is pleased about. Jay has worked hard to catch up following an accident on his bike a year ago when he was in hospital for several weeks.

Consider the transitions that Jay has experienced and then complete the following tasks:

1. Draw a time line for Jay and record the common transitions that he would have experienced.
2. Identify any personal and particular transitions experienced by Jay.
3. What are the family circumstances that may have caused transition?
1. Produce a time line showing the stages of a child’s life from 0–16 years and use this to identify the common patterns of transition. **P1**

2. Outline particular and personal transitions which children may experience at any stage of a child’s life. You might organise these transitions into those which happen because of their own health and wellbeing and other causes. **P2**

3. Outline family circumstances which may lead to transition. You should include circumstances which reflect positive as well as negative changes in family circumstances. **P3**

**Grading tips**

You should refer to the chart on stages of development in the child development chapter when identifying common or natural transitions.

Remember when outlining personal transitions that you do not have to write in detail about specific illnesses or disabilities.

- To achieve P1 you only need to identify the common transitions – using a short sentence or phrase.
- To achieve P2 and P3 you must outline – giving a brief description of each transition identified.

**Assessment activity 6.1**

1. Define the meaning of transition.
2. Identify three common patterns of transition.
3. Identify three personal or particular types of transition.
4. Describe the transition which children experience as they move between childhood and adulthood.
5. What is the name of the document which sets out the common values for all child care practitioners?
6. At what age do children transfer from the Foundation Stage to Key Stage 1?