

## Improving children's transitions

### Top Practice Tips

- Agree common standards for Hub partners around practice and paperwork relating to home and setting visits when a child moves into a setting or school
- Provide training and moderation opportunities for all settings as a way of identifying any strengths and challenges in the approaches currently used
- Ensure that the approaches and documentation related to transition meet the needs of the child, the parent and the school or setting
- Work to engage childminders as partners – they can add improved flexibility to meeting the needs of parents
- Use the **Partnership** Hub to help manage the contact between schools and settings, as well as acting as a forum for parents to share transitional arrangements

### Background

A focus on the transition of children from home to an early years setting, or from the setting to a reception class, can help a Hub meet the key goal of improving the quality of provision. Supporting children through the transition helps to identify and tackle school readiness issues, as well as working to close the attainment gap between disadvantaged children and their peers. Effective information sharing provides more effective support for children with additional needs.

### Why focus on transitions?

Waltham Forest-based Church Hill and Low Hall Nursery School federation leads its local Early Learning and Community Childcare Partnership Hub. The Hub partners with Woodside Primary Academy, which also runs a daycare nursery for children aged from six months to five years, and six other settings which run local nurseries and preschool groups.

**HOW**

**ACTION FOR CHILDREN**

**WORKS**

“We hold twice-termly network meetings in each other’s settings and work to identify issues that will improve the quality of our local provision,” says Sandra Campbell, headteacher of Church Hill and Low Hall Nursery School federation. “Transition was chosen because local authority cuts mean we no longer have one agreed way of exchanging information or consistency around what information to exchange.”

Issues around transition have become acute as more families move out of the borough but want their children to come back to a local school, says Ms Campbell. “Property owners evict them from private accommodation as the local housing market picks up,” she explains. “Social services contacted us recently about a child rehoused out of the borough. The mother still wants her child to attend here to provide some continuity.”

This churn means Hub partners have to work with settings from other boroughs to manage transitions. “This means more transitional work not only at the traditional entry times but also throughout the term,” says Ms Campbell.

### **How are Hubs supporting children with transitions?**

“We are able to identify primary schools whose practice is good, and those who have to be chased,” says Ms Campbell. Identifying schools with poor practice around transition is important, as this may flag up other issues.

“Visits are important as staff get a chance to brief the school informally about the children and families that might be tricky to report formally,” she continues. “It is often difficult to visit the schools with all children now because of staffing levels. The priorities are children with additional needs or those that may find the move difficult.” A good relationship with the PVI sector is vital, as only around half of children go straight from a maintained nursery class to reception.

Agreeing best practice for sharing and recording information around transition is key, especially if children have additional needs or find settling in a challenge. “To help with transition we looked at possible improvements in procedures based on the practice of the nursery at Woodside Primary Academy,” says Ms Campbell. “Also, each setting shared the documentation they use so that we could discuss best practice.” Wooler Children’s Centre says joint training can help settings gain an understanding of issues in the home and for the school.

Hubs can also establish best practice around home visits and other activities. Wooler uses Play and Stay sessions to ease transition, while Haxby Road Primary Academy runs community fun days to help parents and children experience school life.

City of York Strategic Hub supports all settings to use the Ages and Stages documentation, so they are all working from a common baseline. It is also exploring the use of ‘Travelling Tom’, a bear that comes to sessions in different settings that children attend so that they see a familiar “face”.



### **What are the challenges around supporting transition?**

“The support from the local authority tends to be through large network meetings, and it is tricky to keep them focused,” says Ms Campbell.

Funding affects the capacity and resources that settings have for transition work, particularly when releasing staff for home and school visits.

### **How can Hubs build on their work to further improve transitions?**

Sharing best practice with other Hubs can be beneficial. “Getting involved with the Sheringham hub and its local network of seven nursery schools has been a bonus,” says Ms Campbell. “We have been able to see what improvements are possible. By working together as a focused network to improve this issue, we can demonstrate to the local authority how sector-led improvement makes a difference.”

Many Hubs, including City of York Strategic Hub and Brotherton and Byram Community Primary, highlight the importance of working with other local schools and networks, which can lead to the creation of a local authority-wide set of standards and paperwork. However, they stress that priorities and agendas will vary between settings and other agencies, such as health.

Weoley Castle Nurse School and Children's Centre has developed and identified transitional training that could be offered to the partnership as well as the local early years networks. Grange Park Primary points out that involving childminders in transition support is also important, although this can take time to develop.

