

Northern Alliance Covid-19 Transitions Framework

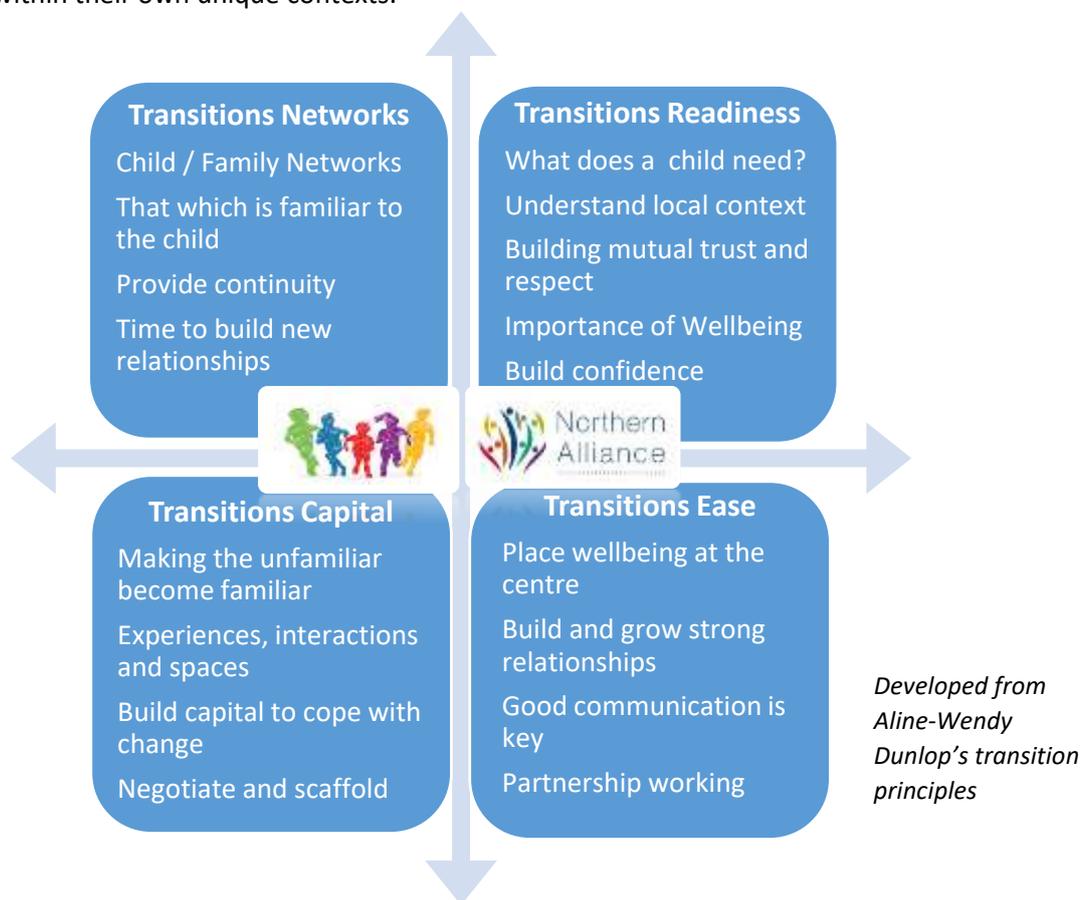
One of the most challenging aspects of the Covid-19 Recovery Period for children, parents and education staff is the transition to school or ELC. As a result of the sudden, significant change in all of our lives, most children and young people and their families will not have the opportunity to finish off the last months of the school session - and without care and appropriate support, may not feel prepared for their next steps within school or ELC. The National Return to School Framework indicates that children who are at key transition points may have some experience of school or ELC in June, if appropriate. This could also be a strange time for our children as they will have new spaces to become familiar with, as well as physical distancing and control measures to consider. However, transitions for all our children, families and staff this year will need careful consideration and planning by school and ELC teams.

Colleagues from the Northern Alliance Early Years Network and the Primary and Secondary Curriculum Workstreams have developed 'Northern Alliance Transitions Framework' based on four key principles:

- Transitions Networks
- Transitions Readiness
- Transitions Capital
- Transitions Ease

These principles have been developed by **Professor Aline-Wendy Dunlop – Emeritus Professor in the school of Education, University of Strathclyde – Dunlop, AW. (2019). *Transitions in Practice Model, from the Navigating Educational Journeys. Longitudinal Study Report (2020)***. We are grateful to Professor Dunlop for her help and support in developing this framework.

Northern Alliance Lead Officers have provided further guidance around each of the four principles in relation to Early Level, Primary and Secondary to support school and ELC teams in planning for transitions within their own unique contexts.



Transitions Networks

Families need to be connected to their networks just now. There is a role for us to recreate networks for families returning to school and ELC in engaging with each child's key worker / teacher and people from settings and schools who are familiar to the child and family. By having contextual knowledge, teachers and ELC practitioners are able to open a child's social world up again to provide continuity – with who they already know and through the introduction of new people – eg P1 teacher/Secondary teachers. It is important that our children and families get to know their new teachers as soon as possible in order to build relationships. This will mean that schools may have to bring forward their staffing plans for the following session in order for this to happen. In getting to know our children's networks, we should also connect with the networks that support children with additional needs and our most vulnerable children and families.

What Can We Do?

Early Level

For the children who will be joining ELC for the first time, we should consider how we can gradually become part of their networks. How can you get to know your new children and their families? How can you begin to build a relationship with each child and their family to get to know what they can bring and what they may need in starting ELC? For your existing ELC children, continue to connect with your children's families - you are a member of your children's networks and you will already be in touch with your children. This is the best way to build firm foundations for transition - by maintaining contact, you can provide continuity through the transition process for your children and families. If you are a primary one teacher, get to know your children through their key workers. If possible, try and 'meet' with your children's ELC Key Workers to learn more about each child and their family. There are some great examples of shared transition experiences using a theme such as a popular children's story, which gradually introduces new teachers and members of staff to each child's network. Work out when the time is right to get in touch with your children and families - your ELC colleagues will help you to make contact. Remember to include your children who may not have access to technology or who may not have a supportive family network at home. Are there other people who you would be useful to connect with? Colleagues from other agencies may already be part of a child's network. Your child's Key Worker will be able to give you the information you need to get to know each child.



First and Second Level

School staff will be planning for transitions- setting time aside to meet virtually to discuss the progress and needs of their children. Under the current circumstances, *how have these changed?* Take into account those children in hubs and the new networks they have built up; adults and new friendships. How could these new relationships be integrated into your transitions? With learning taking place at home and in hubs, how could this be built upon for continuity? Teachers could build on these networks through being added to the digital platforms in the current setting.

This will enable formal and informal discussions to take place-planned introductions and “drop ins” on learning at home and in hubs, enabling children to link their adults and begin to build relationships.

To introduce key school staff, photos with names and roles for reference could be added to powerpoint, video, word document or website. Teachers and key staff could hold Q&A sessions, such as Meet the Teacher, plan a short activity, set a weekly challenge, create short videos- particularly for key staff e.g. head teacher, school canteen staff, pupils support assistants, school clerical. Use of platforms such as Microsoft Teams and Google Classroom to create “class time” ahead of next session and provide learning for “transition days”. Buddies and Playground leaders who play an important part in a child’s school network could send a letter/picture through the post/email or join a digital platform to introduce themselves, lead an online fitness challenge, scavenger hunts, read a story/ create a presentation to share about the school.

Maintain a sense of community through holding school community events such as a remote quiz night, photography competition, Covid-19 artwork, garden and window displays etc. Ask members of your Parent Council to share how members support the life and work of the school community with new parents. Along with traditional methods of sharing the school handbook and information packs, hold online workshops, question and answer events and “Live Experiences” for parents and carers to participate in.

Build on your knowledge of your children’s families and how best to reach out to them at this time - those who have access to technology and those who don’t. What other agencies are now involved with your families who are able to support, give advice? You will know which children and families require bespoke and enhanced transition. Transition is an opportunity to build resilience.

Secondary

There will be four key networks which would usually be used and developed during the process of transition from P7 to S1:

1. Secondary Schools connecting with the families of P7 students.
2. Secondary Teachers connecting with Primary colleagues.
3. P7 students connecting with the secondary environment.
4. P7 Students connecting with each other.

Previously parental engagement evenings, school tours, cluster discussions and a well-developed programme of transition activities helped to strengthen and make best use of these networks. Obviously, it will not be possible to operate as usual in the current situation. However, these are still the networks we need to use. We just need to think differently about how we connect with them. Connections will now need to be built online. Tours will need to be conducted via video. Virtual briefings and information packs will cover key information. Students will join an S1 class team hosted by their guidance or registration teacher to meet and get to know each other. These and a hundred other ideas will become new tools for engaging with traditional networks.



Useful Links

<https://education.gov.scot/improvement/learning-resources/resources-to-support-the-refreshed-curriculum-for-excellence-narrative/>

<https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/covid-19-resources/support-resources-for-schools/>

Transitions Readiness

This period of change in our children and families' lives may be a source of great stress and they may be anxious about returning to school or ELC. Children may be anxious about being separated from their families after a long period of time at home and also around meeting new people in new surroundings. Families may be worried about infection control, and about the wellbeing of their children. Some children and families may need the opportunity for 'closure' – saying farewell to the old before stepping on to the new. However, for others, they may be excited about these next new steps.

We should consider how we work with our children and families to prepare us all for this significant change in our lives. Relationships, connections and local context are key. At the heart of this is wellbeing – how all aspects of a child's life are working together to support wellbeing during this time of change. For some children and families, this time may have been a chaotic experience, with little support. We should shape the kind of support required around the needs of each child and family. Stronger relationships support higher wellbeing – these two elements build an ease in transition. It is important to slowly prepare children for change – for some, returning to a setting or school which is not as it used to be- but understanding that over time, the unfamiliar will become familiar.

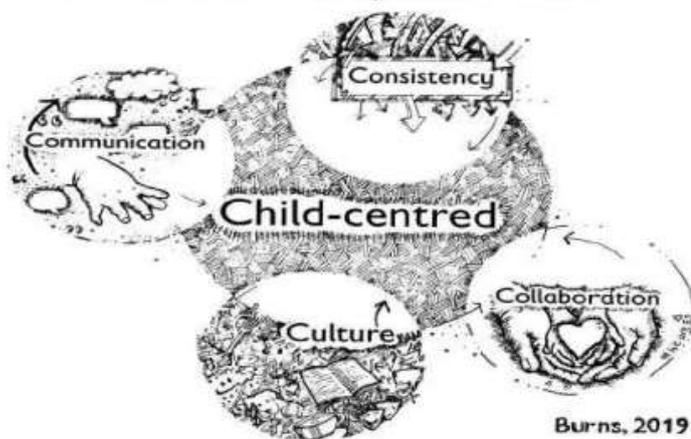
What Can We Do?

Early Level

Maintaining contact with all of your families is very important during this time. Through building on your relationships with your children and families, you are in a strong position to understand their needs and work with them to prepare for their child's next steps - to present a positive picture of what is going to happen so that children and families are confident that everything is going to be ok – 'We are planning for you', 'What will matter to you?'. It is also important to prepare children and families for the fact that returning to ELC will be different. As we become clearer around control measures and physical distancing, we can communicate these changes to our children and families in a supportive way.

As a primary one teacher, it is important to spend time now to continue to build relationships with your new children and families so that you can be part of these discussions and to reassure them that we will all be moving forward together. As outlined above, it is important to be aware of the challenges that some children and families may be facing and begin to shape your approach to supporting them as they move from ELC into primary.

The five 'C's that contribute to a positive transition



First & Second Level

Before venturing into the 'new normal', how will you provide closure for your children and families? Look for opportunities to share with the community your children's achievements and continue a sense of belonging from afar. Use digital platforms to recreate simplified versions of end of term events so important for bringing your school community together.

Children's worlds may have become very small; their homes, street, a family walk- yet be part of a vast world online. Local circumstances will have changed and may have impacted on your families financially, socially and emotionally. What adjustments have families had to make and how has this affected their own networks? What other agencies are now involved with your families?

There may be high anxiety about returning to school-families and children may need time to prepare for the new. How can you involve your children and parents in two-way communication through these uncharted waters? Online surveys, quizzes and check in can provide feedback. Clear, consistent transparent communication will be vital to help everyone feel more secure and maintain trust. Use your communication channels; social media, emails, digital platforms, newsletters to provide an opportunity for two way conversations, which will provide reassurance. Maintaining positive communication, celebrating home learning successes, reinforcing simple encouraging messages and gentle reminders will build confidence, trust and relationships as we move forward together

Work with your children and families to collectively paint a picture of the 'new normal' in your school. Some may need time to prepare and consider the implications of physical distancing and hygiene on school environments. Where appropriate, pupils could be set mathematical tasks to work out 2m², as well as research games they could play while being aware of physical distancing- explore this with younger pupils to dampen any fear whilst maintaining a positive ethos. Your children could also work together to create 'Covid-19 Guidance' for your school. What will be tangible when it can't be experienced?

Secondary

Relationships and close working with Primary School colleagues has always been important but in the current situation it is going to be vital. Close communication with those who know transitioning P7's best will provide valuable insight into how to structure a way forward. Transition to secondary school is always potentially a stressful and worrying time. For vulnerable students Bridging groups, which may already have started, will need to continue virtually. Many young people will have specific needs during the transition process which will need to be met in a socially distanced context. Strong pre-existing relationships with key players and familiarity with processes and surroundings will be vital in ensuring a successful transition for all but particularly for those who need extra support. Social distancing messages and modelling will need to be shared well in advance of a restart. The further in advance students can know what the requirements will be in schools, the more time they will have to process the information and potentially practise at home.

As positive an ethos as possible around transition is vital as students who may already be nervous, will pick up the 'mood' of a transition very quickly and may become fearful and distressed. The message around potential consequences of infection if physical distancing is not practised will need to be handled carefully. Most of all in our planning we need to be aware of and sympathetic towards the challenges that some families will be facing.

Useful Links

<https://www.mentallyhealthyschools.org.uk/resources/coronavirus-anxiety-toolkit-4/>

<https://glowscotland.sharepoint.com/sites/AberdeenshireCouncil/northernalliance/SitePages/Raising-Attainment.aspx>

<https://education.gov.scot/improvement/learningresources/realising-the-ambition/>

https://family.co/blog/covid-19/denmark-reopening-child-care-corona/?utm_source=twitter

[https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/public/files/Publications/Covid-19 Resources/Resources for schools/Communicating Effectively with Families Guide for Schools.pdf](https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/public/files/Publications/Covid-19%20Resources/Resources%20for%20schools/Communicating%20Effectively%20with%20Families%20Guide%20for%20Schools.pdf)

Transitions Capital

As children approach school, under normal circumstances they bring with them the capacity to meet new staff and embrace new environments. However, this unexpected change will be a shock to children. Strong relationships and good communication are essential in supporting this process. We need to support our children to try to work things out and not be scared of the current situation.

However, in planning for returning to school or ELC, do not under-estimate the power and creativity of our children to be able to engage in this process.

What Can We Do?

Early Level

What can practitioners do to help make the unfamiliar become familiar? One simple idea is to use photographs which could link the old with the new – photos from ELC could be shared in an area of the P1 classroom. Perhaps children could bring photos which they would like to share with their new teacher and classmates. There may be an opportunity for children to share memories of learning experiences in ELC or indeed at home. Primary one teachers can provide familiarity in learning approaches by taking forward play based pedagogy. This supports continuity in learning and development through interactions, experiences and spaces – as outlined within the National Early Level Practice guidance, ‘Realising the Ambition: Being Me’. Further guidance and support is also available within Education Scotland’s ‘Play Pedagogy Toolkit’. Whilst it is important to follow national guidelines around control measures for Covid-19, it is also a child’s right and need to play. In fact, it is more important than ever to offer our children the opportunity to learn through play as this is a natural and effective way to build positive relationships, get to know them, and for them to express and process any feelings or worries they have.

There are also several ‘tools’ in our existing toolkit which will support children as part of their transition journey and in settling into their new space. Some of our local authorities make use of PAThs - ‘Promoting Alternative Thinking Strategies’.

The PATHS® Programme for Schools is designed to facilitate the development of self-regulation, emotional awareness and interpersonal problem-solving skills. Another useful tool is the 'Words Up Early' programme which has been developed by the Highland Speech and Language Therapy team to equip adults with the knowledge and skills to improve children's early language development. The Words Up programme is also a key component of the oral language strand within the Emerging Literacy model in the Northern Alliance. Emerging Literacy supports the delivery of a developmental approach to planning and assessing children's learning. Each of these existing tools will support teachers and ELC practitioners to meet the wide range of learning and developmental needs of their children through carefully planned interactions and experiences.

First & Second Level

Children have been preparing for transitions through extended school transitions programmes prior to Covid-19 and developing resilience through Health and Wellbeing programmes. Unique to this generation of children, transition will be experienced digitally. How, in our individual settings, do we translate the best elements of effective transition within this context?

Children will need help in making their new classrooms/learning environments visible, taking into account physical distancing and hygiene implications. Schools may wish use apps to create a virtual tour of the school or make a short video and share photos. Employ your children's creativity in how to visualise their learning spaces. Learning will have been experienced through a range of learning and teaching approaches in different environments such as hubs or learning at home - families may have done their best within limited means or other pressures to keep learning going. These approaches may have increased engagement, as children have had more control of their learning-accessing it as and when suited. How can you build on this range of learning experiences, factoring in blended learning and where your children are developmentally? Children and young people will be coming back to school with different gaps in learning. Some children will have apparent learning, but without depth and consolidation. How are you able to observe or assess where children are in their learning and how might you adjust your usual approaches in order to be flexible to needs that may not be clear until sometime after the session starts?

Children may have become disconnected with school and will need to feel empowered, that they have some kind of responsibility for their learning, their environments and for making decisions. This will, in turn, create that feeling of safety, security and self-worth that is required to achieve success. How can you ensure your children's voices are heard? What pedagogy approaches/adjustments will need to be taken to engage all children?

Emerging Literacy supports the delivery of a developmental approach to planning and assessing children's learning and Words up- a key component of the oral language strand within the Emerging Literacy- supports high quality adult interactions developmentally pitched for the learner. Ideal for starting from where the child is. What factors need to be considered for children with ASN/vulnerable/at risk and what will their learning pathways look like?

Secondary

Students have been preparing for transition throughout their P7 year. Both in primary schools and in many cases through an extended transition process that was well under way prior to the Covid-19 outbreak. Remember that although this year's transition process seems unusual to you it is the first time students have been through the process.

There may well be aspects which seem alien to you that young people take in their stride, and aspects you'd think would be straightforward that turn out to be difficult for some.

Also, a return to school is not occurring in isolation and they will experience the expectations around physical distancing in other contexts.

Most young people throughout their primary journey will have been supported to develop the skills they need to adapt to a transition under 'normal' circumstances. Any transition in life is essentially a personal development project. The landscape of this particular project may have changed and they may need to recalibrate their skills a little but those skills exist or can be adapted and built upon.

In every group of students who are transitioning from P7 to S1 there will be students who, for a variety of reasons will need extra support to build transition capital. Through working with primary schools these students should be familiar to Secondary Schools and in many cases work to support transition will have been well underway before lockdown began. It is important that bridging groups continue in an online format as much as possible. The social aspect of extended bridging groups can be partly met through group video calling. Similarly introductions can be made to key people who will be helping to meet their needs and to the school building in this way.

It is also important to plan for how we meet the learning needs of our young people. They will have had a wide range of experiences through either learning at home or within hubs. Gaps in learning that may have existed before may have become even greater. For young people in the Senior Phase, consideration should be given to managing expectations around SQA qualifications until it becomes clear what the approach to these will be. This will likely be a source of anxiety for our young people.

In the end the current situation will build adaptability and resilience in our young people if we handle it right. Our coping skills can grow through experiencing moderate stress while being supported practically and in a context of positive relationships. We need to reassure and engage everyone involved that this is a challenge that can be met and overcome. It may be helpful to engage S1 students or S6 students to support and prepare transitioning P7's throughout their journey from a primary to a secondary context.

Useful Links

<https://highlandliteracy.files.wordpress.com/2019/05/words-up-early-key-messages-guidance-notes-march-2019.pdf>

<http://www.pathseducation.co.uk/what-is-paths/paths-curriculum/>

<https://education.gov.scot/improvement/learningresources/realising-the-ambition/>

https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/public/files/Publications/Metacognition/Summary_of_recommendations_poster.pdf

<https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/covid-19-resources/support-resources-for-schools/#nav-support-resources-for-schools>

<https://education.gov.scot/improvement/learning-resources/delivering-learning-and-teaching-online/>

<https://education.gov.scot/improvement/self-evaluation/HGIOS4>

https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/public/files/Publications/Covid-19_Resources/Resources_for_schools/Linking_learning_home_learning_support_from_mainstream_schools.pdf

Transitions Ease

By focusing on wellbeing and relationships through transitions networks, building transitions readiness through re-fostering transitions capital, children, families and our own professional communities will be more prepared, relaxed and cognisant of their strengths in returning to nursery or school or moving on to the next phase of experience. As a guide and support framework, the Six Principles of Nurture will support you in planning an effective transition process. Now, more than ever, we need to focus on the wellbeing of each child as they make their individual transition journeys. With clear communication, strong relationships and wellbeing placed centrally, adjusting the curriculum and pedagogies, we can move forward together, build on our school values and vision which bind us together as a community, to build a bright, compassionate future.



What Can We Do?

Early Level

In preparation for returning to school and ELC, it might also be worth revisiting the principles of 'Getting it Right for Every Child' (GIRFEC), with a clear focus on the Wellbeing Indicators in particular – Safe, Healthy, Active, Nurtured, Achieving, Responsible, Respected and Included (SHANARRI). How will you use this guidance to help you to focus on the wellbeing of all of your children.

When we return to school and ELC, things will be different. Social distancing and infection control measures will have an impact on our day. This is where it is very important to ensure that children's wellbeing is not affected by these processes. How will you support your children to understand why these processes need to be in place? The UNCRC - 'Rights of the Child' should be considered in ensuring that our children's voices are heard, as well as the fundamental right of a child to play.

The spaces that we will utilise should not just be restricted to indoors – as we continue to develop our approaches to learning and development within the Early Level, many of our settings and schools have been making more effective use of outdoor learning and play. For children experiencing emotional and behavioural problems or struggling in a traditional formal setting, immersion in a natural setting can be therapeutic and releases their potential. The Play Strategy for Scotland Action Plan (2013) makes clear the 'profound benefits for children in terms of psychological well-being, buffering life stresses and boosting resilience.' Getting outdoors more also provides continuity in approach across the Early Level- and of course, a natural solution to social distancing!

First & Second Level

During these times of adversity, children may have lost routine, structure, friendships, opportunity and freedoms, which may trigger anxiety, trauma and bereavement.

Use your knowledge of a trauma informed approach to strengthen relationships which are key to resilience and the foundations of success and achievement in any learning environment. Many strong relationships will have been formed over the years in school but without daily interaction will require planned times to reconnect and build trust. The implications of blended learning may impact on pupil networks- their friends, buddy systems and opportunities to “see” and work with their wider peer group.

With your inherent understanding of your children and community– what adjustments may be required of your curriculum rationale -What is it we want for these children?’ and ‘how will we work together to achieve it? - what is vital, very important and important? How will Health and Wellbeing programmes be adjusted/focused to take account of the current crisis and implications for children’ social, emotional and mental health. It is also important to remember that ‘Achieving’ is one of the wellbeing indicators and most children will welcome the opportunity to engage in meaningful and appropriate learning – this will be a source of comfort and reassurance to them. Wellbeing sits at the heart of the GIRFEC approach and reflects the need to tailor the support and help that children, young people and their parents are offered. How can you incorporate SHANARRI wellbeing indicators into your practice? How can you pull together the knowledge and skills of professionals and partners so that these pupils are not disadvantaged against their peers whilst placing wellbeing at the centre?



Play is fundamental right of a child-UNCRC-Rights of the Child-and vital for forming friendships and learning. Consider how this will look with physical distancing and hygiene implications whilst protecting wellbeing. Pupils could be involved in making short videos, poster/leaflets explaining why this is necessary. Utilise outdoor spaces to promote play and wellbeing-nature is a buffer for life stress.

Secondary

In preparing for transition the SHANARRI wellbeing indicators always provide a strong pathway and checklist. This will be doubly true now. Young people will need to transition with a clear understanding of why social distancing measures are in place. The current situation can be used to build community. Not only among P7’s moving to S1 but among all secondary students if they can be engaged with the idea that we are sacrificing our convenience and normality to protect each other and those we care about. We bond in important transitional moments in our lives. This has always been true of the transition from primary to secondary school. Friendships made through a well planned and carried out transition process can endure for life. If a sense can be created among transitioning P7’s that they have a challenge to meet which they must work together to overcome, then the bonds we are looking to create could become more powerful than ever – building on the capabilities and attributes within the Four Capacities.



Useful Links

<https://cypcs.org.uk/rights/uncrc/articles/>

<https://www.gov.scot/publications/out-play-practical-guidance-creating-outdoor-play-experiences-children/>

https://childreninscotland.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/201902_GIRFEC-Toolkit_11Note.pdf

<https://rshp.scot/>

<https://healthyschools.scot/>

<https://www.evidenceforlearning.net/recoverycurriculum/>

<https://education.gov.scot/improvement/learning-resources/resources-to-support-the-refreshed-curriculum-for-excellence-narrative/>

<https://www.epinsight.com/post/i-need-you-to-stepping-into-the-shoes-of-a-child-who-has-experienced-trauma-loss-change>

Transitions Planning Template

Please find below a transitions planning template for organising your own approach to transition which will meet the needs of your children and families. The template is framed around the four key principles as outlined in page one. To support you with transition in this current period, please find reflective questions to frame discussions.

Northern Alliance Transitions Framework – Planning Template

Establishment

Stage/s:

Transitions Networks Reflective Questions	What do we need? What is vital? Important? Very important?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How are you connecting to your children’s current networks; key workers, teachers, other agencies, hub staff? • How are you consulting your children and families to understand what they need? • Under <i>current circumstances</i> what do you need to do differently to respond to individual needs? • How can you move forward as a team with the knowledge you have gathered and what adjustments will be required for continuity and meeting needs in the current situation? • How can you introduce new networks to your children and families? • How can you build on current and new networks to maintain a sense of community remotely? • With learning taking place at home and in hubs how can you build on this for continuity? 	
Transition Readiness Reflective Questions	What do we need? What is vital? Important? Very important?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How can you build in opportunities for closure for current year groups before stepping in to the new for those that need it? • To support wellbeing and build confidence, how can you involve children and families in creating a new positive picture of their next steps? • How can you digitally familiarise children and families with the processes of transition? • How have local circumstances changed and how is this impacting on children and families? What adjustments could you make? 	

Developed from Professor Aline-
Wendy Dunlop’s transition principles

Northern Alliance Transitions Framework – Planning Template

Establishment

Stage/s:

Transition Capital Reflective Questions	What do we need? What is vital? Important? Very important?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Considering your own unique context, how can you make the unfamiliar become familiar and involve children’s creativity? • What capital does each child bring as part of the transition process? How can you build on this? • What pedagogies and resources can you take forward for continuity and to engage all learners? • How can you translate the most effective elements of transition in the current context? • What factors/adjustment will you consider for children with ASN/vulnerable/at risk and what will their learning pathways look like? 	
Transition Ease Reflective Questions	What do we need? What is vital? Important? Very important?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How can you utilise the SHANARRI wellbeing indicators to focus on wellbeing of all children? • How can you interpret children’s behaviour as expressing feelings or needs that require support? • How can you support children and families in understanding why we have physical distancing and control measures? • How will you continue to develop approaches to learning and play, outdoor learning, the Principles of Nurture, trauma informed teaching and blended learning to build foundations for wellbeing and future learning? • With your understanding of your children and community, what adjustments may be required of your curriculum rationale? How will you engage your children and families as part of this process? • How will curricular programmes be adjusted/focused to take account of the current situation and implications for children’ social, emotional and mental health? • How will you build in flexibility in order to respond the changing needs of children over the short to mid- term? • Who may require a focused recovery intervention programme and what will it look like? 	