

5

Supporting transitions



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Transitions are times when children or young people experience change, and are required to adapt to new circumstances, people, expectations, environments or relationships.

The transition may be from home to a learning community, from one learning community to another or, on a different scale, from one learning experience to another or from outdoor to indoor play.

Transitions require children and young people to learn new skills, including navigating change. This can be particularly challenging for a child or young person with developmental delay or disability.

The strategies you choose to use to support a child or young person who's experiencing a transition will depend on their needs and strengths. There are three common strategies to bear in mind when children and young people transition to a new learning community.

1. Get to know the child or young person

Share useful and relevant information about the child or young person with the learning community they're transitioning to. Make the time to understand a child or young person's strengths and interests, as well as their needs and, where appropriate, their experiences in their previous learning setting. Sharing what you know about a child or young person or seeking information from their previous settings will be helpful for the child and their family. This knowledge will

help you structure orientation activities that support them during the transition phase, reduce anxiety and create a positive learning environment from day one.

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“Listen to the families and their priorities for their child. Start from a place of trust and learn together.”

– Educator insight

2. Partner with families

Families are an integral part of successful transitions. Connect with and talk to families on how to support a child or young person during transitions, but also take time to identify and address concerns a family might have.

“Transitions can be as equally challenging for families as they can be for children,” says Early Childhood Australia. “For example, for families transitioning from early learning services to primary school, adjusting to larger class numbers and the prospect of having less frequent one-on-one contact with their child's primary educator can be cause for concern.”

Anticipate and pre-empt challenges like these by making time to meet with the family to hear their concerns. This helps create a trusting relationship where you can support each other during the transition for the child or young person.



3. Plan for successful transitions

Effective transitions in an early learning service or school require a whole learning community approach, where children and young people, families, leadership teams and individual educators – as well as healthcare professionals – work together, always keeping the interests of the child or young person front and centre.

At the heart of this approach is establishing good communication channels between everyone involved, keeping in contact and sharing relevant information.

Taking steps to familiarise a child or young person and their family with a new learning environment can also play a role. For example, visiting a new classroom without other children present can help a

child with developmental delay or disability become familiar with the space, learn where resources are and feel a greater sense of safety when they start in the new setting.

Transition meetings or introduction opportunities can be helpful, particularly if you consider and plan what you could do in addition to what you usually do for all children or young people transitioning to your service or school.

Isabella's story

This story demonstrates how educators used their local Inclusion Professional to support Isabella's transition to their early learning service.

Three-year-old Isabella enjoys painting and loves unicorns. She has been diagnosed with a childhood anxiety disorder called selective mutism and finds it difficult to use verbal communication at times, particularly with unfamiliar people or when an environment becomes loud and busy. Recently she enrolled in an early learning service, where educators arranged transition meetings with Isabella and her family. During these meetings, Isabella was shy and did not speak to educators and peers when engaging in the new environment. This prompted Isabella's educators to contact their local Inclusion Agency to discuss strategies to support Isabella's transition.

Some of the strategies her educators have used include orientation play sessions with her and her family at the service; sending Isabella 'get to know me' pages from each of her educators; and creating social stories for Isabella's family to share with her at home about the service and its routines. Then, to ensure Isabella was included in the service's daily routine once she started attending, educators adapted and evolved their routines to flow in smaller groups and they also became more flexible with timings. Two months into her journey with the service, Isabella seems settled and comfortable, and participates well with several peers in small groups. She also speaks with great enthusiasm about her days at the early learning service with her parents at home.



For reflection

- What are some questions you'd ask Isabella's family during the transition meetings?
- Drawing on Isabella's strengths and interests, what else would you do to help her transition into your learning community?
- How would you further adapt a learning environment to help Isabella feel confident and comfortable?



Learn more

Explore AllPlay Learn's [Transition resources](#) for educators, which cover transitioning from home to early learning services, transitioning to primary school and transitioning to secondary school.

Read a [Guide to Transitions](#), published by New Zealand's Ministry of Education as part of its Inclusive Education initiative.

General transition resources include:

- Victoria State Government's [Transition: A Positive Start to School](#).
- Be You Fact Sheets: [Transitions in learning communities](#).
- Queensland Curriculum & Assessment Authority's [Transition to school](#) professional learning video.

References

AllPlay Learn, [Transitions](#) (online document).

Be You, [Transitions in learning communities](#) (online document).

NZ's Ministry of Education, [Guide to Transitions – managing times of change](#) (online document).

Be You resources for educators

Delivered by Beyond Blue, in collaboration with Early Childhood Australia and headspace, **Be You** empowers educators and every learning community to be their most mentally healthy, positive and inclusive.

Now you've read the Be You Disability Inclusion Guide, browse the Be You website for educator resources related to supporting children and young people with developmental delay or disability.

Fact Sheets

Gain knowledge and to share information with your learning community.

- [Overview of mental health services](#)
- [Help-seeking in early childhood](#)
- [Help-seeking for children and young people in schools](#)
- [Recommending additional support](#)

Webinars

Learn from the Be You team and other educators across Australia through sessions, events and webinars.

- [Supporting Children with Complex Needs](#)
- [Professional Boundaries and Difficult Conversations](#)

Educator wellbeing

Wellbeing Tools for You is a collection of online apps and resources that Be You has compiled for educators. This resource offers guidance and practical strategies to look after your wellbeing, and to put yourself in a better position to support others in your care.

Join Be You today

Join **Be You** today and be part of building lasting positive mental health and wellbeing for children and young people in Australia.

The best way to sign up is as a **Be You Learning Community**, giving you access to the full range of resources and support from a Be You Consultant.

Be You resources include free online interactive sessions and events, accredited Professional Learning, Fact Sheets, a Programs Directory, planning and implementation tools, and more.

[Get in touch](#) to find out how Be You can support your early learning service or school.

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