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**Early Years Transition Project: 'Supporting Smooth Transitions'**

*Report of Director of Children's Services*

Author(s): Mireille MacRaild, Education Services Director - Early Years,  
Herts for Learning Ltd

Tel: 07990774310

**1. Purpose of the report**

To update Schools Forum on the Early Years Transition Project.

**2. Summary**

Attached is a progress report on the Early Years Transition Project prepared by Herts for Learning.

**3. Recommendations:**

Forum is asked to **note** and comment on the report.

## **Transition Project: 'Supporting Smooth Transitions'**

### **Context**

The principles of the transition project were agreed by Schools Forum and commissioned by HCC in June 2019. The specifications of the project were agreed by a cross sector working party to match stakeholder need and user engagement.

It was agreed that the purpose of the transition project is to support transition from Early years providers into Nursery and Reception classes in primary schools, to review and develop smooth transition processes for children aged between 3 and 5 years across Hertfordshire and ensure that the information shared between settings better enables children to get off to the best possible start when they move into primary school.

The identification of children with potential barriers to a smooth transition will help practitioners adapt practice to meet children's needs, particularly those at risk of not reaching expected levels of attainment, thereby working as part of a broader plan to close the disadvantage and inequality gaps.

Work on the project began promptly in June 2019. The aim was to build on current good practice, identify the potential barriers to a smooth transition for some children and provide professional development opportunities, including contact with specialist professionals who can offer advice with cohort needs when children move into school.

### **Key Activity: Autumn 2019**

Website landing pages were created to signpost schools and settings to details of the project.

A dedicated email address [eytransition@hertsforlearning.co.uk](mailto:eytransition@hertsforlearning.co.uk) was set up for queries and mail outs so that information about the project is directed to the right personnel in the timeliest way.

A set of risks were considered that could potentially prevent school readiness for children that informed the initial identification of schools that would benefit from an advisory visit focussed on transition.

60 schools across Hertfordshire were selected to take part in the first round of transition visits. The schools identified had wide FSM gaps, a decline in GLD from 2018, were not currently purchasing support from HfL for Early Years (EY), and had not been part of the EY Brokerage grant funded visits. The focus of the visits was current transition processes for children joining the school nursery class. The visits were designed to be short (2 hour max), information sharing visits that provided an opportunity to support schools to further improve their current transition processes and to identify those with already strong practice. A follow up record of the visit was sent afterwards for practitioner reference. During the visit, a transition audit tool was used to provide a framework for professional dialogue about current processes. The audit tool highlights the desirable practises for schools when planning transition and takes into account the most effective processes that will support the children, the families and the school. The school also received a copy of the completed audit for future use.

## Key Findings from transition visits

Some of the originally identified schools were unable to participate in the project. In most cases these schools were replaced by another; however, delayed responses from some schools has altered the numbers of schools that actually took part. Out of the 60 schools selected, 54 were visited. From the visits, schools were RAYG rated using the audit tool to ascertain how current processes may look across Hertfordshire. The findings are detailed in the tables below.

Table 1: Percentage of effective transition procedures across the 54 schools visited by district

District	Number of Schools visited	Red - minimal	Amber - emerging	Yellow - effective	Green - enhanced	% schools with transition processes that are at least effective
Broxbourne	3	1	1	1		33%
Dacorum	14		7	7		50%
East Herts	8	1	2	3	2	63%
Hertsmere	3		1	1	1	66%
North Herts	4		1	1	2	75%
Stevenage	3				3	100%
St Albans	6			4	2	100%
Three Rivers	3			3		100%
Watford	5	1	2	2		40%
Welwyn & Hatfield	5		1		4	80%

Table 2: Overall percentage of effective transition procedures across 54 schools visited

	Red – minimal	Amber - emerging	Yellow - effective	Green - enhanced
<b>Number of schools</b>	3	15	22	14
<b>% of Schools</b>	6%	28%	41%	26%
<b>Overall number and % of schools with processes that are at least effective</b>				36/54 (67%)

Schools rated red have limited processes that have been in place for a long time. Their key characteristic is that they do not change to reflect the needs of an incoming cohort or to support the parent/carers. The transition support for children identified with SEN/D was also an area of development for two of the schools. Two of the schools were not familiar with any transition policy being in place and two schools do not currently carry out home visits.

Overall, 42 schools carry out home visits, 38 schools carry out visits to settings. Five schools do not carry out either home or setting visits.

Throughout the visits, EY advisers using the tool noticed some gaps and, on reflection, there may have been some inconsistency in the use of the audit, which in some cases gave schools a higher RAYG rating than warranted. This has been reviewed and the tool updated to make it clearer and less 'open to interpretation'.

### **Impact**

- Every school visited is aware of the transition project
- The audit tool facilitated reflective discussion of current transition processes and enabled schools to identify clearly where they could improve processes
- Schools have been challenged on a number of concerns including staggered starts, how schools are supporting SEN/D and disadvantaged children, what schools do to support families through transition and sharing of information with other professionals
- All schools that replied (20) to a feedback survey stated that they found the audit tool useful and will use this again to evaluate their practice.

### **Transition Surgeries**

Five transition surgeries were held across the county, in Watford, Hemel, Ware, Stevenage and Hatfield. These were attended by 190 practitioners from 87 schools. This provided access to a range of multi professionals, such as speech and language therapists (SALT), Inclusion Development Officers from Integrated Services for Learning, Virtual school colleagues, Family Centre representatives and EY advisers. School practitioners were able to discuss concerns regarding disadvantaged and vulnerable pupils to receive guidance on how best to adapt provision to meet their needs and identify further pathways for support. In some cases schools took this opportunity to send their EYFS team who gathered information and planned together how they would use this to adapt practice.

### **Impact**

Many delegates spent time discussing support for children with speech and language delay with SALT; consequently feedback indicates that they increased confidence to make a referral.

Almost all delegates stated that they would do something as a result of attending:

- share information with other staff members
- use ideas to support working with parents
- signpost to available support at family centre due to increased knowledge of what is available,
- liaise more with the school SENCo.

The Virtual school reported that *'Teachers did not know who their designated teacher for CLA and Post CLA was. They were not aware that there was also a designated practitioner with a parallel role in PVI settings'*. We hope the impact has been that teachers do now know this and ensure effective support for CLA and post CLA children

## Spring 2020

During the spring term, the main focus of project activity has been to finalise development of the transition toolkit, including the transition level of need criteria and tool for use across the sector. Visits to schools, nursery schools and PVI settings have taken place to trial the tools and check understanding of the criteria to ensure they are user-friendly and fit for purpose.

The following additional events were utilised to further raise the profile of the transition level of need criteria and tool:

- Presentations at Family Centre networks to share information on the transition level of need criteria and barriers to learning
- Meetings with day nursery, pre-school chains and the nursery school head teacher group
- Attendance at HCC HT, governor & PVI briefings
- Slides included in HfL HT seminars to 245 delegates
- Slides included in Annual Programme breakfast briefings to 36 schools
- Articles provided to HCC for Best Start news, including numbers of 'reads' of the transition articles
  - March- focus on introducing the toolkit - 1062 views
  - April- promoting the briefing and toolkit – 1306 views
  - May- promoting completion of the toolkit – 1134 views

The **transition toolkit** was launched in March (9.3.2020). Hard copies are yet to be fully distributed, but all materials are available for electronic download through the [HfL website](#) and the [Hertfordshire grid for learning](#).

## Impact

The transition page on the Herts for Learning website has received 7,081 hits between January and May 2020. The transition page on the Herts Grid for Learning has received 304 hits.

"Thank you so much for the all the wonderful resources you have put together. I have been exploring them this morning and they are so helpful and will be particularly useful I think in the current climate." Katie Dean, Deputy Head and SENCO, Puller Memorial Primary School

The transition toolkit : Analysis of the download data between March and end of May 2020		
Contents page	499 downloads	NB practitioners like to have a hard copy list of contents
Ready schools – zip file (section 2 – 35)	1013 downloads	Main section for schools; includes the level of need tool
Introduction (Section 1)	1413 downloads	Science behind transition project
Level of need tool	476 downloads	Representing individual downloads of the level of need tool over above those completed from the Ready schools zip file.
Transition record ( section 29) digital version	1703 downloads	Indicating a move to a more standardised approach
Ready Families zip file ( section 36 – 41)	909 downloads	This section includes all relevant documents for schools to use for working with families
Induction powerpoint (section 14)	651 downloads	Feedback indicates schools are finding this particularly useful
Ready Child zip file ( section 42 – 45)	344 downloads	Interesting to note that at this stage there seems to be less interest in accessing materials that schools can use to support children's move into their class. This may be the Covid-19 factor or time of reporting.

### Supporting Smooth Transition briefings to launch the toolkit and level of need tool

Face to face briefings were delivered to delegates representing 70 schools at 3 sessions delivered in early March. At these sessions the 70 schools attending received a hard copy of the transition toolkit.

### Summer term 2020

Due to COVID 19 restrictions the planned face to face briefings required adaptation. HfL EY team and HfL IT teams worked swiftly to develop a digital solution to enable practitioners to access the briefing information at a time convenient to them.

A pre-recorded **Transition briefing** was produced and made accessible to all schools and settings on the HfL website. The briefing is freely accessible on the website and between April and May 2020 has been accessed 3,823 times, representing 192 schools and 175 PVI settings; 390 practitioners to date.

98% of delegates reported that they found the briefing easy to understand and 79% of delegates stated they were confident to complete the transition level of need tool after watching the briefing; those who were not confident were contacted and individual support provided as required.

Evaluation analysis identified that 53% of delegates requested further support with completing the level of need tool and 25% requiring support in receiving and collating the information.

In response to this feedback a further three webinars were delivered at different times of the day to provide a demonstration on how to complete the transition level of need tool and share further information. These were accessed by a total of 451 people, representing 186 schools, 100 PVI settings and 30 childminders. Within the live webinar delegates were able to ask questions and gain an immediate response from the early years advisers.

Feedback from the evaluations showed 97% now feel confident and are ready to complete the transition level of need tool after attending the webinar. Again further support was offered to those who stated they were not confident. 95% stated they were confident to share the training with their colleagues. 100% stated that they know what to do next to support transitions.

Digital delivery has enabled practitioners to access the briefing and webinars multiple times, if they wished to.

A recording of the live webinars is freely accessible on the website and between April and May 2020 has been accessed 1,530 times following the live sessions.

Support has been provided to schools and settings to enable them to complete the transition level of need tool and share the information. The Early years advisers and consultants have been available to provide support by phone and MS Teams to individual settings and schools.

Contact made with the PVI sector in the summer term include a focussed discussion on transition and support to complete the transition level of need tool. Due to the closure of many settings and the furloughing of staff HfL PVI consultants and CBIs have liaised closely to strongly encourage those settings to continue to complete the transition level of need tool. Each of these settings have been emailed by the HCC Early years strategy manager and HfL Education Services director for Early years.

The dedicated transition email inbox is monitored daily and queries replied to within 48 hours. HfL early years advisers and HfL IT teams have been able to support schools and settings remotely with queries around completing the transition level of need tool, (144 queries have been received, April and May; 78 schools, 59 PVIs, and 4 CMs).

### **Submission of the level of need tool overview data**

PVI early years settings and nursery schools have been encouraged to complete the level of need tool with children's information and send to the receiving schools by 15<sup>th</sup> May. Due to the COVID 19 restrictions, some settings have been closed and the submission of this data to schools has been delayed. The planned submission dates have been extended for both PVI settings and for schools to submit the information to HfL. Currently schools are working to submit the data to HfL by 15<sup>th</sup> June. This will be extended to the end of June, where required.

At the beginning of June, 40 schools had submitted their transition level of need tool overviews to inform HfL planning of targeted support and transition visits in the autumn term. Schools with greater numbers of children with higher levels of need will be shared with HCC to ensure deployment of resource is managed as efficiently as possible.

School practitioners are using the overall cohort level of need information to plan effective transition support for individual and groups of children. Referring to the level of need support planner is helping to guide practitioners with transition activities over the next few months.

COVID 19 guidance has resulted in implications for usual transition practice. To further support schools and settings a blog was written to help schools consider how they could adapt their transition activities to take into account social distancing measures. The blog received 624 views on the HfL website and a further 176 on social media.

Feedback from schools colleagues also indicated the need for school administrators to understand the process. In response to this HfL included a session in the school business managers' (SBM) briefing to which reached 100 SBMs.

### Training to Help Preparations for the Autumn term

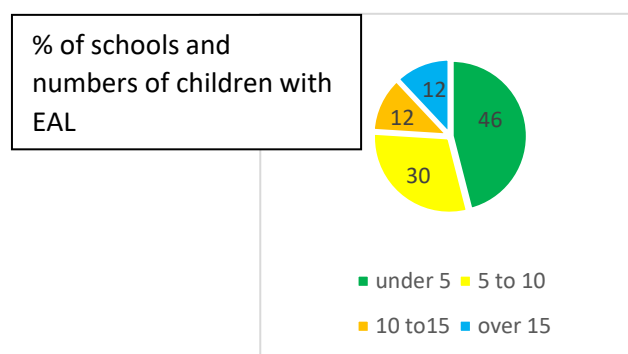
**'Are you ready?' workshops** for nursery and Reception staff in schools are being delivered. These focus on the prime areas of learning, to support professional development opportunities that will help equip staff with information and ideas of how to best support these fundamental areas of learning and development from the moment children start school. They can choose to access all or just those pertinent to their cohort needs.

As of 5<sup>th</sup> June the following delegate bookings have been received:

- Personal social and emotional development 234
- Communication and language 226
- SEND 206
- Physical 184.

Workshops will be delivered by live webinar, with input from HfL early year's team, HfL SEND adviser (SEND workshop), and occupational therapists (physical workshop).

The first live webinar focussed on supporting children with English as an additional language (EAL); attended by 155 practitioners.



**12 district focussed 'Transition Information Sharing' events** were planned for June and July to give professionals the opportunity to share information about children transitioning from early years settings into school in September 2020. Due to Covid 19 the transition information sharing events have been reorganised into a pre-booked phone call/MS teams meeting between each school and setting. Each district is allocated a specific day for the information sharing. PVI settings provide information to HfL on the schools they wish to make contact with. HfL is matching professionals across the sector to support facilitation of discussions about children due to start at school. This should give the practitioners time to explore the initial information provided through the transition level of need tool and discuss children's holistic development to inform transition support for September 2020. Due to the change in plans this is being closely monitored to assess the effectiveness of this process.



## Key findings

Social media proves to be a very effective way of keeping in touch with practitioners, sharing key messages and promoting CPD opportunities.

Remote delivery has enabled training messages to reach greater numbers of Hertfordshire practitioners across the sector. It has enabled access to more practitioners per setting and the opportunity to revisit learning through the website recorded sessions.

Webinar facility enables more responsive feedback tailored to delegate queries which has supported the pace of change to meet Covid 19 restrictions.

Qualitative feedback is indicating that the early receipt of the transition level of need information is enabling schools to address the needs of children with potential barriers to a smooth transition sooner rather than later in the term.

Information sharing has promoted increased PVI and school partnership working to support families during transition.

Covid 19 has resulted in closure of many PVI settings and the furloughing of their staff teams. This is causing a delay in them forwarding of the transition level of need tool to schools and may limit the amount of settings sharing information.

Despite Covid 19 all HfL contract activity has been implemented in an adjusted fashion and additional staff and activity has been put in place to enable digital transformation of training and events.

## Next steps

- Receive the level of need tool cohort overviews from schools
- Review and update the risk stratification to include the levels of intensive, personalised and targeted children in each school.
- Complete a suite of 'home learning cards' to be made available for digital download on the website. Hard copy packs of cards to be printed and distributed to schools, a pack for each child starting reception class in school in September.
- Identify 60 schools for focussed transition visit in the autumn term. Review current visit format, using feedback from the schools visited in autumn 2019 and themes identified from analysis of the level of need overviews.
- Plan 5 district surgeries to enable school practitioners to access advice and guidance from professionals. These will be offered as live webinars with opportunity to post questions prior to the session. Review feedback from 2019 surgeries and invite professionals. Schedule transition surgeries to enable increased engagement of multi-professionals.
- Consider whether it would be beneficial to offer the PVI sector the opportunity to engage in an event similar to the transition surgeries where there are multi-professionals in one room.
- Review level of need tool and make amendments
- Review toolkit documents and develop new documents
- Continue to gather feedback from key stakeholders and make any adjustments to the tools created.