

Transitional arrangements form a core component of the revised SEN Code of Practice (2014), which highlights the importance of supporting children and young people through key changes in their life, such as moving school, puberty, family break-up or sudden illness. Effective transitional arrangements provide an increased likelihood of improving employability, health and independent living, along with greater opportunities to participate in society. Anticipatory support through co-ordinated services is essential to ensure provision is planned for well in advance and is able to meet the individual needs of children and young people.

What does the SEN Code of Practice say?

The Code focuses upon transitional arrangements for all children and young people with SEN and disabilities from birth to 25 years, outlining the mandatory obligations for local authorities alongside the key responsibilities of schools, colleges and other agencies. The focus is upon a staged process over several months or years, planning for outcomes to ensure there are no surprises and every eventuality has been considered, whilst ensuring the views of the child are central throughout.

What is the role of the local authority?

Local authorities (LAs) have a statutory duty to ensure their communities are aware of the provision available within the locality through the local offer, which is published on their website. LAs are a central source of local information sharing, the aim being to provide more information at the outset to alleviate the often stressful and complex process which parents and children have frequently found themselves wrapped up in. The LA should, therefore, ensure information is available which is accessible and accurate, regarding the provision available, what to expect and when to expect it, the transitional arrangements process and who to go to for advice and support. The LA must also provide information regarding provision at higher education along with details regarding Disabled Student Allowance.

It is the duty of the LA to ensure the child or young person with an EHCP is provided with all the support needed to participate in discussion regarding their future provision. This may be through an

Time for Transition

Pearl Barnes explains how to take some of the stress and strain out of key periods of transition for pupils with SEN

The focus [of the SEND Code of Practice] is upon a staged process over several months or years

independent support worker, a sign-language interpreter or through use of signs and symbols.

LAs also have a duty to cooperate with schools and colleges to ensure any provision or support that is highlighted as necessary is acted upon. They must also cooperate with post-16 education and care providers to ensure children and young people are appropriately supported as they progress into adulthood.

What is the role of schools/colleges?

The responsibility of schools and colleges, from the outset of identification of an SEN, is to plan for adulthood. Where a child or young person has an EHC Plan, transition planning **must** be built into the revised plan and should result in clear outcomes being agreed that will prepare the individual for later life. The directives explicitly describe the duty to:

- be child-centred
- explore the child's aspirations and abilities
- understand what the child wants to do post-16
- provide the support they need
- provide a clear explanation of how personal budgets can be used.

It is the responsibility of schools and colleges to be child-centred

EHCP:

It is particularly important that schools and colleges recognise the various alternatives available when considering the future needs of the individual with an EHCP, including the option of young people attending courses at further education (FE) from the age of 14. Hence, the focus of each annual review post Year 9 should include discussions regarding transition to the next phase and beyond to prepare for adulthood. A transition plan must be detailed and reviewed annually thereafter to ensure the trajectory is set for improved future outcomes. The plan must identify the lead professional for coordinating care and referral to services and there is a duty upon health and social care services to cooperate with them.

THE MORE EXPERIENTIAL THE BETTER

Many children and young people, however, may not be aware, or have experience of, the wide array of courses and options available to them; in order to help them make an informed choice, schools and colleges should organise events for young people to experience the

range of opportunities on offer. This may be through taster days, visiting a new setting and the use of symbols or photographs and other visual media to convey information. The more experiential these are the better, as this would provide the opportunity for young people to actively consider what and where they feel they would be able to excel and find fulfillment.

It is also worth remembering that post-compulsory school age (the end of the academic year that the individual turns 16), the rights of young people shift under

the Children and Families Act (2014), giving them the right to make their own choices, which supersede those of their parents and other professionals, making it more imperative that they are fully aware of the choices available to them and how they can meet their aspirations. Moreover, there is a statutory duty to ensure all students from Y8 to Y13 (or age 25 if they have an EHC plan) are provided with independent careers advice, including all academies, free schools and pupil referral units.

Best practice in supporting transition

Although experiences, and associated stresses, may differ greatly at various key stages, many of the support structures which can be offered to alleviate the anxiety can be adopted universally. Generally speaking, the key factors for enabling a smooth transition are:

- knowing the individual's perspective and triggers for anxiety
- working with the child and family to provide information well in advance to pre-prepare them for what will happen
- allocate adequate time to the transitional process – begin months or years in advance
- use staff who know the child and family well and who enable them to feel at ease
- listen to the child and family; what do they want? What are their hopes, dreams and aspirations?
- consider the physical constraints of the new environment and where any special adaptations may be required
- consider future needs, in terms of the allocation of resources and/or staff
- ensure specialised equipment is available in advance of the transition
- ensure information is shared between different schools, and staff within schools.

*Pre-prepare them
for what will
happen*

Early years to primary to secondary

Children and families should be given the opportunity to choose from the range of opportunities on offer, for instance, between specialist and mainstream provision, after visiting each setting. Each agency involved in service delivery should attend annual review meetings and children should be provided with the opportunity to visit the new setting regularly with a trusted adult, along with opportunities to meet the other pupils who will also be starting at the school. Other preparation activities could include:

- **photographing the new staff and talking through their names regularly with the child**
- **developing a transition book in collaboration with the child or young person**
- **photographing areas of the school/setting to improve familiarity and reduce anxiety**
- **gradually building up the time spent at the new setting; don't expect the child to be able to adapt to the setting immediately, but build in a slow transition for perhaps just a few minutes to a few hours. This may begin by being supported**

to finally the child requiring little or no support from a professional at the previous setting

- **walking the child through the routes they will take to school and within school**
- **social stories to talk through the many changes in expectation which will occur when moving between settings.**

Moving from primary or middle to secondary school can be a daunting process for many young people, as the new setting is often substantially larger and far less familiar. Young people will find themselves in a number of different classes with different teachers and unfamiliar students, who may not know their individual needs as well as their former primary school teacher. What's more, the student may find themselves away from their friends and support network; their whole world could be turned upside down. The Code is very clear that "all teachers are ultimately responsible and accountable for the progress and development of the pupils in their class, including where they access additional support", and therefore the greater the information, knowledge and understanding they have regarding the individual, the more effective their differentiation and support strategies will be. But how does a large setting share information about pupils with often complex needs to ensure all teachers have adequate information and can access specialist advice and support?

Their whole world [when moving from Primary to Secondary] could be turned upside down!

How does a large secondary school share information about pupils with complex needs, to ensure all teachers have adequate information?

Use of ICT can vastly improve the quality of information sharing, provided that teachers access the information. Some examples of how to aid transitional arrangements through information sharing are:

- prior to school entry, ensure the setting is physically accessible and any adjustments are made well in advance: E.g. painting white or yellow lines on steps
- complete a previous school/transition questionnaire for the SENCO and ensure documentation is passed between settings
- collate a pupil passport or pupil profile and share through the school intranet the information about the pupil's needs and how they are best supported in class
- ensure all staff are aware of any specific needs which may manifest across the whole school and not just in class, through a regular whole-school pastoral meeting (at least one a term)
- where specific concerns suddenly arise, invite all staff who teach the individual to a case conference meeting to discuss them
- ensure a time is available every day for updates to be shared with all staff
- subject teachers should allow time to discuss individual needs with their TAs regularly to ensure adequate support and transition at class level

- allocate SEN Champions within each subject area to be a conduit for sharing information
- ensure annual reviews focus upon key transition points and the options available
- involve the SENCO at every parents' evening to discuss ongoing transitional needs
- make sure there is a lead professional/keyworker allocated to the family to aid the transitional process
- publish the school's/college's transitional arrangements on the school website through the SEN Report
- involve the student's view and that of the parents at every level.

Transition to adult services

Transition to adult services can be a particularly stressful time as the young person takes on more independence and may move out of their local area. The transition plan must explore all the options available, including traineeships, supported internships, apprenticeships, work-based placements, higher education colleges or university.

Any work-related reasonable adjustments must be considered in partnership with health and social care and each agency has a duty to cooperate to ensure the individual needs are fully supported. Access to Work funding is available to facilitate access.

Transition to higher education (HE) can be an exciting time for many young people, with high achievement possible given the correct support. The following are examples of best practice when anticipating a student attending higher education:

- ensure the student is fully aware of any entitlement to Disabled Students Allowance (DSA) which can be made through Student Finance England
- the EHC plan must be passed to the DSA assessor
- although the EHC Plan ceases on entry to HE, there is a responsibility upon the HE provider to use their best endeavours to secure the SEN provision needed by the student, which must not be charged for.
- provide opportunities for the student to visit as many settings as possible; look at all the options and courses available
- ask to speak with the Disability Officer at each setting
- universities are not allowed to discriminate against a disability; if a student is able to meet the academic rigor of the course or university, reasonable adjustments must be made
- consider accommodation and independent living; is there any specific equipment which is needed to ensure access to the accommodation?

There is a responsibility upon HE providers to use their best endeavours to secure SEN provision needed by students with SEND

- where personal care is needed, a personal care plan should be drawn up which identifies who provides support.

All agencies have a duty to support children and young people with identified SEN throughout the key stages of their lives, to alleviate additional stresses and plan for adulthood. Where transitional arrangements form a core focus of service provision, young people and their families feel more supported and more able to make informed choices about their future and feel in greater control over their own destiny.

Further information

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