



PLANNING FOR LIFE AFTER 16

The transition process

Some definitions

'Transition' means 'change' and is the term used by the *SEN Code of Practice* (published 2001) to refer to the period between 13 – 19 years (or 25 in the case of young people with learning difficulties). Parents should be aware that professionals have in recent years begun to use the term 'transition' for any move between different phases of education, e.g. from nursery to school, or from primary to secondary school, but this factsheet is specifically about Transition in the sense of supporting adolescents with SEN into adulthood.

The 'Transition Process' is the term used for the statutory framework designed to identify any services or support the young person will need, and ensure they are delivered. The process is set out in the *SEN Code of Practice* and in section 10 of the *SEN Toolkit*, entitled *Transition Planning*. See below for details of how to obtain these publications.

Points to note

As is always the case when it comes to SEN, it is advisable to make sure you know what the guidelines say and check that they are properly implemented. This is particularly important if your son or daughter has a high level of need and is likely to require a lot of support from a number of different services.

The formal Transition Process only applies to young people with statements. If your son or daughter does not have a statement and you are concerned that he or she will need professional help to make a smooth transition to adult life, see the relevant section below for further guidance.

The time-scale

The process should begin in year 9 at the latest. This may seem early, especially if your son or daughter is not due to leave school for some years, but it is designed to allow plenty of time to make informed decisions and arrange for the necessary support. Remember that everything can take twice as long and be twice as complicated when it involves anything to do with SEN.

It is advisable to try and work to the following time-scale:

- > Year 9, Consider with your son or daughter their aspirations and preferences, and start exploring the options
- > Year 10, Having identified possible future directions, visit colleges and schools as appropriate and arrange any relevant work experience
- > Year 11, Firm up your plans and, if your son or daughter is leaving (their current) school this year, submit in good time applications for courses at colleges or other schools if appropriate, or for work/training placements

This is a general guideline. Do bear in mind that you may have to revisit parts of the process, sometimes several times, as your son or daughter clarifies his or her plans. And, of course, you may have longer if your son or daughter is staying at the same school until he or she is 18 or 19.

Annual Reviews

The annual review in year 9, which is often called the Transition Review, should start to consider the young person's options and needs as he or she moves towards adult life. Bear in mind that, as with all annual reviews, reports and other relevant paperwork should be circulated at least two weeks before the meeting. Make sure you do receive copies in advance, as they will form the basis of the discussions at the meeting. Remember, too, that, as parents, you have the right to submit your own written report.

Following the review meeting, a Transition Plan should be drawn up, summarising the decisions that were agreed. Subsequent annual reviews should review the Transition Plan and modify it if necessary. The head teacher is responsible for ensuring that a Transition Plan is drawn up, but usually delegates the job of writing it to the young person's Connexions personal adviser (PA). A representative of the Connexions service, usually the PA, **must** attend the year 9 annual review. See the fact sheet on *Connexions* for more information about the Connexions service.

The Transition Plan

The Transition Plan should specify the support the young person needs, or will need, to enable him or her to make a smooth move into adulthood.

It should be based on the information supplied by the young person him or herself and everyone involved with him or her: parents, school, other services e.g. speech and language therapy etc. The Transition Plan should be holistic in nature, looking at all aspects of a young person's current and future life, not only education and possible careers but also things like leisure activities, housing and travel. Responsibility for providing different forms of support should be clearly allocated to specific services or professionals. As Transition planning is a continuous and evolving process, the Transition Plan should be reviewed regularly (at the very least at each annual review) and revised if necessary.

Leaving school

The head teacher and Connexions service both have a duty to arrange the transfer of relevant information when your son or daughter moves on to a college or training provider, though the Connexions PA should ask his or her permission first. This information should include a copy of their section 139a assessment, statement, school records and other information. However, it is always possible for paperwork to go astray, be incomplete or contain errors. So you are well advised to talk to the college or other provider yourself to make sure they have understood your son or daughter's needs. For more information about section 139a assessments, see the relevant factsheet.

When young people leave school, their statements cease to have any validity and they will no longer have annual reviews. But this does not necessarily mean the Transition planning process comes to an end. Theoretically, PAs should maintain contact with young people until they are 19, or 25 if the young person has particularly severe or complex needs, though it should be noted that sometimes a different PA takes over when a young person leaves school. However, in areas where Connexions are facing significant financial cuts, they may no longer be able to continue to support young people whose statement has been discontinued.

Social Services

Social Services are the main agency providing support to adults with disabilities who need help to cope with daily living. They also support some children with disabilities, mainly through 'short breaks'.

The head teacher **must** invite Social Services to the year 9 annual review, so that, if required, they can become involved in Transition planning and start arranging the support the young person will need. Parents should, however, be aware that social services do not generally consider SLI to meet their definition of a disability, and so are unlikely to attend review meetings unless the school makes it clear to them that the young person in question will probably need substantial support in adult life.

If you think your son or daughter is likely to need help from social services as an adult, talk to the school and see if they can convince them to attend the Transition Review. Failing that, contact them yourself. Remember that you are entitled to request a community care assessment at any time. For more information about social services see the relevant factsheet.

Young people without Statements

There is no formal Transition Process for young people without statements, though it is advisable to ask for Transition Planning to be included in your son or daughter's IEP. Do bear in mind, too, that he or she may also qualify for:

- > A section 139a assessment, if he or she is likely to need additional learning support at college or in a training placement.
- > Enhanced support from a Connexions PA if he or she is likely to struggle to make a successful transition to adult life.

The fact sheet on *Connexions* gives more information about personal advisers and their general duty to support particularly vulnerable young people through adolescence and into adulthood. Do, however, bear in mind that in recent years many Connexions services have had their funding cut and some are no longer able to offer a PA to young people without statements. If you think your son or daughter would benefit from enhanced Connexions support, it is worth discussing this with his or her school. They may have been allocated a link PA. Even if not, they should know whether it is still possible to make a referral and, if so, can do this for you. Failing that, try contacting your local Connexions service directly to ask for support from a PA with appropriate specialist skills.

Incidentally, if you feel that your son or daughter needs a section 139a assessment, or enhanced support from Connexions, it might be worth considering whether he or she should have a statement. Many families go for many years under the (mis)apprehension that their son or daughter's needs are 'relatively mild' only to realise as they approach school leaving age just how far behind other young people they are. Remember that, as parents, you have a statutory right to request a formal assessment of your son or daughter's special educational needs (this is the process that must, in law, precede the issuing of a statement) but only until he or she reaches 16.

Further information

The *SEN Code of Practice* and *SEN Toolkit* can be obtained free of charge from the publications helpline of the DfE (Department for Education), tel: **0845 602 2260**, quoting reference nos. 581/2001 for the *SEN Code of Practice* and 558/2001 for the *SEN Toolkit*.