

Planning for a positive future – navigating transition

Families are often concerned about what will happen when their child leaves full-time education and moves to adult social care services, but if managed properly it can be a positive experience. Guy Page explains more.

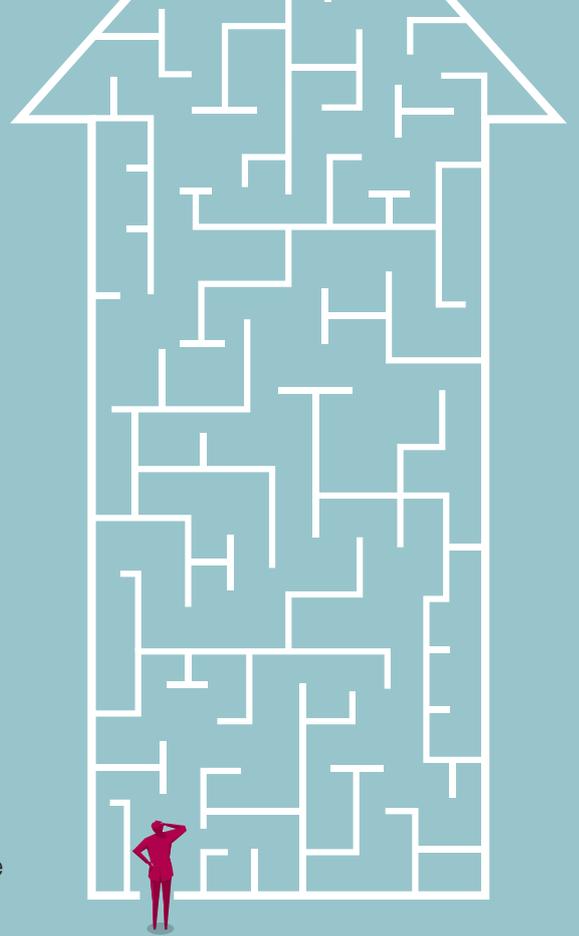
For many young people, planning ahead does not go much beyond plans for the next weekend. However, for young people with disabilities and their families, looking into the future is a worthwhile exercise as so much of what you do at a young age can impact your life later on. One of the more difficult times for parents or carers can be when your child transfers from local authority children's care to adult services when they reach 18. They may already be receiving support from lots of different agencies, including health, social care and education, and these will all change as they approach adulthood. From a social care perspective, in England and Wales, this is known as 'transition' – moving into adulthood.

The transition period can be an uncertain time for your child; they are likely to be changing school or college, they may move away from home and also be leaving the professionals they have known, and been supported by, for many years. It is understandable that some young people may see the move to adult services as a leap into the unknown. It can also be a tricky time for you as a family. You may find it a struggle adjusting to dealing with new professionals and new ways of working. All parents know they need to start preparing for their children to leave home, but in reality, it's natural to have concerns about the future. This is why it is important to make sure there is time for adequate and sensitive preparation. Preparation will help give your child the knowledge, skills and confidence to move forward into adulthood.

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Transition can be a positive experience, but it is essential to start understanding the whole process as early as possible, preferably when your child is 14 to 15 years of age. This gives families time to plan, see what is available and look at options for the future.





One of the most important things is continuity and getting the transition right first time. If left too late, options can be limited and may not be right for your son or daughter. It could mean that their first move into adulthood doesn't go as smoothly as it could.

The first steps

In particular, the year leading up to the handover to adult services is an important one and is the time to prepare as much as possible. Your child will have an assessment of their needs and a transition plan will be written, with your child and their wishes always being at the centre.

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Your child's transition plan should draw together information from a range of professionals who are all involved in supporting them. By involving as many people in your child's life as possible, the aim is to clearly define their needs and what they want to achieve in the future. Your child's wishes for the future should be integral to the plan.

This is also the time that information about legislation and eligibility criteria for services will be made available to you. You will also learn about the types of adult services that are out there.

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The local authority will be responsible for assessing your child's social care support needs and arranging the support they are eligible for. Your child should be offered the option of taking a personal budget which sets out the costs of any services for which they are eligible. They may also be offered the option to take this personal budget as a direct payment, which is a cash payment to buy the support they need to meet their needs.



➔ Finding a service

Once your child's future is planned out you may want to find the right services to meet their needs. The first step to finding the right service in transition is to ask questions and get as much information as possible. If your child has been fully involved in the transition plan, you will know their wishes for the future. Speak to your child's care manager about opportunities in the area, what services the local authority knows of, what the assessment says your child's specific support needs are and how they can best be met.

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If you are looking at specific services, such as supported or independent living, it is important to visit them and take a good look around. This will help you and your child get a feeling for the living environment, see who already lives there and how they enjoy their lives. If they have friends, it may be that they all want to live together, so it may be an option to look for somewhere that they can share. Living with others is as much about personalities as it is support, so your child needs to feel comfortable, supported to live their lives as independently as possible and happy with their neighbours or housemates.

Growing up

For any parent, watching their child leave home can be hard. Your child will be living a more independent life and it can be a tough transition for the parents. Transition is a significant part of a young person's life so everybody involved should to be as prepared as possible.

Young people need to think about what they want from their lives long before they turn 18. By developing these wishes, hopes and aspirations, you have a clear idea of where your child wants to be as they head into adulthood; what they want to do and where they want to live.

Transition can be difficult to navigate and it relies on clear communication between local authorities, schools and colleges as well as with service providers. Dedicated transitions care managers are starting to be introduced in more local authorities and they can be a real help to young people coming through the process. Ask your local authority if they have someone who can navigate the transition process with you and your child as they can really enhance the experience and the opportunities your child may be able to access.

Remember that this time of change does not need to be daunting. With careful, early planning it can be a very positive, and exciting, introduction to adulthood.

With thanks to Guy Page, Regard.

