



# Transition

*A quick guide to supporting the needs of pupils and their families  
when moving between educational settings*



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Nasen House  
4/5 Amber Business Village  
Amber Close  
Amington  
Tamworth  
Staffordshire  
B77 4RP  
[www.nasen.org.uk](http://www.nasen.org.uk)

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# Transition

A quick guide to supporting the needs of pupils and their families when moving between educational settings

This guide is for SENCOs, other school staff and parents and carers.



## This guide aims to:

- + set out the key principles underpinning successful transition from one educational setting to another and into training or employment for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities
- + suggest some practical approaches to supporting a smooth transition at different stages in the education process
- + examine processes for transition planning and review in secondary schools
- + identify what schools and disabled young people themselves can do to smooth the transition from school to higher education.

## What is transition?

The term 'transition' is used to refer to life changes that children and young people may go through. Some will be experienced by all children, for example puberty or moving from one educational setting to another. Others will only be experienced by some children and may not necessarily be understood by their peers, for example illness or death in the family, family break-up, going into care, adoption, issues related to sexuality, teenage pregnancy, the asylum process or the consequences of crime.

This quick guide focuses on just one kind of transition – moving into, between and out of educational settings. In particular, it looks at three key transition points – the move from:

- early years to primary school
- primary to secondary school
- secondary school to work, college or university.

Moving from one school or setting to another can be stressful, and while all children and young people benefit from positive experiences of transition, some require additional support. Children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) often find transition more challenging than their peers. This quick guide has some suggestions for what feeder and receiving settings can do to ensure that transition is as smooth as possible for this group.



## Key principles for effective transition

This section outlines the key principles underpinning effective transition for children and young people with SEND. These will apply at any transition point.

### Receiving settings – be prepared!

- Make sure that the setting is accessible. Educational settings are subject to

the Equality Act 2010. This places duties on establishments not to treat disabled people less favourably and to make 'reasonable adjustments' where disabled students are placed at a 'substantial disadvantage'. The duty is anticipatory, ie it does not only arise when a disabled pupil/student is about to join; instead, educational settings should anticipate the requirements of disabled pupils/students and make, in advance, the adjustments they are likely to need.

- Find out early if pupils/students have particular needs and make the necessary adaptations and reasonable adjustments. These should be in place when the pupil or student joins the setting. You can find out a great deal from reading pupil profiles, relevant past reports and supporting documents, such as progress reports, provision maps, education, health and care (EHC) plans and attendance and behaviour data. However, it may be difficult to get a true picture of the capabilities and needs of an individual from paper or electronic records, so create opportunities to get to know the pupils/students better before they join you by, for example:
  - meeting and talking to them and, as appropriate, to their parents, carers, teachers and other key professionals who have worked with them
  - observing them in the 'feeder' setting before they join your setting.

- Prepare your staff. All staff need to have a good understanding of the needs of those due to join the school or setting. Make sure that staff briefing and training take place in good time, so that when pupils or students arrive everyone knows how to make them welcome and secure, how to help them settle in quickly, and can take account of their needs.

## Feeder schools – pave the way!

- Share information with receiving settings. Staff need to understand the implications of an individual's SEND so that they can plan to meet those needs and pass information to the receiving setting in good time. Some settings



compile a profile, which outlines key facts about an individual and highlights points to consider, for example:

- mobility needs
- how the individual communicates
- special measures to support participation or learning, such as allowing additional processing time, breaking tasks down into manageable steps and using visual timetables

- strategies that support positive behaviour, such as giving movement breaks and using 'time out' cards
- care and/or support needs.

- Prepare pupils/students. It is important to listen to them and acknowledge and address any concerns they may have. Encourage them to visit the new setting to get to know the layout, experience the curriculum and meet staff and peers.



- Work with parents/carers. Remember, transition can also be a stressful time for the parents and carers of children and young people with SEND. Working closely with parents will help them to feel confident that they have the right information and are well prepared for the process. Good communication and a consistent approach between home and school will help support children and young people through transition.

One primary school works with its feeder secondary school to buddy up Year 6 pupils with Year 7 pupils. The pupils meet and then correspond online. Primary pupils can ask their online buddies any questions as they arise. Year 7 buddies continue to look out for the new pupils when they join the school.

## Plan to improve transition for vulnerable groups

There is clear evidence that certain groups of pupils find transition particularly difficult, so work with your feeder schools to target those groups. Funding streams such as the pupil premium can be used to help vulnerable groups, and although this funding is not directed specifically at pupils with SEND, approximately 30% of pupils who attract the pupil premium will have SEND (see nasen's quick guide, *The Pupil Premium*). Look out also for government initiatives specifically targeting transition, such as the recent pupil premium-funded summer school programme. A 2013 Department for

One secondary school used its pupil premium to employ a support worker to implement initiatives to improve the attendance of a group of vulnerable pupils. This person also worked with pupils in feeder primary schools and their families. The initiative prevented some attendance difficulties from becoming ingrained, and children joined the secondary school with better attendance and experienced a smoother transition from primary to secondary school than had been seen in previous years.

Another secondary school promoted its pupil premium-funded summer school to eligible children in Year 6 who were about to join the school, along with their younger siblings. The school delivered a two-week sports camp, which offered a wide range of activities chosen to appeal to both girls and boys. As a result of the summer school, the children and their parents and carers became more familiar with the secondary school. Pupils felt confident when they made the transition to secondary, and attendance at school events by parents of the summer school pupils was good. There was a positive effect on the participation and attainment of the summer school pupils. (See *The Pupil Premium: how schools are spending the funding successfully to maximise achievement*, Ofsted, 2013.)

Education report (*The Impact of the Summer Schools Programme*) found that, in general, most pupils who attended summer schools run by their receiving secondary school had fun, made new friends and said they felt more confident about starting secondary school.

## Supporting transition at different stages

### From early years to primary school

- Share relevant documents and information during two-way transition visits, for example:
  - families visiting the school
  - the school carrying out home visits
  - primary staff visiting early years settings
  - staff from early years settings visiting the school.
- Give children an opportunity to visit their new school, accompanied by a familiar adult, and to join in a variety of sessions, including playtimes and lunchtimes.
- Make an 'All about my new school' booklet for each child, with lots of pictures, and discuss it regularly with the child.
- Use stories to explain new situations.
- Give children opportunities to meet key staff, such as their teacher, teaching assistants and any other support staff who will work with them.

### From primary to secondary school

- Give young people an opportunity to visit their new school, accompanied by a family member or a friend. Individuals with mobility or visual difficulties may wish to visit several times to familiarise themselves with the layout. Pupils with learning difficulties may like to take



photographs to help them remember and think about their new setting. Some schools provide opportunities during Year 6 for pupils to visit and experience some classes in their new school.

- Provide pupils with a map of their new school building(s) – colour code subject rooms and highlight important areas such as the cafeteria, toilets, assembly hall and form rooms.





- Make timetables easy to use for individuals, and understand that pupils may get lost and arrive a little late for lessons for a short while.

**One secondary school timetabled classes to be on the ground floor to minimise travelling distance for an ambulant pupil with muscular dystrophy.**

- Create daily checklists so that the correct items are taken to and from school for each day's activities, and use diaries for organising homework.
- Raise pupils' awareness and understanding about particular special needs and disabilities, especially those that are not visible, such as autism. This needs to be done sensitively. With appropriate support and preparation, some pupils may be willing to talk to their peers about their strengths and needs.

**One secondary school offers a virtual school tour online, led by a friendly headteacher avatar. Pupils can watch the tour as many times as they want at home or at school and can email any questions they may have.**

## From secondary school onwards

Schools should help pupils to start planning for their future adult life as early as possible, and by Year 9 at the latest. This should go beyond thinking simply about the transition to post-16 education and training. Schools should focus on raising aspirations and supporting pupils to achieve the best possible outcomes in education, employment, independent living and participation in society.

This could involve, for example:

- including preparation for adulthood in planning meetings with parents and pupils at an early stage
- making sure that careers advice and information provide high expectations

and a wide range of options for pupils with SEND

- helping pupils and parents to understand and explore how the support they receive in school will change as they move into different settings, and what support they are likely to need to achieve their ambitions.

### **Pupils with EHC plans**

For pupils with EHC plans, from Year 9 onwards, the review meeting must consider what provision is required to assist them in preparing for adulthood and independent living. Education providers and local authorities should support young people in a smooth transition to adulthood so that they:

- are prepared when their EHC plan ends
- understand what support is available after they complete their studies
- are helped to prepare for employment,

for example supported in finding employment and job coaches and sourcing any welfare benefits that may be available

- are helped to prepare for independent living, for example given information about housing options and support in finding suitable accommodation
- are able to keep healthy by understanding which health professionals will work with them when they are discharged from children's services, and how adult services will differ from children's services
- are helped to participate in the community, for example by focusing on mobility and using transport systems, and using information about social and community activities
- understand how personal budgets can be used to support preparation for adulthood.

Good transition planning will provide a clear handover to new professionals and services so that young people and their parents know and are confident in who they are dealing with and where they need to go for help.

### **Person-centred planning and review**

The best kind of planning has the young person at its centre. Person-centred planning focuses on the child or young person and what matters to them and their family, rather than merely on processes or services and what is 'right' for the child or young person.





Person-centred planning looks at an individual's capabilities and helps them and their family think about short- and longer-term goals and the support they need to attain those goals. A person-centred review brings together the child, their family and others who can help the child/young

person to achieve their targets. Effective multi-agency engagement in the planning and review process will ensure that professionals work together to help young people experience a smooth transition into adulthood. The outcome of a person-centred review is a person-centred plan.

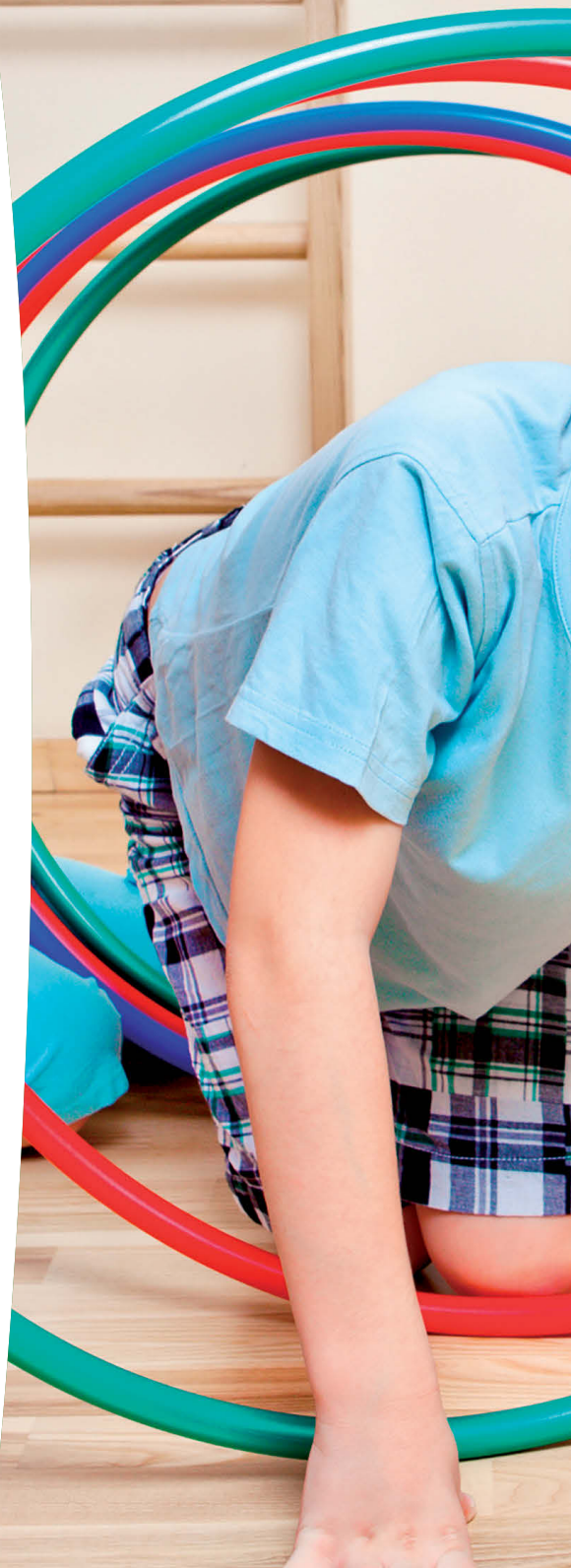


**Listen to this audio clip in which the deputy headteacher of a special school explains the relationship between a person-centred review and person-centred planning – <http://t.co/QKpsJ59U8C/>**

It is important that the child's views and preferences are elicited and taken into account in the meeting and, wherever possible, that the child/young person attends the meeting and participates in it.

**Charlton Park Academy in Greenwich uses multimedia person-centred portfolios to enable pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties to have a voice and participate in review meetings. Find out more at [www.multimediaadvocacy.com/](http://www.multimediaadvocacy.com/)**

A person-centred planning process builds on a shared commitment of everybody involved in a child/young person's life to enable them to achieve the best possible future, in accordance with their aspirations. Person-centred planning and review should be ongoing to allow the plan to be tailored over time.





**Listen to this audio clip in which the deputy headteacher of a special school explains how the pupil voice in his school is kept at the centre of the review process – <http://t.co/QKpsJ59U8C/>**

### **Post-16 options**

At the age of 16, young people with SEND have four options:

- Staying on at school.
- Going to a local further education college or sixth-form college.
- Work-based learning.
- Going to a specialist college.

The choices about their future that pupils face in secondary school can be more complicated for young people with SEND because they need to consider the extra support they will need with their learning or in training or employment.

The principles outlined at the beginning of this guide apply equally at the age of 16 – good preparation and communication are key to a successful transition.

Post-16 providers should have high aspirations for young people with SEN, who may range from those able to progress to higher education to those unable to gain academic qualifications.

**Listen to these audio clips in which the deputy headteacher of a special school discusses some issues associated with person-centred planning – <http://t.co/QKpsJ59U8C/>**

Colleges should use their best endeavours to ensure that young people with SEN:

- have access to a wide range of study programmes and support at all levels to enable them to achieve good life outcomes
- are on appropriate courses
- have the support they need to succeed
- are helped to make a successful transition from college to adult life and employment.

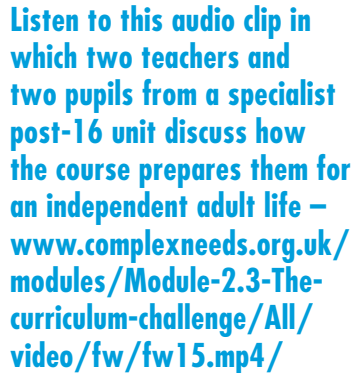
To achieve this, post-16 providers should:

- draw on assessments from students' previous educational settings
- discuss students' needs with them and their families and involve them in planning to meet those needs
- carry out their own assessments where appropriate.

Colleges should have access to specialist skills to support students with SEND and should also ensure that curriculum staff are able to develop their skills, keep their knowledge up to date and are aware of effective practice.

Study programmes post-16 should also prepare students for a smooth transition to the next stage of their lives:

- Adult life and independent living.
- Further study or employment.
- Participation in society.



**Listen to this audio clip in which two teachers and two pupils from a specialist post-16 unit discuss how the course prepares them for an independent adult life – [www.complexneeds.org.uk/modules/Module-2.3-The-curriculum-challenge/All/video/fw/fw15.mp4/](http://www.complexneeds.org.uk/modules/Module-2.3-The-curriculum-challenge/All/video/fw/fw15.mp4/)**

## Going to university

When a young person with an EHC plan takes up a place in higher education, their EHC plan ceases. Local authorities have a responsibility to plan a smooth transition to the relevant higher education institution (HEI) and, where appropriate, to the new local authority, before ceasing to maintain the young person's plan. Once the young person's place has been confirmed at the HEI, the local authority must, at the earliest opportunity and with the young person's permission, pass a copy of their EHC plan to the relevant person in the HEI.

In 2013, Trailblazers, a group of young disabled campaigners from



across the UK, published its second University Challenge report ([www.mdctrailblazers.org/assets/0000/9417/UniversityChallenge2013\\_WEB.pdf](http://www.mdctrailblazers.org/assets/0000/9417/UniversityChallenge2013_WEB.pdf)), highlighting the challenges for young disabled people in gaining access to higher education. As part of its report,

Trailblazers offered some advice on making a smooth transition to higher education, aimed at young disabled people considering going to university and the staff who advise them. The following advice in this guide is based on the report.

## Choosing a course

- Choose a university based on what you think is the best course for you. Most subjects can be studied by anyone with the qualifications, skills and dedication.
- Research courses extensively.
- Start your research early – one or two years in advance. The sooner you know what you want to do, the more time you have to get a good understanding of the facilities at your top choices.
- Familiarise yourself with the Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS) and with university websites and prospectuses. Each website should have information on the support services available, including disability services.

## Interviews

- If you are invited to an interview at a university, be sure to inform the institution of any special arrangements that you require. The interview provides an opportunity for you to discuss and ask questions about the adaptations and support that you will need to study successfully.

## Access

- Visit as many of your shortlisted universities as possible. You might want to go on a general visit with your peers first before making a second visit to universities you really like. Have a good look round and make a list of any concerns to discuss with relevant staff. If you can't visit or if you need more information, ring and ask questions.
- Make appointments with course tutors and the university's disability support

team to talk through your list of concerns. Every university should have a disability support unit to help liaise with the academic and accommodation departments whenever accessibility is an issue. The disability support team should offer to take you on a guided tour of the academic rooms, leisure facilities and accommodation – make the most of such opportunities. Don't be afraid to ask questions. Ask what services are available to you, such as notetaking in lectures.

- Under the Equality Act 2010, universities and colleges must make reasonable adjustments to their premises to make them more user-friendly for disabled students. Universities have to ensure that lecture halls, student unions, libraries, ICT suites and halls of residence are accessible. Once you have your place, see if you can get hold of your timetable as soon as possible so that you can make sure that you can access all your lecture theatres or seminar rooms. Make sure your subject faculty knows you are a student in their department so that they can get to know you and ensure that your classes are scheduled to take place in accessible rooms.
- Visit the DisabledGo website, which has carried out detailed surveys of the facilities and support available at many UK universities – [www.disabledgo.com/](http://www.disabledgo.com/)

## Social life

- Check out the accessibility of venues and bars before you arrive.







## Accommodation

- Decide whether you would rather stay at home, on campus or off campus.
- If you decide that you want to stay in university accommodation, look into the range and size of the rooms available and see as many as you can before selecting one.
- Make a list of all the equipment you will need in your room, kitchen and communal areas and let the university accommodation and disability teams know.
- If you need additional rooms for personal assistants, or if you need adaptations to be made to kitchens or communal areas, speak to a member of the disability team as early as possible, so that adaptations can be in place when you arrive.

## Financial support – Disabled Students' Allowance (DSA)

- Make sure that you have access to all the financial support that you are entitled to.
- DSA is paid on top of other student finance. You don't have to pay it back. The amount you receive depends on your individual needs, not on household income.

- You are eligible for DSA if you have a disability or long-term health condition, a mental health condition or a specific learning difficulty, such as dyslexia or dyspraxia.
- You must also be an undergraduate or postgraduate student, qualify for student finance from Student Finance England (SFE), be studying on a course that lasts at least a year and have a condition that affects your ability to study.
- DSA can help with the costs of:
  - specialist equipment, for example computer software
  - non-medical helpers, for example notetakers or readers
  - extra travel costs that you incur because of your disability
  - other costs, for example photocopying.
- You can apply for a form to claim DSA when you apply to UCAS and fill in your main student finance application. On the form you will need to provide information about your disability, how it affects your study and the support you will need. Fill in the form as soon as possible, as processing applications can take some time.
- Once your eligibility for DSA is confirmed, SFE will ask you to attend an assessment centre to work out what help you will need. Following the assessment, you will get a report listing the equipment and other support you can get for your course.
- Money is paid either directly into your bank account or to the organisation providing the equipment and services for you.

## Personal care plans

- Many disabled students will require personal care while at university. Personal care needs may be greater when a young person is living away from home than when they are living with their families.
- Personal care assistance is funded by the local authority of your 'permanent residence'. So, if your family lives in Manchester and you want to study at Surrey University, the local authority in Manchester will pay for your living needs.
- You will need a care assessment before you go to university. This is your right and is carried out by social services. If your needs change once you are at university you should talk to your disability adviser.
- You may have the option of managing your care through direct payments. If you already receive direct payments, book a reassessment before you start university to make sure you receive enough to pay for personal assistants.
- There are a number of options if you need personal assistance and require direct payments:
  - Working with local care agencies – look at prices and flexibility, and meet those who might be helping you.
  - Employing people privately – you will then become an employer, so look into what that will entail.
  - Community service volunteers, who provide young care workers and personal assistants from overseas.

## Clearing

- Like other students, disabled students who don't get the grades they need for their preferred university can either take a year out or go through clearing.
- If you have complex needs, it may be challenging to get the funding, support and adaptations that you require set up in time; however, for many disabled students, going through clearing is not impossible.
- Where universities are already highly accessible, clearing may be easier
- Make contact with the disabilities team at universities that have potential, and find out about the support that the university can offer in the short- and longer-term.
- Be realistic – gauge whether it is possible for essential adaptations to be made at short notice.
- Be prepared – have information about your DSA and needs assessment ready.



## Find out more

Several organisations have produced guidance to support transition for pupils with particular special educational needs and disabilities, including:

- Autism Education Trust's transition toolkit – [www.autismeducationtrust.org.uk/resources/transition%20toolkit.aspx](http://www.autismeducationtrust.org.uk/resources/transition%20toolkit.aspx)
- The National Autistic Society's toolkit: *Transition from school to adult life* – [www.autism.org.uk/living-with-autism/education-and-transition/transition-from-school-to-adult-life.aspx](http://www.autism.org.uk/living-with-autism/education-and-transition/transition-from-school-to-adult-life.aspx)
- Down's Syndrome Association's information pack 9 – [www.downs-syndrome.org.uk/images/stories/DSA\\_documents/Information/PrimaryEducationPacks2011/unit\\_9\\_primary.pdf](http://www.downs-syndrome.org.uk/images/stories/DSA_documents/Information/PrimaryEducationPacks2011/unit_9_primary.pdf)

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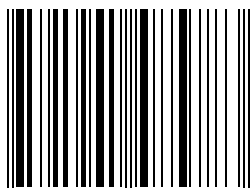
[www.nasen.org.uk/schoolinspection](http://www.nasen.org.uk/schoolinspection)

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Nasen is the leading UK professional association embracing all special and additional educational needs and disabilities. The organisation promotes the education, training, development and support of all those working within the special and additional educational needs and disabilities sector. Membership of nasen is an invaluable source of advice, offering an exclusive and vital range of benefits to support teachers, governors, teaching assistants and the entire education support network in the delivery of high-quality inclusive practice.

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