



Transitions in Education– A guide for Parent Carers and Family Carers

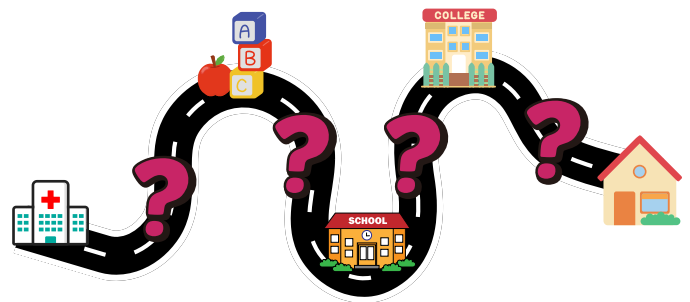
A guide to provide information and signposting for Parent Carers and Family Carers to help them navigate educational transitions for children and young people.

What is a Transition?

Moving from childhood to adulthood, moving from one education setting to another and moving from children's to adult's services, moving from the family home into supported living are all transitions. The young person's hopes, wishes and aspirations for the future are kept central to the planning process.

A person-centred transition action plan focuses on the young person, what is important to them for their future and what support and actions are needed for them to achieve their outcomes and have a successful transition.

Transition is not a single event. It is a gradual process during which your child/ young person should be supported throughout their childhood and into adulthood to build up their confidence and ability to manage the care and support they need where they have capacity to do this. Every child and young person's transition pathway looks different.



Transitions in Education

Everyone's transition journey looks different, education transitions do not just involve a change in an education provision, they also involve social, emotional, and physical adjustments, which often require a high level of planning and support to ensure a successful transition. Some common transitions in education include:

- early years education to school
- infant school to junior school
- primary school to middle school
- primary school to secondary school
- middle school to secondary school
- secondary school to a post-16 provision



Very often this process is called a “phase transfer”

In Shropshire, Phased transfers are referenced as moving from one Key Stage to another:

- Early Years – Key Stage 1
- Key Stage 2 – Key Stage 3
- Key Stage 4 – Post 16

Choosing a school or college



The law recognises the importance of parents or carers and young people being able to choose their educational setting as far as possible. Getting the right setting can be very important for children and young people with special educational needs (SEN).

There are a number of different types of school: mainstream and special, and those which are under local authority control and those which are not. If you want a particular school, it is important to know what type it is.

Find out more
from IPSEA



Nurseries, schools, colleges and specialist provision



How do I choose a nursery/school/college?



Moving to a new phase of education without an EHCP

Maintained nurseries, schools, Academies and Further Education colleges have a duty to use their best endeavours to secure that the special educational provision required by a pupil/student's special educational needs is made (s.66 Children & Families Act 2014, "CAFA 2014"). So, support should continue as the student moves through the different phases of their education and training.

However, parent carers and young people may have concerns about the way this support is delivered and whether and how the student will be supported in the new environment. Check the setting's website for information about the special educational provision they typically provide: the SEN Information Report which maintained schools, nurseries and Academies must produce is a good starting place.

Find out more from
IPSEA



Transition Deadlines

Primary School Applications (without an EHCP)

This affects children currently in Nursery who will turn 4 years old before 31 August this academic year and require a Reception Year school place for September. Applications are submitted to Shropshire Council via an online portal and must be submitted by 15 January.

Junior School Applications (without an EHCP)

This affects children currently in Year 2 who attend an Infant School and require a Junior School (Year 3) place for September. Applications are submitted to Shropshire Council via an online portal and must be submitted by 15 January.

Secondary School Applications (without an EHCP)

This affects children who are currently in Year 6 and will require a Secondary School (Year 7) place for the following September. Applications are submitted to Shropshire Council via an online portal and must be submitted by 31st October.



Find out more about School Transitions

College Applications

If you apply for a 2026/27 course starting in September 2026, you can expect the application process to open in the autumn term (October and November) of the year before. This would be when you're likely in Year 11 at school. Unlike school, you will need to follow College's application process, the Local Authorities Phase Transfer and Consultation process. You can submit more than one application if your young person is unsure of which course they want to enrol on.

University Applications

The main UCAS deadline for most undergraduate applications is January, but this can vary by course.

Education Health and Care Plan Annual Reviews

Regulation 18 of The SEND Regulations 2014 states that the EHC plan must be reviewed and amended before 31 March if the transfer is from secondary school to a post-16 institution 15 February in any other case, or If a young person is moving from one post-16 institution to another post-16 institution at any other time, at least five months before that transfer takes place.

Frequently Asked Question

My Child has an EHCP, do we need to apply for the next phase of education and follow the normal admissions process?

Under the law, there is no requirement for parents of a child with an EHC plan, or young people with an EHC plan, to go through the normal admissions process for a school or college place. EHC plans should be dealt with separately to this. However, many LAs will ask you to fill in forms with your preferences. It is not lawful for LAs to require you to use these forms, but there might be a risk if you do not use them. This is because if you do not use these preference forms, your LA may decide to name a school or college you are not happy with.



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Grades and what they mean

GCSE

GCSE is the qualification taken by 15 and 16 year olds to mark their graduation from the Key Stage 4 phase of secondary education. GCSE's are graded 1-9. A Foundation GCSE is the lower of two tiers for the exam, designed for students aiming for grades 1–5. It has a more focused curriculum and less complex questions than the Higher tier, which covers grades 4–9.

Current	Old
9	
8	A*
7	A
6	B
5	
4	C
3	D
2	E
1	F
	G
U	U

The number scale is not directly equivalent to the old letter one. But if you are still used to thinking about the old A* to G grading scale, the old and current grading scales are comparable at the following points:

- the bottom of a grade 7 is comparable to the bottom of the old grade A
- the bottom of grade 4 is comparable to the bottom of the old grade C
- the bottom of grade 1 is comparable to the bottom of the old grade G

So for example, if an employer used to set entry requirements of at least a grade C, the equivalent is to require at least grade 4.

DfE policy states that students who are awarded a grade 3 or below in maths and/or English must be offered support to make progress in the respective subject(s) if continuing to further education.

A Level

A Levels are graded on a scale from A* to E, with A* being the highest grade and E being the lowest passing grade. A Levels are graded through a combination of coursework and exams. The exact breakdown of coursework and exams will vary depending on the subject, but generally, A Level grades are determined by the student's performance on the final exams. Each grade is worth a different number of UCAS points.

Find out more about Grades



Frequently Asked Question

What happens if my young person does not get their predicted grades and they fail their Maths and English GCSE's?

You'll need to continue studying GCSE English, GCSE maths, or both if you're on a 16 to 19 study programme and do not have a grade 4 or above in one or both of these subjects. You're not required to resit the exam, but you can if you and your institution think you're ready.

Depending on your circumstances, you might be eligible to take a functional skills qualification in English or maths instead. This is also a level 2 qualification and allows you to apply English or maths in real life. You can check with your school or college if this option is available to you (National Careers Service).



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Open Days/ Events

Attending open days or open evenings gives you and your child the chance to experience each setting first-hand and make an informed decision about what will suit them best.

Experience the Environment First-Hand

Visiting in person lets your child and family get a real feel for the school or college – its atmosphere, size, layout, and how welcoming it feels. This is especially important for children with sensory needs, anxiety, or mobility challenges, who may find certain environments more comfortable than others.

Meet Staff Who Will Support Your Child

You can talk directly with:

- SENCOs (Special Educational Needs Coordinators)
- Learning support staff
- Teachers and pastoral teams

This helps you understand their experience, approach, and how they adapt learning and support for students with SEND. It's also a good opportunity to ask questions about how the school or college implements EHCPs and what additional support is available.

See How Inclusion Works in Practice

An open event gives you a chance to see how inclusive the setting really is – how pupils interact, whether classrooms are accessible, and how SEND provision fits into everyday school life. You can observe whether diversity and inclusion are part of the school culture rather than just written in policies.

Helps Your Child Feel Involved and Confident

Taking your child to visit potential schools or colleges can help them feel included in the decision-making process. Familiarising them with new surroundings and key people early can reduce anxiety, build confidence, and make the eventual transition smoother.

Opportunity to Ask Practical Questions

You can ask about:

- Class sizes and teaching support
- Access arrangements (for exams or physical accessibility)
- Therapy provision (speech and language, Occupational Therapist, counselling, etc.)
- Transport and transition planning
- How the school supports social or emotional needs

Hearing the answers directly from staff can give you confidence that your child's needs will be met.

Compare Different Settings

Every school and college offers SEND support differently. Visiting more than one helps you compare how each setting approaches inclusion, communication, and support – so you can find the environment that best fits your child's personality and learning style.

Why it is important to make sure an EHCP is accurate and up to date before transition

Ensures the Right Support from Day One

Each stage of education brings new expectations and environments. If the EHCP accurately reflects your child/ young person's current needs, the new school or college can plan the right support in advance—things like staffing, specialist input, resources, or therapies. This helps your child settle in smoothly and feel confident from the start.

Reflects Your Child/ young person's Progress and Changing Needs

Children and young people grow and develop, so their needs often change. An outdated plan might include support that's no longer suitable—or miss new areas where help is needed. Updating the EHCP ensures it remains relevant and effective.

Supports Transition Planning

Moving to a new setting can be a big step, especially for children/ young people with special educational needs. A well-written EHCP provides clear guidance for everyone involved in the transition: parent carers, current teachers, the new setting, and any health or social care professionals. This shared understanding makes planning smoother and reduces anxiety for your child/ young person. You can also invite practitioners from the next phase of education to the Annual Review.

Legal Protection

The EHCP is a legal document—schools and local authorities are required to deliver what is written in it. If it's not accurate, the support your child/ young person actually needs might not be legally enforceable. Keeping it correct ensures your child's entitlement to appropriate provision is protected.

Focuses on the Right Outcomes for the Future

At each new stage, the goals in your child/ young person's EHCP should link to their next steps—whether that's becoming more independent, developing social skills, gaining qualifications, or preparing for employment or adult life. An accurate plan helps keep everyone working toward meaningful, achievable outcomes.

Further Information



Further information on the Annual Review process, the Local Authorities responsibilities and what to do if legal processes are not followed.



Further information on the Annual Review process and what needs to be covered during a review.



Support for Students accessing Higher Education

The **Disabled Students' Allowance (DSA)** offers assistance to university students who have disabilities, health issues, or learning challenges. This support can help cover expenses like special equipment, non-medical helpers, and travel costs related to the student's condition. The amount of DSA funding a student can receive is based on their specific needs and is not influenced by their financial situation. To access DSA, students need to apply through their student finance organisation, and the help provided is customised to meet each student's unique requirements.

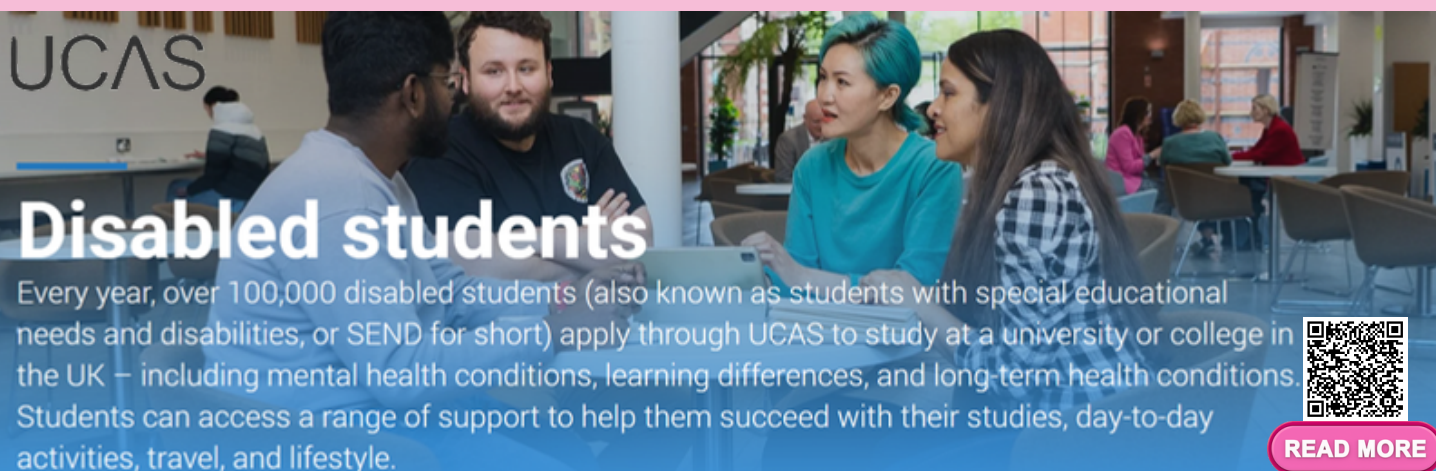
[READ MORE](#)

It is a young person's responsibility to apply for DSA. The DSA application process can take several months to complete and so it is important that they start the process as soon as possible. Support cannot be guaranteed without DSA being in place.

Universities' have various services to support student wellbeing, including counselling, mental health or wellbeing teams, and disability or inclusion teams. Each Universities' support offer will look different- their website should have information on what they offer.

Equipment needs

When preparing for university or college, it's essential to consider the equipment needs to ensure a smooth transition and a comfortable learning environment.



Disabled students

Every year, over 100,000 disabled students (also known as students with special educational needs and disabilities, or SEND for short) apply through UCAS to study at a university or college in the UK – including mental health conditions, learning differences, and long-term health conditions. Students can access a range of support to help them succeed with their studies, day-to-day activities, travel, and lifestyle.

[READ MORE](#)

Funding Higher Education for Disabled Students

[READ MORE](#)

Accommodation Support for Disabled Students

[READ MORE](#)

Preparing for transition

Transitions can be exciting but also challenging, especially for children and young people with SEND. Changes in environment, routines, staff, and expectations can cause anxiety or uncertainty. Careful preparation helps your child feel safe, confident, and ready for the next step.



Start Early

Transitions work best when preparation begins well in advance – ideally at least a term before the move. Early planning gives time to:

- Update your child's EHCP or support plan with accurate information about current needs and effective strategies.
- Arrange meetings between current and future settings (school SENCOs, teachers, support staff).
- Create a shared plan for the move so everyone knows what support is needed.



Involve Your Child or Young Person

Include them in conversations about their move in a way that suits their age and understanding.

You can:

- Talk about what will stay the same and what will change.
- Show them pictures, videos, or maps of the new setting.
- Ask what they're excited or worried about.
- Encourage them to share ideas on what might help – giving them a sense of control and ownership.



Visit the New Setting

Many Education Provisions will let you look round a year before your child/ young person is due to transition. When you have decided on a provision, arrange transition visits where your child/ young person can:

- Explore the new classrooms, playground, lunch hall, and key areas.
- Meet new teachers, support staff, or peers.
- Try parts of their new routine, such as walking from one lesson to another.
- If possible, take photos during visits to make a transition booklet or social story to look at together over the summer.



Create a Transition Plan

Ask both schools or settings (current and new) to agree on a structured transition plan. This could include:

- Gradual visits that increase in length and complexity.
- A clear schedule of what will happen and when.
- Named staff members who will be the main contact for your child.
- A summary of effective strategies that have worked in the current setting (e.g., visual timetables, sensory breaks, or communication aids).



Use Visual Supports and Stories

Many children with SEND respond well to visual or concrete information.

You could create:

- A transition booklet with photos of new staff, classrooms, and routines.
- A social story that explains what will happen in a positive, reassuring way.
- Visual timetables to prepare for new routines.

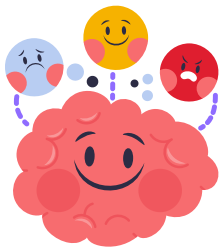


Keep Communication Open

Strong communication between parents, professionals, and the child is key.

Attend review meetings and share your child's concerns or successes.

Keep in touch with the new SENCO or key worker before the move. Share any updates to the EHCP or strategies that help your child feel calm and succeed.



Focus on Emotional Wellbeing

Transitions are emotional as well as practical. Support your child's confidence by:

- Talking positively about the new stage and celebrating milestones.
- Helping them build coping strategies for change (e.g., relaxation, using a comfort item, or talking to a trusted adult).
- Encouraging friendships or peer buddies who can help them settle.

Useful Links

BITESIZE Starting Primary School downloadable resources



BITESIZE Starting secondary school

Advice for parents who have a child starting secondary school this year, with tips on the emotional and practical sides of the transition.



Back to School Booklet

For Age 11+
Secondary School

 **Mind**
Coventry and
Warwickshire



Transport

The deadline for new applications for the 2025/26 academic is 30 June 2025. Applications submitted after this date will still be processed but will have no guarantee of travel assistance being in place for the first day of term.

You do not need to reapply for transport every academic year in school. You will need to submit a new application when your child/ young person moves to a new phase of education, and annually in post-16 education.

Find out more



Planning and preparation

Familiarise with routes: Practice the journey with your child to help them understand where to get on and off the bus or train.

Familiarise with timetables: Show them the timetable so they know when the transport arrives and departs, which can help avoid unnecessary delays and build confidence.

Allow extra time: Plan to arrive early to account for potential disruptions, which can reduce stress for both you and your child.

Establishing routines and using visuals

Create a routine: Establish a consistent morning routine for getting ready for school that includes breakfast and packing their school bag to help them adjust.

Use visual aids: Use visual timers or token systems with pictures to show how much time is left before the transition or to signal what the next activity will be after the journey.

Preview the day: Give your child a preview of what to expect for the day to help them prepare mentally for the transition.

Find out more from IPSEA



Further Information

contact

These tried and tested tips were prepared by a special educational needs teacher and a group of parents to help parents and children navigate changes of school, for example from nursery to primary, or junior to secondary, or if you move and have to start school in another area.

YOUNGMINDS

Change is a normal part of life, but it can feel difficult for children and young people to cope with. We have information and practical tips to help you support your child during a time of transition or change.



Our LA is saying now that our daughter is 16 she is only entitled to education over 3 days per week. When we challenged this it said this is the maximum all young people get once they are in post 16 education. Is this right?

A full-time post-16 study programme is a minimum of 18 hours per week, this is often split over 3 days. For some young people, a 5 day package of provision may be required.

When young people continue to require education and/or training over 5 days per week, it is important that Section F of the EHC plan specifies this. LAs will often ask young people or parents to seek additional provision to make up for the remaining days through health or social care. However, even if additional provision has been identified through these services, it will need specifying in the EHC plan. If the health or social care provision educates or trains the young person, it is in fact special educational provision and therefore must go into Section F of the EHC plan. There is no legal basis for LAs to limit the number of hours a young person with an EHC plan is in education or training based on their age.

Where young people have EHC plans, local authorities should consider the need to provide a full package of provision and support across education, health and care that covers five days a week, where that is appropriate to meet the young person's need.

Five-day packages of provision and support do not have to be at one provider and could involve amounts of time at different providers and in different settings. It may include periods outside education institutions with appropriate support, including time and support for independent study. A package of provision can include non-educational activities such as:

- volunteering or community participation
- work experience
- opportunities that will equip young people with the skills they need to make a successful transition to adulthood, such as independent travel training, and/or skills for living in semi-supported or independent accommodation, and
- training to enable a young person to develop and maintain friendships and/or support them to access facilities in the local community.

It can also include health and care related activities such as physiotherapy. Full-time packages of provision and support set out in the EHC plan should include any time young people need to access support for their health and social care needs. (8.39 and 8.40 of the SEN and Disability Code of Practice).

Legislation



SEN and Disability
Code Of Practice



Equality Act



Special educational
provision



Children and Families Act



Education Act



Skills and Post-16 Education Act

Frequently Asked Questions

My Young Person has struggled with transition at school. Is there anything I can ask college for to help?

The college should be able to provide you with information of SEN Support available. This may include transition days, opportunities to meet key staff, a map of the site, providing them with their timetable as early as possible, identifying a key member of staff. It is worth speaking to the provision about your young person's concerns and working together to ensure appropriate support is in place.

I am worried about how my child's new school support pupils with SEND- is there anywhere we can look for information?

The school website will have a SEND policy. This is a document that outlines a school's approach to supporting pupils with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities. It details the school's commitment to creating an inclusive environment, the procedures for identifying and supporting students with special needs, and how it works in line with national guidance. They should also have a SEND Information Report, which provides further information around support and communication. . The SEND Code of Practice para 6.2 states 'Every school is required to identify and address the SEN of the pupils they support. They must use their best endeavours to make sure that a child with SEN gets the support they need – this means doing everything they can to meet child and young people's SEN'.

My child was eligible for free school meals, will they be eligible for anything at college?

You could get a bursary to help with education-related costs if you're aged 16 to 19 and:

- studying at a publicly funded school or college in England - not a university
- on a training course, including unpaid work experience

A publicly funded school is one that does not charge you for attending it. A bursary is money that you, or your education or training provider, can use to pay for things like:

- clothing, books and other equipment for your course
- transport and lunch on days you study or train

Each Education Provision has a slightly different process, so it is best to speak to a Tutor or Student Services for more information.

My child is going to a new school, and they have suggested a reduced timetable for the first term to help them settle in. This is going to impact work and my other children, do we have to agree to this?

All children of compulsory school age are legally entitled to a full-time education which is suitable for them, including their age, ability, aptitude and any special educational needs they may have.

As a rule, schools cannot put children of compulsory school age on a part-time timetable. Part-time timetables should only be used in very exceptional circumstances where it's in a pupil's best interests, such as to meet a pupil's medical needs and enable them to access as much education as possible. A part-time timetable must not be treated as a long-term solution and should not be used to manage a pupil's behaviour (IPSEA).

Useful Organisations



Shropshire SENDIASS provides free, impartial, and confidential support to parents and carers of children aged 0 to 25, as well as young people aged 16 to 25, who have or may have special educational needs or disabilities (SEND).



We're here for families wherever they live in the UK, and whenever they need us.



The SEND local offer is a single place for information, services, and resources for children and young people aged 0-25 with special educational needs and/or disabilities, their families, and the practitioners who support them.



The PaCC Navigator service is available to help SEND families understand the options available for young people with SEND on their preparation for adulthood journey.



IPSEA is a registered charity in England that provides free legal advice and support to families of children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND).



The service is aimed at families of autistic young people aged 0-19 and provides early intervention & prevention, person centred and needs led support, contributing to improving the understanding of autism, provision of support strategies & information to improve quality of life, no diagnosis is necessary to access this support.

