



Surrey's
Local Offer



Supporting your child during transitions

Moving between different stages of education and life can be a worrying time for any child, but especially for those with additional needs and disabilities. To help transitions be successful it is important to plan and prepare.

Planning for transitions

All children and young people with additional needs and disabilities should have a transition planning meeting with their current education setting. At this meeting you should make a plan and document what is going to happen, when and who is going to do it. The setting might arrange some activities and there will be some things that can be done at home. You may also want to speak to the new setting to make sure they have a plan in place.

If your child has an [EHC Plan](#) there will be a specific review of the EHC Plan which is when you can start to think about transition. This is called a Key Stage (Phase) Transfer or Transition review and this will be held in the summer term of the year before the transfer is due to happen. At this point you will not usually know the new setting but it will be important to plan for the move once the new setting is known. The [Review process and documents for practitioners](#) and [About the Annual Review of the Education, Health and Care \(EHC\) plan](#) pages provide further information on the EHC Plan Key Stage Transfer review.

Transition to or preparing for adulthood is a major event in any child's life. Preparation for adulthood will take place from the earliest years but more formal planning will start in year 9. You can find information about all aspects of starting adult life, including work, study, health and money in the [Preparing for Adulthood booklet](#) and our [Preparing for Adulthood pages](#).

How to prepare your child

- Talk positively and openly about the change.
- Involve them in planning the transition, what they would like to happen and how they want to be supported.
- Ask them to talk about, draw or make a list of the things they're looking forward to and things that they are worried about. Try to find answers for any worries they have.
- Find out whether they know anyone at the new setting. Encourage them to talk to them if appropriate, or to family members or friends who have positive experience of changing school.
- Talk openly about leaving the current setting and how this might feel and make sure they can say a proper 'goodbye'. You could make a book of memories of the setting they are leaving. If possible, explain that they can keep in touch with their friends/peers.
- Work out what the new routine will be and talk about it in advance. If helpful create a visual timetable or [social story](#). This might include preparing them for the journey to and from school. You could practice the journeys
- Prepare all the equipment and uniform needed and if appropriate get them to try new things on and make sure there are no issues.
- Talk to them about any specific school rules you know about that might be new and what the school day looks like.
- Consider taking photos of your child in the new setting, as well as photos of the different areas within the school or college, including key staff. This may help your child feel reassured and familiar with their new setting and as well as give them an idea who they can go to when they need extra help or guidance.

What you can do

- Work with the current setting to create an up to date simple 'one-page' profile which can be shared with staff at the new setting to make sure they

know your child. An example of some of the questions you could ask could include:

one page profile example

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What do they like?

What are their interests?

What works well in their current setting?

What are their strengths?

What you can do to help?

What worries or upsets them?

What are the best ways to communicate with them?

- Check the current setting has arrangements in place for sharing information about your child's needs and what strategies/support are needed for them (provision). Check the new setting receives this and will use it.
- If you have sensitive issues or questions that you don't want to discuss in front of your child, ask the setting to contact you at a time you know you can speak freely or arrange to have a meeting on your own.
- Check whether there are any activities running for transitioning, such as extra induction days and specific 'settling' activities.
- Make contact with other parents/carers of children at the same setting so that you can share information and support each other. If you don't know anyone already you could ask the setting if they can put you in touch with others.
- You could join local social networks and support groups
- Read books about moving to a new school with your child, this may encourage them to ask questions or talk about their feelings.

If your child is starting primary school they may like to play the [BBC Bitesize My First Day at School Game](#).

If your child is starting Secondary School, you may find it helpful to watch the video clips below from [Young Minds](#) and [Family Voice Surrey](#) about how you can support your child through the change from primary to secondary school.

After starting at the new setting

It may take time for your child to settle into their new setting and routine, this is normal and for children and young people with additional needs and disabilities it can take much longer to settle.

You can help by:

- Being patient and let your child know you are there for them.
- Asking them about their day and allow time and space for them to communicate with you.
- Encouraging them to think about what has gone well. If there are issues, listen to any concerns and help them work through these.
- Keep communication open and share any new information that will help the setting to adjust support and help your child settle. However, be mindful that older children might want to be independent and work things out for themselves.
- Share any signs of extreme distress due to the move with their teacher, Head of Year or the Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator (SENCO) who will work with you to resolve the issues.

Other sources of support and guidance:

- [Mindworks - Resources and information for parents](#)
- [Childline- Moving Schools](#)
- [Contact- Top tips to help when your child changes school](#)
- [National Autistic Society Education Transitions guide](#)
- [Surrey Family Information Service- Get Ready for School booklet](#)
- [Surrey Family Information Service- Parenting Handbook](#)

Reviewed: 18 Mar 2025