



Right support, Right Place, Right Time initiative

Enhanced transitions protocol for
children with an EHC plan



Derby City Council

Introduction

As Local Area partners, we have a duty to ensure that children and young people receive the right level of support in the most appropriate settings, including those placed in special schools.

Special school heads have told us that following successful interventions and support they have children in their setting who could be successful in a mainstream school, which would lead to improved academic and social outcomes for the young person, and opportunities to use the specialist place for another young person.

Stakeholders, including lead representatives for parent carers and the school sector, have co-produced and developed this protocol. It works to ensure that when identified, children, their parents and schools receive the support they need to deliver a positive and successful transition.

Supporting reintegration in Derby

For most children and young people who attend a special school, that is the right arrangement to support their education for the duration of their statutory school career. There are some who make tremendous progress due to the support they receive and have the potential to access their education in a mainstream setting. Schools and parents are often attuned to situations where this may be possible, and through the arrangements in this protocol we would like to make that step as easy as possible for families who wish to pursue this pathway.

This initiative aims to:

- celebrate the successes of those children and young people who reintegrated back into a mainstream school/setting
- build on current good practice and encourage consistency across Derby
- develop a pathway which will ensure schools involved in the transition process receive pertinent information about a child's strengths and needs
- where relevant, ensure consideration is given to contacting specialist professionals to seek advice and support successful reintegration
- provide professional development opportunities and contact with specialist professionals that can offer advice with needs.
- improve the early identification of children whose needs could successfully be met in mainstream provision, through integration with the Derby Inclusion Tool (DIT).
- identify where policy and practice can be adapted to support children in settling into their new learning environment in preparation for future learning and development.

What this protocol does not cover

- This protocol does not cover transitions for young people entering adulthood with a view to accessing statutory adult social care and/or disability services, though the values and principles of early conversations and preparation, and person-centred plan are still applicable.
- Transitions for children between mainstream settings with an EHC plan
- Transitions for children supported at SEN Support via the graduated response.
- Children looked after by the local authority or being supported at Child Protection by Derby City Council, or another local authority, will not normally be considered as part of this protocol.

Principles

The principles that underpin our transition protocol are:

- Children's emotional wellbeing, welfare and involvement should be at the heart of transition arrangements.
- Children, parents/carers, and staff have an equal voice and planning should reflect this. The development of transition plans will follow the principles of coproduction in Derby

- Transition is not easy; however, children and young people should experience it as an enjoyable life event that motivates and challenges them. A transition is not a single event, and effective transition takes time. Decisions about moving setting are part of a process that should work towards achieving a successful reintegration.
- The arrangement must have enough flexibility to account for individual children who may need an extended period to settle into their new placement.
- Discussions and information collated to support decisions around a potential move will not just focus on academic development or achievement, instead we will focus on routines, interests, social networks, other professional involvements, family circumstances and relevant medical information, alongside any additional needs.
- Any relevant information will be shared on a “need to know” basis in accordance with existing information sharing agreements, e.g. social care issues, special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), looked after child, etc (all compliant with Data Protection Act).
- Plans must include and support allocation of staff and/or temporary deployment to meet the needs of the child or young person during the ‘handover phase’, with harmonisation of approaches to teaching and learning complete at the point of final transition.

Commitment to Collaboration and Person-centred planning

At the heart of this protocol is the imperative to ensure that pupils and their families are "part of the conversation" about transition from special school into mainstream and that the step is supported such that it feels less daunting. The protocol is therefore relationships-based and collaborative.

Special schools engage with and develop relationships through their role in supporting children and young people with SEND to access education. They are aware of the student’s capabilities and their potential and may identify children for whom reintegration will have a transformative effect on increasing their independence and life chances. It is important that they can clearly communicate why this pathway is a viable option.

Person-centred transition planning

The child or young person should be at the centre of the transition planning process, giving them choice and some control over their own future. Throughout the process of planning and reviews they will be supported to express their views and aspirations to inform support planning and ensure positive outcomes.

We will recognise and involve young people and their families as partners in the process and will support and encourage young people to take responsibility for making decisions.

Transitioning

Conversations can take place at any point during the academic year. If reintegration is a potential option for a child or young person, everyone should be clear about what this might mean, and what it will involve. The process will not progress unless everyone understands what it involves and is happy to proceed.

Special schools know which children would be appropriate and whether they could sustain a successful reintegration. It will be important for them to be clear about what makes this a viable option and messaging needs to be well managed to ensure parents see the benefits.

Once the potential new school is identified, we will work together to create an 8 – 12 week agreed programme of intervention. This would involve schools sharing information, comparing curriculum information and how these fit with the needs and aspirations of the child or young person. It will also involve visiting each other’s settings to gain an appreciation of the differences and/or similarities in physical environments and making reasonable adjustments.

The involvement of trusted professionals is an essential component of this process, with the understanding that everyone involved is operating in the best interests of the child or young person. This process will operate within the

statute of the EHC plan, so that the existing control mechanisms give parents confidence. Concept of a 'warm handover', with physical introductions wherever possible.

Identifying the right person to be involved from the education settings is critical to this process. The involvement of school leadership and the wider staff team in creating a welcoming environment from the first introduction has been reported to be essential to building confidence and relationships. It is suggested that the mainstream schools consider an alternative approach to standard in-year admissions for prospective families as part of the reintegration process.

Enablers for successful transition

- Building on examples of good practice from other Local Authorities, and Derby City's own 'Fresh Start' initiative (the in-year fair access protocol), dual registration will be initiated to protect the special school place for the child or young person during the transition period. Usually, this will mean the young person will retain an allocated place at the special school for the duration of the transition. We hope that this arrangement will provide reassurance to the child or young person, their family, and the participating schools.
- Early conversations will take place with schools identified as potential matches for a child to feature; examination of the curriculum and what needs to be in place to ensure that the student is able to access subjects within the agreed timetable. Work to develop curriculum matches will reflect the needs and bespoke nature of individual children. The geography of the area may also need to be part of the discussion, as transport must not be a barrier to the completion of this process.
- A bespoke transition plan will be developed in coproduction with all parties, setting out the level and frequency of support.
- Appropriate staffing from the special school will be made available to support the implementation of the transition plan
- A dedicated SEND Officer will be allocated to support the family, special school and mainstream school to ensure that plans are monitored and implemented. The SEND Officer will be supported by the education welfare officer.
- To foster the environment and ambition of inclusive approaches across the education establishment, we will ensure that schools do not experience financial penalties' for engaging in this process. Funding will be made available to cover agreed programme of intervention from the special school during the handover period (e.g. staff time 2 hours per day over specified number of weeks etc) – up to £3000 per child. Element 3 funding will be available in addition to this, where required and agreed by the SEND Officer in accordance with existing funding processes.
- To support a successful transition it is essential that the 'right questions' are asked throughout this process. There must be a holistic plan that focuses on developing the potential of the child and young person, what is possible for them to achieve both academically and socially and ensuring that difficulties are met with provision as part of the wider plan of support. We advocate a strengths-based approach to all conversations.
- All schools have received training and have access to the Derby Inclusion Tool (DIT). This is seen to be an effective way to visually communicate the needs of the child or young person and the provision that is available in the school setting. For students who have made progress, use of the DIT should prompt conversations around the ongoing suitability of placement, particularly when it demonstrates that the young person has the potential to succeed elsewhere.

Additional support

This protocol summarises the general premise and ambition to support reintegration through carefully managed transition, however, while it outlines some specifics, such as funding arrangements, and general process, it is designed to remain flexible enough for schools to be able to progress support and change, e.g. recommended period for dual registration, but plan may specify a shorter time if the child is likely to settle more quickly.

This process deliberately uses shorter steps and points of review to help schools identify whether the move and implemented interventions are working. This approach supports timely adjustments if outcomes are not as anticipated.

School leadership have indicated that they welcome peer support and challenge and have confidence in the feedback of a school who states that a child's needs can be met in mainstream. Success will be achieved by developing relationships, and in becoming familiar with each other's settings, then working up the transition planning together.

- More information for parents is available on the Local Offer <https://derby.gov.uk/education-and-learning/derbys-send-local-offer/ehc-assessment-and-plans/>

Measuring outcomes

Throughout the implementation and embedding of this pathway, we will gauge the success of the protocol by measuring the outcomes for children and young people who have gone through this process to reintegrate into mainstream education.

We will do this by measuring the following at a system level:

- Number of children and young people reintegrated to mainstream placements from specialist settings
- Destination data – type of next placement (e.g. further education)

We will do this at a child level by monitoring:

- Progress against outcomes (percentage of outcomes achieved in the EHC plan)
- Child wellbeing
- Attendance
- Academic attainment
- Parental satisfaction (feedback from surveys etc)

Governance - The Transitions Project Group

The core purpose of the Transitions Project group is to undertake detailed consideration of operational issues and the strategic impact of the development and implementation of the Transitions protocol. The project group will take action to sustain improvement relating directly to this process, throughout the trial and during wider embedding. Where appropriate, they will refer matters to the core group for advice and decisions they are unable to confirm. This would include, for example, decisions that relate to financial sustainability. The group will:

- Have oversight of the development of the Transitions protocol
- Review and evaluate the effectiveness of the protocol, sharing feedback on necessary changes and adopting these as appropriate
- Share regular updates with stakeholders. There is a detailed communication plan that covers how this will be done.
- Monitor the impact of the implementation and embedding of the Transitions protocol
- Identify opportunities to embed good practice across wider transitions
- Consider the sustainability of the sufficiency of placements and how this continuum might be impacted by successful reintegration through timely transitions.

Appendix 1 – the transition process

1. Review of successfully achieved outcomes via Annual Review or other meetings between School and parents. Next steps for CYP may be best achieved in a mainstream setting.
2. Consensus that the child or young person has the potential to successfully transition from a Special School to a Mainstream setting, and parties agree to commence transition planning.
3. Identify potential schools. Use the eDIT to confirm levels of need and also provision in place to meet need – to be shared with prospective schools.
4. Both settings to consider resources and curriculum matching, organise visit to assess plans that consider environment differences.
5. Confirm content for 8–12-week intervention plan, as well as enablers including uniforms, transport, staff support.
6. Success – handover complete
OR
Opt out or early cessation, return to placement.
7. Review success of handover after further 6 weeks. Placement confirmed via Section F of Education, Health & Care Plan

