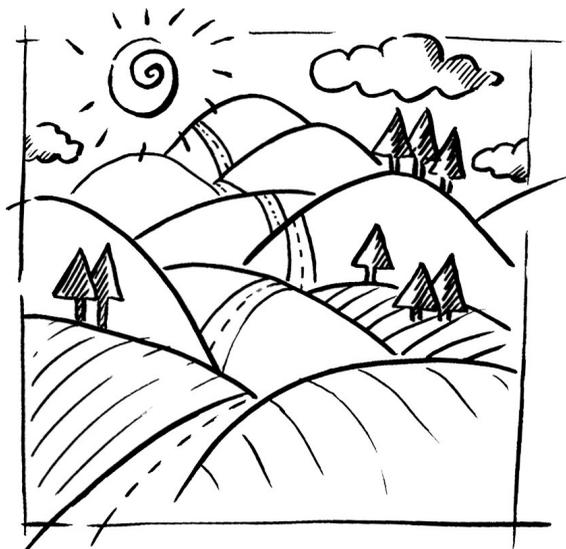


# CHAPTER I

## Planning for your child's future



This chapter explains how you can start to plan for your child's future from Year 9 onwards.

The law on special educational needs changed recently. Since September 2014, instead of Statements of special educational needs (SEN), there are now Education, Health and Care (EHC) Plans that bring together all the support a child or young person needs into a single plan. These plans go from 0 - 19 years and in some cases up to 25. All Statements of SEN are gradually being replaced with EHC plans and many young people will see this happen as part of their Year 9 Annual Review Process.

But regardless of whether your child has an EHC plan, is staying with a Statement for the time being, or is in the process of transferring, the Year 9 annual review marks a significant point in beginning to plan for your child's future as an adult.

## THE YEAR 9 ANNUAL REVIEW ... AND AFTER

### What's different?

You'll already be familiar with the annual review process at school, but the Year 9 meeting is meant to be different. From now on, the focus is not just on your child's education. At this meeting and at every meeting afterwards, there should be a focus on **preparing for your child's adult life**. You'll be thinking and talking about things like further or higher education, independent living, how your young person can be involved in their community and be as healthy as possible in the future. And from now on, **the views, feelings and wishes of the young person** (as well as your own) should be right at the heart of planning.

The 2015 SEND Code of Practice makes it clear that once young people reach the end of Year 11, they should be making their own decisions around education and EHC plans, as much as possible, so the local authority will start to address them directly. But your son or daughter can say they still want you to help or represent them. And, if they do not have the capacity to make decisions about their education, it will usually continue to be you as the parent who takes decisions on their behalf. Chapter 2 explains more about the law on capacity and decision making.

The aim of all annual reviews from Year 9 onwards is to have a plan on how best to prepare your young person for adulthood, to identify the support they will need, how they want the support to be available and what action should be taken by

whom to provide it. If all this sounds a bit overwhelming, remember it's the first step in a process that will take several years.

## Talking about the future

Discussions about the future at these annual reviews should focus on what your young person wants to achieve and the best way to support them to achieve their goals. This should be based on high aspirations for them around employment, independent living and being able to participate actively in society as an adult. The discussion should also recognise that young people's hopes and needs are individual and will change and develop as they get older. For some young people with more severe learning disabilities, it will be their parents who will have to think and plan for their child's future for them.

The detail of how preparing for adulthood reviews should work is set out in the Special Educational Needs and Disability Code of Practice: 0-25 years (SEND Code of Practice). This is government guidance that schools, colleges and local authorities should follow. If your child is not yet transferring to an EHC plan, the old SEN Code of Practice will still apply to them but this gives very similar guidance about starting to plan ahead now.

Young people have to stay in education or training until they are 18. So looking at **post-16 education** will be a key part of transition planning.

In addition to further education, vocational **training and employment**, the transition process should cover your child's **health**, their **leisure** and **social life** and **where they might live** as an adult. This is also the point when your child should get linked to a Learning Difficulties and Disabilities (LDD) adviser as well as or instead of your casework officer from the SEN

team at the local authority. LDD Advisers have more expertise on preparing for adulthood and post 16 options (see page 13 for more details).

## **You and your child at the centre of planning**

Everyone involved in supporting you and your child to prepare for the future should take a 'person centred' approach to planning for the future. This means that you and your child are central to the whole process and that the meetings should be interactive and less formal than 'traditional' annual review meetings. The government says disabled young people should have person centred plans that state clearly the support they'll need once they leave school.

Person centred reviews are not general practice in Brighton and Hove, although all schools should take a 'person centred' approach. Tell the school if you want a person centred approach to planning the future. We talk about how to involve young people in reviews in more detail on page 32. Call the Amaze helpline if you'd like more help with this.

## **TRANSITION PLANNING**

Transition planning is the term sometimes used to mean the planning that takes place as your child moves towards adulthood. Despite the guidance, parents' experiences of the annual reviews from Year 9 onwards can vary and sometimes it can be difficult to spot the difference between these reviews and those from when your child was younger. The quotes below show two very different experiences.

*'We were told by the school that it was a very important review to which various people would be coming along to explain new things to us.'*

*'We were given the impression that the transition review was rather meaningless, almost as though people were going through the motions unable to plan anything really because they said they couldn't allocate places two years in advance and therefore you're left in the dark.'*

## **Forewarned is forearmed**

These are some of the things you should expect in review meetings from Year 9 onwards:

- **The school is responsible for organising the Year 9 annual review meeting as a transition planning meeting.** They'll sort out times and dates, send out invitations and gather together any relevant reports and advice. If your child has a Statement or EHC plan, but does not attend school, the local authority (LA) will arrange the meeting.
- **The school must invite the parents and young person, a local authority SEN officer, a health service representative and local authority social care representative.** Everyone should be given two weeks' notice of the date of the meeting. Other individuals relevant to the review should also be invited, including youth offending teams and job coaches where relevant.
- **To prepare for a Year 9 annual review, the local council has a legal obligation to check with social care whether the child is disabled.** Not all children with Statements of SEN/ EHC plans are considered disabled. You might not have had contact with social care before, but some support services may be useful to your child as they become an adult so this might be a good time to think about a social care assessment for your child if you have not done this before (See Chapter 6 on Social Care).
- **As before the school will write up your child's annual review report.** If your child still has a Statement they should also write a transition plan to sit alongside it and future annual reviews for your child will use this plan to discuss

and develop the plans to support your child becoming an adult. If they have an EHC plan these have more of a focus on future goals and outcomes so the planning for adulthood may be built into their EHC plan.

*'Choosing a college or whatever is like going from junior to secondary school. The most important thing is being prepared for the next stage before it happens.'* (Sue 18)

## **Key professionals involved in transition planning**

### **LDD Advisers**

When your child's Statement or EHC plan was written, an SEN casework officer from the local authority SEN team will have had a central role in coordinating this. You may have had some further contact with the casework officer since then, for example if the Statement was amended or your child changed school. When your child is in Year 9 or 10 they will switch to having an LDD adviser. LDD advisers are also part of the SEN team but they only work with young people age 14 to 19 or 25 and their parents. They will attend annual reviews from Year 10 onwards and can provide you and your child with advice and guidance on the options for education and training post 16, for example what college courses might suit them, to supplement the careers advice the school should offer. If your child still has a Statement they will work with the school on the transfer to an EHC plan. They will stay involved as long as your child has an EHC plan.

### **Social Care Transition Team**

For young people with the most complex needs, e.g. pupils at Hillside and Downs View schools and Downs View Link College, there is a referrals process through the Community Learning Disability Team that decides who is allocated to the Transition Team for additional support. The Transition Team offers information, advice and guidance to young people and families about the transition to adulthood - either directly or

through another professional such as their Children's Disability Service social worker. The team may have intensive involvement with young people and families from Year 11 onwards (16+), depending on the complexity of the young person's needs. They carry out a formal assessment of the young person's social care and health needs after they turn 18.

*'When we spoke, right from the start she was talking to Beth in language she understood. I instantly knew that I had met someone who knew how to deal with special needs children.'*

## **Preparing for transition planning**

There are plenty of things you can do to get the most out of transition planning in Year 9 and in the future.

### **General planning**

You'll get much more out of transition planning if you understand some of the options that may be available to your child. It pays to do some homework. The first thing you'll need to think about is what they're going to do after 16, but you also need to look further ahead.

Most parents find that getting good information helps. Every local authority has to publish a **Local Offer** that sets out all the services and support they expect to be available in the area for children and young people with SEN and disabilities. Brighton and Hove's Local offer is on their website at [www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/localoffer](http://www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/localoffer) and it is a mine of information. Each local authority also has to make sure parents and young people can get impartial information, advice and support individually about SEN and disability when they need it, to make sure they can participate fully in decisions. Amaze is the Information, Advice and Support (IAS) Service for Brighton and Hove.

Consider talking to other parents, school staff or, if your child's at mainstream school, the school SENCO. School staff should be able to tell you about 'school leavers' programmes' and alternative Key Stage 4 (Year 10 and 11) provision for young people with special educational needs. Schools may have strong links with local further education providers and may provide work experience programmes for pupils at Key Stage 4 that run alongside GCSEs, or are an alternative to them. From Year 8 until Year 13 schools must make sure young people get independent careers guidance. School staff should be able to tell you about work experience for young people in Years 10 and 11 (Key Stage 4).

The LDD adviser will also be able to give you information about the colleges and courses that might suit your child after they leave school, and other options like apprenticeships. If your child wants to get onto a particular course at college after they're 16, you can also check with them whether their Year 10 and 11 options will give them the qualifications they need. As far as possible, your child will need to play a part in the decision making process, so involving them is important. You'll find ideas about how to get a clearer idea of their hopes and preferences in Chapter 2.

For more information on education options, see Chapter 3, 'Further and higher education'.

### **Questions to ask yourself**

These are some of the questions you might want to ask yourself as you think about your child's future. You may want to make a note of ones relevant to you so you can take them to the annual review meeting.

- What does your child enjoy doing? What are they good at? Has your child got a school record of achievement? Could it help you think about their strengths and the future?

- What does your child imagine themselves doing after they leave school? What would you like them to do?
- What courses are offered by local colleges and are there more appropriate courses offered by colleges further from home?
- If your child would prefer to be working, can you find out about apprenticeships, training and employment schemes that can offer support?
- What have other children at the school gone on to do?
- What type of social activities does your child enjoy?
- What about transport and independent travel?
- Will your child live at home with you or move to independent or supported living when they leave school or college?
- If your child stays at home, will you need a break and if so, how often? How can this be organised and funded?
- If you're thinking about a residential college, how could it be funded?
- What local daytime activities are available? Would this type of provision suit your child?
- Does your child have health needs? How will healthcare provision like speech and language therapy, occupational therapy or physiotherapy be arranged?
- Does your child need specialist equipment? If so, who will provide and maintain it?
- Are you and your child getting all the benefits you're entitled to? Is your child eligible for a 16-19 year old bursary to help with costs like transport, food and equipment? Do you know how benefits are affected by college or part-time work? Do you know how your entitlement to benefits will change if your child claims benefits as an adult (see Chapter 5, 'Money matters' for more information on benefits)?

*'I knew what I wanted to do from quite an early stage but I needed to know how to get there.'* (Sue 18)

## **PARENT TIPS FOR THE YEAR 9 REVIEW AND BEYOND**

### **Before the meeting**

- ☺ Remember that EITHER your child's Statement or EHC plan will be reviewed at this meeting and may be amended alongside planning for the future OR this meeting will be a key step in the transfer from a Statement to an EHC plan. You should know this beforehand. Presuming this is a review not a transfer meeting, read through your child's Statement or EHC plan to see whether it needs amending. If it does, flag it up with the school and casework officer and ask them get any assessments or advices that support the amendment before the annual review meeting. Changes to the Statement/EHC plan are the local authority's decision, but you have the right to appeal them.
- ☺ Check when the Statement will be transferred to an EHC plan if not now.
- ☺ If your child hasn't had an assessment from an Educational Psychologist for a while, it might be worth requesting one before the meeting to make sure all their special educational needs have been clearly identified. Make sure significant needs like speech and language therapy are included.
- ☺ If your child is at Downs View or Hillside school or Downs View Link College ask for a referral for a Transition Worker (see page 119). Or, if you have a Children's Disability Team social worker, ask if they will be the one to support your child's transition to adult social care. It pays to establish a relationship early on so you can ask for support if you need it later
- ☺ If you think there's a professional involved with your child (e.g. from health services) who should be invited to the meeting, make sure the head teacher knows well in advance so there's time to invite them to submit information or attend the meeting

- ☺ In theory, reports about your child should be circulated to everyone who's planning to attend at least two weeks in advance. In practice, this hardly ever happens – so it's worth asking the school to chase the professionals involved or do this yourself
- ☺ Check whether the school has done some preparation with your child before the meeting
- ☺ Discuss with your child what they would like to talk about at the meeting, well in advance, so you can help them prepare and so you know what they might want to happen next
- ☺ If your child is coming to the meeting, is there someone like a friend, advocate or mentor who they'd like to be there to support them?
- ☺ We suggest you take someone with you to support you too – perhaps a volunteer from Amaze could come with you or help you prepare for the meeting
- ☺ Make sure you inform the school in advance if you intend to bring anyone with you to support you or your child
- ☺ For some of us, it feels unrealistic to talk about career choices. Our focus is more on the need to arrange support for our child in the future, e.g. short breaks or supported living. If this is the case, make sure someone from social care has been invited to the meeting and will attend. Write things down beforehand to help you (and your child) remember what you want to say

### **At the meeting**

- ☺ Be aware that people at the meeting may not have any previous knowledge of your child. You may need to fill them in
- ☺ Ask what each of the services represented at the meeting can offer and what the planning process will be
- ☺ Be clear about your child's strengths and the support they need

Meetings can feel difficult. Amaze has a factsheet called 'Be Prepared for School Meetings' with hints about how to get the most out of them. Call the helpline or look on the Amaze website for a copy.

## **SWITCHING TO AN EHC PLAN**

For many of you, Year 9 is when your child's Statement will transfer to an EHC plan. If it doesn't happen that year it must be considered by the end of Year 11. The local authority and school should let you know when they are going to work together with you and your child to do the transfer. There should be a transfer meeting and this may be combined with the annual review. The transfer process should be completed within 20 weeks maximum and includes time for you and your child to contribute your views early on and later to say what you think of the draft EHC plan. It will be a bit like a shorter version of the process when your child first got their Statement and comes with the same sort of rights to appeal or go to mediation if you are unhappy. You'll want to make sure up to date information is used to write the EHC plan. Ask for new reports if the ones on your child are out of date.

In a very small number of cases the local authority may decide an EHC plan is not needed, perhaps because the young person has made good progress or because there is a college course that can meet their needs without much additional support. If so, they will instead produce a Preparing for Adulthood Plan which will give information about your child and their needs, but does not have the legal status of an EHC plan. There is a right to appeal if you disagree with the decision not to write an EHC plan.

Generally EHC plans are meant to be more forward-looking than Statements and look at goals or outcomes for the current stage of education that will ultimately lead to good outcomes

for the child when they reach adulthood. The emphasis on this steps up from Year 9 onwards. So the Year 9 review should provide the information needed to get this in the young person's EHC plan. At future annual reviews the plan can be added to and revised so it stays relevant and keeps looking ahead.

The EHC plan must include the provision the young person needs to work towards adulthood and independent living, for example, support for finding employment, housing or for participation in society. EHC plans can also include wider outcomes such as positive social relationships. They should specify how services will be delivered as part of a whole package for the young person and explain how this works towards the right outcomes across education, health and social care.

The EHC plan should include the arrangements for monitoring progress, including arrangements for setting and monitoring shorter term targets by the school, college or other education or training provider. The EHC plan must include forward plans for key changes in a young person's life, such as leaving school and going to college, moving from children's to adult social care or from children's to adult health services.

Once your child's Statement has been changed to an EHC plan, this will be a legally binding document and will apply at college too.

## **Constantly evolving**

Annual reviews continue until the young person leaves education, including college or training. The EHC plan should be updated at each review, clearly stating the actions that need to be taken, the responsibilities of everyone involved and timescales for all the actions.

What's agreed in the Year 9, 10 and 11 annual review is the beginning of a journey and isn't cast in stone. While some young people know what they want to do after school, for others it will be a matter of waiting to see how they get on. It's not always possible to decide early on and new options may present themselves further down the line. Some of us were surprised to learn that our child had the potential for much more independent thinking and wider opportunities than we thought possible.

When your child leaves school, their EHC plan will carry on if they are staying in education, whether they are 16 or 19 at this point. Some young people with more complex needs will keep an EHC plan up to 25. Annual reviews should ensure that the EHC plan is updated and relevant to the support they need at college. This should include active input from you and your child.

In the new SEN and Disabilities Code of Practice, there is a clearer focus on the participation of children, young people and parents in decision making. Information should be brought to meetings in a way your child can understand - photographs, symbols or pictures, for example. It's important to find creative ways to share the views of young people who have communication difficulties, to ensure they are involved in their annual reviews and have an input into planning for their future.

Read more about involving young people in transition planning meetings in the next chapter.

## **GETTING SUPPORT WITH TRANSITION**

### **How Amaze can help**

- **The Amaze helpline:** Call Amaze on 01273 772289 if you want to check information or talk things through – for

example, before an annual review that involves transition planning

- **Enlist the help of an Amaze IAS worker or volunteer:** Amaze have a small team of workers and trained volunteers who can give extra information, advice and support (IAS). For example they can help you prepare for annual review meetings and may be able to come with you if you think it might help get your views across
- **Information sessions:** Amaze offers 'preparing for adulthood' information sessions for parents to help them think about their child's future. And the Amaze website has a section all about preparing for adulthood called 'Becoming an adult'
- **Amaze Independent Supporter:** If you need some extra help with your child transferring from having a Statement to an EHC plan, ask about getting an Independent Supporter. Amaze also has an Independent Supporter for young people if your child would like their own help with the EHC planning process. At the time of writing Amaze has not heard about funding for this service from April 2016 so contact us to check if it is still available.

## **Other sources of information**

'My Future Choices' is a free magazine for disabled people and their families from the Transition Information Network. 'My Kind of a Future' and 'Prepared for the Future?' are booklets about person centred planning for young people and their parents from the Foundation for People with Learning Disabilities. See the 'Useful contacts' section for their contact details.