

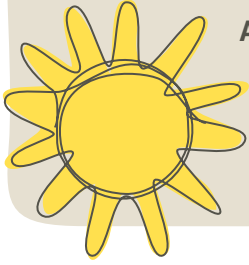
# Action for Children transitions

Helping prepare disabled young people for adulthood



*as long as it takes*

# Action for Children transition services



Action for Children is a charity working with the UK's most vulnerable children and young people. We are the largest voluntary sector provider of services for disabled children and young people in the UK and have extensive experience of supporting young people and their families through transition periods. We offer a range of specialist services that help them prepare for adulthood.

We are aware that many disabled young people and their families are fearful of what the future may hold when they reach adulthood. The period before reaching adulthood is a real opportunity to allay this fear, to plan for the future and to ensure that services are in place to support the young person when they leave children's services.



Our transition services enable young people to develop appropriate levels of independence, roles and relationships based on their own choices. We provide opportunities and build links that enable social inclusion, community participation and life skills development.

Action for Children services work to remove the barriers that occur for young people at transition by enabling them to achieve their potential as confident, included and contributing adults.

We believe we are uniquely positioned to offer outstanding transition services to young people because:

- ▶ We are able to work with young people up to the age of 25.
- ▶ We always keep the young person's wishes and aspirations at the centre of our work.

We are the partner of choice because we provide high-quality, cost-effective services that are both flexible and sustainable.

'I think that it is important to plan, as none of us have a crystal ball, so don't know what could happen. If you don't plan, life goes pear shaped.' Tom, a young person at Action for Children Kingfishers

## Transitions: our commitments

- ▶ We equip young people with the social and practical life skills they need for greater independence and self-confidence.
- ▶ We promote a person-centred, collaborative and co-ordinated approach for services and support around a young person.
- ▶ We deliver services across the traditional artificial or organisational boundaries established through legislation.
- ▶ We run services that support inclusion and integration of young people into the wider community.
- ▶ We provide a keyworker to help navigate and support young people and their families through their transition period.
- ▶ We help young people to get access to an advocate, if needed.

## Transitions: our values

- ▶ We believe disabled young people should be at the centre of the transition process.
- ▶ We believe that the transition into adulthood should be a positive experience for disabled young people and their families, and they should receive more holistic advice and support.
- ▶ We understand that adult services are not always appropriate to meet the needs of young people.
- ▶ We understand the importance of continuity of support through the transition period to sustain and maximise young people's learning and stability.
- ▶ We strongly believe that disabled young people and their families should have the chance to enjoy the same choices and opportunities as their non-disabled peers.



‘For families like mine, transition must be much more than simply a planning process – it is about the hopes, aspirations and safeguarding of our extremely vulnerable children’s future. But while the process itself can be good, we live with constant terror that there’s going to be nothing at the end of it and that’s what keeps us all awake at night. We fear it’s a transition to nowhere.’ A grandmother at Action for Children Bury Red Centre

## Person-centred planning

### Action for Children Monksfield Short Breaks Service

Monksfield works with Northumberland County Council to provide a short breaks service. Action for Children believes that person-centred planning provides a positive opportunity for young people to make informed choices about their future and for their wishes to be heard and acted on. Person-centred planning helps young people incorporate every aspect of their aspirations for their future, as well as their practical needs.

It is important that the final plan becomes a live document that the young person can keep with them and take into their adult life. By doing this, the young person will have an accessible plan that outlines who they are, their views, preferences, wishes, aspirations and intentions for the future and how these could be met.

## Transition keyworking

### Action for Children Pembrokeshire Children’s Centre

Action for Children believes that co-ordinated assessment, advice and support are what make the difference for disabled young people and their families during transition. A keyworker is essential to this process.

Action for Children Pembrokeshire Children’s Centre works in partnership with Pembrokeshire County Council. The centre has established transitions keyworker posts, funded by adult social services. The transitions keyworker co-ordinates the transition planning process and provides advice, support and information for the young person and their family until the young person is 25. The keyworkers also develop relationships with the multiple agencies involved with the young person to ensure that transition is a live and active process.

This is a young person-centred process, where the keyworker ensures all agencies are focused on delivering support and opportunities that fit around the young person’s needs and aspirations, with their views and opinions seen as a starting point.

Keyworkers use a variety of methods to obtain and record young people’s views – for example, they are involved in person-centred and family support plans.



## Short breaks transition services

### Action for Children Yew Trees

Action for Children Yew Trees, in partnership with Derbyshire County Council, offers residential short breaks and needs-led crisis support for young people aged between 16 and 21 with learning and/or physical disabilities.

There is great emphasis on empowering and supporting young people as they adjust to adulthood and the many changes that are taking place in their lives. The service develops a range of social activities in partnership with the young people, based around group activities such as discos, sensory storytelling, cooking, crafts, football and independence skills.





The result for the young person is that, as far as possible, they:

- ▶ drive the plan for their future
- ▶ can envisage their life as an adult
- ▶ can agree and work towards their short-, medium- and long-term aims

The need for keyworker support will increase when more young people begin to use direct payments or individual budgets, which will enable young people to build their own support package.

## Independent living skills

Independent living skills are essential for any young person when they leave home. These skills can be anything from knowing how to pay bills to shopping for and cooking meals. The key life skills needed to move into adulthood are no different for disabled young people.

### Action for Children Kingfishers

Action for Children Kingfishers in Stroud works in partnership with the Gloucestershire support team to provide supported accommodation for seven young people aged 18–25 who have learning disabilities. The service helps young people develop independence skills for an average of two years before they move on to their own tenancies, with floating support from the project.

Staff help the young person to consider risks, enabling them to develop risk-assessment skills. The approach is never to prevent an activity, but rather to enable the young person to participate as safely as possible.

Action for Children Kingfishers was independently evaluated by researchers at the Norah Fry Research Centre (2008), who concluded that the following factors have made Kingfishers successful in supporting young people to become confident young adults with independence skills:

- ▶ Kingfishers adopts a holistic approach to progression, taking an interest in the tenants' employment, future accommodation and social lives, as well as developing practical skills.
- ▶ Kingfishers communicates exceptionally well with other agencies.
- ▶ Kingfishers work hard to maintain good relationships with families.
- ▶ Risk assessments are used positively to overcome barriers.
- ▶ Peer support is encouraged, which helps to develop the tenants' confidence and personalities.

**'I can go to town if I want to, catch a train, manage my own money. I have a job and am about to move on to my own place.'** Tom, a young person at Action for Children Kingfishers

## Volunteering

Many young people use volunteering as an opportunity to broaden their horizons, test out future career paths and to expand their social opportunities. It is important that disabled young people have the same opportunities and benefits as their non-disabled peers that volunteering brings.

Action for Children promotes volunteering for young people who use our services. This provides young people with a constructive alternative or supplement to further education and paid work, smoothing their transition into the adult world and providing them with an opportunity to gain skills and confidence, while giving something back.



## Action for Children Yew Trees

Action for Children Yew Trees works in partnership with Derbyshire County Council. Yew Trees actively recruits disabled volunteers to help support the young people in the project and to share valuable experiences at this important time of transition. The service currently has three volunteers with learning disabilities, one of whom, Sam, has his own blog on the Action for Children intranet. Sam describes his role below:

‘At the project there are kids from about 16 upwards and I look after quite a few teenagers in wheelchairs, encouraging them to do anything that any other teenager would do.

I’ve brought in pop music, helped out at bonfire nights and I’ve also done the story time sessions. I act out the roles and do the sound effects – I can do fireworks, car noises, trams passing, thunder, and I’ll pretty much try to do anything.’

## Participation

### Action for Children Caring Together Lincolnshire

We believe all young people who use services should be fully involved in their design, delivery and evaluation, and empowered to have their voices heard to facilitate change both locally and nationally. This is no different for disabled young people.

### Young people on Lincolnshire’s local authority transitions board

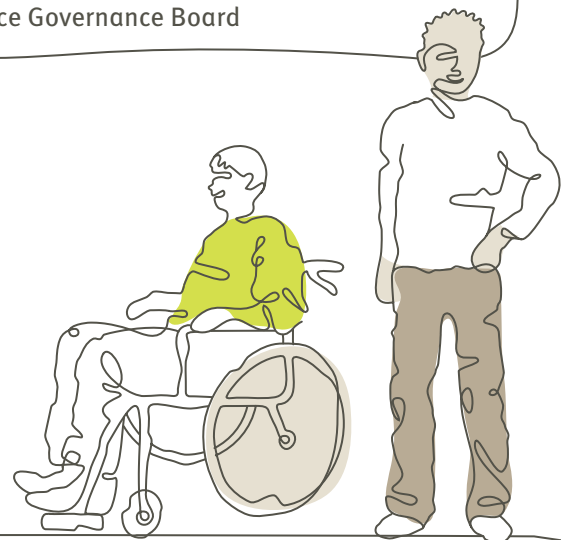
The Lincolnshire Transition Service Governance Board includes two disabled young people who participate in and contribute to the business with full voting rights.

The young people have attended many meetings with professionals, both locally and nationally, sat on interview panels for members of the transition team and consulted with children and young people about their experiences and aspirations.

The two young adults currently involved wanted to be part of the transition board because they had not had a very positive transition process and felt that others should have a better experience in the future. They have also explained why their involvement on the board is important, saying:

‘I think it is important that we can speak for those young people who can’t always say what they mean, so they can be heard as well.

‘I think is important to be involved as I can get my point across, and tell people what myself and other young people think transition should be about.’ David, a young person on the Lincolnshire Transition Service Governance Board



## Peer befriending

Disabled young people are no different to their peers in that they wish to spend time with people their own age who have similar interests.

Action for Children believes more must be done to encourage peer befriending to ensure that disabled young people do not miss out on building positive relationships with their peer group.

## Action for Children Scarborough Services

Action for Children Scarborough Services is a community-based service that works flexibly and responsively with its county council and PCT to provide a range of services for disabled children and young people, including residential and family-based short breaks and specialist fostering, independence support and young carers and children's centre-based services.

Action for Children Scarborough Services' 'Umbrellas' and short breaks service includes a peer-befriending scheme and this is now being developed to provide more holistic independence and social skills development. This supports sustainable access to community-based leisure activities and provides a transition pathway to the independence support service for young adults. The young people:

- ▶ take part in activities they choose with other young people
- ▶ are supported to make full use of activities and opportunities in their local community
- ▶ enjoy time together in small groups and develop friendships
- ▶ develop transferable independence and social skills and confidence

Two young people attend a computer group together and although the arrangements to achieve this were complex, it was achieved in a sensitive manner (as seen in *Aiming High for Disabled Children, Short Breaks Implementation Guidance*, DCSF, 2008).

## Continuity of provision through transition

Action for Children has developed a number of continuous services that are a constant in young people's lives when everything around them is changing. These services include short breaks and residential specialist services.

## Action for Children Redwood House

Action for Children Redwood House provides a specialist service for up to six young people under 26 years of age who have diverse and complex needs and have completed their education at Action for Children's Penhurst School.

Redwood House is not only an extension of the work of Penhurst School but also an independent care and training service for young people with profound and multiple learning needs.

Young people are helped to develop their life and living skills and can access therapeutic services and appropriate medical care.



## Action for Children transition services

Action for Children welcomes the Aiming High for Disabled Children programme in England and the focus on transition support in the UK. We offer and develop services that can ensure the transition into adulthood is a positive experience.

For more information about our transition services, please contact Jane Williams, Aiming High Manager, at [aiming.high@actionforchildren.org.uk](mailto:aiming.high@actionforchildren.org.uk) or **0115 962 2650**.

[www.actionforchildren.org.uk](http://www.actionforchildren.org.uk)

