



Transition is not just about the major changes that occur in phases throughout life. There are many transitions which occur in a typical day. For example, from one task to another; moving from one room to another; from home to school/college and back again; inside to outside; classroom to break time. As children develop from infancy to childhood to adolescence and to adulthood, there are many transitions: from home, to nursery, to school, to secondary, to college and beyond. Many people find these changes difficult, but sometimes they can be even more challenging for children and young people who have experienced or are experiencing life in care.

Change is difficult for many children and young people who are currently or who have previously been in care. This is because children who have experienced early trauma and unhealthy attachments do not know that change is OK; being able to know that change is OK can only come when you have a secure basis to place that on. Care-experienced children have often experienced a high level of change in their lives and therefore any change from what they are used to can trigger fear and anxiety. These children need to be protected from and supported through further transitions as a matter of priority in order to work towards increasing stability. A new school, class or member of staff can be a huge change, as can a new task or activity, or a game they've never played before. Similarly ending a task or activity that they have enjoyed can make them feel that if they stop now, they may never get to do this again.

For vulnerable children normal changes within their education can be hugely challenging. Care-experienced children may find it difficult to regulate their behaviour and emotions at times of change and transition. They may become upset or highly excitable, overly helpful or excessively friendly. They may become clingier and attention needing and demonstrate controlling behaviours because they are trying to make sure that they will be safe and have their needs met. They may ask constant questions or chatter excessively – just wanting to know you are there and that you can see and hear them. Other areas of concerns may also become more prominent such as eating issues, soiling and wetting, sleep problems or engaging in high-risk behaviours such as: substance misuse, self-harm or high vulnerability to sexual exploitation.

Or perhaps they may not show any outward signs of distress, but instead may be working hard not wanting to be noticed and avoiding showing signs of anxiety – masking to try and fit in.

Considerations to support transition

Preparation is needed to help manage any change so the young person is able to process the transition in advance - reminders, prompts, drive bys and visuals all help. All staff in school need to be aware of any triggers and sensitive issues for individual children and completing a One Page Profile can capture this and be easily shared with supply teachers as well as everyday staff members. Cheshire West Virtual School complete a One Page Profile for all children moving from nursery to Reception, Year 6 into year 7 and year 11 into year 12 as part of the summer term PEP.

Learn about the individual, gather their voice, share key information between schools/ settings and ensure regular communication between home and school can be shared.

Possible difficulties and challenges and potential strategies to support

Loss of trusted adults and peers - time in with new teacher/ support staff, transition books, bubby system, planned form groupings, transitional objects. Goodbye cards, photographs and memory boxes/ jars. New school to visit in existing setting first.

Separation anxiety – transitional objects- taken home and brought back to build connection. Object from home such as photo on key fob, key, message in pocket etc to reinforce they are returning home.

Change of environment/ class – visit to new school, class, explore building when empty and when busy, map, practise key routes such as to hall, toilets, form room etc. photos of new adults and environment, identification of key adult and safe place if needed to withdraw to. Phased entry, enhanced transition package, summer school.

New routine – pre teaching, visual timetables, prompts pre warning of changes, practise of moving rooms, using dinner hall, buddy etc. Practise journey to and from school. Consistent approach between lessons including a script for pupil to ask for support or card visual and script for staff at critical times.

Sensory challenges – practise getting used to uniform, flexibility to adapt uniform, built in sensory breaks which require movement such as moving equipment/ books, places, time in to calm/ refocus, calm box adapted with sensory aids, crunchy snacks, concentration aids (fidget toys), position in class (due to need i.e. hypervigilant so they can see everything, near a door so they can easily leave, away from colourful distractions etc). inclusion in extracurricular activities. Consider noise/ smell/ sound in dinner hall, playground and place to withdraw if needed.

Academic Expectations- pre teaching, key member of staff to chunk instructions, use visuals, prompts, adapting work, access to homework clubs, bespoke timetable, use of PP+ and interventions. Academic expectations to be in line with developmental and emotional age. Pre teach new vocabulary.

Expectation of self-direction and independence – check in at start of day to check they have what they need, know where to go. Buddy to support. Check out at end of day with key adult to bag up any worries/ anxieties/ problems. Memory aids on cards, daily check lists, bespoke timetable. User friendly planner for homework. Sometimes verbal cues are not enough, and visual or tangible cues are much more relevant, just as we would use with much younger children. Many of these children and young people have little concept of time and need an opportunity to ‘feel’ what time feels like- sand timers, online calendars etc.

References:

Louise Michelle Bomber – What About Me? And Know Me to Teach Me
The Trauma and Attachment Aware School – Rebecca Brooks
Pac -UK

Useful links to Support Transition

[Preparing your child to be school ready in the early years:
school-readiness-booklet \(cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk\)](https://www.cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk/school-readiness-booklet)

[School Resources to Help With Transitions | Mental Health | YoungMinds
www.youngminds.org.uk/professional/resources/supporting-school-transitions](https://www.youngminds.org.uk/professional/resources/supporting-school-transitions)

[Supporting children's transition to secondary school | Childrens mental health and
wellbeing in schools | Anna Freud Centre
www.annafreud.org/schools-and-colleges/resources/supporting-childrens-transition-to-
secondary-school-guidance-for-parents-and-carers](https://www.annafreud.org/schools-and-colleges/resources/supporting-childrens-transition-to-secondary-school-guidance-for-parents-and-carers)

[Early Years transition guidance booklet \(birmingham.gov.uk\)
www.accesstoeducation.birmingham.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/Kirklees-
Council-early-years-transition-guidance-booklet-2013.pdf](https://www.accesstoeducation.birmingham.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/Kirklees-Council-early-years-transition-guidance-booklet-2013.pdf)

[Transition tips \(autism.org.uk\)
www.autism.org.uk/advice-and-guidance/topics/transitions/transition-tips](https://www.autism.org.uk/advice-and-guidance/topics/transitions/transition-tips)

Specific advice for schools regarding transitions into a pre-adoptive placement can be found on the Previously looked After Children's section on our website

