

Pan Bedfordshire Principles for children transitions to adult services

Introduction

Transitions Are Part of Life. During the course of a child's life, change is inevitable, families move, siblings are born, school begins and, consequently, transitions happen. Knowing about children's development can help us understand how children respond to transition. This document sets out what the Children and Adult Safeguarding Boards in Bedford Borough, Central Bedfordshire and Luton expect of agencies own procedures/policies/practice etc. for those children needing to transition into adult services

What we mean by 'transitions'?

Transition is the period when children develop to young adults. This is not a single event, such as leaving school, but a growing-up process that unfolds over several years and involves significant emotional, physical, intellectual and physiological changes. During this period, children progressively assume greater autonomy in many different areas of their lives and are required to adjust to different experiences, expectations, processes, places and routines. Transitions also impact on the family or on those who care for the child. To achieve their full potential, children often require support in different areas of their lives. There are professional considerations associated with the move from school or college or the transfer from child to adult services. These may include identifying and achieving positive destinations in employment, education or training, managing welfare and housing changes, reviewing healthcare needs, providing information and advocacy, assessing capacity and managing risk. These processes should have the child's personal outcomes, aspirations and wellbeing at the centre. When their wellbeing is fully supported, they will be able to achieve their full potential.

Children's rights

Support for transitions should be firmly rooted in children's rights. This is achieved by placing the child at the centre, recognising them as rights-holders, and acting in their best interests while taking their views into account. 'Evolving capacities' are referred to in the UNCRC (articles 5 and 14). Parents' rights have to be used in a way that takes account of the child's maturity and understanding, especially as their capacity evolves. These approaches should be embedded within transitions; meaning with increasing age, maturity, understanding and experience, a child can progressively assume greater autonomy. The principles of transition closely align with the articles contained in the UNCRC. Additionally, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNRPD) reaffirms that all persons with all types of disabilities must enjoy all fundamental human rights and includes specific protections for the rights of disabled people.

Children with additional needs

Many children with additional support needs and their parents and carers can find the transition to becoming an adult particularly challenging. These challenges are exacerbated by:

- Organisational processes taking priority over individual needs
- Lack of support for carers and families
- Insufficient planning
- Unclear transitions pathways
- Limited options
- Lack of clarity about accountability

Mental Capacity

If there is a need to consider the mental capacity of a vulnerable child to make a decision, and they are aged 16 years and over, then a capacity assessment under the Mental Capacity Act 2005 (MCA) must be considered for each specific decision. It is important to recognise that mental capacity can be affected by a number of factors, including the abusive situation the person is in, and by any threats or coercion. Where there is a concern about mental capacity, this must be recorded. Capacity and consent also need to be considered in the context of control and coercion, which is central to all forms of exploitation. Advice on MCA can be sought from Adult Services Safeguarding Adults Teams.

Children who may pose a risk to others

Where there is a concern about a child who is aged 17.5 years and above posing a risk to others, information should be shared appropriately with practitioners and agencies who may work with them when they reach adulthood. These may be discussed at MARAC, MAPPA, or the Channel Panel. If none of these are applicable, then a multi-agency risk management meeting should be considered. The need to refer into the statutory processes should be revisited should further information suggest they would apply.

Principles

- 1. Planning and decision making should be carried out in a person-centred way** - this means children should be at the centre of their transition planning. A shared understanding and commitment to person-centred approaches across all services. Children should have a single plan.
- 2. Support should be co-ordinated across all services** - this means there should be a co-ordinated approach to transitions in each local authority. Learning and development opportunities should include an understanding of all aspects of transition and Transitions should be evaluated.
- 3. Planning should start early and continue up to age 25** - this means planning must be available from age 14 and be proportionate to need. Children's plans and assessments should be adopted by adult services. Transition planning and support should continue to age 25.
- 4. All children should get the support they need** - this means eligibility criteria should be applied equitably across Bedfordshire and Luton. Support should be available for those who do not meet eligibility criteria. An improved understanding of the number of children who require support and levels of unmet need. Planning and decision-making for services should be done in partnership with children and their carers.
- 5. Children, parents/carers must have access to the information they need** - this means information should clearly state what children are entitled to during transitions. Show what support is available. Be inclusive of different communication needs. Use common and agreed language.
- 6. Families and carers need support** - this means family well-being needs to be supported. Advocacy should be available at the start and throughout transitions.

The Pan Bedfordshire Children and Adult Safeguarding Children Boards will work collectively to promote the Principles of Good Transitions and improve practice across their partnerships. A continued focus on transitions within policy and legislative developments. Learning from local/national good practice and embedding into sustainable longer-term strategies