

Choices for Life Strategy

2017 – 2018

Imagine the possibilities
if you had the opportunities

THE Unstoppables

SOMERSET
County Council

Somerset Parent Carer Forum

CHOICES FOR LIFE

Developing a positive and consistent approach for young people who require support into adulthood

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Welcome to the Choices for Life Strategy!

Harry and I became involved with this strategy from the beginning. We were asked to think about what transitions meant to us and the young people we represented. We believe it is **important** for young people to **make their own decisions** and **think about the future** and be at the forefront of the decision making process.

The more opportunities we have to make decisions in our lives, the more **confident** we will become. By making our own decisions we can **accept challenges, understand risk** and **learn from mistakes. This is okay!**

As we become older the decisions become bigger and potentially life-changing.

If the families and practitioners support us, we will become more resilient, if you have a knock-back in life, it is important for us to keep motivating ourselves to achieve and succeed. These skills will allow us to achieve a positive outlook on achievement and success. We met with young people and talked about what “transition” meant to them; this was through The Unstoppables and other groups. We used the 4 areas of Preparing for Adulthood for our discussions:

- Employment
- Independent Living
- Community Inclusion
- Health and Wellbeing

Transitions is a complex word for many young people to understand and relate to. So Harry and I designed a concept called “Choices for Life.” The concept is all about putting all young people at the forefront of the decision making process in regards to their future. Young people told us that they wanted to explore opportunities and it was important that this happened near where they lived.

We felt that transition should challenge the people that work with us and support us so that we can understand our opportunities. This should be a partnership between us all. To help us progress to adulthood and reach our goals, we want to challenge you to think about our future lives around these five questions:

- How can I choose my next school or college?
- How can I find a job and keep a job?
- How can I live more independently?
- How can I find things to do in my spare time?
- How can I stay safe and healthy?



Harry Tavaré



K. Durham

Becoming an adult can be a positive, exciting and challenging time. Effective support and planning will enable our young people to reach their full potential as an adult. This can only be achieved by talking about ambitions and plans for adulthood from an early age including introducing ideas about work, education and being part of a community including where they will live.

We view transition as a shared opportunity that should be driven by the needs, views and wishes of the young person and the people that care for them in partnership with the agencies surrounding them. Young people have expressed this as having “Choices for Life” and these plans should be evident throughout all reviews and provision in place for the young people supported through this strategy.

Local authorities **must** ensure that the Educational Health and Care plan review at Year 9, and every review thereafter, includes a focus on preparing for adulthood.

Planning **must** be centred around the individual and explore the child or young person’s aspirations and abilities, what they want to be able to do when they leave post-16 education or training and the support they need to achieve their ambition.

Transition planning **must** be built into the revised EHC plan and should result in clear outcomes being agreed that are ambitious and stretching and which will prepare young people for adulthood (SEN Code of Practice page 125).

The need for effective transitions feature as key elements of both the Children and Families Act (2014), and the Care Act (2014), as well as NICE guidelines (2016), and Somerset County Council acknowledges its responsibility and legal duty to prepare and support children and young people who are likely to continue to prepare for their adult-life and potentially beyond. This strategy sets out how the council intends to meet its statutory obligations and ambitions for young people.

The way that statutory services are configured and operate has meant that some young people and their families have had a negative experience of change in the types and levels of support as they grow older.

A key part of transition is about how young people and their families are included and prepared, and how services are coordinated. Provision from statutory authorities is subject to different legislation across child and adult provision, and it is not always the case that services provided for young people have an equivalent adult alternative that a person is eligible to receive.

This strategy is for those young people requiring support and guidance both **into** adult-life and **in** adult-life. Not all young people who are identified as requiring support in preparing for adult-life will require formal services from agencies in adult-life.

Where they do, they will be subject to transfer of care management and funding as appropriate. Where they do not, they will have clear decisions communicated with any appropriate guidance and signposting.

Effective preparation for adulthood will help manage change and promote independence, and all partners including young people and their parent/carers need to be committed to developing personalised and innovative approaches.

Our aim is to design and provide for a person's needs, aspirations and desired outcomes and to ensure that they receive timely information, advice and guidance to help them achieve this. We need to fulfil our statutory responsibilities in such a way that it makes sense to the young person and successfully enables his/her journey from childhood to adulthood, ensuring that they are able to effectively participate in their community and grow to live the life they want.

An effective transition from one service to another may hardly be noticed when it goes well and where the young person and family have been included, but where services fail or end, or where expectation is not met the person may be left increasingly vulnerable and distressed.

Preparation for Adulthood should be seamless and not create additional processes, but utilise existing plans, support, advice and information through effective intra-organisation coordination, and wider multi-agency partnership working.



Within Somerset we have identified that there a number of young people who will benefit from robust planning and accountability into adult-life including those who are likely to gain significant benefit from a transition assessment as described through The Care Act (2014), we define these as the following:

Support in Adulthood:

- Children and young people identified as requiring support through statutory health and social care assessments whose needs will require continuing support from statutory adult services

Support into Adulthood:

- Young people with Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities (SEND), who may be likely to require support into adult life to fulfil their ambitions

Young people who may be vulnerable as adults e.g.:

- Children and young people in care, and Care Leavers.
- Young Carers
- Those requiring ongoing support from health including those known to Child and Adolescent mental health teams

Activities undertaken over the past 12 months:

- Co-production of re-framing of transitions work resulting in renaming of Choices for Life and identification of the '5 Hows'
- Initial Choices for Life Fair developed by young people bringing together education, housing, employment, short-breaks, parent carers and other relevant support agencies in one place to support guidance and planning
- Activities with Special Schools and Further Education colleges to reinforce their relationships in order to meet the ambitions of young people and respond to the shifting approaches to education and personalisation



- Development of joint working practices across SEND/Adult Social Care and Children's Social Care including those that are Looked After and Leaving Care
- Development of Pathways to Employment group across agencies to create coherent strategy into work for our most vulnerable young people
- Focussed development of Supported Employment opportunities including liaison with employers/education providers and job coaches culminating in event for employers to hear the voice of young people both those with SEND and those Looked After and Leaving Care

Somerset County Council acknowledges its responsibility to young people in transition, and recognises that positive outcomes will only be achieved through a partnership approach to the opportunities and challenges that this time presents.

Children and young people involved in transition should be able to say:

- I am receiving the support I need, when I need them and I understand the changes that might occur as I prepare for adulthood
- Any plan written about my future will prioritise my views and all efforts will be made to make sure I can contribute to these plans.
- I understand what is planned and when things will happen, I am not surprised or worried about what is happening as I have the information I need.
- I am able to voice my views, wishes and opinions and they are listened to.
- I know who to ask for help if I am not sure of something and they respond to me quickly.
- My family/carers and I understand what will happen to my money as I prepare for adulthood.
- I understand the choices available in planning for my future, including the 5 Hows:

How can I choose my next school or college?

How can I find a job and keep a job?

How can I live more independently?

How can I find things to do in my spare time?

How can I stay safe and healthy?

- I can access an advocate to support me and to make sure my views are heard and responded to.

High aspirations are crucial to success – discussions about longer term goals should start early and ideally well before year 9 (age 13-14) at school. They should focus on the child or young person's strengths and capabilities and the outcomes they want to achieve (Code of Practice, page 120).

Work here sets out to develop a clear, integrated and effective pathway into adulthood that begins in year 9 and that offers the children, young people and their families who require it direction, information and support appropriate to their needs.

It will also provide a clear framework for multi-agency working, describing tasks and processes that best support families and fulfils the duties and responsibilities of the council.

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Where they do, they will be subject to transfer of care management and funding as appropriate. Where they do not, they will have clear decisions communicated with any appropriate guidance and signposting.

Next steps:

- Ensuring effective and accurate recording, safe sharing of data and information in support of an effective transition process.
- Updating and providing operational protocols to guide practice and ensure an effective approach in preparing for adult-life through a multi-agency approach
- Ensuring that Choices for Life area panels are attended by all appropriate services and create a culture of accountability through monitoring the performance and decision making throughout the process. They should also be used to inform services of the future needs of young people by collecting data and identifying gaps in provision
- Ensuring all reviewing processes maximise opportunities to discuss, plan for and commit provision to outcomes relating to preparing for adult-life including:
 - Employment
 - Independent Living
 - Community Inclusion
 - Health



Given that not all of the children and young people who fall in scope of this work will require support from Adult Services and that some will enter or leave the pathway at different stages, exact numbers are difficult to predict.

However, the current data indicates that we might expect 30% of young people who have Education, Health and Care plans or are funded through high needs funding to require support from Adult Social Care in their future.

As planning and monitoring improves, this should allow for improved data from which to build more accurate identification of numbers of reviews required each year, as well as identifying future levels of demand for services.

Systems and practice in commissioning and care management will need to reflect a commitment to person-centred approaches across our communities.

Next Steps:

- Work with the community and provider organisations to embed an approach which promotes independence at each stage leading to innovative and creative responses to the challenges presented through planning for adult life.
- Strengthen joint working arrangements across commissioning, contracting and procurement teams to ensure that continued post-transition placements or services are a positive choice of quality and value.
- Provide a needs and gaps analysis to ensure that Somerset is able to secure sufficient, affordable accommodation and services for the medium and long term future.
- Support the plans to provide accommodation and community services for people who display behaviour that challenges through 'transforming care' partnership working.
- Development of community approaches and personalisation within children's and adults services to reduce dependency on traditional services and provide truly individualised plans.

“Local authorities will need to consider the needs of the person, what needs they are likely to have when they (or the child they care for) turn 18, and the outcomes they want to achieve in life. They should consider what types of adult care and support might be of benefit at that point, and also consider whether other options beyond formal services might help the individual achieve their desired outcomes.” (Care Act, 2014)



Central to all developments is the maximizing of opportunities for the inclusion and participation of children, young people and their families throughout the conversations, assessment and planning. This should ensure that children and young people with even the most complex needs are included in their individual plans, wider service design and delivery. This includes ensuring that all young people and the people that care for them are able to access activities that are universally available within their local areas.

Next steps:

- Ensuring that full opportunity for inclusion in preparing for adulthood is offered to all and that there is careful coordination of planning to fully explore the promotion of independence from the earliest age across relevant agencies
- Providing support to enable children and young people to have a voice, including access to advocacy services as required
- Facilitate opportunities for eligible families to use personalised budgets and direct payments in a way which supports preparation for an adult-life which is as independent as possible
- The creation of more robust Supported Employment models across both education and adult social care to increase the number of people with SEND in work
- Reinforcing current area panels by increasing membership to include special schools to account for and discuss plans for young people as they prepare for adult-life

Somerset knows that consistent communication, guidance and early planning are key areas that require action over the next 12 months.

Our activity across the next 12 months:

- Continue to work with our partners including Young People and Parent/carers to test out this strategy, clarify the aims and recognise the achievements
- Create consistent and measurable data regarding those young people who may require support and guidance in preparing for a good adult life
- Implement Choices for Life area panels across county
- Work with our partners to ensure that different systems and processes do not inhibit creative person-centred approaches which promote independence
- Provide a supporting infrastructure by nominating both a senior executive accountable for developing and publishing this strategy, and senior managers from education, children, and adult services, to be accountable for its implementation.
- Use this strategy with our partners in health and education to continue to build on our joint approaches to identifying those requiring support in preparing for adult-hood and to work collaboratively to meet the identified outcomes
- Develop provision within post-16 education and services within Adult Social Care to expand access to a meaningful adult-life with the right support for young people including a significant development of support into work
- Deliver two “Choices for Life” events within established careers fairs
- Parent/carer forum to develop approaches with parents
- Working with employers to break down perceptions of work

Measures:

1. Number of recorded outcomes achieved using Preparing for Adulthood review framework through pilot group
2. Number of young people at year 9 identified as requiring support through transition
3. Number of young people with a positive destination through the September guarantee
4. Number of young people allocated to Adult Social Care from 16
5. Percentage of young people successfully transitioning to adult services at the appropriate time
6. Number of young people defined through this strategy accessing Supported Employment programmes inc. Traineeships, Apprenticeships and Supported Internships
7. Young people/families and carers express confidence and understanding of the transition process via participation groups