



EHCP SUPPORT SERIES

Chapter 10

EHCPs and Preparing for Adulthood

A practical guide to using the EHCP to plan towards adult life, increasing independence and keeping the young person's aspirations at the centre.

The key idea

Preparing for adulthood is not simply planning what happens after school. It is about building towards the young person's own future across education and employment, independent living, community participation and health.



What Does Preparing for Adulthood Mean?

Start with the life the young person wants to build.

Preparing for adulthood should be person-centred and linked to the young person's aspirations. Planning can begin well before Year 9, but from Year 9 onwards EHC plan reviews must include a focus on preparing for adulthood (Department for Education and Department of Health, 2015).

Four broad areas

Education & work — Further education, training, supported internships, employment and meaningful occupation.

Independent living — Choice, daily living skills, money, travel, housing and the support needed for greater autonomy.

Community — Friendships, relationships, interests, belonging and participation in community life.

Health — Managing health needs, wellbeing and transitions from children's to adult health services.

Study Note

The SEND Code of Practice identifies these areas as important parts of preparing for adulthood and says planning should be centred on the young person's aspirations and abilities.



From Year 9 Onwards

Preparing for adulthood becomes a required focus of the annual review.

The Year 9 review and every review after it should consider what support the young person needs to prepare for adult life. Outcomes should become increasingly focused on steps towards the future they want.

Key Fact

From Year 9 onwards, the annual review must include a focus on preparing for adulthood. The review should consider the young person's aspirations and the provision required to support progress towards them (Department for Education and Department of Health, 2015).

Questions to bring into the review

- What matters to the young person now, and what do they hope for later?
- What skills or experiences would help them move towards those aspirations?
- What support needs to be written into the EHCP to make those steps possible?
- Which services or professionals need to be involved in planning transitions?

In Practice

A long-term aspiration can be broken into smaller outcomes. For example, wanting to travel independently might begin with recognising a familiar route, asking for help and practising supported journeys.



The Young Person's Voice and Decision-Making

As young people get older, their participation should grow.

The SEND framework places the views, wishes and feelings of children, young people and parents at the centre of decision-making. From the end of compulsory school age, certain SEND rights transfer from parents to the young person, subject to the Mental Capacity Act framework where relevant.

Key Fact

In SEND law, a person becomes a 'young person' for these purposes at the end of the academic year in which they turn 16. Rights relating to EHC plans then generally sit with the young person, including rights to request an assessment and make an appeal (Department for Education and Department of Health, 2015).

Participation might include

- Choosing how they communicate their views.
- Being supported to understand options and consequences.
- Making choices with visual, communication or advocacy support.
- Deciding who they want involved in meetings where possible.

Important

Needing support to communicate or make a decision does not mean the young person's views are unimportant. Decision-making support should be accessible and proportionate to the individual.



Turning Aspirations Into EHCP Outcomes

Connect the future goal to practical steps and provision.

Preparing-for-adulthood outcomes should be meaningful to the young person and specific enough to guide planning. Section F should then describe the special educational provision required to support progress towards relevant outcomes.

Worked example

Aspiration — Amir wants to work with animals when he is older.

Outcome — Amir will develop the communication, travel and workplace skills needed to participate in a supported animal-care placement.

Provision — A trained member of staff will deliver weekly travel-training sessions and explicitly teach workplace communication using role-play and visual supports, with skills practised during planned work-experience visits.

Question to Ask

Can I see how the provision in the plan helps the young person move towards their outcomes and aspirations? If the link is missing, identify what support or experience needs to be considered.



Education, Training and Employment

Planning can include more than one possible route.

Preparing for adulthood can involve exploring further education, vocational learning, apprenticeships, supported internships, employment and other meaningful pathways. The right route depends on the young person's aspirations, needs and circumstances.

Useful experiences may include

- Careers information and accessible exploration of different roles.
- Work experience or supported volunteering linked to interests.
- Travel training and practising journeys to education or work.
- Explicit teaching of workplace communication, routines or self-advocacy.
- Visits to post-16 or post-19 settings before decisions are required.

In Practice

Avoid treating one pathway as the default. Planning can explore what the young person enjoys, what environments help them thrive and what support would make different options accessible.



Independent Living and Community Life

Independence does not have to mean doing everything without support.

For some young people, greater independence means doing more tasks alone. For others, it may mean having more choice, communicating preferences, directing support or participating more fully with assistance.

Areas that might be explored

Daily living — Food, personal care, routines, household tasks and managing belongings.

Money — Understanding spending, budgeting or supported financial decision-making.

Travel — Road safety, public transport, route learning or supported travel.

Community — Friendships, relationships, leisure, communication and accessing local places.

Parent/Carer Note

Skills can look different from person to person. Focus on useful, meaningful goals rather than comparing the young person with a standard idea of what adulthood should look like.



Health and Moving Into Adult Services

Transitions work better when they are planned rather than sudden.

Young people may move from children's to adult health or social care services at different times. Preparing for adulthood can include understanding health needs, communication preferences, medication, appointments and who will coordinate support.

Study Note

The SEND Code of Practice expects EHC plan reviews from Year 9 onwards to consider health and care arrangements needed for adulthood and to support coordinated transition planning where services will change.

Things to clarify

- Which children's services will end or change, and when?
- Is a referral or assessment needed for an adult service?
- How does the young person communicate health needs and choices?
- What information needs to follow them into adult services?

In Practice

Ask who is responsible for each transition action and when it should happen. Recording actions and timescales can make it easier to spot gaps before a service ends.



How Long Can an EHCP Continue?

Age alone does not automatically end an EHC plan at 18.

EHC plans can continue beyond compulsory school age and, where the statutory criteria remain met, up to age 25. They do not continue simply because a young person is under 25; the local authority must consider whether the plan remains necessary.

Key Fact

The SEND Code of Practice states that a local authority must not cease an EHC plan simply because a young person is aged 19 or over. It must consider whether the educational or training outcomes specified in the plan have been achieved and whether the plan remains necessary.

Keep asking

- What education or training is the young person working towards?
- Which outcomes remain unmet and relevant?
- What special educational provision is still required?
- What evidence shows why the plan remains necessary, or why needs have changed?

Remember

Preparing for adulthood is not the same as preparing to remove support. The focus should remain on the young person's needs, aspirations, progress and the provision required.



My Preparing for Adulthood Plan

Use this page to collect priorities for the next review.

What matters to me / the young person?

Education, training or work goals

Independent living and community goals

Health / transition actions

Support or EHCP changes to discuss



References & Further Support

References

Department for Education and Department of Health (2015) Special educational needs and disability code of practice: 0 to 25 years. London: Department for Education. See Chapter 8 and paragraphs 9.151 onwards.

Great Britain (2014) Children and Families Act 2014. London: The Stationery Office. See Part 3.

Department for Education (2017) SEND: 19- to 25-year-olds' entitlement to EHC plans. GOV.UK. Guidance on when EHC plans may continue for young people aged 19 to 25.

Further support

- SENDIASS — free and impartial SEND information, advice and support. Find your local service through your council or Local Offer.
- GOV.UK SEND Code of Practice — statutory guidance on preparing for adulthood and EHC plans.
- Preparing for Adulthood — resources about employment, independent living, community inclusion and health.

Important

This guide provides general information about the SEND and EHCP system in England. It is not individual legal advice. Transition arrangements vary between services and local areas, so check current information for the young person's circumstances.