Preparation for Adulthood Guidance for Professionals

Introduction

Preparation for Adulthood (PfA) is not a single event, it is a continuous process that begins in the early years and supports children and young people to build the skills, confidence, and independence needed for life beyond education.

All children and young people will have dreams and aspirations for their adult life, however, children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) often face more barriers to success. It is important that every child/young person, including those with SEND, is provided with the support they need to enable them to move successfully through their educational journey and beyond into their adult life, so that they can reach their full potential and achieve their individual aspirations.

PfA should start early and should focus on the child/young person's strengths and aspirations. It involves coordinated planning across education, health, and social care to support young people in achieving their aspirations and leading fulfilling lives.

This guidance is for:

- Education, health, and social care professionals who are responsible for writing advice or contributing to content for Education, Health and Care (EHC) Plans.
- Professionals who are conducting/facilitating and contributing to annual reviews for children/young people with EHC Plans in place.

The purpose of this guidance:

- To ensure that PfA content within EHC Plans, including outcomes and provision, is of a high quality, and is in line with statutory requirements.
- To ensure that PfA is embedded from the earliest years in line with the SEND Code of Practice.
- To ensure that annual reviews for young people with EHC Plans in place in Year 9 and above are focused on PfA planning and support in line with statutory requirements and are consistently of a high quality.
- To ensure that all practitioners from across education, health and social care are confident to contribute to PfA content in EHC Plans and as part of annual review meetings/processes.

Legal Framework

Preparation for Adulthood is underpinned by several key pieces of legislation:

- **Children and Families Act 2014**: Requires EHC Plans to include PfA outcomes.
- **SEND Code of Practice (2015)**: Chapter 8 outlines the requirements to embed PfA from the earliest years. There are also statutory duties for PfA from Year 9 onwards.
- **Care Act 2014**: Sets out adult social care responsibilities and transition assessments.
- **Mental Capacity Act 2005**: Supports decision-making rights for young people aged 16+.

Key Outcomes of Preparation for Adulthood

The PfA framework focuses on four key life outcomes:

Employment

- Exploring the child/young person's education, training and employment/career aspirations.
- Preparing for work, training or further/higher education.
- Access to careers advice and guidance, vocational profiling, workplace visits, employer encounters, enterprise activities, and work experience.
- Supported internships, apprenticeships, and pathways to paid employment.
- Exploring entrepreneurial options if appropriate.
- Employment should be viewed as a realistic outcome for all young people, with support adjusted according to individual needs and aspirations.

Independent Living

- Skills development for managing money, cooking, travel, and household tasks.
- Housing options and living as independently as possible.
- Transition assessments under the Care Act to determine eligibility for adult services.

Community Inclusion

- Opportunities to build friendships, relationships, and participate in local activities.
- Support to access leisure, volunteering, and social networks.
- Using public transport and engaging with community services.

Health

- Transition planning from children's to adult health services.
- Support for managing physical and mental health needs.
- Promoting healthy lifestyles and self-care.

Planning and Reviews

Starting Early

- PfA should be **an embedded element of support** for children and young people with SEND from the earliest years.
- Formal PfA planning to support transition into adulthood should begin by **Year 9 at the latest** (age 13–14) and be reviewed annually. It is good practice to begin PfA planning as early as possible. For more information, please visit: Preparing for Adulthood - Annual Reviews - Derbyshire Local Offer
- Discussions should be person-centred, focusing on strengths, aspirations, and support needs.

Education, Health and Care Plans

- EHC Plans must include PfA outcomes considering all four key life outcomes: employment; independent living; community inclusion; health.
- Annual Reviews for those **Year 9 and above** must have a PfA focus.
- Multi-agency involvement is essential to ensure holistic support.

Transition Assessments

- Local authorities must carry out **Care Act transition assessments** for those **likely to be eligible for adult social care support.**
- These assessments should be timely and person-centred.
- For information about eligibility, please visit: Eligibility criteria for care services - Derbyshire County Council

Roles and Responsibilities

Local Authorities

- Coordinate multi-agency planning and ensure statutory duties are met.
- Provide clear pathways and accessible information.

Education Providers

- Embed PfA support from the earliest years.
- Deliver high-quality educational provision and study programmes with progression opportunities.
- Offer careers advice and guidance in line with the Gatsby Benchmarks.

Health Services

- Ensure smooth transition to adult health services.
- Provide ongoing support for complex health needs.
- You can find out more information relating to transition to adult health services here: Preparing For Adulthood Health - Derbyshire Local Offer

Social Care

- Assess eligibility for adult services.
- Support independent living and community participation.
- You can find out more information about Derbyshire social care services here: Adult Care services - Derbyshire Local Offer

Co-Production and Voice of the Young Person

Young people and their families must be involved in all planning and decision-making.

- Use tools and templates to gather views and preferences. The NDTi have produced a range of useful person-centred tools to support PfA planning: Preparing for Adulthood | NDTi
- Promote self-advocacy and informed choice.

Derbyshire County Council promote the use of the Mind of My Own app, which is available to all children/young people who are receiving a specialist service from Derbyshire, and also available for use by Derbyshire schools. The app has a dedicated section to support young people to share their views about their adult life. Schools can use the app once they have accessed the appropriate training. Mind Of My Own

Resources and Support

Derbyshire Local Offer website provides information on services available. Ensure that signposting is provided to young people, families/carers and supporting professionals. Preparing for adulthood - Derbyshire Local Offer

- Additional support may be available from advocacy services and supported employment programmes. See the Local Offer for details.
- National resources: Preparing for Adulthood Programme. Preparing for Adulthood | NDTi
- All schools can now access Preparation for Adulthood training as part of the Inclusion Support Service core training offer. Please speak to your Inclusion Support Advisory Teacher for more details.

Monitoring and Review

PfA plans should be dynamic and evolve with the child/young person's needs.

- Annual reviews must evaluate progress against PfA outcomes.

Writing Preparation for Adulthood Outcomes

The child/young person's voice should be central to their PfA outcomes.

- Outcomes should be co-produced with children/young people and their families and should be strengths-based.
- They should be SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Time-bound), covering all four PfA outcomes areas, and be related to the child/young person's real-life goals.

SMART Outcomes Guidance

SMART outcomes are:

- Specific: Clear and focused.
- Measurable: Progress can be tracked.
- Achievable: Realistic for the young person.
- Relevant: Linked to aspirations.
- Time-bound: Includes a timeframe.

Examples

The following examples are intended to support practitioners when developing Preparation for Adulthood outcomes. The areas for consideration are not exhaustive and should be used to guide discussion with the child or young person and their family.

Employment

Areas for Consideration

Early Years

- Exploring occupations through play.
- Developing interests and preferences.
- Taking turns and completing simple tasks.
- Building confidence and independence.

Primary

- Understanding different jobs and roles in society.
- Identifying strengths and interests.
- Developing responsibility through classroom jobs.
- Developing aspirations.

Secondary

- Careers education and guidance.
- Employer encounters and workplace visits.
- Enterprise activities.
- Exploring future education, training and employment options.
- Understanding personal strengths and areas for development.

Post-16

- Work experience.
- Volunteering.
- Apprenticeships, supported internships and traineeships.
- Vocational qualifications.
- Paid employment.
- Disclosure of needs and reasonable adjustments.

Example Outcome

By July 2028, Ben will participate in at least two employer encounters and one workplace visit linked to his interest in mechanics and will identify three skills required for jobs within the motor vehicle industry, so that he can make informed decisions about future education, training and employment opportunities.

Independent Living

Areas for Consideration

Early Years

- Dressing independently.
- Personal care routines.
- Making choices.
- Following daily routines.

Primary

- Managing belongings.
- Organising equipment.
- Understanding money.
- Developing personal safety awareness.

Secondary

- Budgeting and money management.
- Food preparation.
- Travel training.
- Time management.
- Developing decision-making skills.
- Exploring housing options and future support needs.

Post-16

- Managing bills and finances.
- Cooking and household management.
- Independent travel.
- Accessing adult services.
- Managing support arrangements.
- Understanding rights and responsibilities.

Example Outcome

By July 2028, Aisha will independently prepare and safely cook five simple meals using a recipe card on four out of five occasions, enabling her to develop practical daily living skills and increasing her confidence and independence in preparation for adult life.

Community Inclusion

Areas for Consideration

Early Years

- Playing alongside and with others.
- Developing communication skills.
- Participating in group activities.
- Developing a sense of belonging.

Primary

- Building friendships.
- Participating in clubs and enrichment activities.
- Learning social rules and expectations.
- Developing confidence within the school community.

Secondary

- Maintaining friendships.
- Developing positive relationships.
- Participating in extracurricular activities.
- Building confidence in social situations.
- Exploring leisure interests and hobbies.
- Developing online safety awareness.

Post-16

- Maintaining friendship groups.
- Developing wider social networks.
- Participating in community activities.
- Volunteering opportunities.
- Accessing leisure facilities.
- Developing healthy and appropriate relationships.

Example Outcome

By July 2028, Daniel will develop and maintain positive friendships with at least two peers within his educational setting and will participate in one extracurricular or enrichment activity each term, so that he develops relationship skills, social confidence and meaningful connections that support his wellbeing and future participation in adult life.

Health

Areas for Consideration

Early Years

- Personal hygiene routines.
- Healthy eating.
- Physical activity.
- Communicating needs and feelings.

Primary

- Understanding emotions.
- Developing healthy habits.
- Identifying trusted adults.
- Understanding personal safety.

Secondary

- Emotional wellbeing.
- Physical health needs.
- Sexual health and relationships education.
- Managing appointments.
- Understanding health conditions.
- Building resilience.

Post-16

- Managing medication.
- Attending appointments.
- Transition to adult health services.
- Understanding health needs.
- Self-advocacy.
- Accessing support services when needed.

Example Outcome

By July 2028, Chloe will independently identify when she is feeling anxious and use at least three agreed self-regulation strategies in four out of five identified situations, enabling her to manage her emotional wellbeing more effectively and participate more confidently in education, social activities and future employment.

A Note About Outcome Writing

When developing Preparation for Adulthood outcomes, consider:

- **Who** is the outcome for?
- **What** is the young person working towards?
- **How** will progress be measured?
- **When** will the outcome be achieved?
- **Why** is this outcome important?
- **What difference will achieving the outcome make to the young person's future adult life?**

The strongest outcomes focus not only on what the young person will do, but also on how achieving the outcome will help them work towards greater independence, wellbeing, community participation, health and future employment opportunities.

Conclusion

Preparation for Adulthood is a thread that should run throughout a child or young person's educational journey, rather than a discussion that begins at a particular age or stage. Effective Preparation for Adulthood planning starts with high aspirations, builds on strengths and interests, and supports children and young people to develop the knowledge, skills and experiences they need for adult life.

Professionals play a key role in ensuring that Preparation for Adulthood is reflected consistently within assessments, reports, outcomes and provision. High-quality contributions should move beyond describing needs or current support and instead identify meaningful opportunities for progress across the four Preparation for Adulthood pathways: employment, independent living, community inclusion, and health.

For more information, please visit: Preparing for adulthood - Derbyshire Local Offer