Tips for Effective Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) Reviews: Preparation for Adulthood Focus

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.

From Year 9 onwards, annual reviews must have a PfA focus. Whilst Year 9 is the statutory point at which annual reviews must have a PfA focus, preparation should begin much earlier and develop progressively throughout a child's educational journey.

This toolkit contains **tips for conducting effective EHCP reviews** with a **focus on PfA**. It is designed to help school staff and review facilitators ensure PfA annual reviews are strengths-based, meaningful, person-centred, and outcome driven.

What makes a Preparation for Adulthood review different?

A Preparation for Adulthood review goes beyond considering a young person's current educational provision. It focuses on their future aspirations and the skills, experiences, support and opportunities they need to achieve successful adult outcomes. Discussions should explore what is important to the young person now and in the future, and identify the practical steps needed to move them towards adulthood.

Preparation for Adulthood planning should be developed through co-production with the young person and, where appropriate, their family and supporting professionals.

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.

From Year 9

- 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.

Use the following guidance when facilitating PfA annual reviews:

Centre the Young Person

- **Use accessible formats** (e.g., visuals, symbols) to help the young person express their views.
- **Support self-advocacy** by involving them in setting goals and reviewing progress.
- **Celebrate achievements** to build confidence and motivation.

Involve Families and Carers

- **Share the agenda and documents in advance** to allow preparation in line with statutory requirements.
- **Create a welcoming environment** where families feel heard and valued.
- **Discuss long-term aspirations** and concerns openly and respectfully.

Be Outcome-Focused

- **Ensure that SMART outcomes are identified** (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Time-bound).
- **Link outcomes to the four PfA domains**: Employment, Independent Living, Community Inclusion, and Health.
- **Ensure outcomes reflect the young person's aspirations**, not just service availability.

Prepare Thoroughly

- **Gather input from all relevant professionals** (e.g., careers advisors, therapists, social workers).
- **Review progress against previous outcomes** and identify barriers or successes.
- **Ensure all documentation is up to date** and accurate.

Use Tools and Templates

- **Use a PfA Outcomes Toolkit** to guide discussions. Outcomes Across the Age Ranges | NDTi
- **Refer to the Local Offer** for available services and support. Preparing for adulthood - Derbyshire Local Offer

Plan for Transitions

- **Discuss next steps** (e.g., college, training, supported employment) early and clearly.
- **Consider visits or taster sessions** e.g. with post-16 providers.
- **Ensure transition assessments (e.g. under the Care Act) are planned** if needed. Consider whether a referral to social care is required.

Review Checklist

Use the checklist below as a guide. It is not intended to be an exhaustive list as reviews should be individualised; however, the checklist can help to guide discussions and ensure key actions are undertaken.

Employment:

- Has the young person taken part in workplace visits, encounters with a range of employers and enterprise activities to support development of employment aspirations?
- Have the young person's career/employment aspirations been identified and discussed?
- Have appropriate PfA outcomes and support/provision been identified to help them achieve these aspirations?
- Have the next steps for education/training/employment been explored – e.g. for those young people in Key Stage 4 for example, have post-16 options been discussed? For those already in post-16 provision, have supported employment options been considered? For more information, please visit: Post-16 Education and Training - Derbyshire Local Offer; Employment Support - Derbyshire Local Offer
- Have supported internships, apprenticeships and pathways to paid employment been explored? For more information please visit: Supported Internships - Derbyshire Local Offer; Apprenticeships - Derbyshire Local Offer
- Have entrepreneurial options been explored if appropriate?
- For those aspiring to move into higher education pathways, have the different options been discussed? For more information, please visit: Preparing for Adulthood - Higher Education - Derbyshire Local Offer
- Has the young person accessed careers advice and guidance, work experience, volunteering or do they have a part time job? For more information, please visit: Volunteering Opportunities - Derbyshire Local Offer
- Is there a vocational profile in place? For more information, please visit: Vocational Profiling - Derbyshire Local Offer
- Is the young person aware of support to achieve employment in the future for example Derbyshire Disability Employment Service? For more information, please visit: Disability Employment Service - Derbyshire Local Offer

Independent Living

- What life skills does the young person need to develop for managing money, cooking, travel, and household tasks?
- Have the young person's future independent living aspirations been discussed?
- Have appropriate PfA outcomes and support/provision been identified to help them achieve these aspirations?

- Are they aware of their housing options and where they can seek advice and guidance about this in the future? For more information, please visit: Adult Care Housing Options - Derbyshire Local Offer
- Transition assessments under the Care Act to determine eligibility for adult services: are social care already supporting or is a referral to social care required? For more information, please visit: Adult Care Services - Derbyshire Local Offer Also – see below re Community Connectors.
- Has signposting been provided to services such as Welfare Rights? For more information, please visit Welfare benefits - Derbyshire County Council

Community Inclusion

- Does the young person have opportunities to build friendships, relationships, and participate in local activities?
- What skills might they require in order to maintain friendships and relationships effectively?
- Have appropriate PfA outcomes and support/provision been identified to help them achieve their goals in this area?
- What support may be needed to access leisure, volunteering, and social networks. Is the young person aware of how they access information about this? For more information, please visit: Community - Derbyshire Local Offer
- Is the young person able to keep themselves safe whilst out in the community? Are they aware of the Safe Places scheme and app? For more information, please visit: Derbyshire Safe Place Scheme - Derbyshire County Council
- Using public transport and engaging with community services. What skills might be required in this area? Consideration to be given to whether a referral to Community Connectors is appropriate. If the young person does not meet the service criteria, is the young person aware of where else they can access support e.g. social prescribers, voluntary sector organisations? For more information, please visit: Getting out and about - Derbyshire County Council; Social Prescribing - Derbyshire Local Offer

Health

- Transition planning from children's to adult health services: have relevant health professionals contributed to the review and is there a transition plan in place?
- Support for managing physical and mental health needs: is the young person aware of how to access support? For example, universal services such as the GP, annual health checks for those with a learning disability. For more information, please visit: Preparing For Adulthood Health - Derbyshire Local Offer
- Promoting healthy lifestyles and self-care: have outcomes been identified to support this outcome area? What skills might the young person need to build or develop?

Preparing to Manage Support and Make Decisions in Adulthood

- Has consideration been given to how the young person will be supported to make decisions as they move into adulthood?
- Has discussion taken place regarding the Mental Capacity Act where appropriate?
- Is the young person beginning to understand their rights, responsibilities and choices?
- Have future support arrangements been considered?

Reflective Questions

- If this young person left education tomorrow, what would they need to know?
- What experiences have they had this year that have prepared them for adulthood?
- What skills are they currently practising?
- How have we moved them closer to their aspirations?
- Are we talking about adulthood, or just educational provision?

Example Outcomes

The following examples demonstrate how Preparation for Adulthood outcomes can be written in a person-centred way. Effective outcomes should clearly identify **who** the outcome is for, **what** the young person is working towards, **how progress will be measured**, **when the outcome will be achieved**, and most importantly, **the difference it will make to the young person's future life opportunities, independence, wellbeing and participation in adulthood**. Outcomes should be ambitious, meaningful to the young person, and linked to their aspirations for adult life.
By July 2028, Jacob will complete a minimum of two employer encounters and one supported work experience placement linked to his interest in vehicle maintenance, recording his reflections on each experience with support from a trusted adult, so that he can make informed decisions about future education, training and employment opportunities after leaving school.

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

By July 2028, Daniel will identify, build and maintain positive friendships with at least two peers within his educational setting, participating in shared activities during social times and enrichment opportunities, so that he develops the confidence, relationship skills and social connections that will support him in adulthood.

By July 2028, Chloe will identify when she is feeling anxious and independently 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, community activities and future employment opportunities.

By July 2028, Liam will independently communicate his preferences and make informed choices about at least three aspects of his daily life (such as travel, leisure activities or spending money) during review meetings and planning discussions, increasing his confidence to participate in decisions that affect his life and supporting his transition into adulthood.

Conclusion

Preparation for Adulthood is not a single conversation or event. It is a continuous process that should be embedded throughout a young person's educational journey and reflected within every annual review. It is important to maintain a clear focus on the young person's aspirations, strengths, interests and future goals, ensuring that discussions move beyond current educational provision and consider what is needed for a successful adult life.

Effective Preparation for Adulthood reviews provide opportunities to celebrate progress, identify meaningful next steps and ensure that support remains focused on outcomes that will make a real difference to the young person's future.

The most effective reviews keep the young person's voice at the centre of planning, raise aspirations and ensure that outcomes are specific, measurable and purposeful. Every discussion should contribute to answering a simple question:

"How will this help the young person to achieve the life they want as an adult?"