
Getting Transitions Right: Post-School Transitions for Young People with Additional Support Needs Policy



SHETLAND
ISLANDS COUNCIL

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Transition Policy

Contents

1.	Introduction – Policy Statement	4
2.	Scope	4
3.	Relevant Legislation, Policy and Guidance Links.....	5
4.	Children’s Rights Based Approach.....	6
5.	The Principles of Good Transitions.....	6
6.	Aims.....	7
6.1	Early Identification and Planning	7
6.2	Ongoing Multi-Agency Engagement	7
6.3	Information Sharing and Transition.....	8
6.4	Key Features of Best Practice:	8
7.	Eligibility Criteria	9
8.	Health	10
9.	Access to Information	10
10.	Transitions Flowchart.....	12

1. Introduction – Policy Statement

In this policy, ‘Transition’ refers to the process of moving from Children’s Services to Adult Services. This is not a single event but a phased journey that includes early planning, the actual transfer between services, and ongoing support for the young person and their family. Additionally, the term ‘additional support needs’ is used broadly, to encompass anyone who may need to overcome barriers related to learning, life and work as they enter adulthood.

Each local Education Authority has a specific statutory responsibility under the Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Acts 2004 and 2009 for planning to support children and young people moving from nursery into primary school, through primary and into secondary, and from school into adulthood. This policy is focused on post-school transitions from Children’s to Adult Services. Young people with additional support needs have the same aspirations hope and goals as their peers. As they mature into adulthood, they may face additional challenges that can make the transition overwhelming, particularly when moving on from school to further education, employment training and/or adult social care services.

A well supported transition is essential for Shetland’s children and young people. It may involve changes to key relationships, such as:

- Moving from school to college, university or employment
- Transitioning from child health services to adult health and social care
- Transferring from children’s social work to adult social work

Transitions can be an exciting but also uncertain and stressful. Each young person’s transition should be tailored to their individual needs, aspirations and circumstances, taking account of their expected school leaving date and future goals.

This Policy aims to:

- Promote early planning, intervention and development of life skills
- Establish clear pathways and responsibilities across services
- Support young people with additional support needs to reach their full potential

2. Scope

This Policy applies to applies to young people generally aged between 14 and 25 years old with additional support needs, including those who are care experienced, looked after and accommodated, and their parents or carers. Additional support needs can be both long and short-term or can simply refer to the help a child or young person needs in getting through a difficult period. A young person is said to have additional support needs if they need more or different support to what is usually provided to other young people of the same age. This could be due to:

- Disability or health (e.g. learning disability, sensory impairment, complex needs – this list is not exhaustive)

- Neurodiversity
- Learning environment
- Family circumstances
- Social and emotional factors (e.g. mental health needs)

This policy aims to ensure effective, timely and coordinated planning transitions; minimise uncertainty for young people, families and service providers; clarify roles and responsibilities across agencies; and embed a rights-based, person-centred approach in all transitions planning.

For Looked After Children, local authorities are required to provide aftercare support until care leavers turn 19, and to assess any eligible needs for aftercare support until they are 26.

3. Relevant Legislation, Policy and Guidance Links

This Policy is underpinned by legislation and a national policy, including:

- [United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child | UHCHR](#)
- [United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child \(Incorporation\) \(Scotland\) Act 2024](#)
- [Education \(Scotland\) Act 2016](#)
- [Education \(Additional Support for Learning\) \(Scotland\) Act 2004](#)
- [Adults with Incapacity \(Scotland\) Act 2000](#)
- [Equality Act 2010](#)
- [Carers \(Scotland\) Act 2016](#)
- [Social Care \(Self Directed Support\) \(Scotland\) Act 2013](#)
- [Children and Young People \(Scotland\) Act 2014](#)
- [NICE Guideline: Transition from Children's to adults' services for young people using health or social care services](#)
- [Getting it right for every child \(GIRFEC\)](#)
- [Staying Put Scotland Guidance](#)
- [National Transitions Strategy 2025-2030](#)

This Policy should also be read in conjunction with relevant Shetland Islands Council policies, in particular:

- [Shetland Getting it Right for Every Child Practice Framework](#)
- [Self-Directed Support Policy](#)
- [With You For You documents – Shetland Islands Council](#)

4. Children's Rights Based Approach

Support for transitions must be rooted in a children's rights-based approach. This is achieved by placing the child/young person 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 United Nations Convention for the Rights of Children (UNCRC) (articles 5 and 14). Parents' rights must be used in a way that takes account of the young person's maturity and understanding, especially as their capacity evolves. The Staying Put Scotland Guidance mentions a similar approach.

These approaches should be embedded within transitions; meaning with increasing age, maturity, understanding and experience, a young person can progressively assume greater autonomy. 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.

The Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act 2004 (the "2004 Act") sets out the duties of an Education Authority in relation to post-school transitions including specific timelines. At least 12 months prior to the young person leaving school, the school should engage with Children's Services, the young person, parents and carers, as well as any relevant agencies, and take account of any information and the views of the young person, parents and carers.

The 2004 Act further provides that no later than 6 months before the school leaving date of a young person, Education and Children's Services should provide such relevant agencies with information concerning the young person. The school and Children's Services will work together to ensure Adult Social Work receive relevant information for young people deemed eligible for support in adulthood. This enables Adult Social Work to have a plan in place, and a budget allocated six months before a young person's school leaving date and for the relevant receiving agency/service(s) to be given appropriate information. Locally we expect information to be shared at an earlier point than the statutory requirement, additional detail regarding local processes is provided later in the policy.

A framework of legal rights and duties underpins this Policy. If a person is eligible to receive funding for services, they will be able to choose the services or resources they want as long as they meet the assessed needs and outcomes, providing there is capacity within the chosen service. Should there not be then other options will be explored. The process used to determine who is eligible and determine what the budget will be is described in the stages below.

5. The Principles of Good Transitions

The [Principles of Good Transitions 3](#) is a framework of 7 principles to inform, structure and encourage the continual improvement of support for young people with additional support needs between the ages of 14 -25 who are making the transition to adult life.

The seven principles are as follows:

- Planning and decision making should be carried out in a person-centred way

- Support should be coordinated across all services
- Planning should start early and continue up to age 25
- All young people should get the support they need
- Young people, parents and carers must have access to the information they need
- Families and carers need support
- A continued focus on transitions across Scotland

6. Aims

6.1 Early Identification and Planning

Transition planning for young people leaving education typically begins in secondary 3 when the young person is entering the senior phase of school, however it can begin at any time, dependent on the needs of the child or young person. At this stage, the Pupil Support Teacher or Support for Learning Teacher will begin to gather the pupil's views and where applicable, their parent or carer's views about future aspirations.

For children and young people across Scotland, the 'Getting it Right for Every Child' (GIRFEC) practice model underpins the assessment of the child's needs. The assessment document itself is called a 'Child's Plan', which is a multi-agency tool used to undertake a holistic assessment in line with the GIRFEC framework.

For children who have a Child's Plan in place, transition planning begins at a Child's Plan review meeting, where relevant professionals will be invited to share information regarding support needs, and the views of the child/young person/parents/carers will be made known. If the child or young person do not have a child's plan in place at the start of the transition process, the transition process will initiate a child's plan being required, so multi agency support can be obtained.

Young people have the right to ask anyone to attend meetings in relation to transition and the school must invite them. Good communication between all persons involved is key to the success of the process. Ultimately, the child or young person will be at the centre of the planning process and will be assigned a key contact during the transition process who they or their parents/carers can contact.

6.2 Ongoing Multi-Agency Engagement

Following the initial meeting discussing transition, and views being gathered, further transition meetings will be held involving the young person, their family and relevant professionals.

Throughout the process, effective communication and collaboration is essential to ensure a smooth and coordinated transition.

In order to ensure the transition is as effective as possible there will be continuing multi- agency involvement across education, children’s social work and adult social work, as well as other services that are relevant to the child in relation to transition There may also be engagement from other services namely allied health professionals and third sector services.

Access to clear, timely information is vital. Young people and their families need to understand what is available to them locally, how to access support, and what the transition process entails. Each child or young person’s key contact will be able to provide this information. Information is also available through national organisations such as ARC Scotland ([Scottish Transitions Forum - ARC Scotland](#)) and their Compass app ([Compass](#)), developed by them to provide professionals, young people and families general information about each stage of the transition process.

6.3 Information Sharing and Transition

To ensure continuity of support, the Child’s Plan (where applicable) should be shared with Adult Services at least two years prior to the young person’s expected school leaving date. The plan must include the young person’s goals and aspirations, exploration of potential support options, and key contacts, and timelines.

Once the Child’s Plan has been shared, a social worker from Adult Social Work will be assigned and become involved in the transition process and will begin building a relationship with the young person. They will gather information in line with Shetland’s approach for Adults, namely ‘With you, For You, and complete the ‘Understanding You’ assessment, to determine the indicative budget. This enables the development of the support plan, which should ideally be completed one year prior to a young person leaving school.

It is likely a young person will have both a children’s social worker and an adult social worker during the transition period. This will depend on each young person’s personal circumstances and needs.

6.4 Key Features of Best Practice:

- Early and proactive planning is important to assess needs, research opportunities and be creative in getting the right support in place in the right format at the right time.
- The Named Person/ Lead Professional in Children’s Services ensures clear professional leadership and coordination. The sharing of relevant consent based information is essential for effective transition planning.
- Child Planning meetings should be arranged by school in the first instance; this might become the responsibility of another agency where an alternative lead professional has been agreed. Relevant partners to the child’s plan should be invited, and a reasonable amount of notice (at least 1 month) should be given to support good attendance at multiagency meetings.

- Where a Lead Professional has been identified it will be their responsibility to ensure appropriate services are in place and that the young person and their supporters are enabled to participate fully.
- The Child's Plan should begin to focus on transition from around age 14 years, or at least two years before a young persons' planned school leaving date. The expected school leaving date should be agreed, not assumed, as this is a vital part of effective planning.
- The child's transition plan should capture the voice of the young person and that of their supporters in all areas of the plan.
- Curriculum for Excellence emphasises self-advocacy and participation in their learning and planning for life.
- Communication, collaboration and cooperation with all partners to the plan have been shown to enhance transition outcomes.
- Use of communication methods appropriate to the needs of the young person is essential to facilitate meaningful inclusion.
- All young people have the option to remain in school post 16. They should have an identified positive post-school destination.
- In the case of those with significant additional support needs as the result of disability or complex health needs the process of transition planning should be ongoing and should commence at least 3 years before the young person intends to leave school.
- Adult services (through the social worker) require to be notified of young people with a significant additional support need as a result of disability or complex health need who are likely to require a service in adulthood. Their focus is on future scoping and proactive planning.

7. Eligibility Criteria

Social Care is not a universal service. Access to social care is subject to an assessment, and resources are targeted on the basis of the national eligibility criteria to support those with the greatest need. The purpose of eligibility criteria is to ensure finite resources are used fairly, consistently and transparently.

The first step in determining eligibility for social care is an assessment undertaken by social work staff, with input from relevant partners including health, education, and any other relevant services.

Assessment is a process rather than a one-off event and involves the synthesis of information from various sources, considering strengths and assets as well as risks and needs.

The Social Care (Self Directed Support) (Scotland) Act 2013 provides the statutory framework for social care, ensuring individuals, who are eligible for social care, have choice and control over how their support is delivered. Further details are available in the Shetland Islands Council [Self-Directed Support Policy](#).

Some services for adults are subject to a financially assessed charge. The assessment process will include a financial assessment, which will determine whether the individual may be expected to make a contribution towards the chargeable elements of their support in adulthood. More information about charging can be found here: <https://www.shetland.gov.uk/social-care-health/paying-care>

8. Health

Transition in healthcare is the process of planning and moving from children's healthcare to adult health care. It is likely that young people going through transition from Children's to Adult Services will also go through the equivalent health transition at the same time. The key contact for the child or young person in their transition process will work with health colleagues as required to support this.

9. Access to Information

It is important that children, young people their parents and carers understand the transition process and understand what is available and what may be required during the transition process.

Advocacy

Independent advocacy is available to support young people and their families. The role of independent advocacy is to ensure that peoples' voices are listened to, and their views taken into account. Independent advocacy is available in Shetland and there are also national independent advocacy organisations who can provide support. Professions involved in the transition process should make children/young people/ their families aware of independent advocacy.

Adults with Incapacity

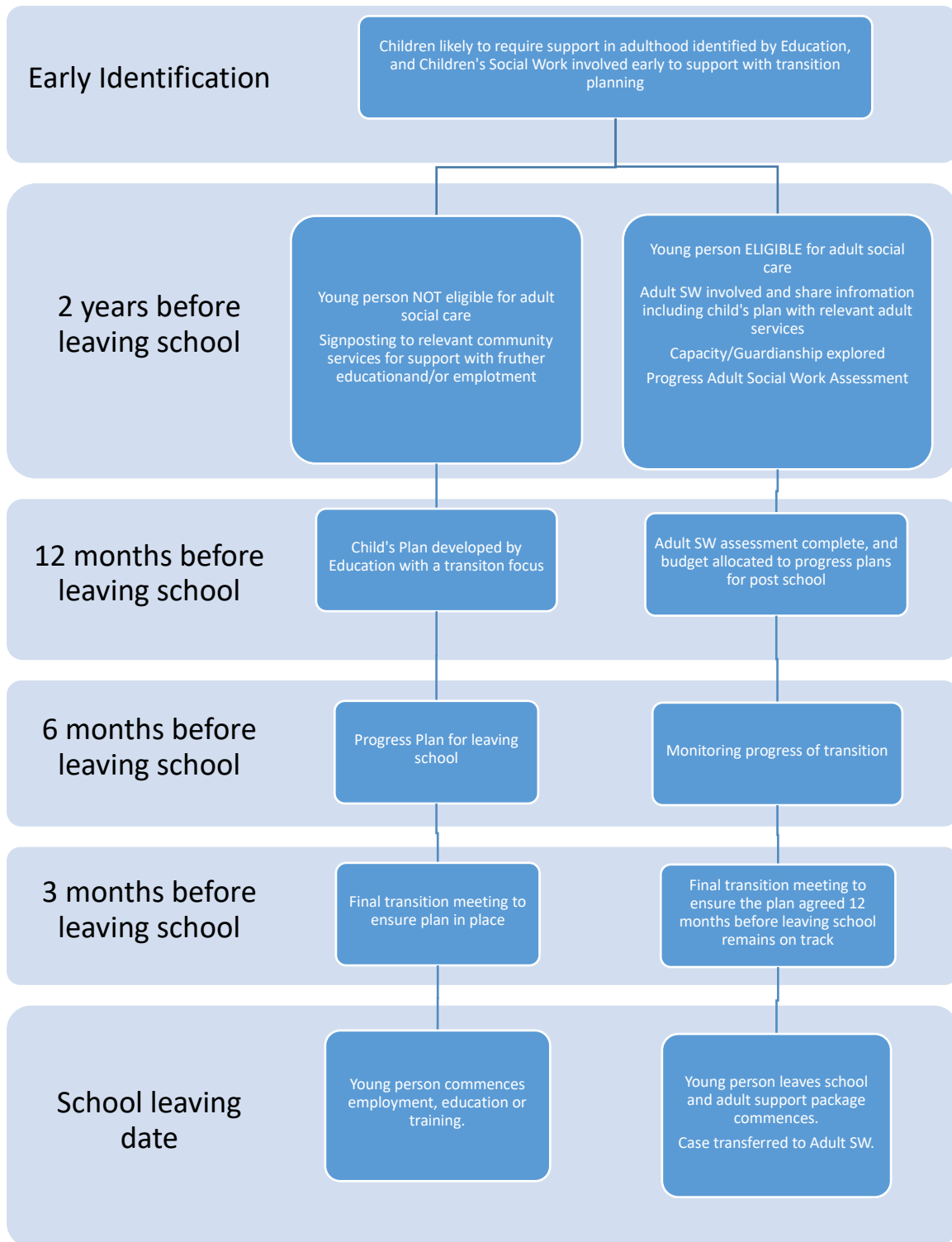
In Scotland, when a young person reaches the age of 16 years old, they are considered an adult, and it is important to consider their capacity (ability) to make decisions about their life, including care and treatment, and to manage finances. When a person is unable to make decisions independently. The Adult with Incapacity (Scotland) Act 2000 (AWI Act) can be used to grant another person the legal power to make decisions on the adults' behalf. Parents or carers do not have an automatic legal right to make decisions for the young person once they reach 16 years old. If a young person lacks capacity, their parents/carers could apply for a court order to make decisions on the young person's behalf. Information can be found on the following website - [Office of the Public Guardian \(Scotland\)](#) or advice can be obtained from a solicitor. Where it is believed a young adult may lack capacity, the professionals involved in transition process should signpost families to appropriate information regarding guardianship.

Finances

Once a young person reaches adulthood, they become responsible for their own finances. It is important to be aware of the changes to welfare benefit entitlement, as this may have an impact on young people's finances.

Shetland Citizens Advice Bureau provides a money advice service, and will be able to provide support - <https://www.shetlandcab.org.uk/services/debt-and-money>

10. Transitions Flowchart



It should be noted children and young people's circumstances may change as they progress through transition and they e.g. may initially not be entitled to social care support but may become so as they move through the process or vice versa.