



Transitioning from High School to College/Post-16 Education for Young People with SEND

RANi Need to Know Guides | Transition Phases Advisory sheet 3

The move from school to college or other post-16 settings is a major life transition. For young people with SEND, especially those with an EHCP, careful planning and person-centred support are essential to ensure their aspirations, needs, and future goals are at the heart of the process.

Why the Transition to Post-16 Matters

This transition is about more than a change of setting — it's about preparing for:

- Greater independence and responsibility
- New learning environments and expectations
- Choices about education, training, and employment
- Building life skills for adulthood

The process should reflect the young person's **hopes, strengths, support needs**, and long-term ambitions across **education, employment, health, independent living, and community inclusion**.

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Legal Framework: EHCPs and Post-16 Transition

The **Children and Families Act 2014** and the **SEND Code of Practice (2015)** require local authorities to:

- ◆ Support young people with SEND in moving towards **greater independence and adulthood**
- ◆ Ensure that the **EHCP review in Year 11** includes **planning for post-16 provision**
- ◆ Focus on **preparing for adulthood outcomes**
- ◆ Keep EHCPs in place **beyond age 16** (and potentially up to 25), **as long as the young person remains in education or training and the plan is still necessary**

The Transition Timeline

Year 9 (Age 13–14)

- **Preparing for Adulthood (PfA)** outcomes must be included in the EHCP review from this point.
- Start early conversations about goals, options, and aspirations.

Year 10 (Age 14–15)

- Research post-16 providers and visit potential colleges or training programmes.
- Request careers advice that is **SEND-aware and impartial**.

Year 11 (Age 15–16) – Critical Transition Year

- **EHCP must be reviewed** with a focus on next steps.

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- Your young person should be supported to **express their views** about what they want to do after school.
- Local Authority (LA) must consult your preferred **post-16 institution** and amend the EHCP accordingly.

By 31 March in Year 11, the LA must issue a final EHCP naming the post-16 setting (if the young person is changing institutions).

Types of Post-16 Provision

Your young person might move on to:

- Further Education (FE) Colleges
 - Sixth Form Colleges
 - School Sixth Forms
 - Specialist Post-16 Institutions (including independent or non-maintained special colleges)
 - Traineeships, supported internships, or apprenticeships
 - Part-time education combined with therapy or support packages
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The EHCP and Post-16 Education

If your young person has an EHCP:

- It should clearly reflect their **aspirations and long-term goals**

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- It must describe the **education and training outcomes** they are working towards
- Section F must set out any **specific support or adjustments** needed in the post-16 setting
- Section I should name the college or provider agreed

The LA must **consult** any setting you express a preference for (as long as it's a recognised provider under the law).

Involving the Young Person

From Year 9 onwards, young people should:

- Be involved in planning and decisions
- Share their views during annual reviews
- Attend visits to post-16 providers
- Receive careers advice and **PfA-focused** guidance

The young person becomes the **primary decision-maker** under SEND law from age 16 — unless they lack mental capacity.

If the Young Person Is Not Ready to Transition

If your young person isn't ready for a mainstream college or course, they may:

- Stay in a school sixth form
- Attend a **specialist FE setting**

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- Access bespoke education packages (e.g., blended education, therapy, life skills, home-based support)
- Join a **Supported Internship, Foundation Learning, or Personalised Learning Programme**

EHCPs can continue **up to age 25**, but only if the young person is still in **education or training**, and the EHCP remains **necessary** to meet their SEN.

Support During and After Transition

- **Transition meetings** between school and the new setting
 - **Visits and taster sessions** for your young person
 - **Named contact** or mentor at the new college
 - Reasonable adjustments and accessibility support
 - **Transport planning** if the college is further away
 - Social care transition planning (if needed)
 - **Preparation for independent travel**, budgeting, and managing routines
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Practical Tips for Parents and Carers

- ✓ Start discussions early
- ✓ Keep a record of visits, advice, and meetings
- ✓ Ensure your child's voice is heard and recorded in the EHCP
- ✓ Ask for a **transition plan** in the EHCP review
- ✓ Check eligibility for **SEND travel assistance**
- ✓ Find out about **Learning Support Teams** at the chosen college
- ✓ Ask about **mental health or pastoral support**

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- ✓ Encourage independence skills at home
 - ✓ Get support from SENDIASS, an advocate, or a local charity
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What If You're Not Happy With the Post-16 Setting Named?

You can:

- Challenge the EHCP via **appeal to the SEND Tribunal**
 - Request **mediation** first (optional, but recommended)
 - Provide supporting evidence (e.g., expert reports or assessments)
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Summary

The move from high school to post-16 education is a key milestone for young people with SEND. With a well-supported transition plan, strong communication between settings, and meaningful involvement of the young person, the process can be positive and empowering.

Support and Resources

You can get further support from:

- **RANi** – Help with advice, support and impartial information
- **Local Offer** - Help with advice, support and impartial information
- **SENDIASS** – Local impartial information and advice service for parents and young people www.iasmanchester.org
- **IPSEA** – Independent Provider of Special Education Advice: www.ipsea.org.uk

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- **Contact** – A national charity supporting families with disabled children:
www.contact.org.uk
- **National Careers Service**
- **Preparing for Adulthood (PfA)** – www.preparingforadulthood.org.uk
- **Disability Rights UK** – for post-16 and higher education advice

If you'd like help preparing your request or understanding your appeal options, RANi can provide guidance and templates.

Remember:

Always keep a copy of all correspondence you send, along with proof of postage or delivery. If you send documents by post, we recommend using a **signed-for** service. If sending by email, request a **read receipt** if possible.

Get in Touch

If you need more information or have a question, we're here to help.

Email us: info@rani.org.uk

Please include:

- Your name
- Your child's name
- Your child's date of birth
- Your query

Or, if you prefer, you can fill out our online **contact form** and we'll get back to you as soon as possible.

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