

Draft Central Bedfordshire Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Preparing for Adulthood Strategy (14-25)

Preparing For Adulthood

Young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) may need extra help to develop their skills and abilities, and build their independence and access care and support as they move towards adulthood.

Central Bedfordshire Council is committed to providing appropriate care and support that keeps young people with SEND safe and improves their life experiences and opportunities. This strategy explains how the Council will work closely with everyone surrounding young people with SEND to offer support at the right time during the transitions phase to ensure they are ready to do their best and achieve their ambitions.

The Council will work with young people with SEND, including their family carers, from the age of 14. This approach will enable the Council and its local partners to understand individual needs and plan ahead so that personalised information, care and support is easy to access and promotes independence and wellbeing. Where appropriate, this support will be on offer through to the age of 25. We call this; 'Preparing for Adulthood'.

Reasons for change

The Council asked a range of young people with SEND and their families about what happened to them as they prepared for adulthood and what range of support was available for them to access. The Council has listened to this feedback and used it to help inform this strategy.

This Research has told us that the transitions experience of young people with SEND moving towards adulthood varies considerably across Central Bedfordshire. Whilst there are formal arrangements in place to prepare young people for adult life and many describe positive experiences of the help they receive from individual workers, this support is not always reliable and families are sometimes not aware of all the care and support options and choices available to them.

The key findings from this research included:

- The need for early advice and guidance around preparing for adulthood and understanding the right care and support options to meet the needs of young people.
- More help for young people and their families to understand the transition to adulthood process, including an awareness of what should happen at each stage.
- More help for young people and their families to better understand the roles and responsibilities of all professionals involved in the transition to adulthood process.
- Better information sharing arrangements across all services involved in child to adulthood transitions to avoid delays in making referrals and providing care and support at the right time.

Our Plan

In response to these issues the Council has created a plan for how young people with SEND should be supported into adulthood. It is important that this plan recognises that every young person is unique and that they will have different aspirations, skills and abilities.

Some young people with SEND might already have ideas about what is important to them as they move towards adulthood whilst others may need more time, help and support. In order to provide a positive and helpful transitions experience the Council will enable young people and their families to:

- Have timely access to high-quality care and support
- Consider options for training, volunteering or getting paid work
- Develop independent living skills and have a home of their own where possible
- Learn about opportunities for trying new activities and meeting new people
- Make choices and decisions about all aspects of their support to improve their quality of life
- To develop confidence, and feel safe and protected

Some young people with SEND may need their parent carers to help them to say how they want to be supported and live their lives. We will make this happen by giving young people and their family's information about their care and support options and the ability to choose the support that meets their individual needs.

The Council is committed to:

- Encouraging young people to have aspirations and believe in what they can do and realise how much they can achieve.
- Working with everyone who is involved in supporting young people as they approach adulthood to have positive aspirations for them and support them in a way that helps young people to achieve their goals.
- Enable young people to live healthy and fulfilling lives, supported by local universal services and accessible health and care services.

How we will work together

The Council will work closely with everyone involved in preparing young people with SEND for adulthood. To do this right it requires a commitment and team effort between everyone involved in the young person's life.

The Council and its partners recognise that the best people to make decisions about a young persons care and support is the young person themselves and their family/carers. We will support young people and their family/carers in a person-centered way to make sure their voices are heard.

To ensure young people and their family/carers are listened to the Council will ensure they are:

- Involved in the plans that are made and what is decided to support them
- Are supported to think about their plans from when they are 14 so they know what kind of care and support might be needed
- To find information about all local activities they can get involved in and things they can do through the Local Offer
- Get the chance and the help they need to access training, jobs, work experience, and volunteering
- Are provided with advice and guidance about benefits and finances
- Can live safely within the community where they are able to
- Are able to move easily between care and health services when they are 18, even where these are provided by different agencies

We made some changes so we can do things better.

We will:

- Talk to young people and their families and carers earlier than we used to so they have more time to think about what happens next
- Explain why we ask questions, why people have to fill in forms, and what we do with the information
- Make sure young people and their families and carers have the information they need to decide things for themselves
- Share information (with permission) about the young person with everyone who helps them – so people don't have to repeat themselves
- Help identify assessments and referrals that are needed

We will:

- Work with businesses and charities to provide better opportunities for employment, training and volunteering
- Work with housing providers and get them involved by the time the young person is 17
- Work with community groups to improve our Local Offer
- Help with the right transport
- Educate others about how important it is to include young people with SEND in all aspects of community life

We know making plans for becoming an adult is hard. All the people and teams that work in Central Bedfordshire want to help young people with SEND and their families decide what is best. To achieve this everyone needs to work together.