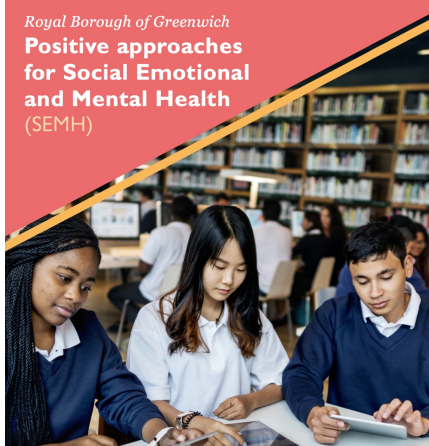


Transition Planning for Children with SEMH Needs

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**Positive approaches
for Social Emotional
and Mental Health
(SEMH)**



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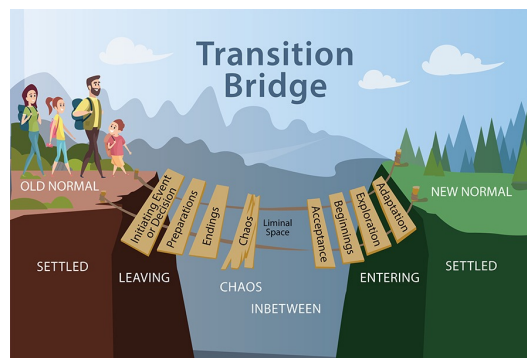
21st March 2022



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Introduction

This workshop uses approaches from person centred planning and risk management planning to maximise the likelihood of successful transitions between schools/provisions, e.g.



- primary-secondary transfer
- managed moves
- reintegration to mainstream (e.g., from AP)
- reintegration following exclusion



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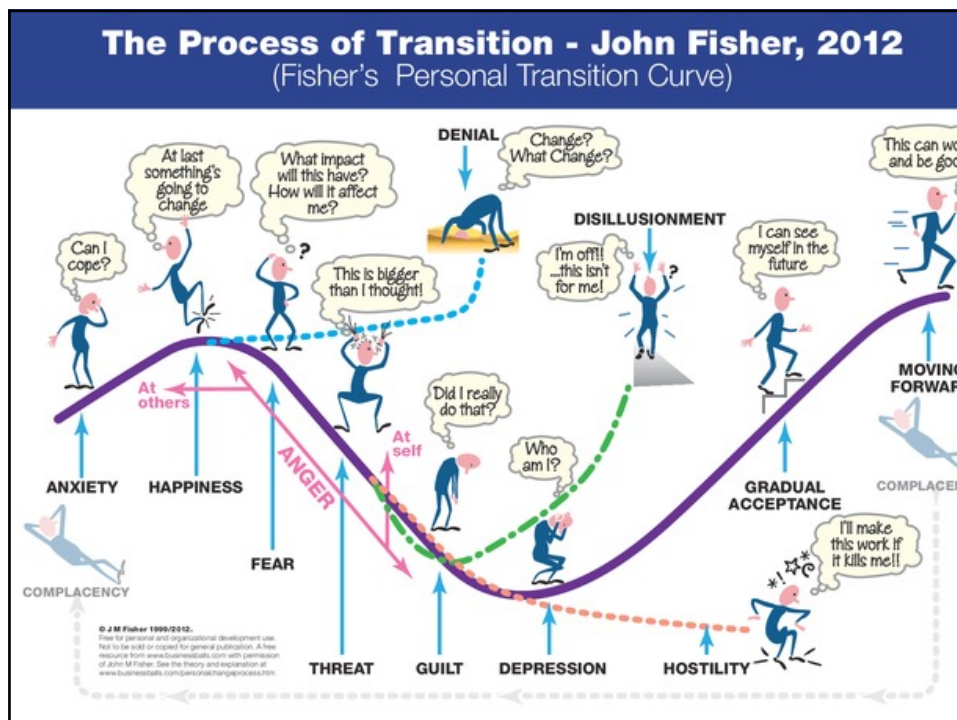
- Pupils will be better prepared for transition through being actively involved in planning their support and target setting, resulting in more achievable targets and greater likelihood of a successful transition.
- Staff in the receiving institution will be better prepared to meet the needs of the pupil and have strategies in hand to manage any difficulties that will inevitably arise.

Transitions: endings and beginnings

- We all experience transitions – moving house, starting a new job – and the feelings these arouse.
- Feelings about endings: ambivalence, loss, guilt, rejection
- What makes a ‘good’ ending?
- Good endings facilitate good beginnings (closure)
- What makes a ‘good’ beginning?
- Feeling welcome, wanted, supported in the joining process (induction)

New beginnings

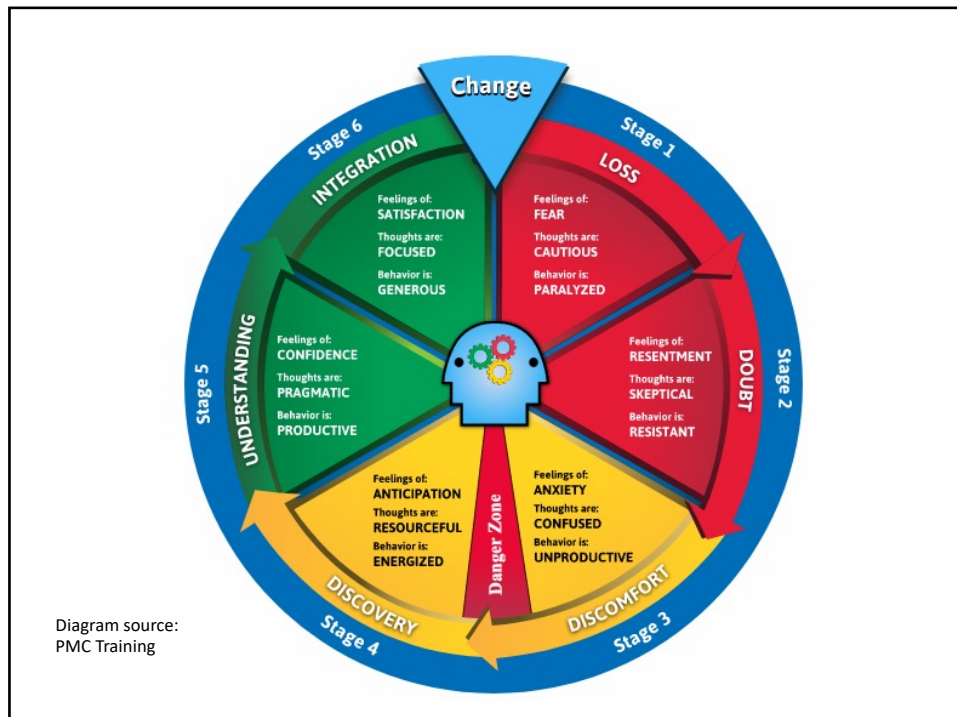
- New experiences are characterised by hope, but also fear
- For some, the anxiety can feel overwhelming
- In order to feel confident in their ability to manage the demands of a new environment, **young people need good internalised experiences to draw from**
- Moving from a small, familiar primary school to a large secondary school can feel daunting for many children - *“We feel most lost in a large group, afraid of hostility and violence and loss of our identity”*
- So can moving from a school to an alternative provision/ PRU or vice versa - *“The more removed the new situation from our previous one, the more bewildering and frightening it is likely to be”*



Transition challenges

- Inability to predict the future, awareness that events lie outside one's range of understanding or control
- Ambivalence, unrealistic expectations (on both sides)
- Impact on both self-perception (identity) and on perception by others
- Uncertainty as to how they will be able to adapt to what is, potentially, a totally new and alien environment
- Recognition of the inappropriateness of previous actions: confusion with no clear sense of identity or vision of how to operate
- Risk of demotivation, dissatisfaction, disengagement
- Risk that conflict between existing values and beliefs and anticipated altered ones results in the persistence of old behaviours

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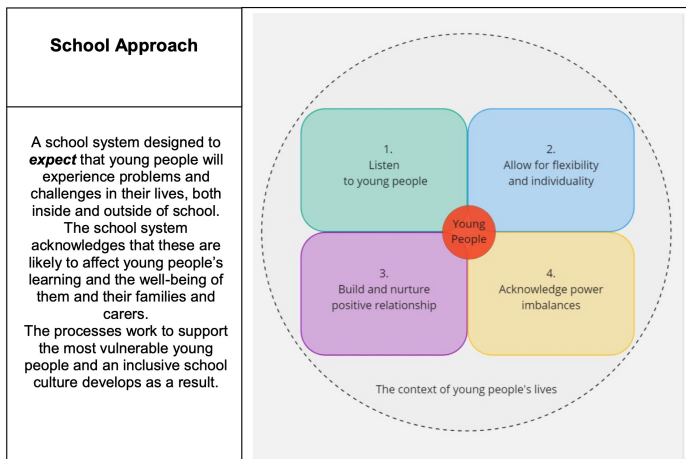
Pupils' worries about secondary transfer

- I'm nervous, scared and worried 'cos it will be a completely different school and I'll be in the smallest year
- I'm worried in case I won't fit in or make new friends because I'm leaving my friends behind
- I'm a bit excited but a bit nervous because I like to meet new people but I have never seen the new school
- I was really excited about going up because I knew I would be more independent but I was also scared about the amount of homework, harder work and that I would lose all of my friends

Pupils' experience of secondary transfer

- I was very, very scared. I was used to be the eldest but now I'm not.
- I was really worried and scared because my uncle kept telling me scary stories about how people give you 'welcome punches' and it tipped my balance
- I have this problem with nerves – if I don't like someone or I'm scared of them I don't talk around them
- I don't adjust well to change – never have, never will
- I didn't really get any support at school – it was more at home and they just said 'don't worry' and of course that made me nervous and worry more

Planning for when things go wrong



'I went on a managed move to another school and it was rubbish. I think the school did not care about me. They threw me in and I didn't know where I was going. They put me in lessons that I was struggling with...the teachers didn't understand me or want to understand me.'

The Children's Society

Listening to young people

- Young people who have been excluded from school reported feeling disempowered and unable to influence key decisions that affect their lives – particularly in response to school exclusion
- Zero tolerance approaches compound this power imbalance

Allowing for flexibility & individuality

- Some young people struggle to conform to the school rules – situations can quickly escalate and lead to a cycle of behaviour that is hard to break
- Young people in PRUs often value the smaller class sizes and more flexible approach. This allows for more time and space for situations to calm down, opportunities for teachers to listen and respond and young people to feel heard and understood.

Build & nurture positive relationships

- Making a genuine connection with teachers and adults at school can make a difference
- Young people value teachers they can identify with, who they can trust, who listen to them and who take time to unpack and understand
- Fitting in and friendship is important to young people
- Actively nurturing friendships can help improve behaviour, reduce the risk of exclusion and improve overall wellbeing

• Young people value school taking time and care over their communications with home

- School policies and processes should not undermine pupils home lives, put unnecessary strain on carers or lack inclusivity

Acknowledge power imbalances

- Young people have a sense that 'school' holds power over them and their carers. They feel that what is right for the 'school' will prevail and that their needs are less significant in comparison.
- They worry about being stereotyped and treated differently.

Considering needs in context

- The context of the young person's life, such the challenges they face in and out of school, their emotional health and well-being, the school environment and the relationships around them can all contribute towards the success of a transition.
- Young people have shared positive experiences of when the context of their lives have been carefully considered by schools, resulting in better understanding and support. They really value the approach taken and refer to it as a key solution in improving school experiences for young people.

Risk assessment and management plans

Vulnerable pupils, reintegration, managed moves

- Understanding current needs
- Realistic achievable targets
- It cannot/will not be 'perfect' - things will go wrong
- Identifying risks, assessing impact
- Strategies for reducing likelihood of risk occurring
- Strategies for reducing impact of risk when it occurs
- Strategies for managing the risk when it occurs
- Strategies for reparation

Activity

- Think about a child you know who has or is about to experience a transition, this could be:
 - A child who has been excluded and is coming back to school
 - A in Year 6 who will shortly be leaving school
 - A child who is currently in Year 7
 - A child you are receiving as part of a managed move or following a permanent exclusion
- What is likely to go wrong for this young person?
- How can we try to prevent that from happening?
- What strategies can be put in place when things do 'go wrong' to manage the situation and avoid exclusion?

Resources

Identifying worries, risk and protective factors and pupil perceptions of their situation:

- School Concerns Questionnaire (SCQ) – *secondary transition focused*
- Risk and Resilience Cards
- Children’s Exploratory Drawings (CEDs)

Understanding the child’s story and thinking about next steps

- MAPS – *when a child joins a setting*
- PATHs – *when a child leaves a setting*
- Developing scripts & using Social Stories

Secondary Transition Tools: School Concerns Questionnaire

Your New School

Here is an example of a rating scale:

Not at all worried
1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
I get extremely worried about it

We would like to ask you some questions about any concerns or worries you may have about your new secondary school. Please rate each of the following using the scale above.
For example, if you were really worried you would put a 10 in the box beside it.

Making new friends	Older children	Lots of different teachers	Following a timetable		
Being bullied	Getting to school	Homework	Dinner times		
PE	Changing classes	Being able to do the work	Toilets		
Remembering equipment for school	What to do if you are feeling ill	Lots of people	Break time		
Size of school	Discipline and detentions	Losing old friends	Getting lost		

If you have any other concerns you can write in the boxes below and then rate your concerns with the same scale as above...

- This lists 20 aspects of secondary school and pupils are asked to rate their concerns from 1-10, with higher scores indicating greater concern
- Children can also add in their own worries

This questionnaire and other transition related documents can be found here, under the 'information, downloads and resources' tab:
<https://www.ucl.ac.uk/pals/research/clinical-educational-and-health-psychology/research-groups/school-transition-and-adjustment>

Common Concerns



All children experience some stress of apprehension before the transition. These concerns usually reduce over time and are abated by the end of Year 7.

Top pupil concerns (before transition)	After transition (beginning of Year 7)	After transition (end of Year 7)
1. Getting lost	Losing old friends	Losing old friends
2. Being bullied	Discipline and detentions	Discipline and detentions
3. Discipline and detentions	Homework	Being bullied
4. Homework	Getting lost	Homework
5. Losing old friends	Older children	Older children

Pupils' thoughts about secondary transfer

A DVD made by the school that we are going to showing a typical day and the places and routines.

We should have a chance to see our tutor room and perhaps to decorate it, so that you could feel more part of the place before you join, at the end of the summer term with the current year 7s – like a sort of handover

We should have more chance to meet the year 7s before we go up – share experiences and maybe set up an email group with them so we can learn what it's really like, how they coped and with teachers introducing themselves so we know who they are and what they do

Summer camp where we can really to get know people

Maps – so that we know our way around the new school – ideally electronic

Once you've arrived you need time to meet people and chat – talk to other year 7 students and find out what they are doing – some activities to help us do this Buddies or mentors – especially for the first week or two and especially on the bus and at break times.

A chance to get to know a key teacher before we go up – someone we know we can talk to and who we will feel OK with when we arrive

Somehow we could write down our concerns so that there's no intimidation or pressure to scare you and then send them to a teacher who will write back and keep going until we don't worry any more

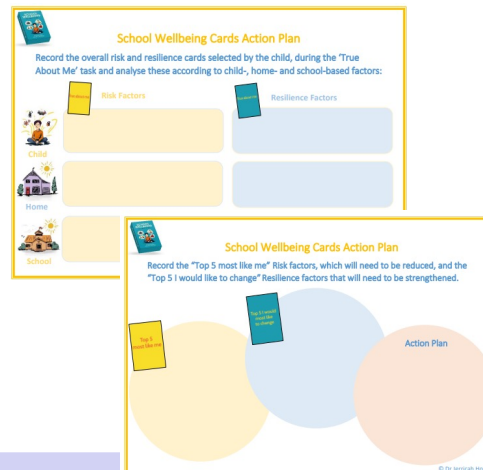
Less written stuff and more time to talk to people one to one before the summer

I think we should get a sheet about the teachers so we know who they are

One good thing our year 6 teachers did was get us to write down all our worries on a piece of paper and then scrunch it up, rip it up and put it in the bin

School Wellbeing: Risk & Resilience Cards

- Designed by an Educational Psychologist, Jerricah Holder.
- The School Wellbeing Cards provide a platform for discussion about how the young person views and makes sense of their experience of school.
- The deck of 40 picture cards, have been developed to reflect key risk factors associated with school avoidance or unhappiness at school, as well as strength and protective factors that promote school attendance and wellbeing. Through a card sorting activity, the young person is empowered to share their experiences of school and any worries or concerns that they might have.



<https://www.schoolwellbeingcards.co.uk/video-tutorial>
https://uploads-ssl.webflow.com/5f607c3900510d073eda558b/60e825b1e5a01d80bbeb2eae_School%20Wellbeing%20Cards%20Action%20Plan.pdf

Children's Exploratory Drawings (CEDs)

- The Children's Exploratory Drawings are a set of simple drawings of common school scenes which can be used for exploring how a young person thinks about their life at school, themselves as a member of the school community and the other members of that community through careful and well-timed questioning, conversation, and storytelling.



Questions to consider:

- Does this child view the behaviour and intentions of others as being negative/ hostile?
- How do they see themselves within the school context?
- What themes or patterns emerge from their responses?
- Does the child show any 'thinking errors' or biases?
- How does this help us to understand their behaviour?
- What interventions might be needed?

See the following link for an introductory video outlining how the tools can be used: <https://youtu.be/luf08QYdljw>

Making Action Plans (MAPs) & PATHS

Both are techniques taken from Person Centered Psychology. It is a method, often used in meetings, to think about a child's strengths, needs and goals to support planning for their future.

- Both explore the child and/or parent's dreams for the child's future.
- Both look at strengths or gifts that the child can use to bring about positive change.
- MAPs include a focus on the child's history or story so far...
- PATHs plan out the child's journey towards their 'dream' in a number of small stages

<https://inclusive-solutions.com/person-centred-planning/maps/>

<https://inclusive-solutions.com/person-centred-planning/path/>

Making Action Plans (MAPs)



The first step asks for the story or the history of the child and their family from the beginning to the present day. The child is asked to describe the milestones, turning points, high and lows – the key moments – of their life so far. The group reflects on what the past can teach us about the focus person's gifts and capacities. It chronicles what has and has not worked in the past and what the story so far tells us about things we may need to do differently in the future.

Pictures are used instead of words. You might want to prompt the child with questions, e.g. *When were you born? Where were you born? Who lived at home when you were born? What is your first memory? What important things have happened in your life (siblings, holidays, moving home, changing schools)?*

My story so far...

[enter information here]

X's Map

Things I'm good at/my strengths

[Enter information here]

Worries/ Nightmare

[Enter information here]

[Enter information here]

Things I find difficult

[Enter information here]

My dream

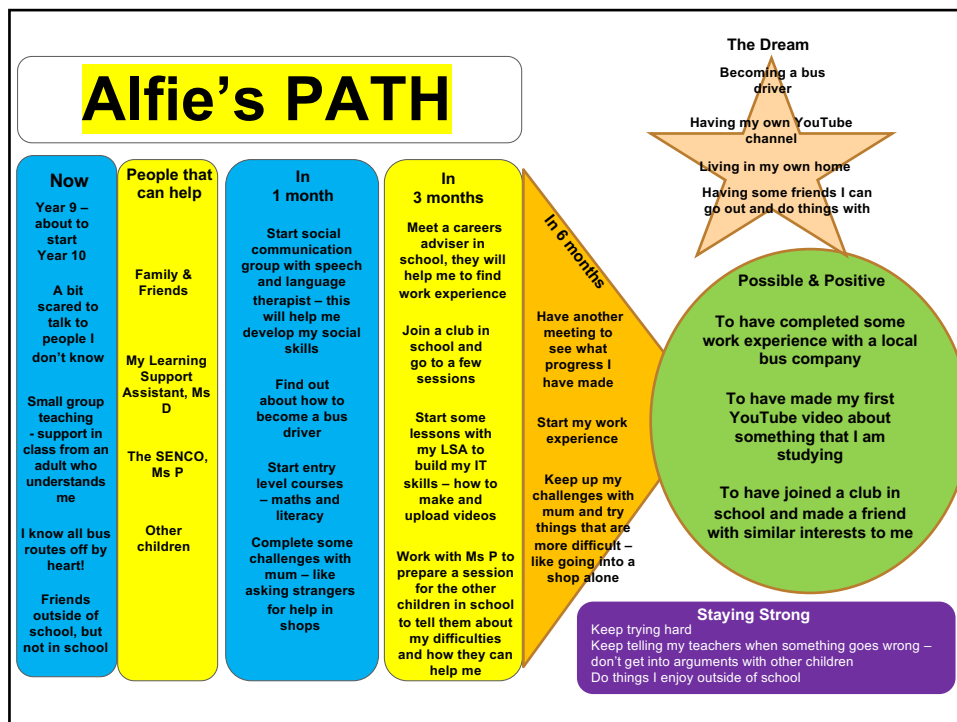
What's important to me

[Enter information here]

Next steps/ what might help?

[Enter information here]

➔



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Developing scripts

- Young people worry about being stereotyped or rumours being spread about them
- They worry about what their peers think of them

'Can't really keep it private because people probably put it on their social media, 'oh, I've been kicked out' or something like that and then everyone will find out cuz they'll look at the stories innit. So, everyone will know that you're not in school.'

It can therefore be helpful to work with young people to develop their 'story' or script for their transition to a new school setting. This could involve a conversation with the child, inviting them to tell their story and then working out the key parts. Explore with the child: What are the things you would like people to know? What would you prefer that people didn't know?

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Social Stories & Social Behaviour Mapping

- Can be used to help guide children as to what to expect when they re-integrate into mainstream
- Explicitly set out expectations and help the young person to consider how their behaviour might be perceived by others

<https://socialskillsresources.weebly.com/uploads/1/0/8/4/10844461/social-behavior-map-and-template.pdf>

Social Behavior Mapping

ThinkingCap.com

Situation: _____

Your behavior that is EXPECTED in the situation	Others' feelings about the behavior(s)	How others treat you based on how they feel about the behavior(s)	How you feel based on how you are treated in the situation
	→	→	→
	☺		
Your behavior that is UNEXPECTED in the situation	Others' feelings about the behavior(s)	How others treat you based on how they feel about the behavior(s)	How you feel based on how you are treated in the situation
	→	→	→
	☹		

Questions or comments?



Please complete the evaluation for today's session:
<https://forms.gle/2RYmgy1wxmFdCknG7>

Resources

Box of Ideas - Transition from primary to secondary school

- <https://www.boxofideas.org/ideas/practical-skills-in-education/primary-school-2/transition-from-primary-to-secondary-school/>

Mentally Healthy Schools – Transitions

- <https://www.mentallyhealthyschools.org.uk/risks-and-protective-factors/school-based-risk-factors/transitions/>