

Top Tips for Successful Care Transitions



This guide is for all staff working with people who may need to move from one social care provider to another.

Precious Homes
Innovative Social Care Services

Timely and safe transitions of care are vital to ensuring people receive the support they require, in the right place and at the right time. Well-managed transitions between care settings provide continuity of care, reduce stress and ultimately deliver the best possible support and outcomes for every individual.

This guide is for all staff working with people who may need to move from one social care provider to another. Whether you're a service manager, provider social worker, commissioner or another care provider, **this guide will provide food for thought and insight into best practice when it comes to successfully managing transitions** to achieve the best outcome.

Planning

In an ideal world, planning a transition should be done ahead of time, allowing those involved to gather and share information, build relationships and ensure that the person in transition knows what to expect.

Assessment and audits:

Taking time to plan and prepare for a transition will allow service providers to undertake a full assessment of current and future needs as well as update support plans and review individual goals and aspirations. The current care team should also ensure that all assessments, review reports, support notes and history are as comprehensive as possible. Doing so will help the new providers to ensure that needs are met and reduce the likelihood and negative impact of failed placements.





Tip

Having a robust procedure in place can help to deliver continuity of care. Consider adopting a templated transition plan which includes contact details of all professionals involved in providing care, as well as details such as what a typical/good/bad day looks like, specific interests, a weekly activity planner as well as some insight into how best to communicate with the individual, specific behaviours and any training or home adaptations that might be required.

A one page profile can also be useful, providing new staff and peers with key information in an accessible and easy to read format. Involving the person in producing this information, where possible, also helps people feel they are involved in the process and provide a greater sense of control around their move and how their support is provided.

Parallel care:

Where possible, there should be a period of overlap between the current care providers and the new one. While parallel care isn't always a feasible option, ensuring that the person in transition has ample opportunity to meet and build a relationship with the new team is vital.

This would usually include visits and calls to get to know one another, but may also include video tours of the new home or skype/zoom calls to build familiarity.

This has proven to be successful particularly where face to face visits have not been possible and often reduces anxieties around change when moving to a new home or new support provider.



A sense of familiarity

It is well known that moving house is one of life's most stressful moments. For those who thrive on routine, a move can be especially disconcerting. At a time of heightened anxiety, increasing familiarity and reducing stress is key.

Rituals:

Routines and rituals can be extremely important, especially to autistic people. Whether the ritual relates to the need to do a specific thing at a specific time, going to bed with a favoured item, doing everyday tasks in a certain way or even talking about a favourite topic, these routines must be understood and maintained. Predictability can be comforting and can help reduce the likelihood of anxiety during an uncertain time.

Environment

Wherever possible, adapt the new environment to be similar to the current one. Although it may seem insignificant, sharing information such as bed orientation, where pictures hang on walls or current decor can create a sense of familiarity that can help to ease anxieties.

Often the opportunity to bring personal items throughout the transition period to leave in the new home can help people adjust to their move as well as provide ownership of their new environment.

As well as increasing familiarity with the inside of the new home, visiting local amenities and engaging in activities throughout the transition period is also a good way for the person to become familiar with the local areas.



Sensory items:

Ensure that any sensory items are in situ before arrival. If they have a sensory need for water play, bouncing or calming lights, ensuring that they are ready can be a great way to ease the transition, as well as being a good distraction if anxieties rise.

Preferences:

Whether it is favoured foods, TV shows or familiar washing powder, ensure that you know and understand the likes and dislikes of the individual in transition. Failing to understand the specific needs of the person in transition could trigger a sensory overload, exacerbating anxiety and making the transition more difficult.



Tip

Help build familiarity in the run-up to the transition. Some of our teams have spent time creating 'about me' videos of other staff and service users, or creating simple video tours of the services, ensuring that the person in transition recognises new faces and places when they arrive in their new home. For some individuals, putting a photo of themselves or chosen picture on their front door can help with becoming familiar with their new room/flat and identifying it as theirs. Social stories and photos of the new service can also be very useful.

Collaboration and communication

For a successful transition, it is vitally important that all professionals work collaboratively to achieve the best outcome. Having a full understanding of the person's history and needs relies on everyone involved in care - from social workers to care providers, SALTs and OTs to other professionals, family members to the individual themselves.

Sadly, when placements breakdown there can be a reluctance to share information. Clear, open communication needs to be the focus. The more open and honest, the better the new care provider can prepare. Equally, those involved should be aware that there is a legal obligation to keep and share information about the person. Failing to do so is a safeguarding issue.



Only by having access to full information can the new staff team ensure that any training or adaptations can be implemented.

This can help the team to **understand the person and needs behind any presenting behaviour** and get a good idea of their past, present and future situation, as well how their needs must be supported. Involving past providers and families in bespoke training sessions can be hugely beneficial. **Things are more likely to go wrong when providers, and the person requiring support are inadequately briefed or unaware.**



Tip

Making the information included in the support notes accessible can make a huge difference to helping new support teams engage. One of our service managers creates a quiz for the support team, helping them to read, digest and retain information such as favorite foods and clothes, interests etc.

We also ensure that everyone is involved, from the support team to the maintenance team - they all have their part to play in ensuring that the new home is prepared for the person in transition and it is important that they understand their needs.

Family involvement

Family members have a great deal of valuable knowledge and insight. Quite often, they are the only people who have been involved in caregiving consistently. For this reason, they must be actively engaged in the transition process.

Build relationships with family members:

Having a positive relationship with the family of the person you are supporting can make a huge difference. Work with them to understand the needs and preferences of their loved one, build trust and ensure continuity of care by tapping into their knowledge. Communication with everyone is crucial - especially when it comes to building consistent approaches to managing and supporting needs.



Put yourself in their shoes:

The transition can often be hard for the person experiencing it first hand. However, it is important to stop and think about the impact on the wider family and ensure that we, as professionals, support them through the process. Parents of those transitioning into care for the first time can feel a mix of emotions and it is important to be considerate of their views and feelings.



Tip

It is important to remember that we manage the delivery of the support required, but ultimately, the family and person being supported are in charge of it. Their goals, aspirations and needs sit at the heart of the care and support we provide. For this reason, we must collaborate with families, listen, involve them at every step and, above all, be respectful.



Flexibility

With the best will in the world, sometimes transitions have to be carried out in a very short timeframe. In these situations, the process needs to be adapted to ensure as much information is gathered as possible.

Honeymoon period:

Bear in mind that some people will experience a honeymoon period when they first make the move. Excitement or stress can trigger a change. Being watchful, empathetic and aware is incredibly important during the early days. Equally, working on building positive relationships from the start can make all the difference.

Habits and boundaries:

Naturally, something as stressful as a move can exacerbate known issues, anxieties and behaviours. If the transition handover has been robust and detailed, the new service provider will be able to employ known strategies to help. However, if these issues differ from what is expected, it is important to seek advice and support. Not responding to heightened levels of anxieties' and presenting behaviours can lead to these instances increasing and developing routines that restrict people from engaging in positive activity and support.



Tip

Be creative about building relationships. At Precious Homes, we are lucky enough to have a multidisciplinary team, all of whom approach situations in different ways.

Our SALT is great at identifying creative ways to break down communication barriers - she recently visited someone who likes bubbles, so she got out of her car and walked towards the building blowing bubbles, knowing that it would break down barriers, provide an engaging distraction and facilitate an easier meeting. Learning about likes and dislikes is an important part of this.

About this guide

Precious Homes is an innovative provider of social care for young autistic people, learning disabilities and complex needs. We specialised in working with people who may have experienced placement breakdowns in the past, by focussing on their individual needs and providing bespoke environments and person-centred support.

This guide has been created with input from the highly qualified multidisciplinary team and experienced operations team at Precious Homes. Our MDT includes a Clinical Director, forensic and behavioural Psychology, and Speech and Language Therapy (SALT).

The team works in conjunction with our support teams as well as internal Training, Quality and Risk Management and Operational Teams to provide therapeutic and behavioural input in addition to the usual level of support.

For more about Precious Homes, visit

www.precious-homes.co.uk

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