

Preparing for Transitions

Transitions, both big and small, can feel anxiety provoking for the children you support. Moving classrooms, meeting new teachers, changes in routine or moving to a new school or house can be difficult for children because...

- Predictable routines can help children feel safe and regulated. A change in routine can feel confusing and stressful.
- Children may have anxieties about meeting new people or making mistakes.
- Some children might find asking questions or expressing their worries harder. This can make settling into a new environment more difficult.
- Some children might find planning or organising their time and belongings more difficult. This might make their new environment feel more stressful.

Strategies and activities for supporting children with transitions:

Transition maps:

Written guides that break down all the parts of a transition into clear and predictable steps such as what is happening, when and where it will happen, who will be involved. It might contain:

- a timeline showing what will happen first, next and last.
- visuals like pictures of places, people and activities.
- schedules which show the person what will happen and when.



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Transition passports:

A transition passport can be a booklet, 1 page profile or letter created with a child. It shares important information about them, their needs, strengths, and support that helps them best. It can move with the child between settings and staff to support with transitions. Creating a transition passport together can help children feel more prepared, understood, and supported during times of change.

Transition discussion cards:

Creating a set of discussion cards which prompt children to have conversations, in a group or 1:1 with an adult, about different aspects of their transition. This can help them to ask questions, express worries or problem solve about their upcoming change.

Transition cards can prompt discussion about things like what might change/ stay the same, what the environment might be like and how they can get any extra support.



Social Stories

Social Stories were developed by Carol Gray in 1991. They are designed to help children understand situations in a clear, supportive and respectful way. Social Stories work from the principle that every person's perspective should be acknowledged and valued.

Developing a Social Story with a child or young person (in line with the Social Stories 10.4 criteria) can be a powerful way of supporting preparation for the transition and to reflect on the transition after it has happened.

How Social Stories Help

- **They present information visually:** visual information is often easier to process and can help reduce anxiety and overwhelm.
- **They answer questions about the transition:** Social Stories can explain what is happening, when it will happen, who the child might meet and how adults can support them.
- **They provide reassurance:** Social stories can include calming and encouraging phrases such as "I am safe" and "people can help me" and can draw attention to what is staying the same not just what is changing.
- **They use accessible language:** Language and sentence length should match the child's level of understanding.
- **They do not give instructions:** Social Stories should never tell a child what they must or should do. Instead, they gently provide information and reassurance.
- **They can include visuals:** Pictures, symbols or diagrams can support understanding.
- **They can be engaging and personalised:** They can include rhymes, repetitive phrases or be read to the tune of a favourite song.

For more information on Social Stories and guidance on writing one, visit carolgraysocialstories.com



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Supporting Communication around Transitions Good Practice Tips

- Involve the child in producing information about the transition whenever possible.
- Keep the information clear and predictable.
- Focus on reassurance and understanding and don't forget to mention what's staying the same. Remember just because we're excited about something new it doesn't mean the child is.
- Adapt information to the child's interests and communication style.
- Review information together several times before the transition and make sure it is available for the child to access whenever they want.

Please get in touch with us if you would like further advice on supporting transitions for the children and young people you work with.

