

# Navigating through Transitions: A Guide for Parents of Children & Young People with ADHD

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# Disclosure Statement

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Except for my lifelong commitment to.....



# Overview of Session

Why Transition? Why additional support about Transition; both from primary to secondary school and from CYP services to Adult services.

**How to Make it Count:** Tips for implementing strategies with young people with ADHD.

**Key Skills:** The primary areas to focus on during transition.

# The changing face of ADHD

- ADHD changes as children grow up.
- Most children with ADHD don't just grow out of it, and 70-80% continue to have ADHD symptoms as teenagers.
- As children become teenagers, ADHD symptoms may change in subtle ways. Some things may improve.
- Changing family relationships.
- Having the freedom to make your own mistakes is part of growing up and youngsters with ADHD are no exception.

# Why is transition to Secondary School a struggle?

What are the differences between primary and secondary school that create problems for young people with ADHD?

# Changes to Multiple Elements of School Life

Overall: Rapid move towards independence.

Changes in expectations

- Self-management – behaviour, coping/tolerance
- Organisation – time management, planning, deadlines
- Learning – volume, homework, autonomy

Changes to friendships & demands on social skills

Increased demands

Increased opportunities

# Specialist Help

- Every secondary school should have a SENCO, or Special Educational Needs Coordinator.
- SENCOs teach individuals or small groups, advise other teachers and parents, and liaise with outside specialists.
- The primary school should pass on all that they know about your child to the SENCO.
- Learning Mentors can also help your child deal with the increased demands of academic and socialisation issues.

# Choosing a Secondary School

This is a big decision, and one that all parents find difficult, regardless of ADHD.

General Discussion: What issues did you face when choosing a secondary school for your child?

# Choosing a Secondary School

Some suggestions:

- Don't just go by the exam results
- Choose an ADHD-friendly school
- Talk to the SENCO
- Contact your local ADHD support group
- Speak to other parents

# Questions to ask...

- Do you have experience of other children with ADHD in the school?
- How does the school help children with ADHD?
- How does the school help all children settle into the new school?
- How do teachers communicate with parents?

# Questions to ask....

- Who would I contact to pass on information about my child?
- How does the school help children who need to take medication?
- How would teachers know if the child had not taken medication and what would they do about it?

# Preparing for secondary school

**Visits and practice runs** - Once the new school is known, you and your child can focus on practical steps to make the move easier and less stressful.

**Communicating with the primary school** - In theory, primary schools and secondary schools should work together closely and share information about children who are moving up.

# Personal Organisation

Possible problems include:

- Getting lost and arriving late for lessons
- Getting distracted between lessons, and arriving for lessons in a restless and excitable state
- Forgetting to note down homework, forgetting to do it, and forgetting to take it back to school and hand it in
- Not having the right books and equipment

# Personal Organisation

## Solutions:

- Contact the school — the form teacher, the SENCO, or the head of year 7
- Explain your concerns and ask the school to establish the extent of the problem. This will involve the form teacher, SENCO or head of year getting information from all your child's teachers
- Ask to meet the teacher or teachers dealing with this. The purpose of the meeting should be to make plans to help your child become better organised.

# Medication

If you are concerned about your child's medication as they move to secondary school, do discuss it with your doctor.

## **Possible problems:**

There are possible reasons:

- The new routine
- Class teachers are unlikely to remind them
- Pressure from friends to do other things at lunchtime
- Lack of time



# Learning

## **ADHD-related problems**

The tougher demands of the secondary school may cause difficulties for the YP with ADHD, even if they were coping reasonably well in primary school.

### **Typical problems include:**

- Work unfinished, or finished in a rush
- Poor handwriting, especially at the end of longer pieces of work
- Failure to listen to instructions
- Failure to note down homework

# Homework

## Problems might include:

- Not noting down the homework
- Not being able to read what's been noted down earlier
- Not being able to settle down at home in the late afternoon and evening
- Not being able to concentrate for long enough to complete the homework

# Homework

## Solutions

- Consider different ways of completing the assignments
- Set up a routine for all the children in the family based on the principle “homework first, play/leisure second”. The school should have guidelines for the amount of time to be spent on each subject for homework. This will help you to set up a sensible routine.

# Homework

- Communicate with the school. If your child spends more than the recommended time on a piece of homework and still doesn't finish it, let the school know by making a note in the school planner or write a separate letter
- Try after-school sessions. Find out about any after-school homework sessions organised at the school. Your child (and you!) may find it easier to cope with homework when there are teachers and other students around.

# Behaviour

Inappropriate behaviour can be a common issue in children with ADHD, and the move to secondary school can sometimes make matters worse.

## **There are a number of risks:**

- There may be more unsupervised and unstructured time which may result in children with ADHD making inappropriate choices
- There is contact with older students, some of whom may have an influence on behaviour

# Behaviour

As soon as behaviour problems begin to appear:

- Contact the school — the form teacher, the SENCO, or the head of year 7
- Explain your concerns and ask the school to establish the nature of the problem. This will involve the form teacher, SENCO or head of year getting information from all your child's teachers
- Ask for a meeting with the form teacher, SENCO or head of year to discuss how you can work together with your child to improve his or her behaviour

# Behaviour

Children with ADHD at risk of exclusion may be asked to enter into a Pastoral Support Programme or PSP.

The purpose of a PSP is to improve the young person's behaviour and avoid exclusion.

# Transition to Adult Services

# Transition to adult services

Transition is the process of moving from child to adult services, which usually happens at 16-18 years of age. For young people with ADHD, transition may be particularly challenging for a number of reasons.

# Transition to adult services

- In some areas, there is no specialist service for adults with ADHD
- Young people may have to return to the sole care of their General Practitioner (GP), and GPs may not be able to prescribe without specialist support.
- This has been described as a “twilight zone” gap in care
- Studies have found a lack of understanding and knowledge from professionals and the public about ADHD in general, and especially about ADHD in over-18s.

# Transition to adult services

If the young person does not experience a smooth transition to an adult service that meets their needs, there can be impacts on their health, education and wellbeing. Some young people with ADHD may disengage and be at risk of substance misuse or other risky behaviours.

We need to better understand young peoples' perspectives on transition to design a process that works for them and ultimately to improve their psychological, social, educational and occupational outcomes.

# Transition Planning should include:

- Discussion with the young person around the need for ongoing care within adult services.
- Agreement that transition is required.
- A joint meeting with the allocated clinician from adult ADHD service and CYPS to explore ongoing treatment & differences that entering adult ADHD services may mean.

# Transition Planning:

- The adult ADHD clinician will attend reviews with the young person, their family and the CYPS worker as part of the transition planning.
- A clear care plan will be agreed between CYPS, Adult ADHD service and the young person of what the transition planning will include.
- Agreeing a date for the transition.
- Consideration of signposting to other services as part of the transition care plan.

# Helpful hints & tips for YP preparing for Transition

- learn about your conditions and treatments
- practise asking and answering questions during clinic appointments
- try to take some responsibility for remembering what your medicines are called, what they are for, how much to take and when to take them.

# Helpful hints & tips for YP preparing for Transition

- learn how to get more supplies of your medicines
- practise arranging appointments with your consultant, family and/or doctor (GP)
- keep important phone numbers and appointment dates in your mobile phone, calendar or diary
- when you agree to treatment plans, make sure that you understand and follow them properly

# Helpful hints & tips for YP preparing for Transition

- try spending time without your parents for part of clinic appointments, then when you feel ready try spending the whole appointment on your own.
- find out who to contact in an emergency
- find out any changes in your condition that mean you should get urgent help

# Summary

- Support for transition needs to address multiple skill areas.
- Support and planning needs to occur both at home and school.
- The young person needs to be actively involved in all stages of the process.
- Strategies should include supported skill development AND adjustments to the environment.

# Resources

- The Alert Program [www.alertprogram.com](http://www.alertprogram.com)
- Tips for Parents & Teachers: [www.boxofideas.org](http://www.boxofideas.org)
- It's Your Move!: Your Guide to Moving to Secondary School.
- Moving to Secondary School: Advice and activities to support transition by Lynda Meansor & Mike Fleetham
- The Straight Talk Manual: A Self-esteem and Life Skills Workbook for Young People by Diane Brokenshire
- Helping Kids and Teens with ADHD in School: A Workbook for Classroom Support and Managing Transitions by Joanne Steer and Kate Horstmann

# Contact Information

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**THANK YOU**