



Darlington Borough Council Adult Services
Preparing for Adulthood for Young People with Care
and Support Needs
Strategy 2024-2028





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Introduction

Preparing for adulthood is a critical step for young people requiring social care. We believe that a strategy is essential to ensure early planning, coordinated support, and a person-centred approach. With the right strategies in place, we can ensure young people can make this transition with greater ease and success gaining the confidence, skills, and resources they need to thrive in adulthood.

We know through feedback from young people and their families that transitions, specifically that of children into adulthood, does not currently produce the best outcomes for all young people and families supported through this process. It was identified as an area of specific need to be addressed under the local area SEND written statement of action i.e.:

“Poor Preparation for Adulthood and post 19 opportunities for children and young people with SEND”

The development of this strategy, is therefore intrinsically interlinked with the SEND written statement of action (WSOA), SEND Strategy and the Children and Young People's Plan.

Our key objectives

1. Share with young people and families the responsibilities and statutory duties of adult services within DBC.
2. To provide information on the key stages when planning for adulthood, who is involved, duties, responsibilities and expected outcomes to ensure that young people and their families/carers are fully informed and that expectations managed about changes across transition points, with clear co-produced plans.
3. To refresh and reinforce the progression approach used to support young people as they prepare for adulthood.
4. To identify what we need to do to improve our preparation for adulthood approach
5. Work with young people and families to improve this journey and achieve improved outcomes
6. To share key information with young people and families
7. Support consistency, continuity and improved outcomes at every stage of a person's life.

The key aims within the strategy include:

1. Early Planning and Person-Centred Approach

- **Start Planning Early:** Begin transition planning by age 14 or earlier through the Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) review process. This allows time to identify goals, explore options, and address needs in areas like education, employment, housing, and healthcare.
- **Person-centred Planning:** Focus on the young person's individual aspirations, abilities, and preferences. Involve them in the decision-making process to ensure the plan reflects their personal goals and gives them a sense of ownership.
- **Involve Key People:** Include the young person's family, carers, and relevant professionals (e.g., social workers, health care providers, educators) in planning discussions to provide comprehensive support.



2. Education and Employment Pathways

- **Access to Education:** Ensure that the young adult has access to suitable locally provided post-16 education, training, or work opportunities. This could include further education, vocational training, or apprenticeships.
- **Supported Internships and Employment:** Explore supported employment programs, such as *Supported Internships* or *Access to Work*, which offer tailored support for young people with disabilities to find and sustain employment.
- **Skills Development:** Equip young people with life skills, such as budgeting, time management, communication, and self-advocacy, to foster independence and confidence in the workplace.

3. Social Care and Health Transitions

- **Adult Social Care Assessment:** At age 18, young people who need ongoing support will be assessed by adult social care services to determine their eligibility for support under the Care Act 2014. This assessment should ensure continuity of care from children to adult services, focusing on their needs in adulthood.
- **Transition to Adult Health Services:** For those with complex health needs, seamless transition from children's health services to adult services (e.g., mental health, learning disabilities) should be planned and coordinated to avoid gaps in care.
- **Personal Budgets and Direct Payments:** Where appropriate, young people and their families can explore personal budgets or direct payments, giving them more choice and control over how their care is provided.

4. Independent Living and Housing Options

- **Explore Housing Options:** Discuss housing options early, such as supported living, shared lives schemes, or independent living with community-based support. These options can provide varying levels of independence based on the young person's needs and preferences.
- **Daily Living Skills:** Encourage the development of practical daily living skills, such as cooking, cleaning, and personal care, so the young adult can live as independently as possible.
- **Assistive Technology:** Consider using assistive technology (e.g., smart home devices, apps, or communication aids) to promote autonomy and enhance safety in independent living settings.

5. Building Social Networks and Community Participation

- **Social Engagement:** Encourage participation in social and community activities to help build friendships, reduce isolation, and foster a sense of belonging. This could involve joining clubs, community groups, or volunteer work.
- **Transitioning to Adult Relationships:** Support young people in understanding adult relationships, boundaries, and social expectations. Help them navigate relationships in adult life, including friendships, intimate relationships, and professional interactions.
- **Advocacy Support:** Ensure access to advocacy services, to help young people voice their concerns, make informed choices, and safeguard their rights.



6. Mental and Emotional Wellbeing

- **Support Emotional Resilience:** Transitioning to adulthood can be emotionally challenging. Offer access to mental health services or emotional support programs tailored to young people with additional needs, such as counselling or peer support groups.
- **Promote Self-Esteem and Confidence:** Encourage activities that build self-esteem and personal achievements, whether through education, hobbies, sports, or volunteering, to promote a sense of purpose and identity.

7. Legal Rights and Responsibilities

- **Understanding Legal Changes:** Educate young people and their families about the legal changes that occur at 18, such as the Mental Capacity Act (2005), which outlines the young person's rights to make their own decisions, and Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards (DoLS) if required.
- **Financial Independence and Benefits:** Provide guidance on managing finances, including access to benefits like Personal Independence Payment (PIP) or Employment and Support Allowance (ESA), to ensure financial security in adulthood.
- **Lasting Power of Attorney (LPA):** If appropriate, discuss setting up an LPA so that a trusted person can help make decisions on health or financial matters if the young adult lacks capacity to do so in the future.

8. Monitoring and Reviewing Progress

- **Regular Reviews:** Conduct regular reviews of the transition plan to ensure it remains aligned with the young person's evolving needs and aspirations. Adjustments should be made as necessary to address any emerging challenges.
- **Ongoing Support Network:** Ensure that the young adult continues to have access to a network of support, including social workers, healthcare providers, and peer groups, as they progress through adulthood.

9. Collaboration Between Services

- **Multi-Agency Working:** Encourage close collaboration between education, health, and social care services to ensure a coordinated approach to the young person's transition. Regular communication between agencies can help prevent gaps in service and provide a holistic support network.
- **Designated Social Worker:** A designated social worker should act as a key point of contact to help navigate the complexities of the system, providing personalised guidance to both young people and their families.

Our statutory duties

Under the **Care Act 2014**, young people preparing for adulthood and who may require adult social care support are assessed through a **transition assessment** process. This assessment aims to determine what care and support they will need as they move into adulthood and whether they are eligible for adult social care services. The process is designed to ensure a smooth transition from



children's services to adult services, ensuring that their needs are met without any gaps in care. Here's how the assessment works:

1. Identifying the Need for a Transition Assessment

The transition assessment under the Care Act 2014 applies to three groups of young people:

- **Young people approaching 18** who may have needs for care and support as adults.
- **Young carers** who might need support once they turn 18.
- **Adult carers of children** with disabilities, if the child is likely to need care and support once they turn 18.

We have a **duty** to carry out a transition assessment when:

- It is **likely** that the young adult will have needs for care and support after turning 18.
- The assessment would be of significant benefit in planning for those future needs.
- The young person, or their family, requests an assessment.

2. Timing of the Transition Assessment

- The **timing** of the assessment is important. It should happen early enough to allow for proper planning and prevent any disruption to care when the young adult turns 18.
- The Care Act emphasises the importance of starting the assessment when it will provide the greatest benefit to the young person. This is often around the time that the young person's needs, and future aspirations are becoming clearer (usually between ages 16 and 18).

3. What the Transition Assessment Involves

The assessment is **person-centred**, meaning it focuses on the individual's unique needs, circumstances, and goals. It takes into account both the **current needs** of the young adult and any **future needs** they might have as they transition into adulthood.

Key areas covered in the transition assessment include:

- **Current Needs for Care and Support:** An evaluation of what care and support the young adult currently requires, including personal care, social support, and any health needs.
- **Future Needs:** Consideration of how these needs might change as they grow older and move into adulthood.
- **Outcomes and Aspirations:** Identifying the young person's goals, such as their aspirations for education, employment, independent living, and social inclusion.
- **Care and Support Options:** An exploration of the adult services, support systems, or care arrangements that might be suitable for meeting these needs and achieving the young person's goals.
- **Skills for Independence:** Identifying opportunities for developing independent living skills, such as budgeting, self-care, and managing daily tasks.



4. Key Considerations in the Assessment

The transition assessment should also consider broader aspects of the young person's life:

- **Wellbeing:** The assessment must promote the young person's wellbeing, considering both their physical and mental health, social relationships, personal dignity, and autonomy.
- **Family and Carers:** The impact of the young person's needs on their family, including any carers, is also considered. If the family or young carers will need additional support when the young adult turns 18, this is assessed too.
- **Involvement of the Young adult and Family:** The young adult and their family or carers should be fully involved in the process. Their views, wishes, and preferences are central to shaping the care and support plan.
- **Advocacy:** If the young adult has difficulty understanding or engaging with the process, they may be entitled to advocacy support to ensure they can participate meaningfully in their own assessment.

5. Eligibility for Adult Social Care

After the transition assessment, we will determine whether the young adult is **eligible for adult social care** under the Care Act. The eligibility criteria consider:

- **Whether the young person's needs arise from a physical or mental impairment or illness.**
- **Whether these needs prevent the person from achieving key outcomes** like managing and maintaining nutrition, maintaining personal hygiene, or developing and maintaining personal relationships.
- **Whether the impact of not meeting these needs would significantly affect the young person's wellbeing.**

If the young adult is eligible, a care and support plan will be developed to ensure their needs are met once they turn 18.

6. Developing a Care and Support Plan

If the assessment finds that the young adult will need support as an adult, the next step is creating a **care and support plan**. This plan will detail:

- The **types of support** the young adult will receive (e.g., personal care, assistive technology, or community support).
- The **outcomes** the young adult wants to achieve (e.g., living independently, gaining employment, or participating in social activities).
- How the support will be provided (e.g., through services funded by the local authority, a personal budget, or direct payments).

7. Continuity of Care

The Care Act ensures that there should be **no gap in care** when a young adult turns 18. If they are receiving children's services (such as support under the Children Act 1989), those services must



continue until adult services are in place. This prevents any disruption in care during the transition period.

8. Reviewing the Plan

The care and support plan should be regularly reviewed to ensure it continues to meet the young person's needs as they progress into adulthood. Reviews can adjust support if needs change or if the young person's circumstances evolve.

Conclusion

The transition assessment under the Care Act 2014 is a critical process for young people requiring social care as they prepare for adulthood. It ensures that their current and future needs are identified early, and that appropriate adult care and support is in place when they turn 18. The assessment is personalised, considers wellbeing, and is designed to facilitate a smooth transition into adult life, with a focus on promoting independence and achieving personal goals.

The Progression Model

Darlington Borough Council Adult Services supports the progression model for young people requiring social care as they enter adulthood is followed. This is a framework designed to help young adults transition from childhood services to adult life, ensuring they receive the appropriate support to lead as independent and fulfilling a life as possible. The model emphasises gradual development of independence and focuses on key areas such as health, education, employment, social participation, and independent living. It also ensures continuity in care and support across services during this period of change.

The progression model emphasises a gradual shift from dependence on childhood services to independent adult life, with support in key areas such as education, employment, housing, and health. It is a flexible, person-centred framework that ensures young people with care needs are empowered to take control of their futures, develop independence, and achieve their personal goals while receiving the appropriate support.

The progression model can be broken down into five key stages:

1. Preparation and Early Transition (Ages 14-16)

Objective: Begin planning for the future, identifying long-term goals, and understanding the needs of the young adult as they move towards adulthood.

- **Early Planning:** Discussions about adulthood should start as early as possible (around 14), often during reviews of the Education, Health, and Care Plan (EHCP). Key conversations revolve around aspirations, interests, and the type of support needed as they move into adulthood.
- **Person-centred Transition Plans:** A person-centred approach is used to ensure that the young person's preferences, interests, and goals shape the planning process. This includes their future education, work aspirations, and housing.



- **Involvement of Professionals and Families:** Professionals such as social workers, educational staff, healthcare providers, and families begin to collaborate to ensure everyone understands the young person's needs and is prepared to support them through the transition.

Key Focus Areas:

- **Exploration of Options:** Discussion about future educational and employment pathways (e.g., further education, supported internships, or vocational training).
- **Starting Life Skills Training:** Encourage learning practical life skills, such as self-care, communication, and personal safety.

2. Transition to Adult Services (Ages 16-18)

Objective: Continue planning while starting the gradual shift from children's services to adult services, with increasing emphasis on independence and decision-making.

- **Review of Social Care Needs:** Young people receive a transition assessment to determine the type of adult social care support they will need under the Care Act 2014. This can involve a reassessment of the individual's care needs and preferences for adult life.
- **Engagement in Education and Employment:** Young people are encouraged to engage in post-16 education, vocational training, or supported internships. Employment goals and pathways are prioritised during this stage.
- **Transfer to Adult Health Services:** For those with ongoing healthcare needs, the shift from children's health services (e.g., CAMHS) to adult health services (e.g., mental health, disability services) is planned and coordinated.

Key Focus Areas:

- **Trial Periods for Adult Support:** Where possible, trial periods with adult services (social care, housing, health) may help the young adults and their family get used to the change.
- **Developing Independence:** Further emphasis on daily living skills and learning to manage aspects of life such as personal finances, transport, and self-care routines.
- **Legal Rights Awareness:** Teaching young people about their rights and responsibilities as adults, including decision-making rights under the Mental Capacity Act.

3. Becoming an Adult (Ages 18-21)

Objective: Young people now legally become adults and fully transition to adult social care and other adult services, with a focus on increasing independence and managing their own care.

- **Assessment Under the Care Act:** At 18, a formal assessment of the young person's care and support needs is conducted under the Care Act 2014. This assessment will determine the support they will receive as an adult, and how it aligns with their goals for adulthood.
- **Personal Budgets and Direct Payments:** Eligible young adults may receive personal budgets or direct payments, allowing them to choose how their care is provided and giving them more autonomy over their lives.



- **Further Education or Employment:** The young adult may continue into further education, training, or supported employment programs designed to help those with additional needs achieve meaningful work.

Key Focus Areas:

- **Independent Living:** Young adults explore different housing options, such as supported living, shared housing schemes, or fully independent living arrangements, depending on their capabilities.
- **Navigating Adult Health Services:** For those with health needs, engaging with adult health services becomes crucial to managing long-term health conditions.
- **Social Participation:** Social engagement and inclusion are emphasized, encouraging participation in community life, social groups, and adult relationships.

4. Consolidation and Growing Independence (Ages 21-25)

Objective: Continue developing independence and refining adult life roles, with appropriate support in place to ensure stability and long-term wellbeing.

- **Ongoing Support:** Young adults continue receiving support based on their needs, which may include social care, supported employment, or assistance with independent living.
- **Further Skill Development:** As young people settle into their adult roles, they continue to develop skills such as financial management, communication, and self-advocacy. For some, this may involve learning how to manage personal assistants or navigate housing and employment issues.
- **Monitoring and Reviewing Progress:** Regular reviews are conducted by social care workers to ensure that support remains appropriate and reflects any changes in needs or goals.

Key Focus Areas:

- **Stabilising Adult Roles:** Employment or long-term education pathways are stabilised, with individuals achieving greater independence in their professional or personal lives.
- **Managing Health and Social Needs:** Health and social care support should be well-established and tailored to ensure long-term physical and mental wellbeing.
- **Building Long-Term Relationships:** Developing adult friendships, romantic relationships, and community connections is a focus to enhance social integration and personal fulfilment.

5. Full Adult Life and Long-Term Planning (Post-25)

Objective: By this stage, the young adult should be living as independently as possible with their long-term care needs met, focusing on sustainability in health, employment, housing, and relationships.

- **Adult Social Care Plan:** Ongoing support is provided based on a formal adult social care plan that addresses the individual's needs as they evolve in adulthood. This may involve personal assistants, supported employment, or community-based services.
- **Stable Living Situation:** The young adult has typically found a stable and suitable housing arrangement that promotes independence, safety, and comfort.



- **Employment and Community Engagement:** Employment or other meaningful daily activities are well-established, whether through supported employment, volunteering, or other community roles.

Key Focus Areas:

- **Long-Term Stability:** The focus shifts to maintaining independence and ensuring the young adult has access to resources and support for continued growth and stability in all areas of life.
- **Health Management:** Ongoing health needs are managed through adult services, ensuring that the young adult's physical and mental health are supported for the long term.
- **Social and Emotional Wellbeing:** Continued participation in social, recreational, and community activities is encouraged, with support for building and maintaining relationships.



The Progression Model is an empowering framework for helping young adults with care and support needs prepare for adulthood. By focusing on personal growth, independence, and self-



determination, it ensures that young people are supported to achieve their full potential. Through tailored, person-centred support, families, care workers, and multi-agency teams can collaborate to help young adults transition smoothly into independent living, employment, education, and active community participation.

Supporting the use of Direct Payments for a Young adult with Care and Support as They Enter Adulthood

Direct payments offer significant benefits to a young adult with care and support needs as they enter adulthood. These payments allow the individual (or their family) to receive a budget from Darlington Borough Council to arrange and pay for their own care services, rather than relying solely on services provided by the council. This approach provides a more flexible, person-centred form of care that can enhance independence, choice, and control.

There are a number of benefits of the use of Direct Payments for young people transitioning into adulthood:

1. Greater Choice and Control

- **Tailored Support:** Direct payments empower young people to tailor their care arrangements to better meet their specific needs, preferences, and lifestyles. For example, they can hire their own personal assistants or choose service providers that they feel comfortable with, rather than using services selected by the local authority.
- **Flexibility:** They can decide when, where, and how their care is provided. This is especially important as young people enter adulthood and may have changing schedules due to work, education, or social activities.

2. Promoting Independence

- **Development of Life Skills:** Managing direct payments can help young people develop important life skills, such as budgeting, decision-making, and managing employment responsibilities if they hire personal assistants. This promotes independence, a key goal during the transition to adulthood.
- **Personal Responsibility:** By managing their own care and support arrangements, young people gain experience in taking responsibility for important aspects of their lives. This fosters a sense of empowerment and autonomy, helping them feel more confident as they progress towards adulthood.

3. Customising Support for Specific Goals

- **Achieving Personal Goals:** Direct payments allow young people to arrange support that aligns with their personal goals, whether that is pursuing education, employment, social inclusion, or independent living. For example, they can use direct payments to hire someone to help them travel to college or work, attend social activities, or develop daily living skills.
- **Adaptability:** As young people's needs and goals change over time, direct payments provide the flexibility to adjust their support accordingly. This is particularly useful in helping them transition through different stages of adulthood, such as moving out of the family home or starting a job.



4. Personalised Care and Support

- **Consistency of Care:** With direct payments, a young adult can choose to hire the same personal assistants over time, ensuring they receive consistent care from people they trust. This can be particularly important for young people with complex needs, where familiarity with caregivers is crucial.
- **Cultural and Social Preferences:** Young people can ensure that their support reflects their personal or cultural preferences, such as hiring someone who speaks their preferred language or shares similar interests, enhancing their comfort and satisfaction with their care.

5. Supporting Social Inclusion and Community Engagement

- **Enabling Social Activities:** Direct payments can be used to hire support workers or personal assistants to help young people engage in social and community activities, attend events, or take part in recreational activities. This can reduce isolation and promote social inclusion, which is critical for wellbeing as they transition to adulthood.
- **Improving Access to Opportunities:** They can use the payments for practical support that facilitates their involvement in education, work, or leisure activities, helping them to build new relationships and integrate more fully into their communities.

6. Supporting Transition to Independent Living

- **Housing and Personal Assistance:** For young people moving into independent or supported living arrangements, direct payments can be used to hire personal assistants or arrange care services that help with household tasks, personal care, and daily living activities. This flexibility helps them live more independently while receiving the support they need.
- **Choice of Supported Living Services:** Rather than relying on a set package of care from the local authority, young people can choose the type of supported living service that best suits their needs and preferences.

7. Family Involvement

- **Supporting Family Caregivers:** Direct payments can also benefit the young person's family. For instance, they can hire a personal assistant to provide respite care or additional help at home, relieving pressure on family caregivers. This can allow the young adult to remain at home for longer or ease the transition into independent living by sharing responsibilities.
- **Shared Decision-Making:** Where appropriate, direct payments can be managed in partnership with the young person's family or another trusted person. This ensures that support arrangements reflect both the young person's wishes and their family's insights, creating a balanced approach to care.

8. Continuity in Transition from Children's to Adult Services

- **Seamless Transition:** Direct payments can help ease the transition from children's services to adult social care by allowing the young adult to maintain continuity in the support they receive. Instead of switching to a new service provider when they turn 18, they can continue working with familiar care workers or services that have supported them during childhood.



- **Gradual Shift to Full Control:** If a young adult feels overwhelmed by managing direct payments alone, they can gradually take on responsibility. This process allows them to learn how to manage their care and support over time, with help from family members or local authority support, before fully taking charge.

9. Maximising Outcomes for Health and Wellbeing

- **Holistic Approach to Care:** Direct payments enable the young adult to address not just their immediate personal care needs but also aspects of their broader wellbeing, such as mental health, social interaction, and physical health.
- **Preventing Crisis Situations:** By having more control over their care, young people can proactively address issues as they arise, avoiding delays that might happen if they were relying on standard service providers. This could prevent crises and help maintain their wellbeing.

The Purpose of the Strength-Based Approach to Support Young People Preparing for Adulthood.

The **strength-based approach** focuses on identifying and building upon an individual's strengths, abilities, and resources, rather than concentrating solely on their needs or limitations. This approach is particularly effective in supporting young people with care and support needs as they transition into adulthood, as it empowers them to take control of their lives and promotes independence, resilience, and social inclusion.

The strength-based approach is a powerful framework for supporting young people with care and support needs as they enter adulthood. By focusing on their abilities, resources, and potential, it helps them build confidence, develop life skills, foster independence, and achieve personal goals. This approach promotes a future-oriented, person-centred plan that supports young people in leading fulfilling, independent lives as they transition into adulthood.

1. Empowering the Young Person

- **Building Confidence and Self-Esteem:** By focusing on what the young adult *can* do, the strength-based approach boosts their confidence and self-esteem. Recognising and celebrating their skills, talents, and achievements helps the young adult feel more capable of managing adulthood.
- **Promoting Self-Determination:** This approach encourages young people to take an active role in shaping their future, fostering self-determination. They are empowered to set their own goals, make decisions, and take ownership of their transition into adulthood, which can enhance motivation and engagement.

2. Personalising Care and Support

- **Individualised Plans:** A strength-based approach ensures that care and support plans are personalised to the individual's unique abilities, interests, and aspirations. Rather than a one-size-fits-all service, the plan focuses on leveraging the young person's strengths to address their needs and achieve their goals.



- **Flexible Support:** Support is tailored to enable the young adult make the most of their strengths. For example, if they have strong communication skills but need help with mobility, their support can be designed to foster independence in communication while providing assistance with physical tasks.

3. Fostering Independence

- **Skill Development:** A key focus of the strength-based approach is building on existing abilities to develop new skills that promote independence. This could include life skills like cooking, managing personal finances, or navigating public transportation, enabling the young adult to live as independently as possible.
- **Maximising Potential:** The approach helps young people reach their full potential by recognising and nurturing their capabilities. Rather than focusing on deficits, it looks for ways the young adult can contribute to their own care and daily life, fostering a sense of autonomy.

4. Supporting Transitions to Education, Employment, and Housing

- **Enhancing Employability:** By identifying strengths such as creativity, problem-solving, or teamwork, the strength-based approach can help young people explore suitable career paths or educational opportunities. Support is then tailored to help them achieve these goals, whether through vocational training, internships, or supported employment.
- **Preparing for Independent Living:** For young people transitioning to independent or supported housing, the strength-based approach can identify and build on practical skills they already have—like managing personal care or basic housekeeping—and offer support where needed, such as learning to manage a household budget.

5. Building Resilience

- **Coping Strategies:** This approach helps young people build resilience by developing strategies to handle challenges. By focusing on strengths, young people learn to overcome obstacles and develop a positive mindset when facing difficulties in adulthood.
- **Resourceful Problem-Solving:** Strength-based planning encourages young people to think creatively about how they can use their abilities and resources to solve problems, whether that involves managing their care or navigating social situations.

6. Strengthening Relationships and Social Networks

- **Social Inclusion:** The strength-based approach promotes the development of meaningful relationships by encouraging young people to engage with their communities, participate in social activities, and build supportive networks. By focusing on their social strengths—such as communication or teamwork—it helps them to integrate more fully into society.
- **Support Systems:** The approach also looks at the strengths within the young person's support network, such as family, friends, and community resources, and leverages these to provide holistic support. It encourages collaboration and co-production, where the young adult works alongside their support network to achieve their goals.



7. Enhancing Mental and Emotional Wellbeing

- **Positive Focus:** Shifting the focus from what’s “wrong” to what’s “right” in the young person’s life fosters a positive self-image and emotional wellbeing. The emphasis on strengths and achievements can reduce anxiety, depression, and feelings of helplessness, which are often barriers to a successful transition into adulthood.
- **Self-Advocacy:** As the young adult recognises their own strengths, they are more likely to become effective self-advocates. This enables them to communicate their needs, preferences, and aspirations to service providers and others, ensuring their voice is central to decision-making.

8. Building a Future-Oriented Perspective

- **Aspirational Planning:** The strength-based approach encourages young people to think beyond their immediate care needs and envision their future. It helps them identify what they want to achieve in adulthood—whether that’s finding a job, forming relationships, or living independently—and works backwards from those goals to create a pathway that builds on their strengths.
- **Long-Term Goals:** By focusing on what the young adult is good at and enjoys, the strength-based approach helps them set realistic long-term goals, which are broken down into achievable steps. This promotes a future-oriented perspective, motivating them to take proactive steps towards building a fulfilling adult life.

9. Collaborative Support

- **Co-Production:** The strength-based approach emphasises collaboration between the young person, their family, social workers, and other professionals. Everyone involved works together to identify and build on the young person’s strengths. This partnership ensures that the support provided is aligned with the young person’s own goals and values.
- **Multidisciplinary Input:** By considering the strengths that arise from various aspects of a young person’s life, this approach encourages input from multiple sources, including education, health, and social care professionals. This ensures a well-rounded, holistic approach to planning and support.

10. Promoting Long-Term Sustainability

- **Sustainable Outcomes:** A focus on strengths helps ensure that the care and support provided is sustainable in the long term. Rather than fostering dependence on services, the strength-based approach encourages the young adult to build the capacity to manage their own care needs as much as possible, ensuring a smoother transition into adulthood and reducing the likelihood of crises later in life.

Next steps

Darlington Borough Council Adult Services pledge to improve the transition of a young adult with care and support needs when becoming an adult:

We have identified **Key areas for improvement i.e.:**



1. Refresh our commitment to the progression model

- **Aim:** ensure we begin transition discussions around age 14 (Year 9) to give young people and their families enough time to plan for adulthood.
- **Outcome:** Early planning allows for a smoother transition by identifying the young person's strengths, preferences, and support needs. It also gives enough time to address gaps.

2. Ensure we are utilising a Person-Centred Strength-Based Approach

- **Aim:** Ensure we are using **person-centred/strength-based planning** approach that focuses on the young person's aspirations, strengths, and choices. The plan should be tailored to their individual goals, rather than a one-size-fits-all service.
- **Outcome:** Focusing on strengths and personal goals empowers the young person, encouraging self-determination and greater engagement. A holistic view that includes health, education, employment, and social relationships ensures comprehensive support

3. Improve Collaboration Between Agencies

- **Aim:** Strengthen communication and coordination between children's and adult services (social care, health, education, housing), ensuring a **multi-agency** approach.
- **Outcome:** Young people and their families often report frustration with gaps or delays in services when transitioning from child to adult services. Seamless coordination ensures that care is continuous, and the transition is less overwhelming.

4. Provide Clear Information and Guidance

- **Aim:** Ensure we offer families and young people accessible, clear, and up-to-date information about available services, legal entitlements, and funding options, such as Direct Payments or Personal Budgets.
- **Outcome:** Many families and young people find it difficult to navigate the complexity of the social care system. Providing clear guidance reduces confusion and helps them access appropriate support.

5. Focus on Skill Development for Independence

- **Aim:** Increase access to life skills training and real-world experiences that promote independent living, such as managing finances, cooking, personal care, and using public transportation.
- **Outcome:** Practical skills are key to ensuring a young adult can live independently. Structured training programs or supported internships can bridge the gap between school and adult life

6. Increase Employment and Education Opportunities

- **Aim:** Work in partnership with supported employment, apprenticeships, and educational pathways to ensure they are tailored to young people with care and support needs.
- **Outcome:** Many young people with additional needs face challenges in finding work or continuing education. Offering more vocational training, supported internships, or flexible education options allows them to pursue meaningful employment or further learning.



7. Support Mental Health and Wellbeing

- **Aim:** Provide advice on how to access to ongoing mental health support, especially as young people face increased stress and uncertainty during transitions.
- **Outcome:** Transitions can be emotionally challenging, leading to anxiety, depression, or social isolation. Mental health services that cater to young adults can ensure better emotional wellbeing.

8. Strengthen Family Involvement and Support

- **Aim: Collaboration and engagement with** families to ensure they are equip with the skills and knowledge to support their young adult through training, support groups, and peer networks.
- **Outcome:** Families are often the most consistent source of support, so ensuring they have the necessary resources, and information helps them provide effective care and advocacy during the transition

9. Ensure Inclusivity and Representation

- **Aim:** Provide information in formats that suit the participants, including easy-read documents, translated materials, or visual aids for people with communication needs.
- **Outcome:** Diverse Representation: Make sure the voices of those often underrepresented—such as individuals from ethnic minorities, LGBTQ+ groups, and people with disabilities—are included and considered in the process.

9. Improved Housing Options

- **Aim:** Develop more housing options for young people, including supported living, independent living, and shared housing approaches that are flexible and cater to individual needs.
- **Outcome:** Many young adults with care needs desire independence but still require varying degrees of support. Expanding housing options provides them with more choices that align with their levels of independence

10. Ongoing Support Beyond Transition

- **Aim:** Continue support services beyond the initial transition to ensure young people can sustain their independence. This includes regular reviews and adjustments to care plans as their needs evolve.
- **Outcomes:** Needs may change as young people age, and ongoing support ensures that the transition is not just a one-time event but a continuous process of growth and adaptation.

11. Measuring Progress and Outcomes

- **Outcome Tracking:** Regularly monitor and assess the young adult's progress against their goals. This helps to ensure that they are moving forward in a meaningful way and that the support they receive is making a positive impact.



- **Celebrating Milestones:** The Progression Model emphasises the importance of acknowledging and celebrating each step forward, whether it's mastering a new skill, gaining more independence, or successfully entering employment or education.

By implementing these improvements, we will ensure young people with care and support needs can have a smoother, more empowering transition into adulthood, giving them greater control over their futures and ensuring better outcomes in terms of independence, wellbeing, and social inclusion.

Appendix 1

Support for young people preparing for adulthood in Darlington

In Darlington, various resources are available to support young people with care and support needs as they transition into adulthood. The Darlington Borough Council offers a range of services designed to help young people prepare for independent living, higher education, employment, and involvement in the community. These include transition planning for individuals with special educational needs (SEND), typically starting at age 14, and may extend up to the age of 25 depending on the individual's needs.

Key services include:

1. **Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Team:** The team supports young people with SEND and their families by providing tailored transition plans that incorporate education, health, and care needs.
2. **Ongoing Assessment and Intervention Team (OAIT):** For young people over 18 with Care Act eligible needs, this team provides long-term support, including assessments and reviews to help individuals maintain independence and access necessary services.
3. **Occupational Therapy and Reablement Services:** These services help young people develop practical skills and independence through short-term goal-focused support. The aim is to maximise independence by providing equipment and adaptations if necessary.
4. **Darlington Association on Disability (DAD)** is commissioned to offer advocacy services, helping young people and their families understand their rights and access appropriate support. It also provides a Direct Payment Support Service.
5. **Adult Learning Disability Social Work Team:** This team provides longer term casework including assessments, re-assessments, scheduled reviews and safeguarding for people with learning disabilities who require long term support This includes supporting carers to sustain their carer's role.

Casework includes responding to Legal Challenge, enabling people to access Independent Advocacy commissioned by DBC with Darlington Association on Disability (DAD), or Direct Payments.

The team work closely with children's social work teams and education (SEND) to ensure that young people, and their families, are supported to prepare well for transition to adulthood.

6. **Transition to Adult Social Care (TASC) Forum,** which helps plan the shift from children to adult social care services. This planning covers vital aspects such as independent living options, employment, education, health management, and legal rights.
7. **Occupational Therapy and Sensory Support (Adult Social Care):** Darlington Borough Council through Adult Services assess functional ability to support people to participate in the activities of everyday life. Occupational Therapists provide equipment and adaptations for people to maximise independence and observe opportunities to prevent, reduce, and delay the need for ongoing support.



The team also undertake the assessment and rehabilitation for individuals with a hearing or visual impairment or dual sensory loss. Both Occupational Therapy and Sensory Impairment teams support both Children and Adults with long term physical or sensory assessment and interventions.

8. **The Local Offer:** For young people with SEND, specific resources are available under the local offer, which includes guidance on education, employment, health services, and legal rights to support the transition into adulthood.

These services aim to create an inclusive environment where young people are encouraged to become active participants in society while receiving the care and support, they need to thrive as adults.

For more detailed information, you can explore Darlington Borough Council's resources on their website [Darlington Borough Council](#)

For further information or to contact specific teams, you can visit the Darlington Borough Council's [Preparing for Adulthood page](#) or reach out to the SEND team directly through their local offices.