

Transitions event - Q&A handout

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Topic: Dimensions

Q: Could you explain the relationship between Dimensions and ECC Social Services / ECC Education?

A: Dimensions is a not-for-profit provider of care and support to autistic adults and adults with learning disabilities. Find out [who we support](#).

London Boroughs, County Councils and Local Authorities assess needs and then fund providers (like Dimensions) to meet those needs. A few deliver support directly. Some people receive funding from their health authority too.

Q: My child has a very high level of need. Profound and multiple learning disabilities, diverse physical disabilities and a history of distressed behaviour.... Is supported living for them too?

A: Yes, we can support most autistic adults or adults with a learning disability, who have an eligible support need. We put together varied living arrangements –supported living alone or with housemates, care homes and clusters of homes. With the right level of support any one of these could be right for your child. You are very welcome to chat this through: use the find local support button to contact us: <https://dimensions-uk.org/>

Q: Is the transitions guide relevant to all regions in England?

A: Yes, we have written it that way. This means that there isn't specific local information in it. Your Local Authority's online Local Offer information will have information about your area and other local information and advice services.

Q: Is Dimensions a nationwide company? What criteria do young people need to meet in order to access support?

A: Dimensions supports adults in about half of all local authorities in England and Wales.

Our support is commissioned by local authorities or sometimes the NHS. The criteria for our support is that you have an assessed eligible social care need, and that your local authority will fund us to provide that support. Hence the importance of social workers. You can check your postcode on this [page](#).

Q: Can we contact Dimensions for guidance on the next steps, as it really has been a minefield, trying to navigate the adult transition maze

A: Yes. Our Family Helpline (0300 303 9161) is open Mon to Fri 10-12pm, or speak to your local team using the [find local support button](#) to contact us.

Q: Do you have written care plans and daily care records for each person?

A: Yes.

Q: Do groups of parents ever approach you to create a bespoke service?

A: Sometimes, yes. There are several examples where we support friendship groups and we are always open to that sort of conversation.

Q: We've had 4 different social workers in the past 18 months. Do Dimensions offer support to fill this gap?

A: Dimensions isn't able to do a social care assessment, but we can describe a person's needs to the local authority. Families have a better leverage for this, however, because there is a perceived conflict of interest between a potential support provider describing a person's needs to the local authority

Q: If you are not at the stage where you want your young person to be in supported living but are interested in finding out more, can you start a discussion with providers like Dimensions so you are ready for the future?

A: Yes, absolutely. The more you know and learn the better prepared you will be.

Topic: Local authorities and social workers

Q: Our area is failing so many children and young people due to lack of access to social workers. We still do not have an adult social worker, despite complex needs, and we only have a Family Practitioner instead of a children's social worker. How do we challenge this?

A: An adult social care needs assessment should be done around the age of 18. You can challenge the local authority if this has not happened. Lots of local authorities aren't providing a named social worker for all people.

Q: My son is 16 and has had a social worker since age 10. He received a letter to say he will be transferred to adult services but his social worker said he won't be contacted until he is 17+, is this too late?

A: Particularly if your son has complex support needs, try calling the adult social care support workers team now and see if they can start his assessment early.

Q: How do I go about accessing social care support in the first place? I'm worried their criteria being too high to access any help, which we really need. My son is 16.

A: Use the [Thinking Ahead Guide](#) to describe your son's needs fully. The criteria for support should be available to read on your Local Authority website. You need to describe all aspects of their needs (thinking of the worst days, with no support). Now that he is 16, you can approach the adult social care teams directly for that initial social care needs assessment. Don't forget to ask for a Carers Assessment too.

Q: I had a social worker for my daughter until she turned 18. We have now transferred to the transitions team. I asked for an adult social worker for her but have been told that is not possible unless my daughter goes into independent living or turns 24. Do you know if I can get an adult social worker for my daughter?

A: Yes. There cannot be a gap in provision between 19yrs and 24yrs. If you have eligible care and support needs, they have a duty to meet them. Your local authority may have different names for their social work teams, but there cannot be a gap in provision.

Q: We intend living elsewhere in retirement / We are close to the county line. Do we look for providers in another county or do we need to stay in our county? How can I access provision in a different local authority?

A: It depends which area your relative will live in. It is the social work team for that local authority that you will need to approach. We advise doing this as soon as possible as the process can be long.

Q: I would like to know: 1. what role Social Services will play when my child leaves education, and 2. Can you help our family with legal and financial support?

A: 1: The role of Social Services is that they have a duty of care for vulnerable people. They may be able to help with accommodation and they are responsible for Safeguarding.

2: There are many sources of legal help, but we cannot help directly. You might consider [Irwin Mitchell](#), [Access Social Care](#), [CASCAIDr](#), [Steve Broach public lawyer](#). Some local MENCAP branches can also be approached for legal support.

Q: My daughter has ASD, learning difficulties and other complex needs. I have been trying to engage a social worker for two years but keep getting fobbed off. Any tips?

A: Keep trying. There are national capacity issues in social work teams but if your daughter has sufficient needs they will have to assess her before, or when, she turns 18. Meanwhile using person centred thinking and planning tools can really help describe her needs in detail:

- <https://www.togethertomatters.org.uk/thinking-ahead-planning-guide-pdf/>
- <http://helensandersonassociates.co.uk/person-centred-practice/person-centred-thinking-tools/>

Q: How do you convince social services pressuring you to accept an unsuitable placement for your child, that it is the wrong place?

A: You need to be able to demonstrate their needs, and the consequences and harm of placing them in an unsuitable place. You can use the [safeguarding legislation](#) to demonstrate this. It may be helpful to have a professional assessment to back this up, such as a psychologist or Sensory Integration Occupational Therapist or Speech and Language Therapist etc.

Q: How is conflict resolved, if there is a difference between what a young person and their parents want and what the LA suggests/is willing to fund? E.g. difference in set up or a provider or level of support.

A: Start with conversations, as the person's wishes must be taken into account. You may need to escalate your concerns. Use the legal route as a last resort. Your young person will be also eligible for advocacy for support to be heard ([NYAS](#), [Disability Rights UK](#), [Mencap](#))

Q: There are no services in our borough for 18-25 - the social worker admitted this was true too. No providers left at all. He's only been given direct payments for a carer to take him out.

A: Check with your Parent carer Forum has some local advice about this. The local authority has a duty to support where there is an assessed need.

Topic: Local offer

Q: Does the Local Offer show independent as well as council run providers?

A: Yes, it is supposed to.

Q: How will we find out info about providers? We don't have a social worker, nor is my child at a special school. He has an EHCP and I doubt he will live independently. We're worried we will slip through the gap! Also - who funds the providers you are mentioning?

A: Information about local providers will be on your Local Authority's Local Offer Pages online. They have to publish the providers that qualify for their provider framework (approved providers).

Support is funded by the local authority or sometimes health authority, who first assess the level of need via a social worker. They then fund the support – unless your child has a certain amount of savings, currently the upper limit is £16,000.

Topic: Needs assessments

Q: Is there advice for a child who will hopefully live independently? My son is 16, autistic and has dyspraxia. Sometimes he seems quite capable but other times he really struggles with his emotions and social skills. He does have an EHCP.

A: If you believe that he has eligible needs, he can have an adult social care assessment. [The Thinking Ahead guide](#) can help you express those needs. Organisations like the [National Autistic Society](#) or [Autistica](#) may help you prepare him for an independent life.

Q: Is there any support for a child who is 17, doesn't have an EHCP and is no longer in education?

A: This will differ from area to area, and will depend on whether the person meets the criteria for support from the local authority or health funding. First step would be to check the eligibility criteria online, and then approach the social work team.

Q: My son has dual diagnosis, Down's Syndrome and ASD. He has an EHCP, but was rejected by Children's Social services saying his needs were not complex enough. We disagree.

A: You can ask for a re-assessment if you think his needs have changed. It is worth checking the local eligibility criteria so you can see what they are looking for. Also, ask for a Carers Assessment so that it is clear which things you can support him with (and this may not be everything as you both get older, and he needs age appropriate support).

[HFT](#) have some great guidance through the process. As does the [Thinking Ahead Guide](#), and [Preparing For Adulthood](#).

Topic: Housing

Q: We have just been referred to a housing charity to try to move our child into supported living. What are the pitfalls we need to be aware of over the next few weeks to ensure a good transition?

A: Things to watch out for could be: checking whether he is well matched to anyone else living in the property; checking the support provider fully understands his needs; the house is adapted well to his needs; checking that the plan to move will work for your son (a good transition plan); check that the funding for his support, housing and all benefits are agreed and in place; remember that it is ok to keep looking if the first place you are offered is not the right place for your son. [The Thinking Ahead Guide](#) could be really helpful.

Q: Do you know any organisations that can help find accommodation for our daughter? We don't have a social worker as we are CHC funding.

A: The organisations that can help are all online, and the ones we know of are: The local authority, housing associations, [MySafeHome](#), and the locally approved providers on the local authority's website

Q: I'm finding it difficult to visit providers, is there a way that they would be more amenable?

A: Providers need to have explicit permission from the people they support to have strangers come into their homes. Some providers offer video tours of houses to get round this.

Q: My daughter is in supported living and the property does not meet her needs anymore. Is it our right for her to be moved?

A: If the issue is with the property there is a Disability Facilities Grant (via the local authority) that could be applied to, to make adaptations. If it is incompatibility with other residents then you need to approach the support provider to discuss this. If you have the legal right to make decisions for her, then you can approach solutions on her behalf. If not, then your wishes should be taken into account, but it will be your daughter's decision to make.

Q: If you are involved in sourcing a property will you be the people renting? Or do the young people hold the tenancy?

A: If the person is over 18 years they will usually become the tenant.

Q: How do you get started with looking for somewhere/know what to look for?

A: The first step is to get a social worker to assess level of need. They may advise on housing options, but you could also look for information in The Local Offer website for your area, and maybe specialist brokers like [MySafeHome](#). You can read more about housing options [here](#).

Q: What happens if a young person wants to live alone in a supported living arrangement but not when they turn 18, but later?

A: A person's support needs and wishes must be annually reviewed by the funding authority. If they wish to change where they live, and they have been deemed to have capacity to decide, then their wishes must be addressed.

Q: I am looking for supported living for my daughter. I'm struggling to find a forever home for her for next year as there appears to be a severe lack of places in our area to meet her needs. What do I do about lack of provision in her home town where I want her to be?

A: This is difficult, and a common issue. Ask all of the local housing associations, consider a HOLD mortgage (<https://mysafehome.info/>), ask at the local carers centre (if you have one), ask a support provider (like Dimensions) if they will consider buying a home for her to have permanent tenancy. Failing all else raise it with your MP and befriend the Local Authority commissioner.

Q: Why would we put in a claim for Housing Benefit for a child aged 14-16? They aren't even legally allowed to hold a tenancy at that age?

A: You're right, you can't apply for housing benefit until age 16. However, it is worth finding out as much as you can about benefits. [Contact](#) have a brilliant benefits advice service.

Topic: Preparing

Q: There are so many things to look into. Where do I start?

A: Use the [Dimensions Transitions Guide](#) and [Transitions checklist](#). Other organisations have good resources too:

- <https://www.hft.org.uk/our-services/transition>
- <https://www.togethertatters.org.uk/thinking-ahead-planning-guide-pdf>
- <https://www.preparingforadulthood.org.uk/downloads/young-people-and-family-participation/transition-planning.htm>.

The steps, very basically, are to first get an assessment of your sons' needs via social services to define the level of support he will need in adulthood, and what is available locally.

Q: How do you decide, with parents & young people, what is the best option for them? Is there an assumption that vulnerable adults do not live at home?

A: There is not the assumption that vulnerable adults will not live at home. The system is slowly moving towards a person centred approach – which respects the wishes and aspirations of the person. We do need to think about the future though and recognise that the majority of adults (learning disabled or not) do live away from home, as well as prepare everyone for life after parents.

Topic: Legal

Q: Can you please explain what the differences actually are between being an Appointee, Power of Attorney on both fronts and a Court Appointed Deputy?

A: An appointee is someone judged responsible by the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) to manage the person's benefits if the DWP assess them as not capable of that.

To have Power of Attorney you need to have been appointed by the person, who may go on to lack capacity to manage their health or financial affairs.

To become a Court Appointed Deputy, the person must be proved to lack capacity to manage their health or financial affairs to the court, and then you apply to the court of protection to deputise for them.

Topic: Money

Q: What is the difference between Direct Payments and Personal Budget?

A: A personal budget is the overall cost of the care and support the local authority provides or arranges for you. It specifies how much, if any, you must pay towards the overall cost and the remaining amount paid by the authority.

Direct payments are a funding choice within personal budgets. They allow you to purchase your own care and support services, with the aim of maximising your involvement and control over how your needs are met.

There is more on this in the Transitions Guide: <https://dimensions-uk.org/wp-content/uploads/Transition-your-childs-journey-into-adult-services.pdf>

Q: Is there a difference between LA funding & what happens & Continuing Health Care (CHC) funding and how that works?

A: Continuing Health Care (CHC) funding will only cover the needs of people who have significant health (including mental health) needs. The Local Authority will trigger a CHC assessment after they have made their own initial assessment.

Q: Since my child was put into CHC funding, the social workers seem to have evaporated. How am I supposed to move forward now?

A: Contact the Care Manager for CHC, or contact social services in your area, and ask for an urgent review, or the duty social worker.

Q: How will care be funded? Would it include money for clothing, days out, clubs etc

A: This all depends on the support needs of the person (as identified in the Care Act Needs assessment). Also it depends on whether the person is living in the family home, in supported living or in a care home etc. And whether they have Local Authority Care and support funding or Continuing Health Care funding (CHC). Your benefits would pay for your clothing etc. There is more on this in the [Transitions Guide](#).

Q: Any advice about the indirect costs? E.g. Time needed for care that we can't use to earn an income. Is it just a given that parents work less & earn less?

A: This can be somewhat overcome by making clear (once your relative has turned 18) that the person needs full time support while you are working, in the Carers Assessment and the Social Care Assessment. We find that a carers assessment is sometimes not offered, it is worth checking, and asking for one.

Topic: Alfie

Q: I am looking for exactly the type of setting that Alfie is in, a community village. Where do I start looking?

A: Have a look at Camphill Village Trust - that is the model used by Alfie

Q: Sounds super, does he get to meet others with SEN despite living in his own place?

A: He certainly does. For example he goes to a weekly disco, horse-riding and a day centre- an outdoor farm where he sees lots of people from his school.

Q: It would be very helpful to hear more about what Linda set up for Alfie in the end and how she did it.

A: Using clear, honest and open communication with social workers.

Topic: Other

Q: We would like our child to be able to do some sort of work. Any advice?

A: There are more and more employment opportunities, organisations and schemes. Job Centre Plus's Disability Employment Advisor is a good place to start. There are opportunities to learn work skills after education - café's, gardens, farms etc. Your child's college may have information of local opportunities and should be teaching work fit skills. Access to Work is a national funding scheme to support people at work.

Q: Can we share the recording with other families who were unable to attend?

A: We have uploaded the video to YouTube: <https://youtu.be/bSK34-azJPM>



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Proving life can get better

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