CYP Voice: From teens to adults
Views and experiences

Preparing young people with special educational needs and disabilities for adulthood

October 2026

How did we know what needed to change?

Children and young people with SEND, alongside their families, told us that preparing for adulthood and moving between services was often difficult, inconsistent and uncertain. Many described feeling unsupported during key transition points, particularly when moving between schools, colleges or into adult services.

Some young people shared that they were unclear about their future, lacked confidence in the options available to them after age 16, and did not feel they were being supported to achieve their aspirations.

Children, young people and families also highlighted that information about transition pathways and available support was difficult to understand and too focused on professionals. They asked for more accessible information that could be discussed together as a family before important decisions were made.

What did we do?

- To ensure the Preparing for Adulthood Strategy was shaped by lived experience, Suffolk County Council commissioned Knowing Works to engage with children and young people with SEND and their families between January and March 2026.
- Through accessible surveys, **169** children and young people and **177** parents and carers shared their experiences, helping us understand what was working well, where barriers existed, and where improvements would have the greatest impact on preparing young people for adulthood



What did Children and Young People tell us?

Young people want to be more involved in planning their futures

- Whilst 83% had an EHCP, only 70% said they were involved in their annual EHCP meetings.
- Many young people wanted clearer conversations about their future, careers and post-16 options.

Support for education, employment and careers is inconsistent

- 75% understood how their choices linked to future goals and 73% had spoken to someone about their future. However, only 60% felt they had enough support to think about their next steps.
- Young people wanted more information about: Job interviews (67%), CV writing (57%) and Work experience and volunteering (55%)

Transitions into adult health and social care are unclear

- Young people described transitions as confusing, happening too quickly, or feeling like support stopped suddenly. Others described positive experiences where they had good information and support.



What did Children and Young People tell us?

Young people are worried about becoming independent

- 61% were either a little worried or very worried about becoming more independent.
- The support they said would help most was: Building confidence (53%), Managing money (42%) and Learning life skills at home, such as cooking and cleaning (36%)

Travel and community participation matter

- Only 36% had accessed travel training, although 63% of those who had said it improved their confidence.
- Most young people did not participate in organised clubs or community groups, with confidence, lack of information and not having someone to go with being the main barriers.

Friendships and belonging are important

- 76% said they had opportunities to meet friends outside school or college, but many relied on informal friendships rather than structured activities.
- Young people who were worried about independence were also more likely to experience barriers to joining community groups and activities



What did Children and Young People tell us?

"I'm currently working an online course, so I haven't been helped directly. However, we have done work which relates to our future career choices as a way for our tutors to gain a better understanding of what we want. The college itself (Suffolk New) offers a lot of support, so I know that I'll have access to even more help once I transition into an in-person course."

"I haven't had anyone that had spoken to me, and I am very confused about what I am able to do in the future."

"Haven't needed any. I know what I want to do next."

"I've had help with my english and spelling and help with kitchen / knife skills and some help in kitchen theory."

"At my college, I have had someone at my careers area ask me what universities I would like to do and any potential courses I could apply for. I have my parents that help me understand what some of the uni course requirements mean (such as what are UCAS points). My lecturers have speakers from universities such as Essex and people doing careers talks."

"I have had discussions about the different career paths and what I would like to do. I have also been told about the benefits of each career path."

What did Children and Young Peo...

What did Children and Young People tell us?

Free text responses – young people's views on transitions in health and social care

Young people aged 16 and above who had already transitioned from children's to adult services were asked to tell us about their experience in a free text question. There were 35 responses. Some of their comments are shown below.

- "I feel like the change happened in the blink of an eye without my consent and I didn't like it very much."
- "The nurse from the children's ADHD service was helpful and said about the transfer to adult ADHD service."
- "I was little nervous that I was going into adult healthcare services , but when I met the healthcare professional I was less nervous."
- "Moving of children to adult services feels like I have more responsibility to handle the services by myself then having my parents to do it for me."
- "It was terrible I was put in an adult ward and was terrified I really struggled with the harsh transition."
- "It was an easy change as I had all the information I needed to feel safe and supported."

"When I turned 16, it made all the services I was provided as a child went away and I had to start again from scratch."

What did Children and Young People tell us?

"I need support in the community and travel, and in and around the home from my family or support worker. I have been practicing my independence skills in college for the last few years - I am not yet able to count money or tell the time, I would not be able to plan or take a journey on my own."
(Completed with support from a parent)

What have we already done?

Key changes delivered or underway include:

- Establishment of a dedicated Preparing for Adulthood Strategy – formed around the survey findings

- The strategy is aligned to the SEND Strategy, SEND Sufficiency Strategy, Alternative Provision Strategy, Education, Employment and Training priorities, and the Local Area Inclusion Plan.

Creation and development of specialist workstreams focused on:

- Education and employment
- Being as healthy as possible in adult life
- Independent living and community participation
- Moving into Social Care



What have we already done?

Key highlights:

- Commence development of clearer and more accessible information for young people and families such as digital resources and technology guidance for young people aged 16–25 to support independence and activities of daily living
- Expansion of independent travel training, including community travel resources and "Try a Bus" and "Try a Train" opportunities to support young people to travel independently and access education, employment and community activities. Benchmarking and improvement work across health partners to strengthen transitions into adult health services and reduce variation in practice
- Development of supported employment activity, supported internships and employer engagement work designed to improve routes into paid employment for young people with SEND
- Development of RONI Toolkit (Risk of NEET Indicators) to be rolled out with pilot schools
- Completed an EHCP Quality Checklist for schools, Post-16 providers and SEND Pods to improve consistency, quality and focus on Preparing for Adulthood outcomes across the annual review process
- Social Care Transitions - development of a joint dashboard, enhancing transitions capacity, mapping pathways and referral processes, and undertaking needs analysis and commissioning planning to better understand and meet the future needs of young people transitioning into adulthood

Next Steps

The experiences and priorities identified by children, young people and families through the Preparing for Adulthood survey have directly informed the Suffolk PfA Strategy; its actions will be embedded within the refreshed Local Area Inclusion Plan, delivered through multi-agency partnership workstreams, and monitored through the PfA Subgroup and wider SEND governance arrangements to ensure continued improvement in Preparing for Adulthood and transition outcomes.

We are on an ongoing improvement journey. By connecting CYP voice to strategy, delivery and governance, Suffolk will build on the activity already underway and maintain a clear focus on delivering earlier, more coordinated and more effective preparation for adulthood and transitions.

