

TRANSITIONS

Recommendations

I may need to use transition objects to support me when separating from my caregiver and coming into school. These may also be useful when moving around school and when returning home after school.

I struggle with morning transition - coming in to school and separating from caregiver is really hard because of my previous experiences.

My emotions become overwhelming at the end of the day when its home time

I think a 'Parallel timetable' might be helpful for me if I worry about what my carer is doing whilst I am at school. This might look like a list of what my carer is doing in the day that they give to me in the morning.

I like to use a visual timetable, which includes hometime, so that I know what to expect

I feel more comfortable when I know that the adults around me have positive relationships. This might look like communicating effectively, for instance regular warm conversations and demonstrating connection between home and school. This helps me to feel consistency and safety

I need you to tune into when I'm most ready to leave my carer. This might be in the car, at the door or in the playground. I might need support from adults that I trust from school.

I find it easier to talk about school at home when I have a home-school book to help me to remember my day. This can also help the adults around me to communicate positive aspects of my day.

In some instances, it might be appropriate for a member of staff to do a home visit eg in the holidays to maintain the connection and show that my home and school are still connected. Or sending a postcard/ message by phone can be helpful to show me you are keeping me and my family in mind.

If my morning routine is predictable, this helps me to feel safe. Sometimes it can also help to include transition time in a quiet space before entering the classroom or I may access my sensory circuit at this time

Adults around me need to keep reminding me how long things are going to take to help me structure time. It may help to have a timer or to cue me into changes in the class or school.



Morning



Afternoon



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I like to be prepared for the end of activity by an adult telling me when it is nearing the end. This might also look like using timers, visuals and sound cues to ensure that I know that we will be transitioning away from an activity. Sometimes I need more flexibility when I am highly engaged in a task.

I like it when there is something that sparks my interest in the learning. This might look like a theme or picture that I like being included in the planning.

I might find some tasks more difficult than other children and need additional support. Please consider that I may have some needs that have not been identified yet

I find it helpful when adults and peers talk about their learning and support me to think about how I do this, but I need to be in a safe environment with people that I trust to do this. This is most useful when the adults around me model this and regularly use skills that they would like us to use. For example, when adults use statements from growth mindset like "I can't do this yet, but I will keep trying" it makes me feel more comfortable in doing the same.

I might also need some time to understand when we shift between activities, particularly if I was confident before the transition.

When I see an example of the expected outcome of my work, this makes me feel more able to attempt the task so that I know what I am aiming for.

As well as encouragement, clear and explicit instructions for the task support me to meet expectations and feel more confident. I may be worried about getting it wrong, so it can be helpful to reassure me once I have started the task.

Sometimes I cannot manage the same pace as others in the classroom when shifting between activities. It helps when adults know this and can plan for me to complete the transition in a realistic timeframe.

I like it when my teacher can show me the learning in a different way, because sometimes I find the learning too abstract. This might look like using concrete resources in maths or physical objects to help me describe things in my writing.

I need help to break a task into manageable chunks so that I am more likely to be able to understand and complete it. This might look like the teacher modelling how to break it down or asking the class how a task might be approached so that it is modelled for me.

I need time and adult support in the mornings to settle in to my learning.

I need encouragement to engage with current or next activities.



I feel safe when adults around me are warm and approachable.

I value when adults listen to my questions and let me be curious; this helps me to learn.

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I find even little changes difficult to tolerate eg; 5 minutes left.

I can find change frightening and often worry it will always be bad.

Please acknowledge and affirm my emotions when I am finding something difficult.

Researchers have found that there are models, such as the PACE model (below), that promote understanding of how it would be helpful for the adults to respond. The virtual school can support with providing more information on examples of these.

I find breathing techniques and other co-regulation strategies help me to regulate.

Carefully planned transitions, as described above, and the use of resources such as visual timetable, now and next boards and transition objects can help me to feel safe during a change.

I can start to learn how to manage anticipation and frustration in safe spaces such as using board games, lego therapy, play and stories with trusted adults and peers.

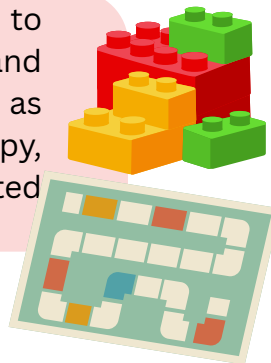
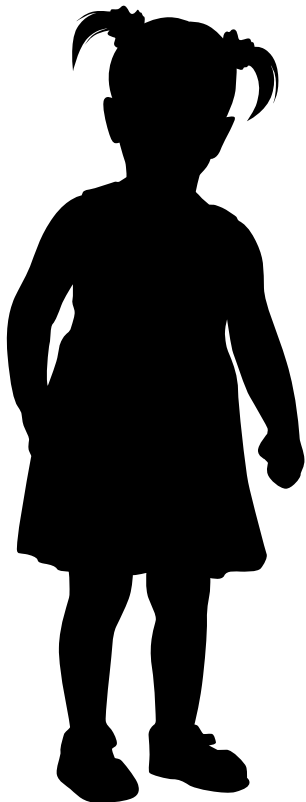
I may need help from a trusted adult, that I feel safe with, to support me to co-regulate if I am finding it difficult, as I may not be able to do this independently.



If adults around me are curious about why I respond in a particular way, it shows that they have empathy towards me and value me as me.

I value when adults listen to my questions and let me be curious; this helps me to learn.

A trusted adult can help me to think about why I find some things more difficult to manage, which could in turn help them to support me in their planning



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I struggle to leave my old teacher and to start another year group

Enabling me to retain a bespoke concrete version of my journey through school will greatly enhance my resilience for transitions, especially when I have to change schools.

I feel safe when adults show compassion and acceptance in these situations, even if they are not sure what the reasons may be. Acknowledging and affirming how I feel helps me to see that you recognise how hard it is for me and are still there for me.

I like to know that I have a safe space for my work to be stored, especially if I have done something I am proud of or want to finish.

An adult can support me by demonstrating that change is ok and can be helpful. This can be supported by preparation for change, commentary and modelling by trusted adults and stories. I may not recognise the benefits of reframing change during my time at school, but this will support me in my preparation for adulthood

When I'm asked to stop something I'm focused on, like during tidy-up time or the end of a lesson, it can feel really tough. I worry that I won't be able to return to it later, and sometimes, that fear comes from past life experiences where promises haven't been kept. This makes it harder for me to trust that I'll get another chance.

When my teacher uses commentary to show how they manage endings of tasks, this gives me good examples of how to manage this myself and further models that change can be ok. This is especially important for starting and finishing things

I may need an adult to tidy up/ clear away with me as developmentally I have not had reliable experiences. I may be emotionally much younger in my learning skills due to my inconsistent early years

I like to be involved in clearing away lego and jigsaws so I can feel a sense of control, I can be helped to do this by being prepared for the end of the task.

Lengthy, relationship -based transitions work best for me. I need my current teaching team to advocate for me in ensuring understanding from my receiving teaching team. Maintaining consistency of non -teaching adults with whom I feel safe will be helpful where possible.

Support me to let go of projects that need to be put away, for example lego or construction materials. This might look like taking photos and creating albums or putting them in my home school book so that I can still be proud of what I did. Using creative methods to record my work ensures that I do not feel it is 'gone'.

I am an individual so I need my team to know me well enough to recognise what will support me in different situations.

It is important to me that I can trust those around me. Please don't promise anything that isn't certain



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Similarly to times of transition, please consider preparing me for time away from key adults. I feel more comfortable when I know where my familiar adults are and when they will return. It is helpful when I have a team to support me, so that the likelihood of not knowing the adults around me is limited.

I feel nervous and afraid if I do not have my familiar adults or people around me.

Transition objects and resources such as visual timetables are also beneficial to support me in these times

When adults acknowledge how I may feel when my familiar adults are not around, this affirms that my emotions are valid. It might be helpful to have a way to support me to label how I am feeling, such as zones of regulation.

Please consider that I may find things more difficult when my familiar adults are not with me, so it may help if you differentiate the expectations on these occasions

I can seem impulsive because I find it difficult to wait

There are times that I can wait for things, it is helpful for my adults to recognise when these are and what could be changed in the times where it is more difficult to wait. It might be a particular activity, person or environment.

When you notice that I have been still and able to wait, celebrate this with me in ways that I respond well to so that I can recognise and continue to develop this skill

If adults take an executive functioning framework perspective, this can support their understanding of response inhibition and inform their planning to promote opportunities to practise these skills.

Opportunities for play and structured exploration, such as sensory activities, to help me to become familiar with having to wait and that this is not always bad. It may be beneficial to commentate and acknowledge my thoughts or feelings during the waiting time.



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There are complicated reasons to why I feel anxious or afraid or unsettled when my typical school routine changes (eg; Christmas parties, sports day events).

I feel safe when key adults are available (which is why I like to have a team of adults with whom I have built relationships) to reinforce a sense of safety and connection

I might benefit from exploring therapeutic stories with a trusted adult, such as The Invisible String (Patrice Karst) and Teenie Weenie in a Too Big World (Margot Sunderland) so that I can explore how the characters are feeling which may resonate with me. This might support my understanding in a way that I feel safe.

I enjoy creating new memories and documenting them so that I can look back on them. Please give me lots of time and focus to embed my memories with you as I really value these times. These are also helpful when transitioning to new classes or settings because they could for example all be added to the transition book for when I move on.

I need my wider team to have communication that is joined up- to know about anniversaries, care changes, birthdays, memories of previous year and deaths for instance. It is not my responsibility to be explaining any of this to adults around me. My wider team must be sharing information and what has worked well previously to be alongside me through such times.



I require my team of adults to guide me through how to navigate situations I find challenging such as explaining to others why my foster carer isn't present, or why a member of staff from my residential home is attending an event in school with me. Normalising the diversity of families is helpful for me to reduce the shame of not having my birth parents with me. Consider developing scripts with me to share with people who may be less understanding than my team.

I feel valued when my teacher or a key member of staff maintains the connection with me over the holiday with a postcard or email with a photo to show I am being kept in mind.

It would be beneficial for me to see that the connection has been maintained between my school and my home. This might look like; a positive themed home /school book reflecting narratives of school, home, family that are agreed across the wider team around me and are deemed helpful. Having lots of photographs can be beneficial for supporting my involvement in these narratives.

I can find it tricky to return to school after certain events eg; school holidays, following family time. I might feel confused and conflicted in my emotions.



When adults check in on how I am feeling this supports me to manage my emotions rather than to suppress them and it shows me that they care

For many care-experienced children, the journey through education is far from straightforward. Multiple placement changes can sometimes mean frequent moves between schools, unfamiliar faces, and a constant sense of starting over. In contrast, many of us as adults can trace our school years as a clear narrative—primary school, then secondary, often with continuity, familiarity, and family members who helped document our experiences along the way.

We may have school photographs tucked in albums, parents who remember the names of our teachers, saved school reports, certificates, or funny stories shared at family gatherings. These moments become part of our life story, shaping how we see ourselves and even influencing the paths we take into adulthood.

Now imagine not having that.

Imagine not remembering the name, or even the face, of the one teacher who made you feel safe. Not knowing whether anyone remembers you, or what your school was like. Imagine having no record of the spaces where you spent most of your childhood, and no one who can help you piece it all together. This is the reality for many care-experienced children.



That's why capturing a child's school journey should be seen as a vital part of their life story—not just something that happens in formal life story work, but as part of everyday practice in schools.

As school professionals, we have the opportunity to change this. Even small actions can have a lasting impact:

- Keep copies of school photos, class pictures, or artwork.
- Record key school events or milestones—first school trip, taking part in a performance or winning an award.
- Write down positive stories to be shared with the child or their caregiver—"Today, you were amazing when..."
- Save reports and feedback, especially the ones that highlight strengths, progress, or moments of pride.
- Note the names of significant adults in school who supported the child—so they can be remembered and possibly reconnected with later.
- If a child is moving from your school then complete the 'My School Journey Prompts' which is a worksheet capturing the child's school journey which can be shared through Virtual School Rotherham.

Not all children in care will receive in-depth life story work, but every child deserves a narrative that reflects who they are and where they've been. By making this part of our regular support for children in care, we contribute to their sense of identity, belonging, and self-worth—now and in the future.