

Time to move on - a successful transition from Sunfield to adult placement

Introduction

For almost a decade, Harry responded very well to the approaches taken by Sunfield, to support his diagnosis of ASD and SLD with complex epilepsy. As with every child here, when they approach 18 years of age, the Transitions Coordinator and the Team Around the Child (TAC) worked together with Harry and his family, as well as LA representatives, to ensure that his transition to adulthood enabled him to continue this success.

Background

Harry joined Sunfield at 8 years of age, with a diagnosis of ASD and SLD. As he approached adulthood, he also developed complex epilepsy. Harry had quickly responded to the structured TEACCH approach adopted at Sunfield from the outset. This support featured consistently throughout Harry's journey at Sunfield, so it was recognised that it would also be important to capture this in the transition planning process. Likewise, it was vital that Harry's future adult placement could mirror the TEACCH input and support he had received at Sunfield.

The Journey

Transition planning began in earnest when Harry reached 17½ years of age, with the aim of ensuring his needs were accurately assessed, identifying possible placements, securing funding for the placement deemed to best suit Harry's needs, and supporting Harry in making a smooth transition.

The Transitions Coordinator worked with Harry's family and TAC to create a transition profile, highlighting his key day-to-day support needs, adult placement criteria, and the support Harry would need to transition successfully. This profile was used to support assessments from the adult social care team, as well as the continuing health team, due to Harry's ongoing complex epilepsy. Total health funding was also established through this assessment process. The team worked with family and health colleagues to identify potential adult service providers – with whom Harry's profile was shared, to support their assessment of whether they could meet Harry's needs. His key staff then visited the short-listed providers to offer their opinion as to whether they would be suitable for Harry.

Once a suitable placement was identified and funding agreed, the Transitions Coordinator arranged regular transition planning meetings to implement each step and monitor progress. The new staff team spent a significant amount of time at Sunfield, getting to know Harry and the approaches that had proven successful with him. They were able to stay in Sunfield's on-site family centres to ensure they observed and fully understood Harry's 24-hour routine. Sunfield's teams advised the new staff on how the key strategies could be transferred and applied in the new placement. They also worked with Harry's family to support his visit to the new placement. Throughout the process, everything was monitored and adjusted to Harry's pace; with constant practical and emotional support offered to both Harry and his family.

The Conclusion

Harry settled well into his adult placement. The new team have continued to use the approaches Harry was familiar with, which have helped to minimise any anxiety. Harry was quickly able to access and engage with the local community and was warmly welcomed. He is able to do a weekly shop, and uses an iPad to communicate with others when visiting the local cafe. He continues to progress in his grasp of life skills, such as housework, and he is undertaking work experience at a local small farm/horticulture centre. He also actively enjoys leisure activities and social clubs. As a result of early forward-planning, with all parties working together, Harry has transitioned successfully, settled quickly and been able to continue with a fulfilled quality of life.