

A new start – the successful transition of a child into Sunfield

Introduction

A referral was received from the local authority, for a 52 week placement for George, and Sunfield had been identified as a preferred provider. This is a case study of the comprehensive preparation process behind the child's successful transition into Sunfield.

Background

George's current residential school were unable to continue to meet his needs, and his parents were keen to find somewhere that could provide a full 52-week package of support around their child. Sunfield met their initial criteria so the process of fully assessing our ability to meet George's needs began – marking the start of his subsequent transition to Sunfield.

The Journey

George's parents initially visited Sunfield and viewed our houses, classrooms and therapy spaces - supported by staff from each of these departments. Having agreed that Sunfield seemed well-suited to their child, they officially pursued a placement with us, and the Local Authority (LA) requested that we conduct an assessment to confirm suitability.

George's observational assessment visit was conducted by members of the education, care and psychology and therapies departments. The assessment identified the living and learning groups that George would be compatible to join, and would best suit his assessed needs. It also identified the specific training that would need to be undertaken prior to admission, by the teams who would be supporting him. A placement was offered to the LA, with accompanying costs for 2:1 support.

Sunfield then held a multi-disciplinary transition planning meeting with the team at George's current provision. This produced a detailed plan to support Georges introduction to Sunfield over an agreed period, that would be suited to George's needs and pace. A series of visits began with Sunfield staff going to George's current provision, to begin to build relationships with him. George was then supported by his existing staff team to visit Sunfield. George was assisted throughout this process by a social story, which included photos of his new staff, peers and environments.

Within the transition period George's Team Around the Child (TAC) was established, and they met to plan for his arrival and to ensure that relevant staff members were fully trained to support his individual needs. The peer group that George was to join were also prepared for his arrival, using visual communication aids such as social stories.

A Family Services representative and George's future key worker at Sunfield visited his family at home, to prepare for George's admission by answering questions and learning more about George's journey to date. Georges siblings were each sent a sibling induction booklet, introducing them to Sunfield and providing the contact details relating to their brother, to encourage them to feel part of his future life here from the outset.

The Conclusion

George settled well into his new environment and is now an active member of the Sunfield community. He is one of many shining examples of the importance of preparation prior to the transition of a student. This should include preparation of the young person, their family, receiving staff and peers. A multi-disciplinary approach, incorporating all professionals involved with the child, has also proven vital in ensuring a successful placement.