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Transition

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The transition from school to work and/or training can be an exciting but anxious time for young people. It can be particularly unsettling for autistic learners who often find change very difficult. However, there are things that you can do to make the transition as smooth and as positive as possible.

Choosing a Work Based Training Course

Centre Based Employability Courses

- Provide opportunities to meet a key contact from the Provider at an agreed familiar venue such as school. Ideally this 'key contact' will be a consistent link person for the learner throughout the transition process.
- Ensure website information is easy to read and contains factual information, including visual information where possible.
- Allow time for learners to process information by providing an opportunity to ask questions after transition events and not only during. Provide opportunities for non-verbal communication.
- Offer additional transition visits to the Provider, starting at quieter times of the day/week and building to include busier sites and times of day.
- Offer additional support for attending course interviews and open day events.
- Provide a Transition Guide to clearly outline the support services offer available to autistic learners.
- Provide opportunities for site familiarisation, allowing learners to plan how they will navigate around the centre and different vocational learning environments. Provide clear maps to facilitate this process.

Applying for an Apprenticeship

- Autistic learners may require some additional support to plan for and apply for Apprenticeship vacancies.
- Ensure that the learner is fully aware of the job role that they are applying for (and the type of tasks that will be involved).
- Support the learner to prepare information about their skills, qualities, experiences, hobbies and interests that can be matched to the person specification for the job that they are applying for.
- Support the learner to plan and be aware of the work place environment and that it is suitable for their needs.
- Offer additional support for attending interviews and familiarisation with the work place.

Putting support in place

- Support the learner in producing/developing a One Page Profile to be used to help develop a personalised package of support.
- Ensure support planning meetings are person centred and capture what is important to, as well as for the learner.
- Ensure all relevant prior medical information / education based support plans / Learning and Skills Plans are used to appropriately meet the needs of each individual learner.
- Involve parents/carers in the transition process as appropriate, whilst supporting the learner to gradually experience training and work independently, in order to minimise anxiety around parental/guardian separation.
- Make an advanced plan for managing unstructured time during break and lunchtimes, this may include making use of designated quiet spaces.
- Try to provide learning timetables and other process information in advance wherever possible.
- Provide opportunities for learners to meet with other learners in order to help facilitate social interaction. This may include other learners with an ASD diagnosis if appropriate.
- Ensure learners know how to access additional wellbeing support services and counselling if needed.
- Share personalised support plans with Tutors/ Assessors/ Employers and pastoral support staff as appropriate, with guidance on how to best support the learner to achieve specific outcomes.
- Offer travel training/ opportunities for journey planning. Use social stories to support this process if appropriate.

Reducing the learner's anxiety

Prior to beginning their training programme/employment

- Organise a visit before they start to look around the training centre/work place and show key places such as reception, canteen, toilets, chill out room. Give the learner a map of the training centre so they can find their way round easily on their first day. This can help with coping with the environment, dealing with large, noisy crowds, trying to find their rooms. Or they could produce their own with your help.
- The learner could use a video film or take photos of key places and build up their own map.
- Introduce key staff members.
- Show the learner where key activities happen.
- Provide a time out / safe base for stressful situations.
- There should be clear labelling around the training centre.
- Clearly explain the procedures for break times and lunch time and how to cope with meeting others.
- Travelling to training/work by bus – Allowing time to get to the bus, where to wait, times of the bus, what happens if the bus is late.

Once they have started on their training programme/employment

- Explain the rules clearly and maintain boundaries consistently.
- Stay calm if the learner is pushing the boundaries.
- Do not expect the learner to read your facial expression.
- If appropriate use social stories in pastoral time/review meetings to explain appropriate behaviour.
- Be aware that a learner may use a lot of energy trying to fit in and may get tired and agitated at certain parts of the day such as before using public transport.
- Warn in advance of changes/room change/change of Assessor.
- Autistic people may also give the appearance of being compliant and willing to do any task they are asked and not may not give a verbal indication they have not understood your request.
- They may sometimes mask that they have problems by deflection or not being able to stick to tasks. This may manifest itself by the learner not being able to complete tasks, varying the task given and/or just concentrating on the elements they find interesting or drawn to.