

PEOPLE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

6 November 2025

Update on Transition into Adulthood Report by Corporate Director of Adult Social Care

RECOMMENDATION

1. **The Committee is RECOMMENDED to**

Consider the support provided by the Council for young people transitioning into adulthood to ensure they live independently and in their own communities, in line with our strategic vision for adult social care, the Oxfordshire Way [the Oxfordshire Way](#).

Executive Summary

2. Oxfordshire County Council is committed to ensure a smooth transition into adulthood for young people who have additional needs. This report summarises actions taken since 2018 to achieve this, tangible outcomes that we can see today and how the Moving into Adulthood (MiA) team operates.
3. We are proud of our achievements in transitions into adulthood and young people's positive experiences, which have been recognised by our recent Care Quality Commission (CQC) inspection.

Background

4. Becoming an adult is a hugely important stage in any young person's life. For those young people who have additional needs, ensuring smooth transition into adulthood is even more crucial. The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) give clear guidance in relation to transitions which includes the importance of multi-agency working and strengths-based approaches. Strengths-based approaches focus more on what a person's aspirations, goals and wishes are rather than any limitations in relation to any disabilities or conditions that may have.
5. Moving from age 17 to 18 for young people with additional needs often means changes in social care and education provision, professional involvements and the legislation under which they are supported. For disabled children, the most relevant piece of legislation is the Children and Families Act 2014 until they are 18 years old. When they turn 18, their needs are to be met under the Care Act 2014. Both of these pieces of legislation make explicit reference to the importance of ensuring a smooth transition for young people with additional needs. The Mental Capacity Act 2005 is also an essential piece of legislation

in relation to young people who are moving into adulthood, and this applies from the age of 16.

6. The Care Act 2014 states the following in relation to transitions:

Where it appears to a local authority that a child is likely to have needs for care and support after becoming 18, the authority must, if it is satisfied that it would be of significant benefit to the child to do so and if the consent condition is met, assess

(a) whether the child has needs for care and support and, if so, what those needs are, and

(b) whether the child is likely to have needs for care and support after becoming 18 and, if so, what those needs are likely to be.

7. To ensure that young people have the best chance to thrive as adults, it is essential that agencies work together with young people and their families to create a clear plan in relation to how they will be supported and by whom when they turn 18.
8. There are often multiple transition points for young people throughout their journey into adulthood. For some young people the end of their education and what their support looks like when they are no longer in school can be as important as turning 18 and becoming an adult. Some young people may attend residential college as a result of their complex needs. It is important that there is a careful and managed transition when they have finished their studies given that this is a significant change in their life.

The Oxfordshire Context and Current Pathways

9. Oxfordshire County Council recognises the fundamental importance of supporting our most vulnerable young people with additional needs and ensuring that there is a smooth transition for those young people who are most likely to need Adult Social Care support when they reach adulthood.
10. Adult Social Care commissioned a project in 2018 to co-produce the Moving into Adulthood Team to enable this. This piece of work included parent carers, young people as well as relevant professionals from social care, health and education. The project consisted of a series of workshops as well as visiting other Local Authorities such as Kent and Leeds to identify best-practice models.
11. Upon completion of this project a series of recommendations was made which included:
- Earlier involvement from Adult Social Care to support the transition process,
 - Having a named point of contact/worker throughout,

- Adopting a long-term case work model so that young people receive consistent support throughout their journey into adulthood and the completion of their education.
12. In June 2021, the 'Moving into Adulthood' (MiA) Team was launched within Adult Social Care. The Council invested in a bespoke training programme for the team which focused on strengths-based practice to ensure young people's assets and aspirations are reflected in their support. The team's ethos is rooted in strong communication with families and an aspirational and outcomes-based approach for our young people in line with Adult Social Care's overall strategic vision, the 'Oxfordshire Way'.
 13. The Oxfordshire Family Support Network (OxFSN) who are a registered charity and support families of loved ones with Learning Disabilities played a fundamental role in the development of the MiA Team. They were a key stakeholder in the co-production process. They also provided training for the MiA Team in relation to the importance of relationship building with families.
 14. The Council commissioned OxFSN to write a Moving into Adulthood Handbook (please see <https://movingintoadulthood.oxfsn.org.uk>). This is a comprehensive resource covering finances, social care, education and legislation such as the Mental Capacity Act 2005. OxFSN continues to be a key stakeholder and have significant input into the development of Oxfordshire's Learning Disability strategy.
 15. The MiA team currently consists of a Team Manager, Practice Supervisors, Social Workers and Coordinators. The Team currently has 18.5 full-time equivalents. However, since the inception of the team there has been an increase in complexity of need of some young people that are being assessed. As a result of this the Council has taken the decision to realign staffing to manage this demand. This equates to 1 additional Practice Supervisor post and 1 additional Social Work post.
 16. The team work with young people on a long-term basis and if a young person has care and support needs, they will have a named worker. Their assessment will be completed by the time a young person is 17.5 and an agreed support plan will be in place to start from their 18th birthday. The team will stay involved with the young person until they have fully finished their education and have confirmed what their post-education support will look like. This can include numerous options such as volunteering, employment, outreach support and for those with higher presenting needs, supported accommodation.
 17. The team developed positive relationships with our special schools and colleges with each one having a named link worker. The team has also attended transition events and webinars hosted by organisations such as OxFSN and the Oxfordshire Parent Carer Forum (OxPCF) to support the identification of young people who are likely to need support from Adult Social Care as an adult.

18. There are well-established monthly multi-agency transition meetings that are chaired by the Practice Supervisors in the MiA Team. These meetings are locality based – they are held in the North, Central and South areas of the Oxfordshire. The core membership includes colleagues from Education, Health and statutory Children’s Social Care Teams including Children’s Disability, Children We Care For and the Leaving Care service.
19. The core aim of this meeting is to ensure that young people are being referred to adult services in a timely way so that there is sufficient time to assess their needs and complete any subsequent supporting planning. To ensure this, the team encourages referrals from the age of 16 particularly for those young people with complex needs so that there is time to have collaborative conversations and ensure a smooth transition. Please see Annex 1: Moving into Adulthood Protocol, which details our transition arrangements in Oxfordshire.
20. In terms of outcomes there has been a positive improvement journey in relation to timeliness and planning since the establishment of the MiA team in 2021. The team’s impact can be seen in key performance indicators below:
 - 58% of young people had an assessment in place by the age of 18 prior to the MiA Team, this figure is now 96%
 - 20% of young people had a *support plan* in place by the age of 18 prior to the MiA Team, this figure is now 93%.
 - Prior to the MiA Team 5% of referrals were received at the age of 16. This figure is now 35%.

Consistency of transition assessments across urban and rural areas

21. The MiA Team was created as a county-wide team to ensure that there is a consistency of approach in relation to how young people and their families are supported regardless of where they live in the county. The MIA has developed specialist knowledge in relation to services and opportunities that are available for young people in their local area.
22. Over the last four years, the team has developed an internal database with local resources that is regularly updated. This is discussed with young people and their families during the assessment and support planning process. Families are also signposted to the OxFSN handbook described at paragraph 14 above to ensure that as much information as possible is given during the assessment process.
23. As detailed above, we also have three monthly locality-based transition meetings across the North, Central and South of Oxfordshire to ensure that we are having localised discussion in relation to young people that are most likely to need Adult Social Care support when they turn 18.
24. In terms of access to appropriate care and support it is recognised that this can be a challenge in more rural locations. The actions to mitigate this include

- Having a good distribution of supported living throughout the county, as part of our supported accommodation strategy,
 - Having developed a strong provider framework with availability across the county including in rural areas. There are 58 providers on the Live Well Adults Supported Services Framework, with 22 as complex needs for behaviour and 14 providers able to deliver specialist forensic support.
 - Ongoing work to reduce reliance on out of area placements. This includes the development of 3 complex needs sites across the county as well as the development of a 'Safe Space' for those in acute crisis. The Safe Space will support Oxfordshire to deliver a community model for people with a learning disability and / or autism in line with future reform changes to the Mental Health Act. This is part of the Council's 5 year supported housing plan.
25. The MiA team is committed to using a flexible approach to meeting people's needs. This can include the people hiring their Personal Assistants (PA's) via their Direct Payment as well as more traditional services such as the use of care agencies. Personal assistants are employed or self-employed individuals who can support people with a range of tasks. In the context of young people, they can also play an important role in maximising independent living skills around cooking, travel training and learning how to do a range of household tasks.

Integration of health, education and voluntary sector partners

26. The MiA Team is actively involved in a number of collaborative processes that are aimed at improving outcomes for young people and ensuring a smooth transition. For example, we are a key stakeholder in Multi-Agency Quality Assurance (MAQA) meetings which assess and audit the quality of Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs). The MiA Team work very closely with colleagues in Education to ensure that we are creating collaborative and holistic support plans for young people. For example, the Team worked closely with education colleagues to support a young person onto a Supported Internship scheme. He had a passion for horticulture and upon successful completion of his internship, has now secured permanent employment at a local garden centre.
27. The MiA Team also attend meetings hosted by Health partners aimed at improving the quality of transitions for those young people that are likely to require specialist health input when they are adults. These include
- Learning Disability Health Transition meeting for those people with a Learning Disability who will need clinical input into adulthood, and
 - Complex Health Forum for those with complex physical health conditions. There is a focus on transitions within this group, including ensuring smooth transition from community paediatrics to specialist adult services.
28. Adult Social Care plays an active role in the SEND Improvement Plan. The Head of Service with responsibility for transitions in Adult Social Care co-

chairs the 'Preparing for Adulthood' theme group with a colleague from Children's Social Care. The core membership of this group includes representatives from colleges, employment services, commissioning, health and parent carers. There are four key workstreams within this group which are as follows:

1. **Access to employment, education and training.** This area of work has included the creation of a SEND Employment Forum and a significant focus on enhancing the Supported Internship offer in Oxfordshire as well as tracking the development of our Connect to Work program.

The Council has 42 young people accessing Supported Internships this academic year compared to 32 the previous year which equates to a 31% increase as a result of the work of the Employment Forum. Last year 55% of young people on an Internship scheme achieved paid employment. This compares favourably to the national average which is 30%.

2. **Health transitions** which focus on improving information for young people and families including information on specialist health pathways as well as a number of webinars for families.
3. **Social care transitions** which include a number of projects including a review of the effectiveness of the current pathways that have been detailed within this report as well as our commissioning intentions. Outcomes from this review so far have included enhanced tracking of children in the care system to ensure timely referrals to Adult Social Care at the age of 16.
4. **High Quality Information-** the key focus on improving the quality of information that is available for young people and their families. There has been some positive work in this space, such as improving the Council's Local Offer in relation to Preparing for Adulthood. We also created a Youth Hub webpage which includes advice and information on areas such as employment, further education and benefit entitlements.

29. The progress is monitored via the SEND Improvement and Assurance Board (SIAB) which is chaired independently. The Department for Education (DfE) also provide advice on progress and the measurement of impact.

Safeguarding and risk management in transition cases

30. The Council fully recognises the need for robust safeguarding arrangements for young people entering adulthood. Currently for any young people open to the MiA Team, any safeguarding issues that arise would be managed by them following our usual adult safeguarding processes.
31. Because the MiA team is usually involved well in advance of the age of 18, it allows the time to ensure that there is a strong and cohesive multi-agency approach around a young person in advance of their 18th birthday. For example, we have a number of young people who are subject to Court authorised Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards (DoLS) as children to ensure

their safety. The MiA Team will ensure that they are involved in advance of their 18th birthday and there will be a careful handover of this process as they turn 18 to ensure continuity of care and support.

32. We also work to ensure Care Act and Mental Capacity Assessments are completed as well as applications made to the Court of Protection to authorise the post-18 support plan to ensure no disruption in the support young people receive.
33. The Council developed a transitional safeguarding protocol which was agreed in November 2023 jointly by the Children and Adult's Safeguarding Boards (please see Annex 2).
34. All stakeholders recognise that for some young people their transition to adulthood may not result in statutory care and support services, however their presenting circumstances still contain a level of risk or potential harm. To address this need Children's Social Care are currently leading on the establishment of a Transitional Safeguarding Panel. This will be a multi-agency panel including partners in social care, health, housing and the voluntary sector. The focus of this panel will be on those young people who are unlikely to meet the criteria for statutory services such as adult social care or specialist mental health services but are likely to be at risk as a young adult and thus will require a systemic view of what access to support is available and what actions could be taken.
35. The Council also has a well-established Dynamic Support Register (DSR) process that involves multi-agency input, which is a requirement under NHS England guidance and policy. DSR process, which is a monitoring process for those people with a Learning Disability and/or Autism who are most at risk of hospital admission or currently in hospital under the Mental Health Act 2005.
36. The Council has used Better Care Fund to create a specialist DSR Team which is a small team of Social Workers who work intensively with people to prevent hospital admission and facilitate timely discharge from inpatient settings. The team has facilitated 10 discharges from inpatient settings for people with a Learning Disability and/or Autism over the past 12 months. In addition to this there have been 11 people who have been prevented from going into hospital under the Mental Health Act as a result of the intervention of the team.

Learning from inspection and other feedback

37. There are multiple opportunities for assessing effectiveness of our processes and outcomes in relation to transitions. This includes Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission (CQC) inspections as well as feedback from other organisations such as the Local Government Association (LGA), government departments such as the Department for Education and the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC).

38. In the last full Ofsted SEND inspection in July 2023 the following was said about Social Care transitions:

'Many young people aged 18 to 25 who are known to adult social care receive effective assessment and intervention to meet their needs. Planning for transition is coordinated and avoids delays in meeting the needs of these young people into adulthood. This group receives professional support to participate in decision-making about their futures.'

39. As part of our preparation for our CQC Assurance visit the Council asked the LGA to conduct a Peer Review to give constructive feedback on a number of areas. In relation to the Moving into Adulthood Team, their feedback stated that

'the peer team heard about the positive working relationships between the Council Children's and Young People's Services (CYPS) team and the Moving into Adulthood team. There was genuine respect between the staff. Those involved described their work to identify vulnerable young people outside of the Care Act and how they work together to identify and plan with those young people and their parents/guardians/carers to ensure they keep them safe and aid their transition into adulthood and arrange the care necessary for support.'

The Moving into Adulthood team have a good understanding of the needs of the young people they support and are well-resourced to allow dual case tracking with CYPS but also to allow each young person to have an allocated worker. They also have a good understanding of local resources and could really benefit from sharing these as well as having access to a wider range of community assets as part of an information, advice, guidance and prevention offer.'

40. The Local Authority was inspected by the CQC in January 2025 (with the final report being published in September 2025) receiving a 'Good' judgement overall with transition pathways specifically being assessed as 'Good'. The report recognised the success of transition into adulthood approach in Oxfordshire, and stated that

"Many young people and their parents described positive experiences of transitions from children's services to adult services, stating their needs were thoroughly assessed and considered with aspirational, ambitious conversations that led to a flexible approach to their care packages".

41. Inspectors noted that communication had been a problem in transitions, in the past, but the local authority had taken steps to address this and this had now improved.

42. In terms of the key learning from this, inspectors commented that the Council needed to do more in terms of the identification of Young Carers. We will continue to improve our collaborative working with Children's Social Care to improve systems and recording of carers. For adult social care, the main opportunity to identify young carers is when we are working with the adult they

care for. In order to improve this, we prepared and delivered a training to Adult Social Care front-line staff.

43. Once identified, professionals should contact Locality, Community Support Service (LCSS) for advice, support, and early help when there are no immediate safeguarding concerns for a young carer. Where a young carer is at risk or has potentially suffered significant harm requiring urgent protection, this must be reported to the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) immediately.
44. As part of Oxfordshire's [All-age Carers Strategy](#), we are working with our health and voluntary sector partners to improve awareness for young carers across the system so they can be supported in a person-centred way depending on their circumstances.

Corporate Policies and Priorities

45. Adult Social Care's priorities are shaped by our corporate vision and priorities, with particular focus on
 - Tackling inequalities - working with partners to address inequalities focussing supporting on those in greatest need, embedding and implementing our digital inclusion strategy,
 - Prioritising the health and wellbeing of our residents: working with partners to implement our health and wellbeing strategy prioritising preventative initiatives, and
 - Supporting carers and the social care system: deliver seamless services, explore new ways to provide services promoting self-directed support and increasing choice.

Financial Implications

46. This is a report for information only. There are no direct financial implications in the body of this paper.

Comments checked by:

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Legal Implications

47. As stated above, the Care Act 2014 states that where it appears that a child is likely to have needs for care and support after becoming 18 it must assess
 - (a) whether the child has any such needs and
 - (b) whether the child is likely to have those needs after turning 18.

The timing of this assessment however will depend on when it is likely to be of significant benefit to the individual, which will generally be the point at which their needs for care and support as an adult can be predicted reasonably confidently. This allows for flexibility of approach, placing the individual at the heart of the process and enabling services to respond appropriately.

48. The Act and Statutory Guidance stresses the importance of co-operation between professionals and organisations in supporting the young person's transition to adulthood and working together to combine support plans for the person wherever possible, to avoid repetition for the person and provide clear lines of responsibility.
49. This report sets out the processes how Oxfordshire will meet its responsibilities for the young people in its area.

Comments checked by:

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Staff Implications

50. There are no additional staff implications arising from this report however as detailed above we are realigning existing staffing to meet increased demand.

Equality & Inclusion Implications

51. Equity in experiences and outcomes is a key priority for Adult Social Care arising from our statutory duties under Care Act 2014 and CQC Assurance Framework. We take a person-centred approach to supporting people and any protected characteristics they have would be part of this framework.

Risk Management

52. Adult Social Care Directorate Leadership Team has oversight of the risks and maintains a risk register and reports to Senior Leadership Team and Informal Cabinet through monthly updates.

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Annexes: 1. Moving Into Adulthood Protocol
2. Oxfordshire Transitional Safeguarding Procedure

Background papers: Nil

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