COSLA

Scottish Government
Riaghaltas na h-Alba

‘A Time of Change’

National Transitions to Adulthood Strategy for Young Disabled People

2025-2030

Contents

Foreword 3

Why a Transitions Strategy? 6

Definitions 8

Building Blocks 10

Vision 16

Priorities 18

1. Choice, Control and Empowerment 20
2. Clear and Accessible Information 26
3. Co-ordination of Support 32
4. High-quality Transitions Practices 40
5. Data Collection and Measurement 46
6. Connecting to a Wider Policy Landscape 53

Next Steps 56

Foreword

> **“We will continue to work collaboratively with young disabled people and their families, with those who provide the high-quality support and planned transitions that we know every young disabled person should have, and with colleagues across the Chamber to ensure that all young disabled people who are making the transition to adulthood in Scotland are empowered to achieve their full potential.”**
>
> Minister for Children, Young People and The Promise, Scottish Parliament, 20 November 2024

The transition to adulthood is a significant milestone in every young person’s life. For young disabled people, that transition can be uniquely complex, requiring thoughtful and tailored support, often across multiple facets of their lives. Recognising this, the Scottish Government and the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (COSLA) have come together to present Scotland’s first National Transitions to Adulthood Strategy for young disabled people.

Our shared goal is to ensure that every young disabled person in Scotland feels confident in their transition to adulthood and is empowered and supported to control their own path to success.

This strategy is a response to the lived experiences of young disabled people and their families, who have consistently highlighted the complexities and challenges they can face during this period. It builds on our collective responsibility to improve transitions and ensure that no young disabled person is left without the support they need during this time. It also reflects our recognition that the transition to adulthood can impact every aspect of a young disabled person’s life.

No single policy, sector, organisation, service, or individual in isolation can make the changes needed to improve outcomes for young disabled people making the transition to adulthood. This strategy therefore calls for a co-ordinated, collaborative approach that integrates the efforts of all relevant sectors and partners.

The seven Principles of Good Transitions, developed by the Association for Real Change (ARC) Scotland, and endorsed by the Scottish Government, COSLA and many other partners, serve as a strong foundation for this strategy. These principles emphasise the importance of early, person-led planning and decision making, and access to information and co-ordinated support. They guide professionals across paediatric and adult health, children’s and adult social work, education, and other sectors to collaborate effectively to both plan and deliver support for young disabled people during this period of their lives.

This strategy seeks to further embed these principles.

COSLA members are supportive of the work of ARC Scotland, including the Principles of Good Transitions, Principles into Practice and Compass. The support from Scottish Government to further roll these out as highlighted in the strategy is welcomed.

This strategy also builds on our previously published Statement of Intent and the solution-focused engagement which followed. From this, we identified five priorities which we believe are key to achieving our collective ambition that all young disabled people in Scotland can experience a supported and positive transition to adult life. These are:

1. **Choice, Control, and Empowerment**: Ensuring young disabled people have a voice in their transition planning.
2. **Clear and Accessible Information**: Ensuring young disabled people and those who support them have understandable information at every stage of the transition.
3. **Co-ordination of Support**: Ensuring seamless communication and collaboration across sectors.
4. **High-Quality Transitions Practices**: Establishing consistent, national standards for transition practices.
5. **Data Collection and Measurement**: Using data to monitor progress and drive continuous improvement.

These priorities are designed to set a consistent national standard while continuing to encourage flexibility and local innovation and implementation. They build on what we know already works well, and the good practice we have heard about and seen across many areas of Scotland.

However, despite those fantastic efforts, we know that experiences continue to differ and that some young disabled people are still not getting the support that they need at the right time. These priorities therefore set out to strengthen practice where we have heard improvements are still most needed.

We know transitions is a complex area. The policy and legislative landscape surrounding it has been described by many stakeholders as cluttered and difficult to navigate. In response to this, we have added a sixth priority for this strategy:

6. **Connecting to a wider policy landscape:** Bringing together existing policies, legislation, plans and activities which contribute to improving transitions to adulthood for young disabled people in a more strategic and coherent way.

We want to extend our heartfelt thanks to the young disabled people, their parents, carers and families, and all the professionals who have taken the time to share their insights and lived and living experiences, to help shape this strategy. Your contributions have been invaluable in creating an approach that reflects lived realities and practical solutions. We have heard you.

Thank you also to the members of the External Strategic Working Group who have provided wide-ranging knowledge, expertise and experience which has steered the work leading to this strategy. We have appreciated all your time, dedication, passion and input.

Thank you to members across Parliament, and in particular to the Education, Children and Young People Committee for their thorough consideration of Pam Duncan Glancy MSP's Disabled Children and Young People (Transitions to Adulthood) (Scotland) Bill, their comprehensive Stage 1 report, and their continued commitment to monitoring the work of the External Strategic Working Group. These have all contributed to, and strengthened the work, we have taken forward to improve young disabled people's experiences of their transition to adulthood. We look forward to continuing to work with you.

Working together, we can make the difference to ensure that all young disabled people in Scotland experience positive, supported transitions, paving the way for a future where they can thrive.

We all have a part to play.

Natalie Don-Innes MSP,
Minister for Children, Young People and the Promise

Kaukab Stewart MSP
Minister for Equalities

Councillor Tony Buchanan
COSLA Spokesperson for Children and Young People

Why a Transitions Strategy?

> **“Transitions from school can be scary; change is a big thing to navigate, and knowing what it will entail is hard.”**
>
> Young Person, engagement session on the strategy

There is already well-documented evidence that the planning and support for young disabled people who are making the transition to young adult life could be improved.

In February 2023, the Scottish Government published a literature review of existing Scottish, UK and International evidence on the experiences of young disabled people during their transition to adulthood, taking account of both ‘institutional transitions’ (e.g. from child to adult services) and ‘life-course transitions’ (the changes that occur as a result of a young person entering a new life-stage e.g. leaving school or pursuing independent living).

The findings from the literature review, along with the personal testimonies heard throughout the development of this strategy, share many similarities in their descriptions of struggles to access the right support at the right time, and to navigate complex systems and services that do not always seem to be working together.

We have heard that the common experiences of transitions can include:

- Stress and uncertainty for the young person;
- Difficulties transferring from child to adult services;
- Changes in eligibility for services, and support arrangements;
- A sharp drop in support;
- Inadequate transitions planning;
- Lack of clear information about the transitions process;
- Lack of joined-up working (such as communication and collaboration) between services and other partners;
- Inadequate account being taken of young people’s capabilities, views, needs and aspirations; and
- Stress and difficulties faced by family members relating to their young person’s transition.

These challenges are said to be especially problematic for young disabled people with ‘complex needs’; a term which has been heard in different contexts through the development of the strategy. In our Statement of Intent: Engagement Analysis we described how respondents had used this term to describe young people who: have complex or multiple healthcare needs; have significant care needs; have a life-shortening condition; require support for transitions across multiple sectors e.g. education, health, independent living and social care; have a profound learning disability; and/or otherwise lack capacity for decision making.

Many of the challenges facing young disabled people in their transition to adulthood have also been heard through:

- The Education, Children and Young People Committee's consideration of the Disabled Children and Young People (Transitions to Adulthood) (Scotland) Member's Bill.
- Consultation responses to the proposed Learning Disability, Autism and Neurodivergence Bill.
- The Economy and Fair Work Committee's Inquiry into the Disability Employment Gap.
- Responses to the 'Moving on' from care into adulthood consultation.
- The Care Inspectorate's thematic review of disabled children and young people's experiences of social work services.
- CELCIS' Children's Services Reform research

The Scottish Government statistics for attainment and initial leaver destinations for 2023-24 shows that school leavers from publicly funded mainstream secondary schools in Scotland who were declared or assessed disabled were less likely to have a positive destination three months after leaving school (93.3%) than leavers who were not declared or assessed disabled (95.8%).

Although the statistics for those declared or assessed disabled who were in a positive destination three months after leaving school have been increasing year on year (92.6% in 2020-21; 92.3% in 2021-22; 93.2% in 2022-23), **we are determined to make more progress to change this narrative to make the transitions journey for every young disabled person a smoother and more positive one.**

That is why a commitment was made in the 2021 Programme for Government to introduce a National Transitions to Adulthood Strategy.

Definitions

What we mean by 'transitions to adulthood'

> **Transition is the period when young people develop from children to young adults. This is not a single event, such as leaving school, but a growing-up process that unfolds over several years and involves significant emotional, physical, intellectual and physiological changes. During this period young people progressively assume greater autonomy in many different areas of their lives and are required to adjust to different experiences, expectations, processes, places and routines. Transitions also impact on the family or on those who care for the child or young person.**
>
> **ARC Scotland,** Principles of Good Transitions 3

This strategy adopts the Association for Real Change (ARC) Scotland's definition of transition, and centres its improvement focus on young disabled people between the ages of 14-25 years old who are making the transition to young adult life. This is in line with the evidence collated in the literature review that planning and support for this particular age group of young disabled people could be improved.

The focus on this period also acknowledges that 'transition' is not a single event, but a process which takes place over a number of years, and is a period of personal development which can involve changes in every area of life.

96% of respondents to question 1 in the online survey on the Statement of Intent strongly agreed or agreed with this proposed definition. However, we also continue to recognise that the transition to adulthood will mean different things to different young people, and as such will be achieved in many different ways and timescales.

As such, we encourage planning and support which is person-led and responds flexibly to the stage of development and unique needs and aspirations of each young person.

What we mean by 'disabled'

A person (P) has a disability if –

a) P has a physical or mental impairment, and

b) The impairment has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on P's ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities.

Equality Act 2010 Section 6(1)

This strategy adopts the same definition of disability as is used within the Equality Act 2010 (the 2010 Act) which is set out above. This definition also reflects feedback from partners in our External Strategic Working Group who were clear the strategy should work on a pan-impairment basis, and that a lack of diagnosis should not prevent a young person accessing the support they need.

This strategy is also framed by the social model of disability, developed by disabled people. The social model says that people are disabled by barriers in society (which could be environmental or attitudinal); not by their impairment or difference. As such, when speaking of disability within this strategy, we use identity-first language such as 'disabled person', not 'person with disabilities'. You can find out more about the social model of disability on Inclusion Scotland's website here.

Question 2 in the online survey on our Statement of Intent engagement asked if people agreed that the meaning we had given to 'disabled young people' was the correct one for the strategy. 90% of respondents strongly agreed or agreed with our proposal. However, we also heard, and continue to recognise, that different people have different preferences in terms of how they identify. For example, some young people, parents, carers and professionals have told us that they prefer terminology such as 'person with disabilities'. When writing the strategy we also heard from some young people and Disabled People's Organisations that the term 'young disabled people' was preferable to 'disabled young people'. This strategy has therefore adopted this term.

Others have also highlighted that whilst they might require additional support to make a positive transition to adulthood, they would not either consider themselves to be disabled nor identify with the terminology of 'disabled'. Specific examples heard through the development of this strategy included deaf and neurodivergent young people.

We respect those preferences and, whilst trying to be as inclusive as possible, we accept that the terminology used within this strategy is not necessarily reflective of the preferences of everyone.

The important principle underpinning this strategy is that it encourages support which seeks to remove the barriers which hamper or prevent young disabled people from experiencing a positive and supported transition to young adult life.

Building Blocks

This strategy recognises that we are not starting from scratch. It has been designed to reflect and recognise the wide range of activity already being delivered across Scotland, and seeks to build on many years of progress in policy, development and investment which have sought to improve young disabled people's experiences of their transition to adulthood.

It has looked for ways to learn from, and further embed, what we have heard is already having a positive impact for young disabled people making the transition to adulthood, as well as identifying where the greatest need for change and improvement remains.

Facilitating meaningful participation and engagement, where young disabled people, their families and others who support them have been empowered to influence the development of this strategy, has been an integral element of our approach. Our intention has been to amplify seldom heard voices, and engage with as many young disabled people, parents, carers and other family members and practitioners from across Scotland to support the development of this strategy.

The following timeline shows some of the most significant milestones which have provided the foundations on which this strategy has been built:

May 2004 – Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act 2004 **(the 2004 Act) received Royal Assent.** This legislation sets out timescales for post-school transition planning.

June 2006 – Getting it right for every child (GIRFEC) implementation plan published. GIRFEC is Scottish Government's ongoing commitment to provide all children, young people and their families with the right support at the right time, so that every child and young person in Scotland can reach their full potential. GIRFEC policy and guidance recognises that well planned and supported transitions are key for children and young people.

April 2009 – Association For Real Change (ARC) Scotland's Scottish Transitions Forum **established,** with support from Scottish Government. Through the Scottish Transitions Forum, ARC Scotland provides information and networking for parents, young people and professionals around transitions for young people with additional support needs in Scotland.

June 2009 – Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act 2009 as amended **received Royal Assent.** This amended the 2004 Act to strengthen the rights of young disabled people and enhance the responsibilities of education authorities.

April 2013 – ARC Scotland's Principles of Good Transitions first published. This provided a framework to inform, structure and encourage the continual improvement of support for young people with additional needs between the ages of 14 and 25 who are making the transition to young adult life.

March 2014 – Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 **received Royal assent.** Part 3 of the Act sets out the legal framework for children's services planning in Scotland.

April 2014 – Public Bodies (Joint Working) (Scotland) Act 2014 **received Royal Assent.** This legislation aims to improve the integration of health and social care services in Scotland by allowing local authorities and health boards to enter into integration schemes. It also made provision for shared services, strategic planning, performance reporting, and other related matters.

May 2014 – ARC Scotland's Principles of Good Transitions 2 published.

January 2017 – ARC Scotland's Principles of Good Transitions 3 **published, endorsed by a Ministerial foreword.**

December 2017 – The Scottish Government's Independent Living Fund Scotland Transitions Fund **launched** to support young disabled people to make a smoother transition from childhood into adulthood by promoting independence, community participation, social inclusion and confidence through grants of up to £4000.

December 2017 – Updated statutory guidance to the Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act 2004 as amended **published.** This guidance provides a chapter on transitions which includes preparing for adulthood.

March 2019 – ARC Scotland's Principles of Good Transitions 3 (2nd Edition) published, endorsed by Scottish Government and national bodies. This sets out the current seven Principles of Good Transitions.

January 2020 – Updated Statutory Guidance on Children's Services Planning published. This encourages consideration of the transitions between children's and adult services by integration authorities, local authorities and health boards, in order to achieve the statutory aims prescribed for both a Strategic Plan and a Children's Services Plan.

January 2021 – ARC Scotland's Principles into Practice Trial Programme launched in 10 Local Authority Areas. This programme, funded by and delivered in partnership with Scottish Government, supported participating areas to identify, design and test changes to improve the planning and delivery of support for young people who need additional support as they transition to young adult life.

September 2021 – National Guidance for Child Protection in Scotland **and Practice Insights published.** These publications include practice considerations and guidance on how positive child protection practice relates to the principles of good transitions for young disabled people as they move towards and enter adult life and services. Both publications were subsequently updated in August 2023.

February 2022 – the Coming Home Implementation report was published setting out the Scottish Government and COSLA's joint ambition that the human rights of everybody with learning disabilities and complex care needs are respected and protected and they are empowered to live their lives, the same as everyone else. Local Dynamic Support Registers were introduced in May 2023, backed up by a Memorandum of Understanding between Scottish Government and COSLA. The local Dynamic Support Registers record information about people with learning disabilities and complex care needs who are in hospital and in out-of-area placements. Public Health Scotland collects and publishes this data.

March 2022 – Hear Our Voices, Respect Our Choices Conference – put together and presented by the Divergent Influencers and ARC Scotland's Parent and Carer Network based on topics from the Experiences of Young People with Additional Needs Leaving School, a consultation by the Divergent Influencers among young people across Scotland.

June 2022 – Scottish Government re-formed an **internal cross-policy working group** to facilitate greater communication and co-ordination of the breadth of work across Scottish Government which contributes to improving outcomes for young disabled people as they transition to young adult life.

September 2022 – Scottish Government published refreshed GIRFEC policy and practice guidance materials to provide practitioners with the clarity and practical support to continue to embed GIRFEC.

December 2022 – Getting it right for everyone (GIRFE) Design School launched. Eleven Health and Social Care Partnerships commenced an intensive programme of training and support to co-design GIRFE. One of the five thematic areas included families with multiple and/or complex needs; and young people in transition from GIRFEC to GIRFE.

February 2023 – Literature review of existing Scottish, UK and International evidence on the experiences faced by disabled young people during their transition to adulthood published.

March 2023 – Conclusion of the Principle into Practice Trial Programme.

March 2023 – Scottish Government established an External Strategic Working Group to support the development and implementation of a National Transitions to Adulthood Strategy. This group is comprised of key representatives of parents/carers, the third sector, local authorities, education, employment, health and social care.

May 2023 – ARC Scotland Principles into Practice Impact Report published providing information about the progress, impact and learning through the trials of 'Principles into Practice'.

June 2023 – Launch of 'Compass' – a suite of web-based applications, funded by Scottish Government and developed by ARC Scotland with young people, their parents and carers, and professionals who support them. The Compass tools provide individual guidance to help navigate the transitions journey and signpost to tailored information and support.

June 2023 – Launch of ARC Scotland's 'Principles into Practice'- a national framework that offers practical guidance and evaluation measures to improve planning and delivery of support for young people aged 14-25 who need additional support as they make the transition to young adult life. Based on the seven Principles of Good Transitions, it helps to embed these in policy, planning and practice across Scotland.

August 2023 – Health and Social Care Alliance Scotland publishes the resources and the learning report 'Seen Heard Included' from the third sector project commissioned and funded by Scottish Government. It captured what matters to disabled children and young people whose needs are complex and whose voices are rarely heard, and their families within the context of effective planning and effective support, to contribute to the design and development of the National Transitions to Adulthood Strategy.

September 2023 – Transitions to Adulthood: Statement of Intent published summarising the research and engagement to date on Scotland's first National Transitions to Adulthood Strategy. It also set out what the Scottish Government had heard it should focus on in order to improve the lived experiences of transitions for Scotland's disabled young people.

September 2023 to November 2023 – Consultation on the Transitions to Adulthood: Statement of Intent. 151 online survey responses received and nine engagement events held (six online and three in person) to gather feedback on the Statement of Intent.

October 2023 – Education, Children and Young People Committee's Stage 1 Report **on the Disabled Children and Young People (Transitions to Adulthood) (Scotland) Bill published.**

October 2023 – GIRFEC Child's Plan Practice Statement published. The GIRFEC child's plan can be used to support quality transitions by enabling those involved to effectively plan for changes together, and in time, to ensure co-ordination and continuity of support.

December 2023 – Concluding report of CELCIS Children's Services Reform Research Study **published** bringing together key themes and learning from across the study's findings and determines that there are a range of elements which contribute to creating the optimal conditions for implementing effective, sustainable change to improve support and outcomes for children, young people and families, including the need for seamless transitions between children's and adult services.

December 2023 to April 2024 – Public consultation on the proposed Learning Disabilities, Autism and Neurodivergence Bill sought views on a range of topics including young people's transitions to adulthood.

January 2024 – UNCRC (Incorporation) (Scotland) Act 2024 **received Royal Assent.** The intent behind the Act is to deliver a proactive culture of everyday accountability for children's rights, including the rights of disabled children, across public services in Scotland.

May 2024 – National Transitions to Adulthood Strategy: Analysis of engagement on the statement of intent published providing analysis of feedback received on the National Transitions to Adulthood Strategy: statement of intent.

May 2024 – August 2024 Scottish Government solution-focused engagement to support development of the strategy. During this time 36 sessions were held (both online and in-person, with some held by third sector partners), reaching approximately 500 people including professionals, parents, carers and young disabled people themselves.

July 2024 – Refresh of the Health and social care – strategic plans: statutory guidance **published,** focussed on integration authority strategic plans, including guidance to ensure correlation with Children's Services Plans and other local priorities, policy direction, service provision and improvement activity, and transitional arrangements between children's and adult services.

August 2024 – Learning Disabilities, Autism and Neurodivergence Bill consultation analysis published.

October 2024 – First Compass Annual Data Report **published** detailing findings from 437 parents and carers of young people with additional support needs in Scotland who used Compass between June 2023 and July 2024 and establishing a baseline to measure future trends.

December 2024 – GIRFE 'Team around the person' Toolkit made available, including a specific tool to support young people transitioning from children's to adult services alongside other tools to support co-ordination and planning of care in adult services.

January 2025 – 'Moving On' from care into adulthood: consultation analysis **published**. The consultation considered the package of support available to young people, including those with additional support needs, moving on from care into adulthood.

Vision

Our vision is that young disabled people in Scotland feel confident in their transition to adulthood and are empowered and supported to control their own path to success.

> **“Not everyone will have the same path; success looks different for everyone… People shouldn’t dictate what you do, you should decide what support you need.”**
>
> **“We should feel happy, supported and confident as we move towards whatever comes next.”**
>
> **“[Support should] help disabled young people and students with additional support needs transition to whatever destination they want to go to.”**
>
> Young People during engagement on the Vision Statement

This vision statement has been developed with young disabled people themselves, based on the things they told us. Many young disabled people express optimism and excitement about the future and are keen to move on to the next stage of their lives, but need support to be more empowered, listened to and to be able to direct the transitions process through the journey towards whichever destination is right for them.

86% of respondents to question 3 of the online survey on the Statement of Intent strongly agreed or agreed that the proposed vision statement as set out in the Statement of Intent, was the correct one for the strategy. However feedback acknowledged that, whilst the aspiration of the vision statement was welcome, there were some reflections on its relevance to young people who may lack capacity for decision making or to independently identify their own goals. Practical challenges in relation to measuring and quantifying happiness, in the proposed wording for the vision in the Statement of Intent, were also raised.

The vision statement was subsequently revisited and amended by the External Strategic Working Group, who endeavoured to retain as much of the aspiration and voices of the young people who had contributed to its development, in the context of the feedback.

The vision statement seeks to motivate everyone with a stake in the strategy and provide direction towards a shared future for young disabled people in their transition to adulthood. Whilst important as serving as a constant reference and anchor point to the change required, we know that the vision cannot stand on its own.

For that reason, we have developed a theory about what needs to change to achieve the vision. This is communicated in the driver diagram below and explained in more detail in the next chapter which looks at the identified priorities for the strategy.

VISION	PRIMARY DRIVERS		SECONDARY DRIVERS
In order that...	**Enable choice, control and empowerment for the young person**	This means...	• Allowing enough time for the planning process. • Supporting practitioners to adopt person-led approaches to transitions planning. • Ensuring young people can explore and express their aspirations and ambitions. • Helping young people to access networks of peer support.
Young disabled people in Scotland feel confident in their transition to adulthood and are empowered and supported to control their own path to success.	**Provide clear and accessible information**		• Providing young disabled people and their parents and carers with the right information they need in a way that suits them. • Ensuring young people are aware of their rights, how to claim them, and where to go if they feel they are not being upheld.
	Co-ordinate support and encourage communication across sectors		• Everyone working well together to deliver the young person's plan. • Practitioners understanding their roles, responsibilities and statutory duties in relation to transitions. • Supporting local planning partners to better assess, resource and deliver services which support young disabled people to experience a smooth transition in the move from children's services to adult services.
	Establish high quality transitions practices		• Incorporating ARC Scotland's 7 principles of good transitions into local policy and practice. • Ensuring that learning from local transitions work informs national policy and the continual improvement of transitions support for young people across Scotland.
We must...	**Collect data to measure progress and improvements**		• Collecting and making available robust and relevant data where possible. • Using data collection and reporting to improve transitions, including effective planning and commissioning of local services.
	Connect to a wider policy landscape		• Collating the existing range of policies, legislation and improvement activity in a more strategic and coherent way, making it easier to navigate.

Priorities

This section describes the priorities which will help us to deliver on our vision. These have been designed to respond directly to what young disabled people, parents, carers and practitioners have told us will make the greatest difference. They build on ARC Scotland's seven Principles of Good Transitions, which are already widely-known, endorsed and used across Scotland.

The strategy's priorities for change and improvement and accompanying actions pay particular attention to: early transitions planning; clear and accessible information; communication across sectors, co-ordinated support; and improved data. Through our research and engagement, these are areas which we have heard have the potential to improve transitions in the context of local availability of services and support.

87% of respondents to question 4 of the online survey on the Statement of Intent 'strongly agreed' or 'agreed' that the priorities were the correct ones for the strategy. However, we also heard some feedback, including from young disabled people themselves, that the language of the priorities as written in the Statement of Intent was not always clear or easy to understand. For that reason, we have tried to simplify the language of the priorities and their descriptors.

We also heard through engagement that the existing landscape of policy, plans and legislation which contribute to improving outcomes for young disabled people, and their families, can be confusing and hard to understand. We have therefore added an additional priority to the strategy 'Connecting to a wider policy landscape' to bring together in a more strategic and coherent way, some of the existing policies, legislation, plans and activities, which contribute to improving transitions to adulthood for young disabled people, and to better support young disabled people, their parents, carers and those who support them to navigate this.

As set out in the Foreword, the six priorities are:

1. **Choice, Control, and Empowerment**: Ensuring young disabled people have a voice in their transition planning.
2. **Clear and Accessible Information**: Ensuring young disabled people and those who support them have understandable information at every stage of the transition.
3. **Co-ordination of Support**: Ensuring seamless communication and collaboration across sectors.
4. **High-Quality Transitions Practices**: Establishing consistent, national standards for transition practices.
5. **Data Collection and Measurement**: Using data to monitor progress and drive continuous improvement.

6. **Connecting to a wider policy landscape**: Bringing together in a more strategic and coherent way, some of the existing policies, legislation, plans and activities, which contribute to improving transitions to adulthood for young disabled people.

In the following sections we will set out:

- what each priority means and why it is important,
- the activities which are already happening to progress each priority, and
- what else we propose to do to drive meaningful improvements.

1. Choice, Control and Empowerment

What this means:

Ensuring young disabled people have a voice in their transition planning by:

- **Allowing enough time for the planning process.**
- **Supporting practitioners to adopt person-led approaches to transitions planning.**
- **Ensuring young people can explore and express their aspirations and ambitions.**
- **Helping young people to access networks of peer support.**

Why this is important:

> **"Ask the question – what is it you actually need? Talk through all the support and check that it works for me. Making the time to do that is really important."**
>
> Inclusion Ambassador, Transitions, August 2023

> **"People shouldn't dictate what you do, you should decide what support you need."**
>
> Young Person during engagement on the Vision Statement

> **"I want to be taken seriously. I want my choices – not my parents."**
>
> Young Person during engagement on the Statement of Intent

Through our engagement, young disabled people have told us that having choice, control and feeling empowered can be limited by factors such as not feeling supported, not having enough time to plan and not having their say when decisions affecting them are being made. They have been clear that they want to be listened to; be taken seriously; and get the time and support they need to make their own choices.

The literature review commissioned by the Scottish Government, found that young disabled people in Scotland are 'routinely not asked even basic questions relating

to their interests or aspirations, contrary to the principles of person-centred and strengths-based planning, resulting in them being placed into unsuitable or suboptimal settings'. For this reason we set out in our Statement of Intent that:

"Disabled young people should be at the centre of planning and decision making for their future. Early transitions planning should be available to disabled young people and should adopt a holistic, person-centred approach to support their needs and empower them to dream big, identify and pursue their own goals and aspirations."

The Association for Real Change (ARC) Scotland's Principles of Good Transitions provides a framework to inform, structure and encourage the continual improvement of support for young people who are making the transition to young adult life, including in relation to planning for transitions.

The first Principle of Good Transitions states that:

"Planning and decision making should be carried out in a person-centred way."

This means that:

- Young people should be at the centre of their transition planning.
- There should be a shared understanding and commitment to person-centred approaches across all services.
- Young people should have a single plan.

And the third principle states that:

"Planning should start early and continue up to age 25."

This means that:

- Planning should be available from age 14 and be proportionate to need.
- Children's plans and assessments should be adopted by adult services.
- Transitions planning and support should continue to age 25.

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) which outlines the fundamental rights of every child, regardless of their race, religion or abilities, states that:

"Children who are capable of forming their own views have the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting them, and their views given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child." (Article 12)

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, which aims to promote and protect the rights and dignity of disabled people states that:

"States Parties shall ensure that children with disabilities have the right to express their views freely on all matters affecting them, their views being given due weight in accordance with their age and maturity, on an equal basis with other children, and to be provided with disability and age-appropriate assistance to realize that right." (Article 7)

In the feedback received on the National Transitions to Adulthood Strategy: Statement of Intent, respondents commented on the importance of early transitions planning with young people at the heart of the process, and on ensuring all relevant key partners were engaged in this process. There were, however, some challenges highlighted in relation to engaging all of the necessary partners – namely adult service practitioners and, in some instances, young people themselves.

What is already happening:

We continue to recognise the importance of good transitions planning in preparing our young disabled people for life beyond school.

Getting it right for every child (GIRFEC) provides a framework to ensure that everyone in Scotland can work together to support children and young people to grow up feeling loved, safe and respected so they reach their full potential. GIRFEC policy and guidance recognises that well planned and supported transitions are key for children and young people.

In 2023, the Scottish Government published the 'Getting it right for every child' (GIRFEC) Child's Plan Practice Statement, which highlights that the Child's Plan should be used to support good transitions by enabling those involved to sufficiently plan for changes together, and in time, to ensure co-ordination and continuity of support, and that particular consideration should be given to disabled children and young people throughout periods of transition.

The Child's Plan Practice Statement also states that:

"All decision-making regarding a child's plan within GIRFEC should seek, have regard to and act on the views of the child or young person and their family…" "In line with Article 12 of the UNCRC, the views of the child or young person must be considered in accordance with the maturity and evolving capacity of the child or young person regardless of their age and ability. A condition or disability which impacts a child or young person's ability to communicate should not prevent them from expressing their views in all matters affecting them."

Building on GIRFEC best practice, the Scottish Government has also been co-designing a Getting It Right For Everyone (GIRFE) approach with place-based pathfinder teams across Scotland, to develop a joined-up, coherent and consistent multi-agency approach to support and services from young adulthood to end of life care. A pathfinder focused on families with multiple and/or complex needs; and young people in transition from GIRFEC to GIRFE has formed part of this work.

The work of the pathfinders has formed the basis of a toolkit for embedding GIRFE within a wider national context. The toolkit includes tools to support early and sustained planning conversations with young people to assist them, and their families, prepare to transition from children's services into adult services. The GIRFE 'Team Around The Person' toolkit was made available

in December 2024 to support Health and Social Care Partnerships and NHS Boards across Scotland to plan and embed GIRFE in their local areas. The toolkit can be found here.

GIRFE is about providing a more personalised way to access help and support when it is needed, and placing the person at the centred of all decision making that affects them to achieve the best outcomes.

The Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act 2004 and associated Regulations sets out the legislative duties on local authorities to plan for transitions throughout a young person's school life, including the transition from secondary school. Under this legislation, the education authority has a duty to request and share information within specific timeframes (this should take place no later than 12 months before the expected leaving date, and they must provide information to other agencies no later than six months before the young person is expected to leave school), and are encouraged to plan for children and young peoples' transitions wherever possible in advance of these, so that there is sufficient time for post-school planning.

Where a young person needs support from other agencies (e.g. other Local Authority services such as social work; NHS Boards; Skills Development Scotland; and further and higher education institutions in Scotland) to transition from school, their education authority should work with those agencies and the young person, to establish the support required and ensure it is put in place.

The Additional support for learning: statutory guidance 2017 states that:

"Preparation for adulthood should involve explicit recognition of the strengths, abilities, wishes and needs of each young person as well as identification of relevant support strategies which may be required. It is essential that there is good communication between the school leaver and parents and all supporting agencies. Information should be shared promptly and effectively, with the parents' or young person's consent. All young people should be asked for their consent unless it has been established that they lack capacity to grant or deny it."

GIRFEC, GIRFE and The Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act 2004 already recognise the importance of early person-led planning for young disabled people. There is consistent evidence that person-led planning is more effective in bringing about improved outcomes in a range of settings from healthcare to education and employment. Evidence also points to positive outcomes for young people who take a more empowered role in their transitions.

We will therefore continue to support and strengthen existing planning mechanisms, including person-led planning resources and practices, so these can remain available to young disabled people.

This includes:

- Updating the additional support for learning statutory guidance (Supporting Learners' Code of Practice), including strengthening the section on transitions to promote good practice in this area.
- Continuing to invest in the Independent Living Fund Scotland's Transition Fund to support young disabled people to make a smoother transition from childhood into adulthood by promoting independence, community participation, social inclusion and confidence, including referring applicants for grant-funded person-led planning support where it is needed.
- Working with the Association for Real Change (ARC) Scotland to promote the use of Compass for young people as a tool to support person-led planning within existing planning mechanisms.
- Continuing to develop Education Scotland's Inclusion, Wellbeing and Equalities Professional Learning Framework, including resources to support practitioners to fulfil their legal duties around planning for learners with Additional Support Needs and transitions.
- Continuing to work in partnership with stakeholders, including local GIRFEC leads, to better understand local challenges around GIRFEC implementation in order to strengthen its consistent, high-quality application across Scotland.
- Promoting the use of the GIRFE 'Team Around the Person' toolkit, which will support Health and Social Care professionals across Scotland to provide support holistically to individuals in the health and social care system. The toolkit includes tools to support positive early conversations around transitions for young people, with a focus on early planning, accessible information, and the join-up of professionals around the person.
- Continuing to work with NHS Education for Scotland to develop GIRFE training and guidance modules to support the workforce to understand and practice GIRFE approaches.

What else we will do:

During our engagement to develop this strategy we heard about a number of examples of good practice in relation to person-led planning for young disabled people making the transition to adulthood. We will therefore also:

- Support partners to build on, and deliver, these initiatives which we have heard are making a difference. This will include funding the National Development Team for Inclusion (NDTi) in 2025-26 to build on their Time to Talk Next Steps Scotland Pilot to:
    - promote and support person-led and relationship-based approaches to planning amongst practitioners.
    - support the wider use of PAMIS' digital passport in person-led communication and transitions planning to empower young people with complex needs to have their voices heard.

- explore models of post-school transitions planning (in line with ARC's Principles of Good Transitions which state 'Planning should start early and continue up to age 25'), particularly for young disabled people who have no involvement with an agent of the local authority.

- Support peer to peer learning by:
  - Exploring models of peer support which can help young disabled people who are making the transition to adulthood to build confidence and knowledge.
  - Sharing aspirational success stories, where permission is granted, of young disabled people with lived and living experience of the transition to adulthood to inspire other young disabled people to achieve their fullest potential.
- Further explore how key agencies (education, health and social work) are planning for post-school transitions, and how this planning is recorded, in order to share effective and innovative practice.

2. Clear and Accessible Information

What this means:

Ensuring young disabled people and those who support them have understandable information at every stage of the transition by:

- **Providing young disabled people and their parents and carers with the right information they need in a way that suits them.**
- **Ensuring young people are aware of their rights, how to claim them, and where to go if they feel they are not being upheld.**

Why this is important:

> **"Children and young people want more information about what to expect from transitions and what will come next."**
>
> Inclusion Ambassadors, Transitions, August 2023

> **"We need information about our support and options that is easier to understand and is given in a way that suits us. Whether that's through pictures, audio versions, easy read, BSL options or just plain language without jargon."**
>
> Young Person responding to the Statement of Intent

Research and engagement to develop this strategy has highlighted the issue of a lack of clear and accessible information, advice and guidance to help young people, parents and carers and professionals to navigate the complex transitions landscape. Young people and their families have stated that they routinely felt unprepared for this next stage.

On the basis of the research and engagement conducted, there is consistent evidence that positive transitions are characterised by – amongst other things – the provision of clear and accessible information. Priorities 1 and 3 of this strategy, in particular, are dependent on good practice in this area. For this reason we set out in our Statement of Intent that:

"Disabled young people, their families and others that support them should be aware of their rights and entitlements, and the support and services available during different points of transitions. The provision of national and local information should be clear and accessible."

ARC Scotland's fifth Principle of Good Transitions states that:

"Young people, parents and carers must have access to the information they need."

This means information should:

- Clearly state what young people are entitled to during transitions.
- Show what support is available.
- Be inclusive of different communication needs.
- Use common and agreed language.

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) states that:

"Children shall have the right to freedom of expression; this right shall include freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds, regardless of frontiers, either orally, in writing or in print, in the form of art, or through any other media of the child's choice." (Article 13)

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities states that:

"States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to ensure that persons with disabilities can exercise the right to freedom of expression and opinion, including the freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas on an equal basis with others and through all forms of communication of their choice." (Article 21)

"State parties undertake to provide accessible information to persons with disabilities about mobility aids, devices and assistive technologies, including new technologies, as well as other forms of assistance, support services and facilities." (Article 4)

Further, the Education (Disability Strategies and Pupils' Educational Records (Scotland) Act 2002 places duties on education authorities to develop and publish accessibility strategies to: increase pupils' access to the curriculum; increase access to the physical environment of schools; and, improve communication with disabled pupils, in particular, relating to the provision of information in appropriate alternative formats and taking account of any preferences expressed by them or their parents, that would be provided in writing to pupils who are not disabled.

In the feedback received on the National Transitions to Adulthood Strategy: Statement of Intent, respondents commented on the importance of young people and their families having access to clear and accessible information. Some suggested this would support them to be more involved in the transitions process and increase access to available support.

What is already happening:

We know that if young people and their families can have access to clear and coherent information they can:

- make better informed decisions as they have access to the information they need.

- better understand their rights and how to claim them, and where to go if they feel they are not being upheld.

We will therefore continue to support existing sources of good information so these can remain available to young people, parents, carers and practitioners.

This includes continuing to:

- Fund Enquire to provide advice to parents and carers on additional support for learning. This includes specific information for parents and carers on 'Planning for Leaving School' and on 'Education and Additional Support after 16', and support on understanding and accessing their rights.
- Fund Reach to help children and young people understand their rights and how to access support in school, or when changing or leaving school.
- Fund local authorities to deliver their duties under the Carers (Scotland) Act 2016. This includes having local carer information and advice services (usually commissioned via local carer centres), covering issues relevant to carers' needs, including supporting them with future care planning.
- Support ARC Scotland to further develop, promote and evaluate Compass- a digital web application developed in partnership with young people, parents and carers to help them, and the professionals who support them, to navigate the transition to young adult life. This will include exploring the potential for Compass to be made available in more accessible formats.

"I like Compass. It's like a 'sat-nav' for information about transitions and where to get help. I know people who were involved in developing it, and some of us have been involved in testing it."
Young Person, Consultation Event on the Statement of Intent

- Provide core funding in financial year 2025-26 to ARC Scotland via the Children, Young People, Families and Adult Learners (CYPFAL) third sector fund which supports the work of their Scottish Transitions Forum. ARC Scotland provides information and networking for parents, young people and professionals around transitions in Scotland.
- Take forward the recommendations (particularly 6.1.) within the Additional Support for Learning Review Action Plan which contribute to providing consistent, accessible and clear information to parent and carers, and report on their progress.

What else we will do:

In 2016, the Scottish Government funded a survey of families with disabled children and young people across Scotland to gather evidence about their information needs. At this time respondents said they favoured a centralised resource which signposted to relevant information and organisations. To meet these wishes, an online resource: Supporting disabled children, young people and their families: guidance was published in 2019.

We have continued to undertake content reviews and updates for accuracy, but we will take forward a wider review of this resource, with young disabled people, parents and carers and other relevant stakeholders, particularly to explore what national information would be helpful in respect of transitions, and to explore how best any information should be made available to ensure that it is accessible to all.

We have heard that there is also often a disconnect or gap between the provision of local information and the provision of national information in relation to transitions. There have been some successful case study examples shared through the Principles into Practice trial programme where local authorities have developed documents which highlight what support is available across local communities.

Through the solution-focused engagement during May-July 2024, we heard some areas have developed a transitions pathway for their area or have created a social booklet which is shared with young people and their families. Some areas and organisations have held transitions fairs which were seen as a solution by some young disabled people to receive the information they needed:

"Drop-in information events are the best way to get information all in one place. Like when Glasgow Disability Alliance have stalls– you can talk directly to the people who give you information and advice. It saves time and energy."

Young Person, Consultation Event on the Statement of Intent

A former recommendation on improving transitions made by the Disabled Children and Young People's Advisory Group suggested that a resource on national information on transitions should complement the provision of local information. We will therefore explore how local partners provide local information on transitions to young disabled people and their families in order to share effective and innovative practice and consider how a national resource may be able to better complement this.

As well as continuing to support existing sources of good information on transitions we will also take forward opportunities to build consistent information and advice into other information resources. For example we will:

- Work with Education Scotland to review and update online transitions guidance and resources on their website to help parents and carers and practitioners supporting young disabled people and their families to have the information they need to navigate transitions.
- Work with Student Awards Agency Scotland to provide further information on transitions on the Student Information Scotland website.
- Work with the Parental Audiences team to improve the information on transitions for parents and carers of disabled children and young people on ParentClub.scot.
- Work with Young Scot to provide information on transitions for young disabled people on the Young Scot website.

- Work with the Coalition of Carers in Scotland (COCiS) to support better access to information on transitions for parents and carers.
- Continue to provide funding in 2025/26 to support the Health and Social Care Alliance (The Alliance) to maintain ALISS (A Local Information System for Scotland) – a national digital programme enabling people and professionals to find and share information on health and wellbeing resources, services, groups, and support in their local communities and online. ALISS aims to ensure that everyone in Scotland has the right information, at the right time, about resources that are available to help them live well and stay connected to their community. As part of this, we will work with the Alliance to review and update the information hosted on ALISS in respect of transitions for young disabled people, and to explore the potential for using existing ALISS information when considering any future updates to the Scottish Government's supporting disabled children, young people and their families online resource.

Our approach to supporting transitions is rights-based, in line with the implementation of United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and the United Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD).

Having clear, consistent and accessible information can support young people and their parents and carers to be better aware of their rights and what to do if they believe their rights are not being met or respected.

For many children and young people, particularly those who may be most at risk of not having their rights met, we know that **advocacy can be fundamental** in ensuring the realisation of their rights. For this reason we will also continue to fund:

- The national children's service called My Rights, My Say made up of four elements – advice and information, seeking children's views, advocacy and legal representation – which together ensure that a children aged 12-15 years can be fully supported when exercising their rights under the Education (Additional Support for Learning) Scotland Act 2004, including in relation to transition planning.
- The Let's Talk ASN service so that young people over 16 and parents and carers also have access to free advocacy and legal representation in relation to disputes under the Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act 2004.
- The Support in the Right Direction (SiRD) programme between 2024-2027, which provides local independent support, advice and information about advocacy services, ensuring a person-led approach and responding flexibly to individual circumstances to provide direct, end-to-end, independent support for all social care user groups.

- The legal charity Clan Childlaw in financial year 2025/26, to ensure that children and young people in Scotland can access independent, free, child-centred legal advice and representation when they need it, and to support the development of an accredited legal specialism for lawyers representing children and young people.
- The Scottish Independent Advocacy Alliance in financial year 2025/26, to support their work as an intermediary organisation that promotes and supports independent advocacy in Scotland through engagement, training and evidencing quality.

The UNCRC (Incorporation) (Scotland) Act 2024 commenced fully on 16 July 2024. As such, all public authorities supporting young disabled people and their families must not act incompatibly with the UNCRC requirements as defined by the UNCRC Act when undertaking 'relevant functions' as defined in section 6(2) of the Act.

It is therefore important that young people also know what to do and where to go if they think their rights have not been met.

The Scottish Public Service Ombudsman (SPSO) has a statutory function in relation to complaints handling for most public bodies. They have published child-friendly complaints approaches and procedures as part of a model complaints handling process. The principles and guidance launched in July 2024 and can be found here Child Friendly Complaints | SPSO.

In addition to SPSO's model child-friendly complaints process, the Scottish Government is working with Barnardos to design and publish a new resource to ensure children and young people understand the pathways that they can follow to claim their rights when they feel they are not being respected. The new resource will support children and young people to understand how to raise a concern, how to make a complaint, and who the adults are in their lives that can support them to do this. This pathway resource will be live by late Spring 2025.

We will also continue to review existing advocacy arrangements to support children and young people in accessing their rights, and to consider how we can strengthen the provision of advocacy to children and young people who need it.

The Scottish Government is co-developing a set of core measurements for support organisations that children and young people access when raising an individual rights issue or a general concern. The data will help us understand: children's experiences of raising an individual rights issue; identify if and where children encounter barriers and gaps in support; and what information and services that they need to claim their rights. The data will support us to consider where additional investment may be required, including, for example, the provision of advocacy support. The measurements are being piloted in Spring 2025 with the first data collection happening later in the year.

3. Co-ordination of Support

What this means:

Ensuring seamless communication and collaboration across sectors by supporting:

- **Everyone involved in transitions to work well together, and alongside the young person, to deliver the young person's plan.**
- **All practitioners to understand their roles, responsibilities and statutory duties in relation to transitions.**
- **Local planning partners to better assess, resource and deliver services which support young disabled people to experience a smooth transition in the move from children's services to adult services.**

Why this is important:

> **"Good support means having a good team, a good manager and getting the pitch conditions right."**
>
> Young Person, engagement on Seen, Heard, Included

> **"Transitions can be… exciting if handled properly, with a coherent set of people communicating efficiently so that the young person is at the centre of the planning process."**
>
> Young Person, engagement on the strategy

Research and engagement to develop this strategy has highlighted that young disabled people may require support from a range of services during transition, including health, education, housing, employment, social care and more. As well as allowing enough time for planning and ensuring that the young person is at the centre of the plan and has their voice heard, which is the focus of Priority 1, it is also critical that there is effective co-ordination of transition planning and support, and good communication across sectors.

Engagement to develop this strategy has highlighted a variety of approaches to co-ordinating support locally for young disabled people including transitions co-ordinators and transitions teams within local authorities, as well as examples of where co-ordination roles are provided by the third sector.

We have also heard however that there can often be a disconnect between children's and adult services, and poor communication across agencies providing

support to young disabled people and their families. Families reported that there is often no clear person to take the lead on transitions, leading to parents and young people having to advocate – within and across multiple services – for themselves, particularly on leaving school. This echoes the findings from the literature review which stated that 'it often falls to parents to coordinate their child's transition, which can prompt considerable stress as they seek to navigate and negotiate with disjointed services'.

For this reason we set out in our Statement of Intent that:

"Support from trusted professionals and consistent relationships are key to effective support during this time. Communication across all partners involved in transitions – including disabled young people and their families – with clearly defined roles and responsibilities are vital for ensuring a smooth transition."

Feedback on our Statement of Intent found that multi-agency working in practice was a point of interest, with a significant minority of respondents keen to see better collaboration and communication across sectors. Towards this aim, suggestions included lead professionals, transitions co-ordinators, and the greater involvement of third sector partners who support young people and their families in planning for transitions.

In relation to this priority, particular challenges in regards to the transition to adult services were highlighted – with discrete specialisms and siloed working; a lack of continuity of support between children's and adult's services; and a lack of adult service representation during transitions planning all noted as barriers to young people experiencing a positive transition. A small number of respondents also expressed that particular care must be taken to ensure young people who are being home educated continue to receive transitions support.

ARC Scotland's second Principle of Good Transitions states that:

"Support should be co-ordinated across all services"

This means that:

- There should be a co-ordinated approach to transitions in each local authority area.
- Learning and development opportunities should include an understanding of all aspects of transitions.
- Transitions should be evaluated.

To note, learning and development opportunities and evaluation of transitions are discussed in subsequent sections of this strategy.

What is already happening:

As referenced in Priority 1, the Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act 2004 and associated Regulations sets out more specifically the legislative duties on local authorities to plan for transitions throughout a young person's school life, including the transition from secondary school. Under this legislation, the education authority has a duty to request and share information

within specific timeframes (this should take place no later than 12 months before the expected leaving date, and they must provide information to other agencies no later than six months before a child or young person is expected to leave school), and are encouraged to plan for young peoples' transitions wherever possible in advance of these, so that there is sufficient time for post-school planning.

Where a young person needs support from other agencies (e.g. other local authority services such as social work; NHS Boards; Skills Development Scotland; and further and higher education institutions in Scotland) to transition from school, their education authority should work with those agencies, and the young person, to establish the support required and ensure it is put in place.

The non-statutory GIRFEC Child's Plan also referenced in Priority 1 is another important element in how children's and related services should already work in a co-ordinated way to support the wellbeing of children, young people and their families. Section 5 of the 'Getting it right for every child' (GIRFEC) Child's Plan Practice Statement published in 2023 states that:

'The child's plan should be used to support good transitions by enabling those involved to sufficiently plan for changes together, and in time, to ensure co-ordination and continuity of support. Lead professionals should support a child or young person's wellbeing by working alongside them and their family and other practitioners involved in transition planning. They should ensure that the views of the young person and family remain at the heart of the plan'.

The GIRFEC approach also recognises that children, young people and their families need to know who they can contact when they require access to support. The role of a named person, or equivalent role, is to provide a clear point of contact within universal services for information, advice or help. A young person's named person is usually a senior teacher or headteacher in their school. Young people making the transition from school education before the age of 18 should continue to be offered a named person, with the local authority for the school the young person was attending being responsible for identifying the new named person as a specific point of contact for the young person.

When children, young people and families require the help and support of a GIRFEC child's plan, a lead professional should be appointed. The lead professional is an agreed identified person within the network of practitioners working alongside the child or young person and their family. In most cases, the professional who has the greatest responsibility in co-ordinating and reviewing the child's plan will undertake this role. The lead professional is responsible for ensuring other practitioners are clear about the different roles they have and the contributions they make to implement the child's plan.

In December 2024, two new e-learning modules were launched to support knowledge and understanding across

the workforce of the 'Getting it right for every child' (GIRFEC) approach and its application in everyday practice. These modules recognise the importance of collaborative working. The Scottish Government commissioned NHS Education for Scotland (NES) to develop these modules in partnership with Education Scotland, Police Scotland and the Scottish Social Services Council. The e-learning modules are available at two levels: informed and skilled. Both e-learning modules are available under the Getting it Right for Every Child and Children's Rights learning site on Turas.

Under the Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act 2004, education authorities are also legally required to provide a co-ordinated support plan for children and young people with complex or multiple needs, which are expected to last for more than a year, and require significant support from education, and a least one other agency. This may be the case for some young disabled people.

Education authorities should have clear arrangements for joint working with those appropriate agencies and others involved in supporting children and young people with additional support needs. The Additional Support for Learning (Co-ordinated Support Plan) (Scotland) Amendment Regulations 2005 make provision for necessary information sharing between appropriate agencies and other parties to enable each to do their part in delivering the necessary support to meet the needs of the child or young person.

There are significant similarities between the contents of the child's plan and the co-ordinated support plan. However, one important difference is that the co-ordinated support plan is concerned with the additional support a child or young person requires in order to benefit from education. However, it is important that the process of developing the co-ordinated support plan is integrated fully with the planning and review of the GIRFEC child's plan.

Building on GIRFEC best practice, our Getting It Right For Everyone (GIRFE) approach has been developed to improve joined-up, coherent and consistent multi-agency approach to support and services from young adulthood to end of life care. Throughout the co-design process we listened to families and young people to gain insights around transitions which once again highlighted a need for improved joined-up working and information sharing between children's and adult services to avoid a 'cliff-edge' for young people.

As previously stated, in December 2024 we made available the GIRFE 'Team Around The Person' toolkit which has been co-designed with people with lived experience across Scotland, to support Health and Social Care Partnerships and NHS Boards across Scotland to plan and embed GIRFE in their local areas. We are currently embedding the toolkit with GIRFE pathfinder and partners, including tools to support the transition from children to adult services.

Embedding GIRFE more widely has now also been included as a requirement in NHS Board annual delivery plans to support integrated care, collaborative working and to foster joint-working across all health and social care services. In January 2025 the Scottish Government held a series of drop in sessions for Health and Social Care Partnerships, Local Authority and Health Board staff to attend to consider how they can plan to embed GIRFE.

There is also a specific statutory entitlement for young people moving on from care to be provided with advice and support from a Pathway Coordinator. The Children (Scotland) Act 1995 (as amended) and the Support and Assistance of Young People Leaving Care (Scotland) Regulations 2003 (as amended by the Support and Assistance of Young People Leaving Care (Scotland) Amendment Regulations 2015) set out the duties of local authorities in terms of preparing young people for leaving care. Published in 2004, the Supporting Young People Leaving Care in Scotland – Regulations and Guidance on Services for Young People Ceasing to be Looked After by Local Authorities sets out the detail of how support to care leavers is to be provided.

The Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 strengthened the approach to throughcare and aftercare and the Staying Put Guidance published in 2013 provides Guidance for local authorities and other corporate parents on supporting looked after children and young people to remain in care, as part of a staged transition towards adulthood and greater independence.

In July 2024 we published a consultation on 'Moving on' from care into Adulthood. Respondents were asked to provide insight, suggestions and examples of practice which might help to better understand how support for young people, and those who care for them as they transition out of care, can be improved. It included two specific questions in relation to young disabled people leaving care. The consultation analysis was published in January 2025 and we will publish a 'We asked, you said, we did' report outlining our next steps. In response to the two specific questions in relation to young disabled people leaving care 'several respondents emphasised the importance of multi-agency working, particularly between children's disability services and adult social work teams. While some spoke highly of the collaboration between these services, others called for better partnership working to ensure the needs of disabled young people leaving care are met'.

In addition to the frameworks and legislation in place in Scotland for the coordination for individual planning, there is also legislation in place which places duties on local authorities and health boards regarding strategic planning, which also includes planning for transitions.

Children's Services Planning is Scotland's legislative approach to collaborative local strategic planning and delivery of services and support, so this is delivered in a way which improves wellbeing outcomes for children, young people and families living in each area. Children's Services Planning duties are set out in Part 3 of the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014.

Each local authority and health board must work collaboratively with specified service providers, other public bodies, the third sector, and children, young people and families to develop their Children's Services Plan. Each Children's Services Planning Partnership has a multi-agency strategic governance group of local senior leaders, who are responsible for their Children's Services Plan. This includes publishing an annual report to demonstrate what progress has been made to improve outcomes for children, young people and families living in that area. To ensure that this annual report is accessible to key stakeholders (such as children, young people and others with an interest in children's or related services) local authorities and health boards can publish their annual report in a variety of formats, in order to facilitate engagement and accountability.

Each Children's Services Plan should tell the story of how local services, supports, and improvement activity will be delivered by partners through a whole-system cross-sector approach which spans prevention, universal services, early intervention and targeted/intensive/crisis support. This should be based on a joint strategic needs assessment which identifies the needs of all children, young people and families living in that area, as well as those with specific types of need, such as complex health conditions, poverty, disability, or care experience. **Children's Services Plans should consider how partners support seamless transitions for young people moving between children's and adult services.**

Section 29 of the Public Bodies (Joint Working) (Scotland) Act 2014 places a duty on Integration Authorities to prepare a strategic commissioning plan for the integrated functions and budgets that they control. The process to create the plan involves assessing and forecasting population need, linking investment to agreed outcomes, and planning the nature, range and quality of future services and working in partnership to put these in place.

In July 2024 we published a refresh of the Health and social care – strategic plans: statutory guidance. This stipulates that a strategic plan should ensure correlation with other local priorities, policy direction, service provision and improvement activity including transitional arrangements between children's and adult services. It states on page 14 that:

"Local planning, resourcing and delivery of services should also ensure that young people experience a smooth transition in the move from receipt of children's services to adult services."

This is echoed in the 2nd edition of the statutory guidance for children's services planning which states on page 56 that:

"in order to achieve the statutory aims prescribed for both a Strategic Plan and a Children's Services Plan, consideration may usefully be given (by integration authorities, local authorities and relevant health boards) to the transitions between children's services and adult services. These transitions have been identified as points where service support for individuals can be at risk of inadequate coordination, leading to a negative impact on wellbeing."

The National Guidance for Child Protection in Scotland 2021- updated 2023 also states that:

"Local services must also ensure sufficient continuity and co-ordination of planning and support for each vulnerable young person at risk of harm as they make their individual transitions to adult life and services."

In the literature review we commissioned to support the development of this strategy poor inter- and intra-agency communication, co-ordination and collaboration, resulting in a lack of joined up working was highlighted as 'the largest impediment to supporting smooth transitions'.

We will therefore continue to promote and strengthen the implementation of GIRFEC and GIRFE as well as the duties relating to transitions within the Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act 2004, the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 and the Public Bodies (Joint Working) (Scotland) Act 2014 to ensure that there is a joined-up, coherent and consistent multi-agency approach to support and services for young disabled people who are making the transition to adulthood.

What else we will do:

Many of the actions which we will take forward in relation to GIRFEC, GIRFE and the duties relating to the Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act 2004 have already been listed in the Priority 1 section. In addition to these we will also:

- Explore further opportunities to strengthen the GIRFEC approach across sectors in relation to transitions to adult services, and to strengthen the clarity and understanding across public services and the third sector on the alignment between the GIRFEC approach and GIRFE. This work will build on existing engagement undertaken to date which includes a session ARC delivered to the GIRFEC Learning Network in February 2025 on the Principles of Good Transitions and the role of high-quality GIRFEC implementation in supporting transitions.
- Work with NES to further promote, review and evaluate the two new e-learning modules which were launched in December 2024 to support knowledge and understanding across the workforce of the 'Getting it right for every child' approach and its application in everyday practice.
- Work with GIRFE pathfinder and partner teams to embed the GIRFE toolkit including tools to support the transition from children to adult services.
- Continue to engage with GIRFE pathfinder and partner teams to define the ongoing leadership and cultural characteristics that are necessary to enable GIRFE.
- Continue to work with Health and Social Care Partnership, Local Authority and Health Board staff to support them to embed GIRFE as a requirement of NHS Board Annual delivery plans for 2025-2026.

- Update the additional support for learning statutory guidance by the end of this parliamentary term (May 2026), including the section on co-ordinated support plans to provide clarity on the relationship between co-ordinated support plans and other types of child plans.
- Consider how to make the current children's strategic planning environment as effective as it can be, including opportunities to strengthen the visibility and messaging around the importance of multi-agency partnership planning for transitions from children's to adult services as part of this process.
- Deliver an enhanced offer of practical support to Children's Services Planning Partnership Strategic Leads as they begin to develop their 2026-2029 Strategic Plans. This will include a joint workshop with Children's Service Planning Partnership Strategic Leads and the Integration Joint Board Strategic Planning and Performance Officers Group focused on best practice for transitions between children's and adult services as well as the role of planning and commissioning in transitions.
- Work with participating areas and ARC Scotland to gather a full picture of what local agencies are already doing to collectively improve transitions in their area in order to share effective and innovative practice. This will build on the examples collated within the Principles into Practice Impact Report published in May 2023 and the Spotlight Examples hosted on the Principles into Practice website.
- Further explore models of local area co-ordination and community navigation as a mechanism to support young disabled people post school, and particularly those who have no involvement with an agent of the local authority, to navigate their next steps in their journey. This will include funding NDTi in financial year 2025/26 to build on their Time to Talk Next Steps Scotland Pilot. An experienced team of NDTi 'Supporters' will work creatively with up to 100 young disabled people aged 14-25 to support them in whatever stage of their transition plans they are at, and to act as a conduit between the young person and services and, in some cases, with their families, to support their plans for the future. The evaluation report for the pilot highlighted that:

"for many young people with additional needs in Scotland the greatest challenge they and their families face when transitioning to adulthood, is coordinating all the elements of the transitions process and its associated administration, alongside living their everyday life. Having the support of a non-statutory, named, and consistent individual to listen and 'connect the dots' was found to be lifechanging for some young people in the Pilot and incredibly valuable to most others."

4. High-quality Transitions Practices

What this means:

Establishing consistent, national standards for transition practices by:

- **Incorporating ARC Scotland's seven Principles of Good Transitions into local policy and practice.**
- **Ensuring that learning from local transitions work informs national policy and the continual improvement of transitions support for young people across Scotland.**

Why this is important:

> **"Using ARC's Principles of Good Transitions makes for better transitions."**
>
> Practitioner during engagement on the Statement of Intent

Throughout the development of the strategy, young disabled people have been clear that the path to success looks different for everyone. On leaving school, the choices young disabled people make in terms of what comes next will be varied and unique to each individual. For example, some young people may choose to pursue a career, or further qualifications within further and higher education; and some young people may need support from social care or health professionals.

Research to develop this strategy has identified commonality across sectors in relation to the enablers which help facilitate smoother transitions. These include:

- Early and sustained transition planning.
- Holistic and co-ordinated wrap-around support.
- Services delivered in partnership.
- Designated keyworkers as a coordinating point of contact and continuity.
- Person-centred support and preparation.
- Family involvement in planning and decision-making.
- Parental and familial support throughout the transition.
- The provision of clear and accessible information.
- Adequate services, resources and staffing.

These enablers identified within this research are largely consistent with the Association for Real Change (ARC) Scotland's seven Principles of Good Transitions which are:

1. Planning and decision making should be carried out in a person-centred way.
2. Support should be co-ordinated across all services.

3. Planning should start early and continue up to age 25.
4. All young people should get the support they need.
5. Young people, parents and carers must have access to the information they need.
6. Families and carers need support.
7. A continued focus on transitions across Scotland.

These Principles can be adopted by professionals from all sectors, including those responsible for planning and delivering support for children and young people within: paediatric and adult health; child and adult social work and social care; education – secondary, further and higher; employment and training; and the third sector. The Principles of Good Transitions are also aligned with wider policy frameworks in Scotland, including the 'Getting it right for every child' (GIRFEC) and Getting it right for everyone (GIRFE) approaches.

ARC's seventh Principle of Good Transitions states that there should be:

"a continued focus on transitions across Scotland."

This means:

- The Scottish Transitions Forum working collectively to promote the Principles of Good Transitions and improve practice across Scotland;
- A continued focus on transitions within policy and legislative developments; and
- Learning good practice from project-funded work and embedding this into sustainable longer-term strategies.

In our Statement of Intent we originally called this priority 'Consistency of practice and support across Scotland' and said that:

"Professionals who support disabled young people during their transition to young adult life should work to incorporate the principles and characteristics of good transitions into policy, planning and practice to ensure consistency of practice across Scotland. Professionals should be given the support and guidance they need to explore and improve transitions practices. Disabled young people, their families and professionals supporting them should have access to learning opportunities to support better transitions."

In the feedback on the Statement of Intent there was some uncertainty surrounding the meaning of 'support' within the proposed title of this priority, with some respondents commenting on a lack of consistency in local availability of services, and some describing a 'postcode lottery' of support from practitioners, especially when moving between local authorities or health boards.

One respondent summed this up by saying:

"I think that we need to be careful to differentiate support from service provision as I do not think it is within the scope of the strategy to determine the latter."

A small number of respondents agreed that the strategy should focus on consistency of support for transitions, rather than consistency of service availability. Access to suitable learning opportunities and training was seen as an enabler of smoother transitions for young people and their families. For this reason this priority's title has been updated to reflect this strategy's focus on more widespread, consistent application of the Principles of Good Transitions across sectors in Scotland.

We want to ensure that those who support young disabled people as they make the transition to adulthood feel and are supported themselves so that they can be confident to embed the principles of good transitions in their practice. This includes having opportunities to collaborate, access peer support, share knowledge, learning and approaches from across the country in order to have a continued focus on delivering and improving outcomes for young disabled people making the transition to adulthood.

What is already happening:

The Scottish Government has been providing ARC Scotland with grant funding since 2013 to support a number of areas of their work. This includes their work to facilitate the Scottish Transitions Forum. In 2013, ARC Scotland published their first edition of the Principles of Good Transitions. This provides a framework to inform, structure and encourage the continual improvement of support for young people between the ages of 14 and 25 who are making the transition to young adult life. This was subsequently reviewed and updated in 2014, 2017 and 2019 and each edition has been endorsed by the Scottish Government.

In 2020, ARC Scotland published Principles into Practice as a draft improvement framework. It followed extensive consultation with statutory sector strategic leads, Scottish Government representatives, Social Work Scotland, Association of Directors of Education Scotland, Scottish Transitions Forum members, parents, carers, and young people.

The aim of Principles into Practice is to provide guidance and self-evaluation indicators to embed the seven Principles of Good Transitions into policy, planning and practice. It sets out practical steps to be taken locally to co-ordinate planning and practice to deliver better outcomes for young people, and to measure the difference they make.

Between 2020 and 2023, the Scottish Government provided funding and supported ARC Scotland to work alongside local partners to trial Principles into Practice in ten local authority areas. This involved identifying, designing and testing changes that transform how young people with additional support needs are supported in their transition to young adult life. Regular learning exchange events enabled practitioners to come together from across Scotland to share practice, discuss challenges and deliver solution- focused approaches.

The purpose of the trial was to improve the experiences of young people who needed additional support to make the transition to young adult life, and to test and bring Principles into Practice and its associated resources to completion. With the support of the Scottish Government's Children, Young People Improvement Collaborative the local authority areas involved in the trial 'learnt by doing', using the three-step improvement framework for Scotland's public services to identify, design and test changes that would transform support for young people making the transition to adulthood.

The Scottish Government also funded ARC Scotland to create Compass, a digital tool to support transitions. There are now three versions of Compass: for young people, their parents and carers and the professionals in their lives. Each version gives the user accessible and personalised information about the most important topics at the right time for them. It also collects feedback anonymously from users about their experiences. More information about Compass is detailed in the next section on 'Data Collection and Measurement'.

The trials of Principles into Practice and Compass concluded in March 2023. ARC Scotland's Impact Report evidenced the usefulness of these resources and their potential to contribute to a more consistent approach nationally. There was also continued support for this work from practitioners across Scotland.

"The time is right for this work – the enthusiasm across the board for the pilot has been most encouraging."

Participant at an ARC Scotland Principles into Practice Learning Exchange Event

In June 2023 ARC Scotland officially launched the completed versions of Principles into Practice and Compass. As stated in the Foreword this strategy seeks to further embed the Principles of Good Transitions, as we also believe that the time continues to be right to drive forward this work.

For this reason we will continue to:

- Support ARC Scotland via the Children Young People Families and Adult Learners Third Sector Fund through the financial year 2025-26, which will enable them to:
    - continue to support and facilitate the Scottish Transitions Forum.
    - continue to support existing local authority areas and support the wider implementation Principles into Practice across more local authority areas in Scotland.
    - continue their learning exchange events for transitions leads from local authority areas to share learning and gather examples of best practice in relation to transitions, and to promote improved practitioner awareness, skills and knowledge about approaches that put young people at the centre of their support.

What else we will do:

We will:

- Seek to strengthen reference to the Principles of Good Transitions within the existing framework of planning, policy, legislation and guidance. We have already done this within the GIRFEC Child's Plan Practice Statement and will explore further opportunities for example, within the forthcoming Additional Support for Learning Learners Code of Practice refresh and incorporation of guidance and tools from the GIRFE Toolkit.
- Use the opportunities provided by existing stakeholder networks, including the GIRFEC Learning Network, to deliver transitions focussed sessions in order to promote high-quality transitions practice across Scotland.
- Continue to facilitate the Scottish Government Cross-policy Working Group on Transitions, to co-ordinate the existing range of policies, plans and legislation which contribute to improving outcomes for young disabled people, and to promote greater alignment between national policy development and the Principles of Good Transitions across relevant areas.
- Further explore the training requirements of the multi-agency workforce responsible for planning and supporting transitions, particularly within the key sectors of education, health, social work and social care. This will include:
    - working in partnership with SSSC to explore updates to their continuous professional learning offer for workers in respect of transitions for young disabled people;
    - As part of our work to implement the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (Incorporation) Scotland Act 2024, the Scottish Government has funded NHS Education for Scotland (NES) to support health boards and the Improvement Service to support local authorities in implementing a children's human rights approach in their practice. This included delivering a session on transitions, in partnership with the Scottish Government and ARC Scotland, which was attended by over 460 health board and local authority practitioners in January 2025. Building on this, we will work with NES and the Improvement Service to consider participant feedback from the session to identify further professional development needs in relation to transitions.
- Provide additional funding in the financial year 2025/26 to ARC Scotland to:
    - design and develop and promote the Principles into Practice website as the national transitions Knowledge Hub, hosting e-learning resources, Principles into Practice, the Principles of Good Transitions, Compass data, research and innovative practice relating to transitions.

- work with sector specialists to design, develop, pilot, evaluate and launch free to access e-learning resources weighted towards meeting the specific learning needs of practitioners in Health, Education and Social Care and referring to the Principles of Good Transitions and the National Transitions Strategy priorities, and integrate these resources into the online knowledge hub.
- facilitate bespoke strategic development sessions for senior leaders, initially in 10 local authority areas, in partnership with local Principles into Practice transitions leads, sharing the effective and innovative practice that emerges.

5. Data Collection and Measurement

What this means:

Using data to monitor progress and drive continuous improvement by:

- **Collating and making available robust and relevant data where possible.**
- **Using data collection and reporting to improve transitions, including effective planning and commissioning of local services.**

Why this is important:

> **"It is important that the system at all levels has knowledge and understanding of the data which exists in relation to these young people. Often we know who these young people are from birth or a very early age, and it should not surprise us that they will require transitions when they reach adulthood."**
>
> Practitioner responding to the engagement on the Statement of Intent

We know that robust and meaningful data collection is required to ensure that we:

- have a more accurate picture across Scotland of the number of young disabled people;
- have a better understanding of the experiences and outcomes of young disabled people who are making the transition to adulthood;
- focus on making the right improvements at a national and local level; and
- can report and monitor progress.

On 8 May 2024, CELCIS published their independent analysis of what is currently known about disabled children across Scotland's statistical collections.

The report concluded that:

"the data from the analysis and findings show that there are many factors affecting how disability is assessed and recorded, including there being multiple ways in which disability and additional support needs are defined and collected across the different children's statistics that are collated".

It stresses that the collection of good quality information about disabled children is critical to ensuring their needs and experiences are understood reflected within national and local policies and services, so that their support needs can be met.

This is also echoed in a recent independent review by the Care Inspectorate on disabled children and young people's experiences of social work services. The review highlighted that 'reliable data and a shared definition of disability are not available to inform future planning or to support the setting budgets' and recommended that 'a robust approach to gathering and analysing data on disabled children and young people must be implemented, both in social work services and wider. This must be used effectively to inform service planning and improvement'.

This disparity in statistics highlighted above can be seen in the following examples on the number of young disabled people in Scotland:

- Analysis of data collected through Scotland's Census 2022 shows that 14.1% of children and young people aged 15 to 24 years had a long-term health problem or disability that limited their day-to-day activities 'a little' or 'a lot'. The proportion of children and young people with a limiting long-term health problem or disability increases slightly with age from 12.6% among those aged 15 years to 14.7% among those aged 20 to 24 years.
- The Scottish Health Survey however estimates that, in 2022 and 2023, 25% of people aged 14-15 years and 27% of those aged 16-25 years had a limiting long-term condition.

In the context of transitions to adulthood for young disabled people, accurate and up-to-date data on the numbers of disabled children and young people potentially moving on from children's to adult services is therefore important for effective planning and commissioning of local services.

As detailed in the 'Co-ordination of Support' Section, Children's Services Planning is Scotland's legislative approach to collaborative local strategic planning and delivery of services and support, so this is delivered in a way which improves wellbeing outcomes for children, young people and families living in each area. The development of a Children's Services Plan requires planning partnerships to use available data and intelligence to undertake a multi-agency joint strategic needs assessment to identify the needs of children, young people and families living in that area, and inform service planning. This joint strategic needs assessment should be used to inform service planning and local strategic commissioning processes for the Children's Services Plan, with specific consideration of the needs of young people as they move between receipt of children's and adult services.

Section 29 of the Public Bodies (Joint Working) (Scotland) Act 2014 places a duty on Integration Authorities to prepare a strategic plan for the integration functions delegated to them. Sections 30 to 39 set out further requirements and considerations relating to the strategic plan, including the need to have regard to integration principles and national health and wellbeing outcomes, to establish a strategic planning group, and to publish

annual financial statements that relate to the amounts intended to be spent in implementing the plan. Updated statutory guidance that provides further support to those involved in the preparation of strategic plans was published in 2024.

Statistical evidence

The Scottish Government and its partners already collect and publish some evidence on the outcomes of disabled people. In relation to statistics on initial leaver destinations, the Scottish Government collects information, on an annual basis, on the number of school leavers who are declared or assessed disabled who are in a positive destination at both three and nine months after the end of the school year.

The latest published statistics show:

- In 2023-24, 93.3% of school leavers from publicly funded mainstream secondary schools who were declared or assessed disabled were in a positive destination three months after the end of the school year.
- This is an increase from 93.2% in 2022-23 and the highest proportion since consistent records began.

For the purposes of these statistics 'positive destination' includes: higher education, further education, employment, training, voluntary work and personal skills development.

The vast majority of school leavers who are declared or assessed disabled are in mainstream secondary schools. Of 2,494 school leavers in 2023-24, 2,058 (83%) were in mainstream secondary schools.

However, when combining both the school leavers who were declared or assessed disabled from both publicly funded mainstream secondary schools and special education schools, in 2023-24 90.9% were in a positive initial destination three months after the end of the school year. This compares to 95.7% of school leavers who were not declared or assessed disabled.

We also know that these statistics only tell one part of the transitions story for school leavers declared or assessed disabled. During our engagement to develop the strategy, some young disabled people described being 'shoved' into an initial positive destination of little value or interest to them, without any consideration of their existing skills, which they perceived as a 'tick box' exercise. The published statistics on initial leaver destinations do not capture these experiences of transitions.

"I always get really anxious to the point of feeling sick about all transitions. Had to hit rock bottom to get any form of support… it felt like a tick box."

Young Person during engagement on the Vision Statement

"I did that course (life/work skills) but it was not challenging enough. It was all things I already knew. I felt shoved onto the course with no other options offered to me."

Young Person during engagement on the Statement of Intent

Qualitative evidence

We know that qualitative data, alongside statistical evidence, are both needed to better understand the current situation in relation to transitions to adulthood for young disabled people.

As previously stated, in February 2023, we published a literature review of existing Scottish, UK and International evidence on young disabled people's experiences of transitions. The literature review called attention to limitations within the literature regarding the types of evidence available, including a lack of robust qualitative evidence. This was also reflected in the conclusions set out by the Education, Children and Young People Committee in its Stage 1 report on the Disabled Children and Young People (Transitions to Adulthood) (Scotland) Bill which said:

The Committee acknowledged that quantitative data exists in relation to the destinations of young disabled people post-transition, but noted that there is currently no systematic collection of qualitative data on children and young people's experiences of transitions to adulthood. The Committee recommended that this should be collected.

ARC Scotland's Principles into Practice framework also highlights the importance of gathering feedback from young people, parents and carers and the professionals who support them, in order to continually refine and improve support based on people's experiences. Their Data and Evaluation Section supports professionals to combine qualitative feedback gathered from young people, parents and carers with data sources to support planning and decision making.

In our Statement of Intent we said that:

"The measures of successful transitions to adulthood should consider life courses, in addition to traditionally-understood positive destinations. Data relating to young people's experiences of their transitions to adulthood should be collected, analysed and reported upon regularly in order to understand the extent to which young people are experiencing a positive and supported transition to young adult life."

In the feedback on the engagement of the Statement of Intent a significant minority of respondents agreed that data collection is vital for ensuring young people are being supported in the right way to achieve positive outcomes. Of interest to some were the practicalities of how relational and experiential data would be collected and reported on, with others noting that already available data sets should be simplified, better organised and more accessible.

In order to measure our progress of our collective efforts to improve the transitions experiences of young disabled people, we therefore require both robust and up-to-date statistics on young disabled people and the destinations to which they transition, as well as high quality qualitative information on their experiences and perspectives during this crucial time of their lives.

What is already happening:

The Scottish Government already encourages the collection and use of information by the public sector, academic institutions, the third sector and from within communities themselves. Certain listed authorities and organisations have responsibilities under the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) and it is incumbent on all organisations to consider their role in funding, designing or undertaking data collection, research and analysis to fill equality evidence gaps.

The Equality Evidence Finder brings together the latest equality statistics and research for Scotland across different themes for age, disability, and other equality characteristics. The dashboard is currently undergoing re-development to improve accessibility, usability, automation and availability of intersectional data. User needs engagement will be carried out in 2025 to guide improvements to the dashboard.

Further, Scotland's Equality Evidence Strategy, covering the period March 2023 to December 2025, sets out a range of actions to strengthen Scotland's equality evidence base, including disability, age, and intersectional data. The Equality Evidence Strategy aims to enable policymakers to develop sound and inclusive evidence-based policies to improve service delivery and outcomes for Scotland's people. The recent 2024 Interim Review of the Strategy shared learning to date and next steps to progressing improvements to equality evidence in the final year of the strategy.

In 2022, the Scottish Government published guidance for public bodies on the collection of data on disability. The guidance sets out a suite of questions designed for use in surveys in Scotland to promote consistency in collecting, analysing and reporting. The guidance indicates that individuals who are limited 'a lot' or 'a little' by their health condition are likely to be classed as disabled. These categories are designed to closely match the Equality Act 2010 Act disability definition. The Scottish Government is cognisant of further development work in relation to harmonisation of disability questions being under undertaken across the UK.

The Scottish Government and COSLA also jointly published Scotland's first Data Strategy for Health and Social Care in February 2023. The strategy sets the vision for making best use of data in the design and delivery of services and sets out a number of commitments for how we intend to improve access to and sharing of health and social care data.

As previously stated, between 2020-2023, the Scottish Government provided funding to ARC Scotland to trial Principles into Practice in 10 local authority areas to identify, design and test changes to improve the planning and delivery of support for young people who need additional support as they transition to young adult life.

As part of the trials, we also supported the development of 'Compass'; a digital web application developed in partnership with young people, parents and carers

to help them, and the professionals who support them, to navigate the transition to young adult life. ARC Scotland developed Compass in response to the identified need to improve how we collect and use information from people with lived experience to better inform decisions about practice, commissioning and policy.

Compass supports the collection of qualitative data on young disabled people's, and their parents' and carers', experiences of the transition to adulthood. By inviting feedback anonymously from users about their experiences. From this it can provide insights into the extent to which young people are experiencing a positive and supported transition to young adult life to help us better understand their experiences and where change is needed. With a data sharing agreement in place, this anonymous feedback can be provided to help shape transitions services and policy in local authority areas.

Compass was launched in June 2023 and is freely available for use across Scotland. It is already being used across all 32 local authority areas, and some local authority areas have entered into data sharing agreements.

In September 2024, ARC published their first annual data report on 437 parent and carers' experiences of transitions between June 2023 and July 2024.

What else we will do:

We recognise that:

- there are some areas where further data would be valuable;
- there is further work to be undertaken to ensure that current data collections are adding value; and
- there may be opportunities to streamline collections or share best practice to improve efficiencies and reduce the burden on data providers.

For these reasons we will:

- Engage with developments across UK bodies on guidance about collecting disability data and harmonisation, with a view to considering where and how Scottish Government may adopt revisions where appropriate.
- Publish initial leaver destination data on an annual basis for school leavers who are declared or assessed disabled from both publicly funded mainstream secondary and special education schools.
- Continue to engage with users to consider technical improvements to the Equality Evidence Finder, including opportunities to present intersectional data on young disabled people where available.
- Undertake an audit of available data collected and published on disabled children and young people, which contributes to our understanding of transitions. Following this, we will consider how best to present this, and will work with stakeholders to identify gaps in the data, in order to consider priorities for filling these to support better planning for transitions.

- Engage with CELCIS, in our membership on the National Child Protection Data Group, to consider the findings of their test of concept around disability indicators. This will consider an enhanced set of disability questions/ indicators for children, and the potential for their future wider application in other statistical collections.
- Undertake analysis of the Growing Up in Scotland study to explore young people's lives in Scotland, and their post-school outcomes and experiences across a range of life areas. As part of this, we will disaggregate by disability, to compare the post- school experiences of disabled and non-disabled young people and conduct analysis, over time, of progress between sweep 10 (age 14) and sweep 12 (age 20). We will consider designing follow-up research with the GUS cohort, specifically to understand their experiences of transitions.
- Continue to provide funding to ARC Scotland through financial year 2025-26. Part of this funding will support ARC Scotland to maintain and continually improve the Compass tools; to promote the wider implementation of Compass and to publish anonymised evaluation reports with the data generated.
- Consider opportunities to strengthen the visibility and messaging around the importance of data which informs transitions between children's and adult services in our work to make the current strategic planning environment as effective as it can be.

6. Connecting to a Wider Policy Landscape

What this means:

Bringing together in a more strategic and coherent way, some of the existing policies, legislation, plans and activities, which contribute to improving transitions to adulthood for young disabled people.

Why this is important:

> **"Support should help disabled young people and students with additional support needs transition to whatever destination they want to go to."**
>
> Young Person during engagement on the strategy

Throughout the development of the strategy, young disabled people have been clear that the path to success looks different for everyone. On leaving school, the choices young disabled people make in terms of what comes next will be varied and unique to each individual.

As ARC Scotland's Principles of Good Transitions 3 acknowledge, the transition to adulthood involves significant emotional, physical, intellectual and physiological changes. This period of a young person's life can involve life-course transitions (relating to education, employment, and independent living), alongside institutional transitions, for example, the transition from child to adult services within health, social work and social care. To achieve their full potential, young disabled people may therefore require support across different areas of their lives. The diagram on the next page illustrates some of these areas.

As we stated in the Statement of Intent, we want to further embed these principles and characteristics of good transitions into practice across Scotland so that all young disabled people can have a supported and positive transition to adult life.

Whilst this strategy's five core improvement priorities centre on support which helps smooth the path to transition for young disabled people, feedback on the Statement of Intent highlighted that sufficient resources and suitable support options being available to young people, including opportunities for them to transition to, are also important in ensuring positive transitions. This is consistent with wider research to develop the strategy which found adequate services, resources and staffing to be a common characteristic of positive transitions. The delivery of the proposed vision and core five priorities is therefore interdependent with the range of legislation and policies already in place that support the objective of improving transitions to adulthood for young disabled people.

"No amount of good, person centred, holistic, supported planning is going to make up for a lack of suitable provision."
Respondent to the Statement of Intent

The responsibility for the provision of supports and services which enhance disability equality, deliver on children's rights and human rights agendas and fulfil Equality Act 2010 duties is shared across all areas of Government and beyond. It involves national and local Government, public and third sector partners and Disabled People's Organisations working together to achieve our vision for young disabled people in the transition to adulthood.

Recognising how these areas are interconnected is crucial in ensuring that transitions for young disabled people are considered holistically, with co-ordinated action across all relevant policy and delivery areas. We want this strategy to complement and to help bring a more co-ordinated and joined-up approach to this broader landscape so that young people, their families and the practitioners who support them are better able to understand and navigate it.

What we will do:

- We will continue to co-ordinate the Scottish Government's Cross-policy Working Group on transitions to facilitate greater communication and co-ordination of the breadth of work across Scottish Government which contributes to improving outcomes for young disabled people as they transition to adult life, and ensure transitions remains a focus of policymakers across a broad range of areas to support joined-up national policy development.
- We will produce a supplement to this strategy in the Autumn of 2025 which sets out what we are doing and what we will do across each of the policy areas in the diagram on the previous page. COSLA members are keen that, through this work, we explore ways to further improve these areas.
- As set out in the section 'Clear and accessible information' we will take forward a wider review of our online resource: Supporting disabled children, young people and their families: guidance, with young disabled people, parents and carers and other relevant stakeholders, particularly to explore what national and sectoral information would be helpful in respect of transitions to help them navigate this broader landscape.

Next Steps

The publication of Scotland's first National Transitions to Adulthood Strategy for young disabled people marks a critical step forward. However, we are clear that publishing this strategy is not the end of the process, but rather it marks the start of a longer-term commitment to improving the experiences and outcomes of young disabled people who are making the transition to adulthood. We will therefore keep this strategy under review so that we are able to measure progress.

Scottish Government and COSLA will work together with key partners to drive successful delivery of the Strategy. The existing External Strategic Working Group will be invited to oversee the ongoing implementation of the strategy, to monitor progress, and to help ensure that the strategy remains responsive to the needs and ambitions of young disabled people, their parents and carers and those who support them. We will review the Terms of Reference, membership and structure of the existing group to ensure it has sufficient influence and ambition for implementing the strategy, extending the membership to include other relevant stakeholders where required. Local Government representatives will be involved in the ongoing work, through the External Strategic Working Group to deliver the Strategy and elsewhere to address the broad range of challenges.

We will also continue to use the Scottish Government's Cross-policy Working Group on transitions to help oversee the implementation of this strategy, by tracking, reviewing and reporting on progress against the actions we have committed to within this strategy.

We will also build a programme of sustained engagement with young disabled people, their parents, carers, and those who represent them to ensure that those most affected by the strategy remain at the very heart of it. We will work with Disabled People's and Carers Organisations and other stakeholders to ensure that this engagement is accessible, inclusive, and meaningful – enabling those with lived experience to share their experiences to help us understand whether the actions we take are making the improvements we want to see.

As well as qualitative engagement, we will also measure progress on outcomes for young people, where possible, through ongoing data collections as set out in the 'Data collection and measurement' section.

It is also important that we not only monitor progress but report on it, and we are committed to doing so. This will provide transparency, help drive shared accountability and learning and allow us to reassess the strategy to consider whether further or new actions are required. We plan to publish the first progress report by the end of 2026.

Next Steps

Improving transitions is not the job of any single service or organisation. One of the clearest lessons is this: transitions will only improve when responsibility is genuinely shared, recognised and acted upon at both a national and local level. Local areas will be encouraged and supported to embed ARC Scotland's Principles of Good Transitions and the priorities of this strategy into their planning and delivery, and we will share both national and local learning to drive collective improvement.

This strategy is a commitment to do better, together so that young disabled people in Scotland feel confident in their transition to adulthood and are empowered and supported to control their own path to success.

Scottish Government
Riaghaltas na h-Alba

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