

Next steps

An updated version of the review is due to be published in autumn 2010. This will include good practice examples and views from children, young people, parents, carers and service providers.

Two other Schools and Communities research reviews *Narrowing the gap in educational achievement and improving emotional resilience for children and young people with additional needs* and *Strengthening family wellbeing and community cohesion through the role of schools and extended services* are also available on the C4EO website. Local decision-makers and commissioners working in local authorities and Children's Trusts may also find it helpful to read the Schools and Communities directors' summary, which presents the key messages from all three reviews.

www.c4eo.org.uk/themes/schools

C4EO is using the main messages from the three Schools and Communities research reviews to underpin its knowledge sharing and capacity building work with Children's Trusts, and through them the full range of professions and agencies working with children and their families.

Research summaries

This summary is a concise and accessible overview of the key messages from the research review on this topic.

Please go to www.c4eo.org.uk to download full and in-depth versions.

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Schools and communities

All children and young people make sustained progress and remain fully engaged through all transitions between key stages

Key messages

- While the majority of children and young people make successful transitions, those from vulnerable groups are more likely to experience difficulties, especially children from economically deprived backgrounds and children with special educational needs.
- How children and young people fare during transition is connected to a range of socio-emotional, behavioural and organisational factors. Their ability to cope with change is related to the level of support received from families and schools in adjusting to their new environment.
- Both universal and targeted transition practices – such as providing information for families through booklets and talks, visits to new settings, summer programmes, curriculum-bridging initiatives, school-linking schemes, induction programmes and buddy/mentoring schemes – are helpful in improving outcomes, especially for vulnerable groups.
- The use of transition practices and initiatives improves social and academic outcomes for all children and young people, and is particularly beneficial for those most at risk of experiencing difficulties during transition.
- Features of good practice include:
 - a focus on the whole child
 - implementing a number of transition practices
 - helping young children to develop the skills needed to help them cope with transition in the future.
- Effective transitions promote good communication between all stakeholders, encourage induction (such as visits to the new environment in advance of the transition) and balance continuity (in curriculum, environment, friendship groups and routines) with positive opportunities for change.

This summary is taken from the research review, which tells us what works in ensuring all children and young people make sustained progress and remain fully engaged through all transitions between key stages. It is based on a rapid review of the research literature involving systematic searching. It summarises the best available evidence that will help service providers to improve services and, ultimately, outcomes for children, young people and their families.

The National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER) carried out the review and compiled the data on behalf of the Centre for Excellence and Outcomes in Children and Young People's Services (C4EO).

Who are the key stakeholders?

- children and young people
- parents and carers
- local authorities
- staff in early years settings, schools and services for children and young people including teachers and tutors in different kinds of schools and colleges, Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) providers and pastoral support staff
- school and service leaders.

Their contributions are valuable in the process of improvement

- **Children and young people** should be involved in the development of transition practices and policies. Preparation is an important aspect of a successful transition and therefore children and young people need to be consulted about their needs and concerns before, during and after transition.
- **Parents and carers** should participate in transition practices. This may include attending transition information sessions or open days. Parents and carers can help support their child by discussing what will happen and providing reassurance and support. They can also help their children to be prepared for new experiences and monitor their responses during the transition phase.
- **Local authorities** need to work across the EYFS sector, schools and the post-16 education sector to encourage good communication and partnership working. They can help to develop joined-up transition strategies across different establishments so that children and young people experience a smooth transfer in terms of curriculum continuity and induction. They can plan more targeted approaches to support parents and children from more vulnerable groups.
- **Education staff** play a key role in supporting children and young people directly when transferring from one establishment to another. Staff should recognise that transition can be a stressful time, be sensitive to the needs of individuals and willing to communicate with children, parents and staff in partner organisations.
- **School and service leaders** should work with the local authority and other managers within Children's Trusts to provide cohesive strategies to manage transition. This can include exchange of information, providing continuity of curriculum and pedagogy, introducing children and young people to their new teachers prior to transition and ensuring that transition offers positive opportunities.

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What data is available to inform the way forward?

Relevant data was identified from national datasets and national cohort studies. Comprehensive data on educational outcomes (attendance and attainment) is currently available from the Early Years Foundation Stage to key stage 5. However, only a very limited number of longitudinal analyses have been undertaken using this data. There is no published analysis of existing national datasets to examine children's trajectories over time and assess at which point difficulties may occur, or to identify which transitions may be particularly problematic for specific vulnerable groups.

The evidence base

There is adequate evidence relating to what works in improving transitions for children and young people. The quality of this evidence is generally good and continues to grow. However, there are weaknesses and the following gaps were identified:

- There were few examples of studies using an experimental design to assess the impact of transition practices and initiatives on children and young people's outcomes.
- Most of the studies in relation to 'what works' only used a short-term follow-up. We know little about their impact on outcomes later in the child's school career.
- There was no evidence available comparing the 'typical' English system of schooling (separate pre-school, primary and secondary schools) with systems which avoid the need for children and young people to make a transition to a separate school (for example, early childhood units or all age schools).
- We were unable to locate sufficient data to examine children's trajectories over time and assess at which point difficulties may occur, or to identify which transitions may be particularly problematic for vulnerable groups.

Review methods

Research literature was identified through systematic searches of relevant databases and websites, recommendations from our Theme Advisory Group, and considering studies cited in identified literature ('reference harvesting'). The review team used a 'best evidence' approach to systematically select literature of the greatest relevance and quality to include in the review. This approach attempts to eliminate bias in the selection of literature, to ensure that the review's findings are as objective as possible.

Data contained within the data annexe was obtained by a combination of search methods but primarily by obtaining online access to known Government publications and access to data published by the Office for National Statistics.