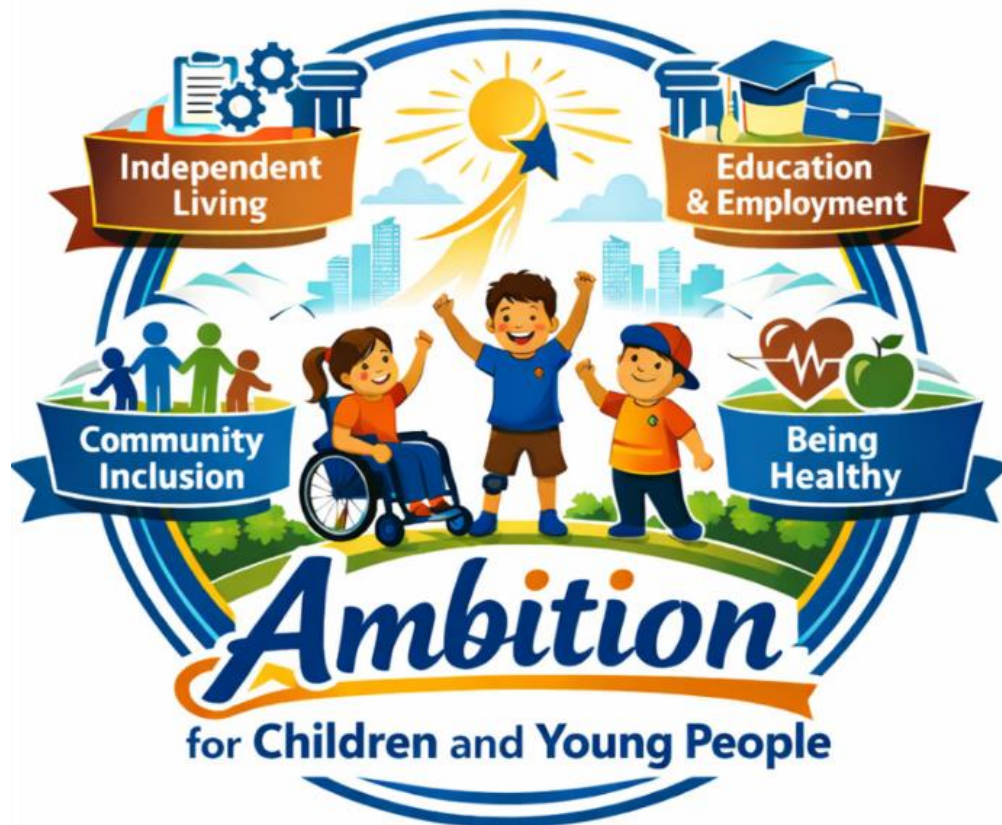




City of York SEND Partnership Preparation for Adulthood Strategy 2026–2029

Delivering the three-year plan for integrated, inclusive and ambitious Preparation for Adulthood in York.



Foreword

Preparation for Adulthood is about supporting young people with SEND to move into adult life with the skills, opportunities and support they need to achieve independence, employment, good health and community inclusion.

This strategy sets out York's three-year approach to strengthening that support. It recognises that, while there are strong foundations in place, planning for adulthood is not always consistent, can begin too late, and can feel fragmented for families and professionals. This is important for all young people with SEND, and those who may experience additional challenges such as sensory needs, anxiety, executive functioning difficulties and transitions that feel unpredictable or overwhelming. Without the right support, this can lead to increased risk of disengagement, poor mental health and reduced access to opportunities in adulthood.

In developing this plan, we have carefully considered:

- the findings of the Preparation for Adulthood rapid review
- the priorities set out in York's Inclusion and Belonging Strategy
- the priorities from York Autism and ADHD Strategy
- the priorities leading York and North Yorkshire Combined Authority Skills Strategy
- current performance, practice and transition arrangements across education, health and social care
- feedback from young people, families and practitioners
- Ambitions of York SEND and Local Area Reform Plan

These sources highlight both the strengths within the current system and the areas where improvement is needed. In particular, the need for earlier and more consistent planning, clearer pathways into adulthood, and more joined-up working across services.

This strategy brings these elements together into a single, coherent direction. It sets out how we will strengthen preparation for adulthood through improved pathway planning, a more integrated delivery model, and clearer roles and responsibilities across the partnership.

Over the next three years, this will mean:

- earlier and more proactive planning for adulthood
- clearer and more accessible pathways into education, employment, independence and adult services
- improved coordination between education, health and social care
- a more consistent experience for young people and families

Our ambition is that every young person in York is supported to lead as fulfilling and independent an adult life as possible, through support that is timely, joined up and focused on their individual strengths and aspirations. This includes recognising and responding to the

needs of all young people with SEND, whose experiences of education, transitions and adulthood can be different and require more tailored support; and supports young people to develop the skills, confidence and experience needed for employment, recognising that access to meaningful work is a key part of independence and adulthood.

How we developed the plan

Our plan

First, York's Inclusion and Belonging SEND and Alternative Provision Strategy (2025–2030) sets the overall partnership ambition. It focuses on earlier support, the right help in the right place, and preparing young people for independence and adulthood. It also provides the wider context for preparation for adulthood in York, including co-production, the role of SEND Central, access to the Local Offer, post-16 pathways, employment opportunities and partnership working.

This Strategy recognises the need for cohesion and strong communication of the vision for PFA between the plans and documents that inform transition for York's Young People with SEND. It represents a stronger shared vision, improved pathway planning, strengthened transitions for young people with complex needs, and moves towards a more integrated way of working. It also clarifies leadership and governance, seeks better use of data, more consistent training, and a stronger role for SEND Central.

The three-year delivery plan translates these priorities into a phased programme of work. The 2026 plan focuses on building the foundations, including developing the strategy, strengthening protocols, introducing workforce changes, establishing the PFA presence within SEND Central, and improving reporting and oversight. The longer-term plan sets out how this will be embedded over time, with a focus on improving employment and housing pathways, strengthening health transitions, reducing delays, and developing SEND Central as a central hub for PFA support.

This work has also been informed by feedback from children, young people, families and practitioners. There is a consistent message that planning for adulthood needs to be clearer, start earlier and feel more joined up. Families want easier access to information and support, better communication between services, stronger post-16 opportunities, and confidence that planning reflects the young person's aspirations rather than organisational boundaries. This is particularly important for autistic young people and those with ADHD, who may need more tailored and flexible support to access opportunities and manage transitions.

The strategy is informed by the York and North Yorkshire Skills Strategy, which highlights the importance of developing skills for employment, strengthening pathways into work, and ensuring that all young people, including those with SEND, can access opportunities to participate in the local economy.

Vision, strategy and co-production

A lot of work to support preparation for adulthood is already happening in York. However, it sits across different services and plans, and does not always feel like one clear, joined-up approach. For families and professionals, this can make it hard to understand what PfA is, what to expect, and how everything fits together.

Over the next three years, we will bring this together into one clear strategy. This means setting out a shared vision, being clear about what support should look like at different stages, and what outcomes we want for young people. The strategy will not replace existing plans or services, but will connect them so that they work as one system.

This will cover all areas of adult life, including education and employment, independent living, health and wellbeing, relationships, community inclusion, and having choice and control.

Co-production is a key part of this. We want young people and families to help shape the strategy, not just be consulted on it. This includes influencing how information is shared, how services are designed, and what good preparation for adulthood should look like in York. This includes ensuring that young people and families are supported to share their experiences, including where needs may be less visible, and that these are reflected in how services are designed.

In the first year, we will focus on agreeing and publishing the strategy, working with partners and families, and clearly showing how feedback has shaped the plan. After this, the focus will be on making sure the strategy is understood and used in practice, and that it continues to shape how services are developed and improved.

By 2029, preparation for adulthood should feel clear and joined up. Families will be able to understand what support is available and when, and young people will have a stronger voice in shaping the support they receive and the pathways they follow.

Partnership priorities and pathway planning

The second priority is about turning our ambition into clear and practical pathways for young people. While support already exists, it is not always organised in a way that is easy to understand or follow. We need to bring this together into a clear set of pathways that families and professionals can navigate.

A key part of this is ensuring that pathways are clearly linked to skills and employment outcomes. This means moving beyond a focus on services and ensuring that young people are supported to develop the skills, experience and confidence needed for adult life, including work.

This means improving the information available through the Local Offer, strengthening SEND Central as a key access point, and making sure young people get the right support at the right time. It also includes increasing post-16 options, continuing to develop supported internships, maintaining our careers advice, and continuing to reduce the number of young people who are not actively in education, employment or training.

Pathways will young people may need more flexible approaches, including adjusted learning environments, tailored careers advice and additional support to access employment and training opportunities. This will include recognising the specific barriers young people can face in employment and independent living, and ensuring reasonable adjustments. Supported pathways and employer awareness are part of delivery.

Over the next three years, we will focus on three main areas.

First, employment and participation. We will ensure clear routes into further education, training, apprenticeships, supported internships, volunteering and paid work. This will include stronger links with colleges, training providers, the Specialist Learning and Employment Adviser Team, and local employers. This will include a greater focus on real work experience, supported internships and employer engagement, so that young people are better prepared for employment and have access to meaningful opportunities.

Second, independence and housing. We will develop clearer pathways to help young people live as independently as possible. This includes access to supported living, housing advice, life skills and opportunities to take part in their community, so that young people can remain in York where this is right for them.

Third, health transitions. We will improve how young people move from children's to adult health services. This will include better coordination between services, more consistent use of tools like health passports, and joint planning for those with more complex needs.

In the first year, we will set up the groups and plans needed to take this forward. From Year 2 onwards, the focus will shift to delivering these changes, including working more closely with employers, developing housing options, and improving how services work together.

By 2029, pathways into adulthood should be clearer and more consistent. Young people will have better access to education, employment and independent living, and employment will be a realistic and expected outcome for young people with SEND in York.

Strengthening transitions for young people with complex needs

This strategy is about improving how transitions are planned and managed by starting earlier and making preparation for adulthood part of everyday work. Planning should not only happen when a young person is about to move to adult services, but should be built into assessments, plans and regular discussions from an earlier stage.

This is particularly important for young people with more complex needs. If planning starts too late or is not well coordinated, these young people are at greater risk of experiencing gaps in support, delays in accessing adult services, or moves that are not right for them. This can lead to increased stress for families, breakdown in placements, or poorer outcomes in adulthood.

For neurodivergent young people, who are more likely to experience transitions as disruptive or anxiety-inducing. Planning will take account of sensory needs, communication differences, and the need for predictability and continuity.

We will make transitions more consistent by improving how they are tracked and overseen. In 2026, we will review current cases to understand where we are now, particularly for those with the most complex needs. After that, we will regularly review progress and use this to improve practice. We will also provide clearer guidance and training so that staff understand their role, and families find the process easier to follow.

We will also improve access to education, employment and training, especially for young people with more complex needs who are at risk of missing out. This means identifying needs earlier, strengthening links to education and careers support, and offering more flexible options that reflect individual needs.

Transitions into employment and post-16 pathways are a key risk point. We will strengthen support at this stage to ensure that young people do not disengage, particularly those who need more tailored or supported routes into work or further learning.

By 2029, transitions should feel well planned and predictable. Young people with complex needs will have clearer, more reliable pathways into adult services, education, employment and community support, with fewer delays and less uncertainty for them and their families

Moving towards a more integrated approach

The fourth priority is to move from separate services working alongside each other to a more joined-up PfA model. York does not need a major restructure, but it does need services to work more closely together, with clearer leadership, better coordination and a clear place for families and professionals to go for support. SEND Central will be the main place where this happens.

SEND Central is already described as a welcoming space where children, young people and families can access advice, support and information. This strategy builds on that by creating a dedicated PfA Zone within SEND Central. This will bring together staff from education, health and social care in one place.

The aim is not just to share a building, but to improve how services work together. This includes better planning for young people, easier access for families, more joint clinics and drop-in sessions, and a space where strategy and day-to-day support come together.

To make this work, SEND Central needs the right facilities and resources. This includes suitable clinic space, accessible facilities such as a changing place, sensory provision, and a clear development plan. These are essential to making the PfA Zone a credible and effective hub.

The PfA Zone will support a more joined-up response for neurodivergent young people, including improved access to advice, clearer pathways following diagnosis, and better coordination between education, health and social care.

Over the next three years, SEND Central will become the main hub for PfA support in York. Families will be able to access advice, information and coordinated support in one place, and services will work more closely together to improve planning, respond more quickly, and provide clearer accountability.

How we will deliver

This three-year plan will be delivered by building on the wider approach set out in York’s Inclusion and Belonging Strategy, and the actions in the delivery plan.

In practice, this means that preparation for adulthood will not be delivered as a separate piece of work. Instead, it will be part of how services already work together across education, health and social care.

Delivery will be both strategic and practical. We will have a clear overall direction, but also specific actions, named leads, and clear ways of tracking progress so we can see what is improving.

Delivery principles linked to Inclusion and Belonging

The Inclusion and Belonging Strategy sets out the foundations that make good preparation for adulthood possible. This includes early support, joined-up working, clear information for families, and a focus on inclusion and independence.

The table below shows how these wider priorities link directly to this strategy and support the delivery of preparation for adulthood in York.

Inclusion and Belonging theme	What it means for PfA	How this strategy responds
Voice and visibility of children, young people and families	PfA must be co-produced, easy to understand and visible through the Local Offer and SEND Central.	Co-production events, accessible strategy, family-facing protocol and guidance, Local Offer updates, “you said – we did” feedback loop.
Needs identified and met as early as possible	PfA should begin early and be embedded in planning long before transfer points.	Earlier pathway planning, training for practitioners, stronger EHCP focus on adulthood, curriculum-based preparation and improved oversight.

<p>The right support in the right place at the right time</p>	<p>Young people need timely access to the right pathways, sufficiency and flexible support.</p>	<p>Improved post-16 map, employment and housing pathways, SEND Central drop-ins, targeted NEET prevention, stronger joint commissioning and sufficiency planning.</p>
<p>Effective preparation for independence and adulthood</p>	<p>The city must support stable journeys into adult life across education, health, care and community inclusion.</p>	<p>Integrated PfA strategy, transition improvements, health and care coordination, supported internships, careers advice, data sharing and a PfA Zone in SEND Central.</p>

Delivery model and structure

The PfA Zone will bring staff together from education, health and social care so they can work more closely as one team. This will be based around SEND Central, with a mix of permanent staff and partners working together in the same place.

In practice, this means there will be clear leadership, dedicated staff to support transitions, and a range of professionals working together to support young people and families.

This model helps connect strategy with day-to-day planning. It ensures that the aims set out in this strategy are reflected in individual plans, assessments and support. By working more closely together, professionals can plan earlier, share information more effectively, and make joint decisions that better meet young people’s needs.

The aim is to make services feel more joined up, so that planning for adulthood, day-to-day support, and access to services are better connected and easier to navigate.

PfA Zone Team

The PfA Zone staffing model brings together staff from education, health and social care to work as one team. It is based in SEND Central and is designed to make support more joined up for young people and families.

The PfA Zone will also strengthen links between services and education and training providers, creating more opportunities for joint working with colleges, training providers and employers, and supporting clearer pathways into employment.

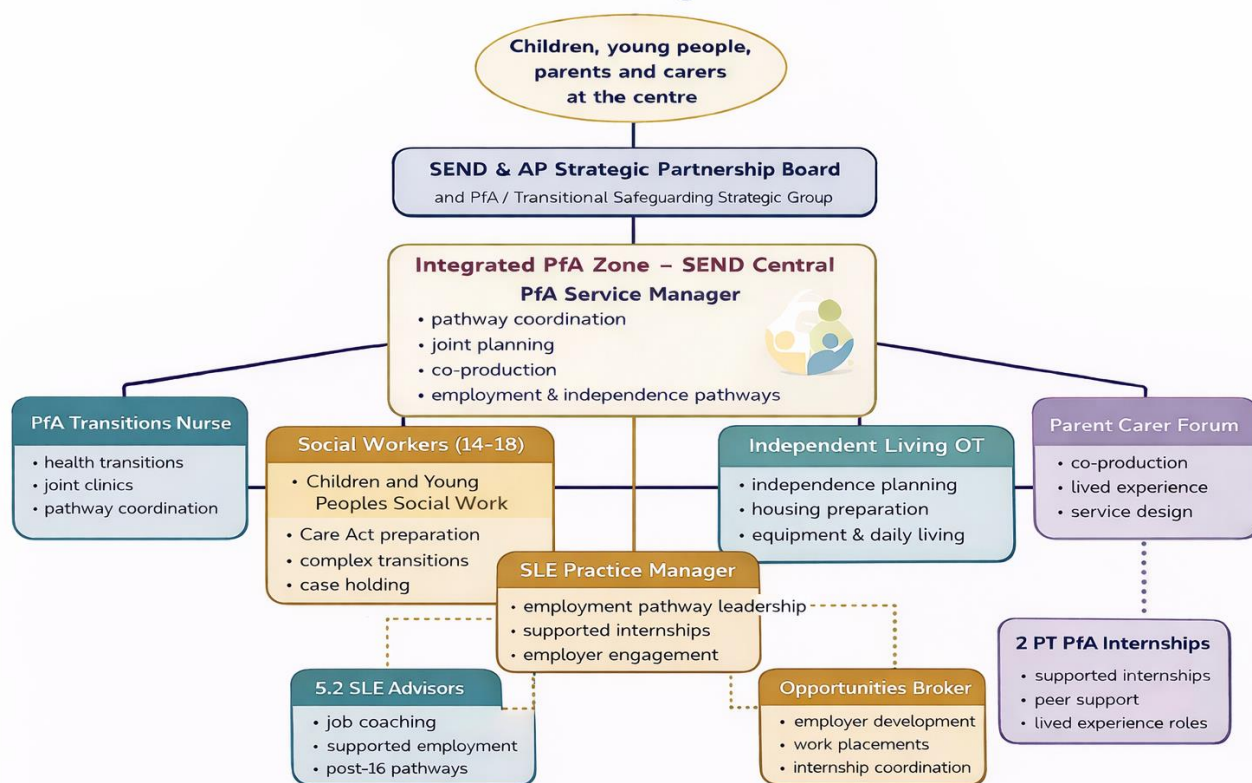
The Integrated PfA Service Manager leads this work and oversees how services come together. The team includes roles that support key parts of preparation for adulthood, including health transitions, social care planning, independent living and employment.

The Supported Employment and Learning team focuses on helping young people into work, with advisors and an opportunities broker working with employers to create more opportunities, including supported internships.

The Parent Carer Forum works alongside the team to make sure that families and young people are involved in shaping services. Internships linked to this also help ensure that lived experience is part of how support is designed and delivered.

Overall, this model helps professionals work more closely together, improves planning for adulthood, and makes it easier for young people and families to access the right support at the right time.

PfA Zone Staffing Structure



Governance, accountability and performance

Preparation for Adulthood will be overseen through existing partnership boards, including the SEND and Alternative Provision Strategic Partnership Board and the PfA Strategy group.

We are not creating new structures, but we will strengthen how these groups oversee the work. This means having a clearer focus on PfA, regular updates on progress, and a shared understanding of what needs to improve.

In practice, this will include regular reporting on progress, tracking key milestones, and taking a closer look at important areas such as transitions and pathway development. The strategy will also be reviewed and updated each year.

The aim is to make sure that work is clearly understood across the system, that progress is visible, and that partners work together to improve the real experiences of young people and families.



Workforce, practice and culture

A strong Preparation for Adulthood system depends on staff having the right skills, knowledge and support. Staff are committed, but need clearer guidance, more training and greater confidence in how to support young people preparing for adulthood.

We will improve this by providing regular training and clear guidance for staff across education, health and social care. This will include a shared training programme, briefings for different teams, and a simpler version of the PfA guidance that is easy for both staff and families to understand.

Training will include a stronger focus on neurodiversity, including autism and ADHD, to improve understanding of sensory needs, communication differences, executive functioning and the

impact of masking. This will support staff to make appropriate adjustments and plan more effectively with young people and families.

There will be focus on improving staff understanding of employment pathways, local opportunities and how to support young people to develop skills for work, including those who may need more supported or flexible approaches.

Alongside this, we will focus on how PfA is used in everyday practice. This means making sure preparation for adulthood is discussed in planning meetings, included in assessments and plans, and regularly reviewed in supervision. We will also share good practice across services and strengthen expectations that planning for adulthood should start early and shape decisions, not just happen at the point of transition.

This will be supported through our existing audit and learning cycle. We will build PfA into case audits, supervision and quality assurance activity, using this to understand where practice is strong and where it needs to improve. Learning from audits, peer review and day-to-day practice will be shared across teams, creating a continuous feedback loop that strengthens practice over time and ensures that improvements are embedded.

Data, forecasting and system intelligence

Inclusion and Belonging highlights the need to strengthen how data is used to support planning and decision-making.

We will improve this by strengthening data sharing and developing a more consistent approach to performance reporting. In the short term, this will include clearer monthly reporting on transitions, timeliness and key risks, alongside improved tracking of young people moving into adulthood. We will also take forward work to improve how systems connect, including Mosaic integration, to support better visibility across services.

Over time, this will develop into a more joined-up and accessible data set, including the ambition for a live dashboard that provides a clear picture of demand, progress and outcomes across the system. This will include improving our understanding of outcomes for neurodivergent young people, including those with autism and ADHD, so that we can better identify gaps, track progress and target support where it is most needed.

We aim to link in data tracking of post-16 destinations, including education, employment and training, so that we can better understand outcomes and identify where young people are not progressing as expected.

This will support a shift from reactive to proactive planning. Better data will enable earlier identification of need, more effective sufficiency planning, improved forecasting of health and care needs, and stronger performance management. It will also provide a clearer understanding of where young people are progressing well and where there are gaps in provision.

For young people and families, this should result in more timely, better coordinated support, with fewer delays and clearer pathways into adulthood.