

Combined Executive Member Decision
Children's Services

7 July 2026

Report of the *Director of Children's Services and Education*

Preparation for Adulthood Strategy 2026–2029

1. Summary

Preparation for Adulthood is about supporting young people with SEND to move into adult life with the skills, opportunities and support they need to live fulfilling and independent lives. It is not a single service or transition point. It is a shared commitment across education, health and social care to help young people prepare for employment, independence, health, relationships, housing and community life.

The strategy sets out a three-year approach for the city and establishes a clearer and more joined-up framework for preparation for adulthood in York. It brings together work that currently sits across several plans, pathways and services into one shared direction.

The strategy has been developed following a citywide Preparation for Adulthood Rapid Review, learning from the Disabled Children's Service Peer Review, and feedback from young people, families and practitioners. It aligns closely with York's Inclusion and Belonging Strategy, the Autism and ADHD Strategy, and wider ambitions for children and young people.

Our vision is that:

Every young person is prepared, empowered and supported to move safely towards adulthood.

The strategy aims to ensure that young people experience earlier planning, clearer pathways and more joined-up support, leading to improved outcomes in education, employment, independence, health and community participation.

2. Background

Preparation for Adulthood is a statutory expectation within SEND arrangements and should support young people to prepare for adult life through four key areas: employment, independent living, community inclusion and good health.

York already has many strengths to build on. The city has committed practitioners, strong partnership relationships and developing services including SEND Central and the emerging PfA Zone. Significant work has already taken place across education, health and social care to support transitions and adulthood outcomes.

However, the rapid review found that this activity is not always experienced as one joined-up approach. Families told us that planning can start too late, pathways can be difficult to understand, and transitions do not always feel coordinated. Practitioners also highlighted variation in planning, pathways and oversight.

The Disabled Children's Service Peer Review similarly recognised the positive direction of travel but highlighted the importance of strengthening transitions, preparation for adulthood and partnership arrangements.

The strategy responds to these findings and sets out six priority areas:

- Vision, strategy and co-production
- Clear pathways into adulthood
- Improved transitions and practice
- SEND Central and the PfA Zone
- Workforce and integrated delivery
- Governance, quality assurance and learning

The strategy also reflects York's wider ambitions around inclusion, neurodiversity, skills, employment, housing and community participation.

A Year 1 implementation plan accompanies the strategy and establishes the foundations required to deliver the longer-term three-year programme.

3. Consultation

The strategy has been developed through review activity, partnership engagement and existing co-production arrangements.

This has included:

- Preparation for Adulthood rapid review activity
- Parent Carer Forum engagement
- Young people and family feedback
- Inclusion and Belonging engagement activity
- Practitioner workshops and partnership discussions
- Disabled Children's Service review activity
- Preparation for Adulthood strategic planning activity

Feedback has been consistent.

Young people want greater choice, meaningful opportunities and support that focuses on their future aspirations.

Families want earlier planning, clearer information, smoother transitions and better joined-up support.

Professionals highlighted the need for clearer pathways, stronger oversight and improved transition planning.

This feedback directly informed the strategy and Year 1 delivery plan.

4. Options

Members are asked to consider the following options:

Option 1 – Approve the Preparation for Adulthood Strategy (Recommended)

This option approves the citywide strategy and supports implementation of the Year 1 programme.

Option 2 – Do not approve the strategy

This option would maintain existing arrangements and current service developments without an overarching strategic framework.

5. Analysis

Option 1 provides York with a shared citywide approach to preparation for adulthood and responds directly to findings from the rapid review and peer review activity.

The strategy creates a clearer framework for young people, families and practitioners. It strengthens transition arrangements, improves pathways into adulthood and creates stronger links between services and outcomes. The strategy also supports wider ambitions around employment, independence, neurodiversity and community inclusion. It establishes SEND Central and the PfA Zone as a visible centre for integrated support and creates stronger governance and oversight.

The strategy is expected to improve experiences for young people and families by ensuring planning starts earlier and support feels more joined up.

Option 2 would maintain current activity; however, it would not address review findings regarding variation in planning, transitions and pathway clarity. It would also risk continued fragmentation across services.

6. Council Plan

The Preparation for Adulthood Strategy supports the ambitions set out within York's Council Plan "One City for All 2023–2027". The strategy contributes directly to several Council Plan priorities.

Health and Wellbeing – A health generating city for children and adults

The strategy supports young people to move safely into adulthood through earlier planning, stronger transitions and improved coordination across education, health and social care. It aims to reduce uncertainty for families, improve continuity of support and strengthen pathways for young people with complex needs, including autistic young people and those with ADHD. This contributes to improving wellbeing, reducing inequalities and supporting young people to live healthier and more fulfilling lives.

Education and Skills – High quality skills and learning for all

Preparation for Adulthood places education, skills and employment at the centre of planning. The strategy strengthens pathways into further

education, supported internships, employment and training, helping young people develop the skills, confidence and experience needed for adult life and improved life chances. This aligns closely with the Council Plan ambition to create pathways into learning and skills that lead to good quality jobs.

Economy and Good Employment – A fair, thriving economy for all

The strategy aims to increase opportunities for employment, volunteering and participation, recognising that employment is a key outcome of adulthood and independence. The strategy supports stronger employer engagement, supported employment pathways and community inclusion so that more young people with SEND can participate in the local economy and access meaningful opportunities.

Housing – Increasing the supply of good quality affordable housing

The strategy includes development of clearer pathways into independent living, supported living and housing advice. It recognises the importance of housing and stability in supporting health, wellbeing and adulthood outcomes and aims to help young people remain in York where this is right for them.

How the Council Operates

The strategy reflects the Council Plan commitment to partnership working, listening to communities and co-production. Young people, families and partners have informed the strategy and will continue to shape delivery through ongoing engagement, Parent Carer Forum involvement and the “You Said, We Did” approach.

Overall, the strategy contributes to the wider Council Plan ambition that everyone in York should have the opportunity to live healthy, fulfilling lives and access the support and opportunities needed to thrive.

7. Implications

a. Financial (Contact – Director of Finance)

Delivery of the strategy will primarily be achieved through existing services, partnerships and transformation activity.

Some elements of delivery may require future investment or reconfiguration, particularly around SEND Central environmental improvements.

Opportunities to maximise existing funding streams and transformation resources will continue to be explored.

b. Human Resources (HR) (Contact – Chief Officer HR and Support Services)

The strategy includes workforce developments linked to the PfA Zone and integrated delivery model. Workforce implications will be managed through existing governance and workforce planning arrangements.

c. Equalities (Contact – Equalities Officer)

The strategy is expected to have positive equality impacts.

It seeks to improve outcomes for young people with SEND, including neurodivergent young people and those with complex needs, by strengthening access, inclusion and opportunities.

The Preparation for Adulthood Strategy has been informed by ongoing co-production and engagement, including the rapid review, Parent Carer Forum, and feedback from young people and partners. This has shaped the strategy's focus on earlier planning, clearer pathways and more joined-up services. The Human Rights and Equalities Assessment (HREA) draws this evidence together and, although completed at a later stage, reflects this continuous engagement rather than a standalone exercise. It demonstrates that the strategy supports positive outcomes for young people with SEND and is aligned with equalities and human rights duties.

d. Legal (head of legal)

The strategy aims to support the delivery of statutory responsibilities and good practice provided for in particular in the following:

- Children and Families Act 2014
- SEND Code of Practice (2015), in particular Chapter 8, which sets out the expectations in relation to 'Preparing for adulthood from the earliest years'.
- The Autism Act (2009) in particular chapter 4, which covers transfer to adulthood
- Care Act 2014
- Equality Act 2010

- DfE document “Preparation for adulthood arrangements in local areas: a thematic review, Published 16 December 2024”

The strategy does not introduce new legal requirements but strengthens the Council’s ability to meet existing duties through earlier planning, improved coordination and clearer pathways.

In particular, improved coordination between ages 16–18 will support lawful transition from children’s to adult legal frameworks, including where Court of Protection authorisation is required. This will help ensure any restrictions on liberty are necessary and proportionate, supporting compliance with Article 5 Human Rights obligations.

e. Crime and Disorder (Contact - Senior Partnerships Support Officer, Community Planning & Partnerships)

There are no direct crime and disorder implications.

f. Information Technology (IT) (Contact – Head of IT)

The strategy includes ambitions to improve data visibility and reporting arrangements, including future developments around system integration and transition tracking.

The system integration work required for the Strategy to track transitions and share data across services will be built into wider IT transformation across CYC.

g. Property (Contact – Property)

The strategy includes development of the PfA Zone within SEND Central and associated environmental improvements.

h. Other

There are no additional implications identified at this stage

8. Risk Management

There are no significant unmanaged risks identified at this stage.

The only risks relate to workforce capacity, pathway sufficiency, pace of implementation and partnership delivery.

Risks will be managed through existing governance arrangements, phased implementation and annual delivery planning. The Year 1 implementation plan establishes the foundations required to support delivery and reduce implementation risk.

9.Recommendations

Members are asked to-

Approve the Preparation for Adulthood Strategy 2026–2031.

Reason: To establish a shared citywide framework for preparation for adulthood and improve outcomes for young people with SEND.

Contact Details

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For further information please contact the author of the report

Background Papers:

- Preparation for Adulthood Rapid Review (2025)
- Inclusion and Belonging Strategy 2025–2030
- Disabled Children’s Service Peer Review

Annexes

Annex A – Preparation for Adulthood Strategy 2026–2031

Annex B – Preparation for Adulthood Year 1 Plan on a Page

Annex C – Equalities Impact Assessment

Abbreviations

PfA – Preparation for Adulthood

SEND – Special Educational Needs and Disabilities

EHCP – Education, Health and Care Plan

DCS – Disabled Children’s Service

CSC – Children’s Social Care

ASC – Adult Social Care

PCF – Parent Carer Forum

SLEAT – Specialist Learning and Employment Adviser Team