

My Next Step



GROUPWORK PROGRAMME MANUAL

FOR CHILDREN TRANSITIONING FROM PRIMARY TO SECONDARY EDUCATION

welcare
strengthening families since 1894

Welcare is a charity working with families and children up to the age of 13 in South London and East Surrey, offering practical and emotional support to overcome challenges.

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INTRODUCTION

For some children the transfer from Primary School to Secondary School can be a daunting experience. Evidence suggests that when vulnerable young people move to Secondary School they find it much easier to deal with the process when they receive support, both academically and pastorally. This helps to raise their self esteem and self worth which in turn reduce their anxieties over the moving on into Secondary Education. Parents also feel less anxious about their children's move into Secondary Education.

The World Bank Development report identifies the transition to secondary school as one of five important life stage transitions for young people. In the UK, this transition typically occurs at age 11 and co-occurs with the biological and social changes associated with the transition from childhood to adolescence. It involves pupils having to negotiate and adapt to a more challenging school setting with different academic structures and expectations as well as changes in social interactions with teachers and peers (Anderson, Jacobs, Schramm & Splittgerber, 2000).

Most children manage the transition with minimal difficulty, however a significant minority benefit from the additional support in preparing for and dealing with the transition process. Many who struggle would have already been identified as vulnerable by teachers either as a result of their earlier experiences or children with additional learning needs or behavioural challenges.

Support can help to counter balance and even prevent later difficulties, including disengagement from education and make transition a positive and successful experience.

The transition from primary to secondary school is therefore an important life transition that can affect children's attainment and wellbeing in the longer term. (STARS)

The purpose of this programme and contents in the manual is to provide information and strategies that encourages the development of skills for children to help make their transition a lot less difficult to process. It is a structured set of ten sessions aimed at enabling children to feel more able to deal with the challenges of transition to secondary school.

It is designed to address the anxieties around expectations of their new school and changes to routines; friendships and other relationship issues i.e. peer and internet safety; homework, travelling; discipline and detention; coping with workload, organisational skills and help seeking skills.

The group will be delivered to children in small groups, in that way they will feel confident and able to discuss their worries, anxieties and concerns or offer their opinions in a small forum. In this way, children are more able to support each other and share their experiences in the group.

MEMBERSHIP OF THE GROUP

A transition group is the 'My Next Step' in supporting children in Primary year 5 & 6 moving on to secondary education. Some of these children have had difficulties either as a result of early life experiences or identified as having additional learning, educational or behavioural needs. This could be for a number of reasons, e.g. pupil with low self image or self esteem or children at risk of exclusion due to behavioural challenges. It is therefore vital to get the group selection right; one very disruptive young who is unable to moderate their behaviour can ruin the session for other members of the group. Importantly, the group should be an enjoyable place for all the children to come to all the sessions.

- Ideally the selection will be discussed with children from Year 5 & 6 or teaching staff/ Inclusion managers or head of years via direct referrals. Children could be identified for being vulnerable in the transition process for a range of reasons, including at risk of exclusion after transition; bullying issues; very low self-esteem or for poor academic achievement. This is of course a very small list of examples and a wide range of reasons that can attribute to a wider range of reasons can create a level of vulnerability for children preparing for transition.
- Ideally selection should include, where possible, a mixed gender group.
- In some cases, children with differing needs and mixed abilities make the group successful as they will all bring a different experience and have something to contribute to the group.
- Group size is 6 – 10 children, can be facilitated by 2 facilitator.
- Once members of the group have been chosen, it is advisable not to change membership of the group by session 2. The only exception would be if the dynamics of members became challenging. This allows for students to build trust and develop a supporting group environment.

VENUE

It is important the group is delivered at a fixed location and there is no change in facilitators throughout. Pupils may find change disruptive and unsettling if there is a sudden change in their routine.

The room should have enough space to allow for activities that require movement.

TIMING OF THE SESSIONS

- Each session runs for 1 ½ hr (90 mins)
- Should be held on the same day and the same time

- 6 – 10 weekly sessions
- Choose a time that does not coincide with a 'favourite' lesson as children are more inclined to want to attend if they are not expected to lose their free/favourite time.
- It is important to ensure the group rules agreed by everyone in the first session, is displayed at each session. Participants should be encouraged to add additional group rules throughout the life of the group.

REFERRAL

It is the expectation of the school to notify the parents that the child will be attending the My Next Step group.

All referrals MUST be signed by the parent/ person with parental responsibility as confirmation of their agreement.

A photocopier referral form is provided in the resources section at the back of the manual (Resource Sheet 1)

Where groups are not taking place in a school venue, it is the responsibility of the referrer to ensure the referral form is signed by the adult with parental responsibility.

PLANNING AND PREPARATION

The lesson plans in this manual are designed to be used and adapted in a way that suits your group members best. The sessions are intended to be fun, inter-active and engaging for the group members. So, be creative and adapt the exercises and resources as you see fit.

It is usually a good idea to try and stick to the rough structure of each lesson plan and to the topic of the session. The key principle of this is that group members feel safe and are encouraged to get involved and share their thoughts, concerns and worries. If something important comes up that needs to be addressed right away, the programme leader should be prepared to stop, address and focus on the question. It is acceptable to say that you will have to come back to the pupil about the area that they have raised, but make sure you have acknowledged that you have heard and understood their question or point. Let the pupil/group know when you will get back to them with an answer.

MENTORING

For children aged 8-13 who have attended the group we may be able to offer a volunteer mentor. Each child will be asked to complete a questionnaire at the beginning and again at the end to help us assess their progress and whether they may benefit from the extra support of a mentor. This would all be in agreement with the parent, carer or guardian. Mentors are fully trained and approved to work with children and are closely supervised by Welcare staff. The mentor will help your child continue building up their confidence and esteem. The mentor would also encourage activities and coping skills that can be sustained when the mentoring relationship ends.

Consideration would be given to the need of each child throughout the group work programme.

MONITORING AND FEEDBACK

It is important to complete the My-Star (child) data sheet at the beginning and at the end of the programme. This will chart the level of change made by each pupil attending the group. The data must be inputted into the Welcare Service Data base and Triangle Outcome Star. This is used as a way of evaluating the effect of the programme concerning the pupil's approach towards transition.

It is good practice to complete the weekly reflective evaluation sheet on the group 'what went well' 'what could have been done differently' 'any issues to follow up' from the session. It is important that the primary school notify the secondary school/s as to which pupils will be attending as the pupils have been identified to be vulnerable. It's also important for the primary school to share what impact the course has had on the student. The school should be informed what was covered in the programme and how the pupil has been prepared for transition when they arrive in September.

PUPIL BOOKLET

Each pupil will be given their own copy of all the activities from the transition booklet. This is very important as it can be used by the child/parent to form a base for discussion about the session. The booklet is not intended to be a 'workbook' where a lot of writing is done; any necessary recording will be visual or written, allowing for the pupil's abilities.

SAFEGUARDING

Local Authority guidelines regarding safeguarding should be acknowledged in the group by the facilitators. Throughout the sessions, facilitators should be aware that safeguarding issues may arise and a disclosure could be made.

The facilitator should inform all members of the group at the beginning of the first session that information shared within the session will remain confidential unless a disclosure is made that causes concern in terms of a child's safety or wellbeing.

The facilitator should make it clear it is necessary to share such information with the relevant person in school and in line with the authorities Safeguarding Policy and procedures.

The facilitator must report the disclosure to Welcare's Safeguarding Lead within 24 hours.

(DE/FM)