

HOW TO USE THE PRIMARY TIS TOOLKIT

PARENTS HELPING CHILDREN TO KEEP SAFE, HAPPY AND LEARNING

Introduction

TIS sessions are intended as:

- A wraparound session that schools can use as an opportunity to invite in all parents, including parents who have not often had contact with their child's school.
- A flexible format for a session that can be adapted locally to meet needs identified in local consultations with parents.
- A session where parents can exchange experiences about how their child is settling into school.
- A session where parents can discuss what helps to keep their child safe, happy and learning.
- A session where parents will be able to find out more information about
 - *the new extended services in schools
 - *specialist services that can help with particular issues e.g. help lines, local agencies, local voluntary sector projects.
- A session where parents can find a first point of contact with their child's school
- A session that gives the message to parents from schools that:
 - *parents do a very important job
 - *support for parents is available
- A session where LA facilitators work closely with designated school staff, head teachers, school support staff, childcare staff and Children's Centre teachers where they are co-located, to build on existing arrangements for transition.
- A session that can be included as part of existing induction activities for parents e.g. meet the tutor class meetings for parents.
- A session where parents can take home TIS fact sheets and other important information from the school.

TIS sessions aim to:

- Build a firm foundation for effective partnerships between parents and their child's school
- Enable parents to find out more about ways of helping their child to flourish – at home and at school

The core presentation for sessions in primary schools will provide an overview of:

- Settling into Reception, and what to expect of the last year of Foundation Stage
- What to expect when your child starts Key Stage 1
- What your child's learning at school, and how to support your child's learning at home
- What to expect as your child progresses through school – and the role you can play in supporting them
- Child development and wellbeing
- How to be a more involved father, step-father, grandfather or carer
- Healthy eating and staying active
- Keeping safe, preventing bullying, using computers & electronic games
- Minimising the effects of family conflict on children

The key themes covered in the core presentation are:

- Supporting children to get the most out of friendships, family life and school
- Helping children to understand themselves and prepare for change
- Helping children to communicate effectively, including understanding and sharing their feelings

Additional materials will be available for each topic, to enable facilitators to cover individual modules in greater depth.

TIS factsheets are available for parents to take away from the TIS session. This will include information about the school, extended services and local and national services for parents.

TIS Sessions for ALL parents

Transition information sessions are for ALL parents, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Local communities will require a different approach to publicity and outreach work according to local circumstances. The following suggestions are based on

- The experience of practitioners organising similar workshops as part of a pilot scheme
- Knowledge of voluntary organisations working with traditionally hard to reach communities

Setting the scene: creating a welcoming atmosphere for transitions sessions

Parents attending sessions appreciate an informal welcome. It is a good idea to find out if any parents have any special requirements (for example, if a parent uses English as an additional language or if a parent has an impairment, special educational need and/or disability). Attention to details such as greeting people at the door and directing them to refreshments and the cloakroom sounds obvious, but can make or break the tone of the whole evening for some of those attending. Clearly labelled rooms for one-to-one conversations and arrangements for transport, parking, childcare, access and diet requirements will depend on local circumstances, but need to be included in the publicity for sessions. Using active listening skills can enhance the welcome offered to parents.

Time of day for TIS sessions

Each school will need to identify the best time of day to fit in with the majority of parents' working times, childcare needs, and dropping off and pick up times for younger and older children in a family.

Offering childcare during TIS sessions

Many schools will be able to offer childcare in an on-site nursery or crèche. Some parents may prefer to keep younger children and babies with them during the workshop or to make alternative childcare arrangements.

Guidance is available from Ofsted, to help identify whether registration with Ofsted is required for childcare provided for parents attending the transition information session. This may be found at:

<http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/publications/index.cfm?fuseaction=pubs.summary&id=2439>

Even if registration with Ofsted is not required, we recommend that individuals should be subject to an Enhanced Disclosure via the CRB if it is intended that they will have unsupervised access to children. Anyone who has not been checked should not be left unsupervised in charge of children, even for a short while.”

Interpreters and translating services

Some parents attending a transition information session are likely to need interpreters. The languages spoken in the school community can be established in advance and volunteer parents recruited in partnership with local agencies to act as interpreters during the session. If the parents speak more than one community language, the session could offer simultaneous translation, with interpreters sitting alongside parents in small groups and the facilitator pausing at regular intervals to allow time for translation, sometimes into two different languages at the same table.

Dealing with difficult issues

Once parents start talking to each other, everything may seem fine on the surface, but as people get to know each other better, they begin to talk more. Sometimes this can be about unacceptable behaviour at home, or at a child's nursery or school, or at work. It can take a while to recognise difficult issues such as bullying, domestic violence or abuse for what they are. People under pressure, and especially parents going through changes – a new baby, break up of a relationship or living with teenage children – tell researchers that their biggest problem is isolation – and that the kind of support that helps most is practical help, including someone being there to listen.

However, protecting children is not only the responsibility of social workers and other professionals: everyone shares responsibility to be aware and alert to the safety and welfare of children in their community. Information for parents can include the NSPCC child protection helpline number for adults with concerns about a child (0800 800 500) and the Childline number for children and young people with any problem (0800 1111).

Occasionally a parent may become upset during a transitions workshop. If this happens, allow time and space for the individual parent to take their time, regain their composure and to talk one-to-one with a professional from a local service attending the session or with the facilitator after the workshop if appropriate.

For further support and individual advice, offer a helpline number such as Parentline Plus (0808 800 2222) and an introduction or referral to a local agency or voluntary group who can provide further one-to-one help and support.

Case Study

Tower Hamlets

Tower Hamlets decided to increase the uptake of local resources available to support parents, including projects and services that provide advice, information, support and education by setting up information sessions in schools. These interactive meetings offered parents an opportunity to exchange information, share experiences and access information in an informal, welcoming atmosphere.

Transition information sessions were an extension of the work of the Tower Hamlets Parents Advice Centre (PAC). The PAC provides information, support and advice to parents/carers of children with special needs, or those who have been excluded from school.

The information sessions took this important work a step further and tried to help all children, not just those seen as at risk. The sessions were designed to reach all parents at key transition points when anxiety about change is greatest.

A trained facilitator from within the school focused the discussion on parenting tips developed by experts and led each information session.

Tower Hamlets allocated funding to help schools provide crèches, refreshments and translations for information sessions, in addition to providing facilitator training and support running initial sessions. The response from schools has been enthusiastic and there are plans to ensure that information sessions become an essential part of helping parents to help their children.

Ideas for places to advertise the TIS session

- Word of mouth
- School gate
- Letter sent home with children from school
- School newsletter

Inviting parents

Ideally, publicity should build up over a period of weeks:

Start of term: a personally addressed letter, posted to home address, with reply slip, and in the calendar of events;

Three to two weeks before the event: posters in prominent places, and in the calendar of events;

In the ten days before: invitation by someone speaking to parent directly, in the playground (primary) or by phone to parents who have not replied

Start of week: personalised reminder note, delivered by their child

Day before the event: verbal reminder through child

Remember that parents are constantly bombarded with information: make the message loud and clear, repeat it often, and make the event as enjoyable and useful as possible.



Draft invitation to parents:

Dear (name)

You are warmly invited to a 'Help your child settle into school' session from (times) on (day) at (place).

This short event will offer you a wide range of tips that can help YOU as a parent to help your child get the most out of all aspects of school life – what they'll learn about (insert local topics here, such as how fathers can get involved, keeping safe, health – these will be chosen after local consultation with parents).

Being a parent is one of the most important jobs in the world. You deserve the very best help you can get. This session will help you find out where you can get it and how.

Yours sincerely,

(signature)

PS. We have laid on refreshments. We hope the session will be enjoyable as well as useful. Please come!

REPLY SLIP:

Please return to (name/address)

I can/am unable* to come to the transitions session on (date)

Name:

Address:

E-mail:

Phone:

*Please delete as appropriate.

All returned slips will be put into a raffle for a choice of prizes, including a £10 gift voucher for ***



Success factors

- Good home–school relationships
- Suitable large room
- Refreshments
- Childcare facilities or crèche
- Transport available
- Interpreters available
- Translated material for parents available
- Facilitators who are skilled in working with parents
- Good-quality publicity distributed to all parents through a variety of outlets
- Effective partnerships between schools and LAs and other partners in the children’s trust
- Effective planning

TIS Questionnaire for Parents

NAME

PHONE..... E-MAIL.....

ADDRESS.....

Going to school for the first time is a big thing. Children and parents can find the changeover difficult.

**Would you like to find out more about helping your child to adapt to school?
Being a parent is one of the most difficult jobs in the world. You deserve the very best help you can get.**

When is the best day and time to come to a session? Please circle as many as you can.

Monday	Morning	Lunchtime	Afternoon	Evening
Tuesday	Morning	Lunchtime	Afternoon	Evening
Wednesday	Morning	Lunchtime	Afternoon	Evening
Thursday	Morning	Lunchtime	Afternoon	Evening
Friday	Morning	Lunchtime	Afternoon	Evening

Would you like help with

Travel? YES/NO

Childcare? YES/NO

Interpreting? YES/NO

Translated information? YES/NO

Please circle the subjects you would like to know more about from the list below.

- Child development and wellbeing – what to expect
- Choosing childcare
- How to be a more involved father
- Healthy eating, staying active
- Family safety
- Preventing bullying
- Using computers & electronic games
- Minimising the effects of family conflict on children

Thank you for completing this questionnaire. We look forward to meeting you at the Information Session event.

One way of consulting parents about the content of the TIS session and encouraging them to return questionnaires would be to place a suggestion box in the school main entrance foyer.

Case Study

Kirklees

Kirklees was one of the three local authorities to be involved in a PIP pilot of information sessions for parents. The lead body was Kirklees Parenting Support Forum, a multi-agency group drawn from a range of statutory and voluntary services that offer parenting support within their service. The forum had identified provision of universal services as an area of interest for development, so the opportunity to take part in this pilot was very timely. We relied on schools to recruit parents to the sessions, offering them support with invitations to professionals, paperwork and preparation.

Those parents who attended the pilot information sessions participated enthusiastically, and reinforced our conviction that the sessions offer a valuable experience for parents. Parents of primary school age children found it easier to attend the workshops than parents of teenagers.

We aim to continue to develop the work, and have learned a good deal from the pilot scheme. We suggest that the key factors for success are:

- The commitment and enthusiasm of the school
- Timing sessions carefully around admission to a new school
- A skilled facilitator who can put parents at ease

How to ensure transition workshops are inclusive and accessible

Outreach

Nearly all parents want to do the best for their child. Some are interested in TIS sessions but find it hard to come into school or to attend a TIS session for a variety of reasons:

- Everyday busy family life combined with both parents working
- Family illness, bereavement or emergencies
- Just moved into the area
- Some parents need encouragement to come into school for the first time.

Examples of outreach and publicity that have worked in a similar pilot scheme include:

- Word of mouth
- Giving out invitations personally at the school gate
- Phone calls
- Text messages
- Notice on the school website
- Article in the school newsletter.

Home-visiting

Voluntary organisations run schemes in many areas:

- Home-Start
- Playlink
- Sure Start
- School-Home Support

Contact Children's Centres or local Children's Information Services for details of locally based home-visiting schemes.

Where home-visiting schemes are established in a local authority, the school, TIS facilitators within an LA or designated LA lead for TIS could establish a link so that volunteers making home visits can use publicity for a TIS session to encourage individual parents to attend.

Children with special needs or a disability

It is important that schools let parents know about policies and arrangements for children who may have difficulties with:

- All the work in school
- Reading, writing, number work or understanding information
- Expressing themselves or understanding information
- Making friends or relating to adults
- Behaving properly in school
- Organising themselves
- Some kind of sensory or physical needs which may affect them in school.

Many children will have these kinds of difficulties at some time during their education. Schools and other organisations can help most children overcome the barriers to the difficulties present quickly and easily. But a few children will need extra help for some or all of their time in school. If parents have concerns at any time they should arrange to talk with their child's class teacher.

Additional resource:

Special Educational Needs: A Guide for Parents and Carers, DCSF (2001)

<http://www.teachernet.gov.uk/docbank/index.cfm?id=3755>

Parents with a disability

Most people want to treat children, young people and their parents the same way as everyone else but are not always sure how to go about it.

These suggestions may be useful when you meet disabled people.

Disabled people are individuals just like everybody else. Don't make assumptions about their abilities or their needs. Don't forget some disabilities are hidden, for example epilepsy, and mental illness.

If you are not sure how something might affect a disabled person, ask them for advice.

DCSF advice on physical access for schools is available on Teachernet at:

<http://www.teachernet.gov.uk/docbank/index.cfm?id=7519>

Communication

If a disabled person is with someone, talk to the disabled person directly, not to the person who is with him or her. This also applies to a deaf person accompanied by a sign language interpreter.

When talking to a deaf person, find out – if necessary in writing – whether they lip-read. If they do, make sure your face is in the light, look directly at the person, speak clearly and naturally, remembering to keep your hands away from your face.

When you first meet a blind person, introduce yourself. When you are going to move away, tell them. Don't leave them talking to an empty space.

When you are talking to someone with a speech impairment, concentrate on what is being said, be patient and don't try to guess what they want to say. If you don't understand, don't pretend you do.

If someone has difficulty understanding you – perhaps because they have a learning disability – be patient and be prepared to explain something more than once. Concentrate on using simple language.

When talking to a wheelchair user, try to ensure that your eyes are at the same level as theirs, perhaps by sitting down. Don't lean on the wheelchair – it is part of the user's personal space.

If someone looks "different", avoid staring. Concentrate on what they are saying, not on the way they look.

If you are talking to an adult, treat them as an adult.

Assistance

If someone looks as if they need assistance, offer it, but wait for them to accept before you help.

When guiding a blind person do not push or pull them. Ask if they would like to take hold of your arm. If there are any steps tell them whether the steps go up or down.

Remember that guide dogs for blind people, hearing dogs for deaf people and other assistance dogs, are working dogs, not pets. They should not be fed, patted or distracted when they are working.

Language

Some of the words and phrases we use offend disabled people, because they suggest that the disabled person is dependent or helpless. Below are some common words to avoid with suggested alternatives

- Do not say “the disabled”; use “disabled people” or “people with disabilities”
- Do not say “suffering from”, “crippled by”, “afflicted by” or “a victim of”; use “a person who has” or “a person with”
- Do not say “deaf and dumb”; use “deaf without speech”
- Do not say “an epileptic”; use “a person with epilepsy”
- Do not say “spastic”; use “a person with cerebral palsy”
- Do not say “mentally handicapped” or “subnormal”; use “a person with a learning disability”
- Do not say “confined to a wheelchair” or “wheelchair-bound”; use “wheelchair user”.

Remember that some people may have more than one disability.

Clear presentation

Words:

You should keep sentences short. Sentences should not have more than 15 to 20 words.

Each sentence should have one idea.

- **You should always use big writing like this**
- If you have to use difficult words or ideas you should say what they mean and you should do this in the next sentence
- You can use a different colour – it should be a dark colour.

Here is an example:

Discrimination

This means treating someone worse than other people for some reason.

It is good to use full words instead of abbreviations or acronyms. For example, you should say “Disability Rights Commission” and not “DRC”.

Pictures:

- The right picture should always be near the right words
- You can also use photographs
- The photographs and pictures should be easy to understand

Other points on presentation:

- Invitations, letters home and publicity posters should also be easy to read
- Signposting material should have information in formats that are easy to people should be able to listen to the words on the pages
- There should be pictures that show what the words mean – these should be photographs and drawings
- Make sure writing is not too small

What is considered a disability?

Based on research, around one in five people of working age are considered by the Government and by the Disability Rights Commission to be “disabled”.

What that means is that they have a disability or a long-term health condition that has an impact on their day to day lives. People in these circumstances and some others (such as people with a facial disfigurement) are likely to have rights under the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA).

It is important that people have rights – people with cancer, diabetes, multiple sclerosis and heart conditions; people who have a hearing or sight impairment or a significant mobility difficulty, caused for example by arthritis, can be treated unfairly. The same is true of people who have mental health conditions or learning difficulties.

People need protection against being treated unfairly. While they might be considered “disabled” according to the Disability Discrimination Act, they don’t need to use that term about themselves – and very many people with rights under the DDA don’t.

The definition covers:

- People who are blind or visually impaired
- People who are deaf or hard of hearing
- People who have heart conditions
- People with learning disabilities
- People with mobility and manual dexterity problems
- People who have experienced mental health problems
- People who have dyslexia
- People who have epilepsy
- People who have incontinence
- People with AIDS
- People with some forms of cancer

Setting down

You should consider putting in place arrangements for minibuses, cars and taxis to set down passengers as close as possible to the entrance of the venue. Find out if this is possible at your venue when you visit and remember to let people know about it.

Car parking

Does the chosen venue have a car park? If so, some of the car parking spaces should be reserved as parking for disabled people near the entrance.

Is there a dropped kerb at the point where people leave their cars or transport? Wheelchair users will need to be able to get to the entrance to the building as independently as possible.

Application and reply forms

Asking people to complete and return application or reply forms is a common feature of events such as conferences and seminars.

You can use the form to let people know what adjustments are already in place such as sign language interpreters, deaf-blind communicators and large-font text and give a description of any physical features.

You can also use the form to ask disabled people about any further requirements they have. A suggested wording for this is:

'To help us ensure that all delegates attending the conference are able to participate fully please let us know about any requirements you have.'

Make sure that this is printed in bold and place in a prominent position on the form.

You should aim to welcome contact from attendees who are disabled and to find solutions for requests you have not planned for. You could ask for a contact telephone number, email or address so that you can discuss any requests in person, using any method that best meets their needs.

Accessible forms

Give people a choice of how to reply to invitations.

- Some disabled people may prefer to do this on computer and return it to you by email
- Some people will prefer to write by hand
- Some disabled people may welcome the opportunity to pass on information over the telephone for you to register their interest and other details

- There are a number of different formats which people may have a preference for. For people who are visually impaired these include large print, [Braille](#) and [audiotape](#). Over 20,000 people in UK use Braille.

You can get more information about how to arrange transcription services from several organisations including:

Royal National Institute for the Blind (RNIB)
Telephone transcription service 01733 37 53 70
Fax 01733 37 53 79
Email busdev@rnib.org.uk
Website www.rnib.org.uk

Deafblind UK
Telephone number 01733 358 100
Email jan@deafblind.uk

Deaf and hard of hearing people can be supported by Language Support Professionals (LSP).

Videos

Videos and clips of films can make interesting additions to presentations at conferences and exhibitions. It is possible to arrange for videos to be [audio described](#) for people who are visually impaired and to be [subtitled](#) and overlaid with [British](#) or [Irish Sign Language interpretation](#) for people who are deaf or hard of hearing. You should check availability of these facilities on any videos that you are going to show.

Think inclusively if you commission any video or film to be shown at your event and plan for this to be [audio described](#) and [subtitled](#). If this is not possible you could arrange for hearing impaired people to receive a script of the video before it is shown.

Housekeeping

Remind staff to be on the look out for things going wrong:

- Double swing doors where one door is locked
- Bags on floors
- Open cupboard doors and portable display stands creating hazards for visually impaired people
- Groups of people gathering in areas and preventing access for wheelchair users
- It is also important for speakers to describe any slides or visual material they use during a presentation for audience members who are visually impaired

Chairpersons may have additional responsibilities.

- They may need to explain evacuation procedures
- They need to be aware that they should describe exits in terms of left, right and north south rather than pointing or saying “over there”.

Glossary

Audio Description – audio description is available on some videos, DVDs, digital TV and cinema films. Digital access equipment enables visually impaired people to listen to a narrator describe what is happening on the screen through personal headphones.

Audio Cassette or Tape – information can be recorded verbally on audio cassette tape and played on a tape machine.

Braille – embossed text created from symbols formed by patterns of 6 dots. Another system of embossed printing is Moon, which relies on curves and lines. Braille and Moon are used by visually impaired people.

British Sign Language (BSL) – BSL is a language which uses visual gestures and space by using the hands, body, face and head and has its own principles of grammar. BSL interpreters translate the spoken language to BSL for the deaf person. They can also translate BSL into spoken language if the deaf person wishes.

Deafblind Interpreter – a deafblind interpreter will communicate with a deafblind person if they are not able to use other forms of communication support. There are different methods of communication used by deafblind people including the Deafblind manual alphabet and the block alphabet. The interpreter will describe non-verbal information such as people’s reactions.

Easy Read – an alternative format for people with learning difficulties, which means writing things down clearly, using short sentences and avoiding difficult words and acronyms. Easy Read publications also use pictures to illustrate points.

Evacuation Chair – In an emergency an evacuation chair may be necessary to ensure that people with mobility impairments can be safely evacuated. An evacuation chair is specially designed equipment and requires people to be trained to operate it.

Lipspeaker – a lipspeaker conveys the speaker’s message to a deaf or hard of hearing person using unvoiced speech supported by gesture and facial expressions. If the deaf or hard of hearing person who is lipreading requests it, the lipspeaker can also support the message using finger spelling. This method of communication is preferred by people who use English.

Loop system and infrared system – help hearing-aid wearers to hear more clearly by cutting out background noise. A loop system can be set up with a microphone and a transmitter to send sound via a loop system to be picked up by hearing aids that are switched to ‘T’ setting. For larger events, infrared systems that allow for stereo sound will be more practical.

Speech To Text Reporter (STTR) or Palantypist – The STTR uses a palantype or stenograph machine to produce verbatim report of what is said and of any other environmental sounds such as applause. This will appear instantly on a screen for the deaf or hard of hearing person to read.

Subtitles – subtitles are available on DVDs, videos, television and in some cinemas. The subtitles describe what is being said and appear at the bottom of the screen.

Text Telephone – a textphone is a machine that has a keyboard and a screen. It may be built into a telephone or be connected to one. A deaf person can use the machine to communicate with another person who also has a textphone by typing the message and reading the reply. Typetalk is a national relay operation that allows the deaf person to communicate with somebody who does not have a textphone by relaying the messages via an operator.

Organisations that can help

The Council for the Advancement of Communication with Deaf People (CACDP)

Durham University Science Park
Block 4, Stockton Road
Durham, DH1 3UZ
Telephone: 0191 383 1155
Fax: 0191 383 7914
Textphone: 0191 383 7915
Email: general@cacdp.org.uk
Website: www.cacdp.org.uk

UK accreditation body for qualifications in communication methods provides a directory of registered Interpreters and other Language Support Professionals.



DIAL UK

St Catherine's,
Tickhill Road, Doncaster
South Yorkshire DN14 8QN
Telephone: 01302 310 123
Textphone: 01302 310 123
Fax: 01302 310 404
Email: enquires@DIALuk.org.uk
Website: www.dialuk.org.uk

Dial UK can put you in touch with local disability information and advice centres and services providers.

MENCAP

123 Golden Lane
London, EC1Y 0RT
Telephone: 020 7454 0454
Fax: 020 7696 5540
Email: information@mencap.org.uk
Website: www.mencap.org.uk

MENCAP provides services and advice on the needs of people with learning disabilities in England, Wales and Northern Ireland.

National Association of Councils for Voluntary Service (NACVS)

177 Arundel Street
Sheffield, S1 2NU
Telephone: 0114 278 6636
Fax: 0114 278 7004
Textphone: 0114 278 7025
Email: nacvs@nacvs.org.uk
Website: www.nacvs.org.uk

NAVCS is a network of over 300 local Councils for Voluntary Services (CVS).

Royal National Institute of the Blind (RNIB)

105 Judd Street
London, WC1H 9NE
Telephone: 020 7388 1266
Fax: 020 7388 2034
Helpline: 0845 766 9999
Email: helpline@rnib.org.uk
Website: www.rnib.org.uk

Provides help, advice and support for people with visual impairments.

RNIB Transcription Service Business Liaison Team

PO Box 173
Peterborough, PE2 6WS
Telephone: 01733 37 53 70
Fax: 01733 37 53 79
Email: busdev@rnib.org.uk

Royal National Institute of the Deaf (RNID)

19-23 Featherstone Street
London, EC1Y 8SL
Telephone: 0808 808 0123
Textphone: 0808 808 9000
Fax: 020 7296 8199
E-mail: informationline@rnid.org.uk
Website: www.rnid.org.uk
Provides information, advice and services for disabled people who are deaf, or hard of hearing.

Scope

PO Box 833
Milton Keynes, MK12 5NY
Freephone: 0808 800 3333
Email: cphelpline@scope.org.uk
Website: www.scope.org.uk
Scope is a disability organisation covering England and Wales and focusing on cerebral palsy.