



Berkshire Healthcare
Children, Young People and
Families services

Coping with change

Change can be difficult for some children to cope with. They may become overwhelmed at sudden changes or feel anxious when their routine is disrupted.

Here are some strategies that may help:

- Visual timetables can help the child understand what will happen at each stage of their day. Set well-defined schedules of activities and help them to estimate how long each task will take.
 - Prepare for transitions. For example, use visual clocks, egg timers or stop watches to enable them to visualise how long they have left of each activity. Give transition warnings ahead of time.
 - Maintain structure and routine as much as possible. For example, keep the order of tasks during a morning routine the same. Predictability can make them feel less anxious and help them to cope better during the day.
 - Prepare them for new places or activities. For example, visit a venue ahead of time, watch a video about what to expect, use social stories, and add changes to the daily planner/visual timetable.
 - Give advance notice of changes where possible.
 - Offer choices to give them a sense of control. For example, 'would you like to wear a jumper or a coat to go to the shop?'.
 - Use choice boards to help your child understand and process the options available and indicate their preference. This may include a selection of pictures showing what activities they could choose to do.
 - Provide a sense of familiarity during unstructured times or times of change. For example, encourage them to have a transition object they can focus on (e.g. a cuddly toy or a fidget toy), listen to familiar music that they like, talk about something they love, or provide a
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quiet place for them to go to.

- Try to limit the amount of change at any one time.
- Encourage your child to recognise their feelings around change and identify specific triggers or anxieties.

National Autistic Society

More information about autism and preference for order, predictability and routine can be found on the National Autistic Society website: <https://www.autism.org.uk/advice-and-guidance/about-autism/preference-for-order-predictability-or-routine>

