

# Information and learning from the Aiming High for Disabled Children Transition Support Programme

## A SUMMARY

National Transition Support Team

Council for Disabled Children

October 2011



# Executive summary

This summary draws together the key points made in the *Information and learning from the Aiming High for Disabled Children Transition Support Programme* report. The report was written by the Council for Disabled Children in order to summarise and reflect on the experience from the Transition Support Programme (TSP). The report focuses on learning from success and identifying key principles and actions supporting positive change for children, young people and families.

The TSP identified five focus areas as a basis for local activity in addressing the challenges of providing transition support. The five focus areas were:

1. Strategic joint partnership working
2. Participation of disabled young people and their families
3. Effectiveness of personalised approaches
4. Joint assessment processes within children's trusts and with adult services
5. Realistic post-16 opportunities for living life

In this summary we draw together the key points from each focus area. For links to a range of resources that were developed throughout the programme and the full report please visit the Council for Disabled Children's website here: [www.councilfordisabledchildren.org.uk](http://www.councilfordisabledchildren.org.uk).

## 1. Strategic joint partnership working

Strategic-level agreement and planning is essential to success. It gives individuals working at operational level the authority they need to make changes and secures the attention of managers who make decisions affecting a number of different agencies and operational teams and brings a different range of skills and experience to the table.

Agreements about how agencies will work together to support disabled young people and their families are set out in multi-agency transition protocols.

An effective multi-agency steering group or board developing and implementing protocols and pathways keeps momentum going and supports operational staff.

## Key learning points

- Multi-agency change at operational level is more likely to occur with strategic-level commitment and engagement.
- Designated leadership, time and capacity to maintain a focus on transition and workforce development are essential elements in service improvement.
- Multi-agency protocols and pathways are critical stepping stones to progress, but not ends in themselves.

- The development of better experiences of transition for young people and their families is a multi-agency enterprise and must involve services that are provided for adults.
- The role of key worker for some young people moving through transition should be better understood and promoted.

## 2. Participation of disabled young people and their families

Disabled young people should be supported to participate in the transition process in whichever way they feel comfortable.

The information returned by local areas presented a positive but varied picture of increasing participation. Increased participation by families in shaping transition services is linked to the development of parent and carer forums supported by the AHDC programme.

### *Key learning points*

- Participation by young people and families in shaping transition services results in the provision of more appropriate services.
- Increased participation by families in shaping transition services is most successful when it is part of a wider participation strategy.
- The TSP successfully highlighted the importance of participation by young people and their families in Year 9 reviews, particularly in mainstream schools.

## 3. Effectiveness of personalised approaches

Person-centred approaches put young people at the centre of planning and review processes and encourage them to retain control over the transition process and feel ownership of their transition plan. Young people are asked to say what's important to them and explore the support they'll need to achieve their objectives.

Advocacy can support participation by young people in decision-making about their future and ensures young people's views are heard, while maintaining family involvement. Advocates help young people to get their views across to other people, enabling them to have more choice and control.

Individual Budgets can provide more joined-up support for young people in transition and their families, as well as more choice and control over support received.

## Key learning points

- Person-centred planning brings a shift in culture and significant changes to working practices.
- A local workforce development strategy is required to support the systematic introduction and use of person-centred approaches across schools, children's services and adult services.
- The introduction of person-centred approaches in mainstream secondary schools should be monitored and linked to broader consideration of Team Around the Child and Family approaches and 'structured conversations' with families.
- Quality assurance measures should concentrate on how person-centred approaches improve the lives of young people and their families.
- Working together to improve the quality of information available to young people and their families is a powerful expression of participation in action.
- Feedback from people who are going to use information improves the quality and appropriateness of any material being developed.
- Young people with the most complex learning difficulties or support needs require specialist information, advice and guidance that is beyond the scope of universal services.

## 4. Joint assessment processes within children's trusts and with adult services

As young people reach adulthood, they are assessed at different times for different purposes. There may be assessments for support from adult social care or adult health services and to ascertain support needed to access further or higher education. Local areas are working to create joint assessment processes to reduce the number of assessments young people and families experience.

Some local areas used the opportunity of the TSP to focus on the development of an integrated assessment framework.

Nearly all local areas reported that information, advice and guidance (IAG) advisers or Connexions personal advisers (PAs) attend Year 9 reviews; 80% indicated that these professionals take on the role of lead professional, fulfilling the requirement in the SEN Code of Practice for Connexions PAs to co-ordinate planning.

## Key learning points

- Better data shared by children's and adult services is essential to forward planning, quality assurance and efficient commissioning.
- The particular issue for transition is how practice with younger children and families in schools and use of the SEN Code of Practice relate to person-centred approaches.
- The broader challenge is to develop the use of health action plans as an integral part of a single, multi-agency transition planning process.

## 5. Realistic post-16 opportunities for living life

The transition of young people into adult life is not only about leaving school – it involves supporting young people aged 16-25 in many different aspects of life. In addition to continuing education and moving into employment, young people may need support around housing, transport, and developing a social life.

Disabled young people may need specialist information, advice and guidance in thinking about options after school.

There is a lack of local post 16 education and training provision available to disabled young people. This particularly impacts on young people with more complex needs for whom the only suitable provision is often far from their home and so means they lose contact with friends and their local communities.

Many local areas focused on developing employment opportunities for disabled young people and found that one of the first steps is to challenge expectations.

### *Key learning points*

- A coherent workforce development strategy for IAG professionals is required ensuring a consistently high standard of practice across IAG provider services.
- Group or peer support arrangements enable the sharing of specialist knowledge and expertise across groups of IAG professionals.
- Quality assurance systems for Connexions and other IAG services are most effective when they focus on the experience of young people and families.
- Effective transition relies on tracking young people after they leave school, particularly as they move on from their first college placement or training.
- Transport and housing are often essential elements in achieving a successful transition into adult life.
- Opportunities for employment and work experience sometimes improve when expectations are challenged.
- Where employment, education or training are not appropriate, aspirations for young people, and the link between transition planning and Short Break services is critical to making leisure services more accessible.
- Appropriate and timely support cannot be provided for young people if data systems cannot identify young people who are not on the social care register but are in need of help.

The full report can be downloaded from the Council for Disabled Children's website: [www.councilfordisabledchildren.org.uk](http://www.councilfordisabledchildren.org.uk).

Further information about the programme, and a wide range of resources, case studies and how to guides can be viewed on the Transition Information Network's website: [www.transitioninonetwork.org.uk](http://www.transitioninonetwork.org.uk).

**The Council for Disabled Children (CDC)** is the umbrella body for the disabled children's sector in England, with links to the other UK nations. CDC works to influence national policy that impacts upon disabled children and children with Special Educational Needs (SEN) and their families. CDC is a semi-independent council of NCB, and has a staff team reporting to its director. The CDC Council is made up of a wide range of professional, voluntary and statutory organisations, including disabled young people and parent representatives. CDC's broad based membership and extensive networks of contacts provides a unique overview of current issues. It also enables us to promote collaborative and partnership working among organisations. CDC hosts the following networks;

- The National Parent Partnership Network
- The Special Educational Consortium
- The Transition Information Network
- The Every Disabled Child Matters Campaign
- Making Ourselves Heard

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