

Pan Lothian Learning Disability Strategic Review
Working Group 7: Transitions
Minute of meeting held on 31.07.06

Who was there:-

Christine Schaffer, Chair Person

Maura Bertram, Jewel & Esk Valley College

Sean Bradley, Careers Scotland

Andy Foreman, Real Jobs, The Action Group

Rhona Neill, People First

Gerald Wilson, People First

Steve Coulson, EDG

Polly Wright, East Lothian Council

Bob Walley, East Lothian & Midlothian Community Learning
Disability Teams (CLDTs)

Who said they were not able to attend:-

Breda McLoughlin, Transitions Health Team

Mark Grierson, City of Edinburgh Council

Denis Rowley, Project Manager

Saltergate School representative

Kate Tomlinson, East Lothian Council

Anita Harrison, East Lothian Council

Carol Chalmers, City of Edinburgh Council

Sally Cheseldine, CAMHS

Pat Jackson, Child Health

Suzie Gibbs, Health

John Russell, Health

Marie Brown, Midlothian Community Learning Disability Team

1. Minute of last meeting

The minutes of the last meeting (5.6.06) will be circulated by email today. Any amendments should be emailed to Christine Schaffer.

2. Key messages for final report

The discussion today was about the key messages to be contained in the final report. In addition today's discussion will assist the preparation for the meeting tomorrow with the ASD & Asperger's Groups.

List of key messages:-

We need to identify the number of young people who are placed in out of area placements/residential schools. Local multi agency forums need to know about & plan for these young people so that resources are in place for their return to the local authority area. Quite often these young people are male and have such disabilities/behavioural needs related to ASD and/or attachment disorder. There is a risk of these young people becoming engaged with criminal justice services without appropriate supports being in place.

We also need to ensure transition planning for young people with genetic disorders e.g. Prader Willie Syndrome.

There are lots of transition stages in life e.g. leaving school, losing a job, moving house, leaving home, getting married, and bereavements.

One possible solution is the appointment of a Key Worker as promoted by the Scottish Executive.

Information is essential to be accessed by everyone concerned.

Young people & their parents need to be empowered to participate in meetings and processes. Young people need help to express their views e.g. through use of person centred planning. We need to undo the feeling that young people and their parents are being done to and are powerless.

There needs to be early planning and agreement re such matters as funding the support package. There needs to be clarity re the transfer from children to adult services. There also needs to be clarity re who does what and when.

The clarity of process is essential to make sure that planning is put in place to assist successful transition.

We need to have more information re "In Control" which is used in England. It brings together funding from different sources.

We need to build into individual planning alternative plans for what to do if the first choice does not occur.

We need to look at mainstream services supporting those young people requiring minimal support e.g. from sports, leisure and community Education services. Training for staff in these services is essential along with looking at solutions to engage and support young people who have minimal needs.

Similarly it would be helpful to explore the sharing of support services in College etc. This would however require someone to coordinate the services.

The East Lothian transitions pathway needs to be updated to recognise that Future Needs meetings no longer occur and have been replaced by the Education (ASL) Act 2004 and to include Person Centred Planning.

There is also a need to look at the transition planning for therapy services. Often parents are disappointed that there is an apparent reduction in service when young people transfer to adult services.

There needs to be recognition of the role of Local Area Coordinators. This service works with people from the cradle to the grave and so is well placed to support young people through transitions.

The key messages must include that employment should be viewed as an option for all young people. Young people with learning disabilities should have the same chances as any other young person. This should particularly be looked at for young people who are disenchanted with school and who are likely to have the same view of college for example. Young people need to be allowed to try different types of jobs before settling on a permanent/final job. There are a number of agencies available who offer support for young people into employment. There is however issues around sustainable funding for these agencies.

Young people are not always able to see the progress that they can make through employment e.g. starting at the bottom and working one's way up through the organisation or onto other jobs.

There needs to be an alternative curriculum available as early as 13/14 years old to help preparation for and the development of skills for employment and life beyond schools. There was a discussion about how this could be done in partnership with colleges but there is a worry that the involvement of school aged young people in colleges reduces the resources available to adults.

There is a need to explore an increase in the amount of work experience time from schools (e.g. a full term) for those young people who are likely to need employment on leaving school. Work experience should be linked to the young person's interests. For those young people they need experience of the routine of work, expectations of employers etc. Some years ago West Lothian had three specialist schools involved in a 10 week programme that gave a flavour of work and responded to individual interests. Could preparation for employment be part of the school curriculum?

There are concerns about the reduction in the number of apprenticeships available and that adaptive apprenticeships that support persons with specific needs are rarely available.

Issues were raised about the difficulties of transport in terms of supporting young people to use transport, learn journeys etc. Where non mainstream transport is required this is usually funded by Social Work.

Consideration needs to be given to how we can provide mentors or advocacy for those young people who require these support services during transition.

There is a worry that the most recent report re the NEET group (more choices, more chances) lacks a focus on the support needs of young people with learning disabilities.

Similarly the Welfare Reform Bill may also disadvantage young people with learning disabilities. This Bill proposes 3 months to support people into employment when it is known that people with learning disabilities need 17 to 18 months support to get into employment with ongoing support thereafter.

The interim report written by Denis Rowley suggests the appointment of Transition Champions.

Similarly the overall review is identifying the need for a learning disability Tsar who will oversee the implementation of the strategy. It has been further suggested that a Partnership Board should be appointed to oversee the implementation of the strategy, this Board should be co chaired by a person with learning disabilities.

Schools benefit from contact with adult services e.g. Careers, The Action Group Real Jobs, Person Centred Planning etc. There appears to be a gap in knowledge in schools about what employers are looking for i.e. enthusiasm, communication skills, reliability etc.

Could schools build up networks with local employers?

What impact will the new ASL Act have on transition planning?

A major issue for young people with learning disabilities on leaving school is social isolation. There is a need for support to maintain and develop social networks. Social Work is now only able to fund services that meet the criteria of critical and substantial need and this level of criteria cannot cover befriending/mentoring services

which might prevent people's needs becoming critical and substantial. There are also reductions in the funding available via Supporting People monies.

There is also a need to look at the support needs in transition for young people who are involved in offending. It is thought that about 70% of the prison population have difficulties related to numeracy, literacy, learning disabilities etc.

We need to consider the sexual needs of young people as part of the support required at transition planning. There is a need for Education to provide information about relationships etc. There is useful information available in the document "making choices, keeping safe".

There is the potential for Councils to build in a clause about training for people with disabilities when commissioning external services.

How do we assist young people with learning disabilities prepare for living away from the family home? It is not easy for young people with learning disabilities to share a flat with a number of other young people before moving on to somewhere of choice with people of their choice.

The report on Transitions needs to include the views of young people and parents. Numbers are also required. Sally Cheseldine will supply some numbers. PALMIS is another possible source of data. We need to look at the messages from the Same As You reports. Information is also available from the East Lothian pilot with three young people and their families moving through transition.

3. Date of next meeting.

This will be held on Monday 25th September from 10.00 to 1.00 in Conference Room One, Fairfield House, Dalkeith.