

national transition support team

working together to improve transition
for disabled young people

Case Study: Dudley Council (multi-agency working)

Introduction

This case study describes how Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council is using multi-agency working to improve local services and reduce out of borough placements.

Overview

A combination of more joined-up working between different local authority departments in Dudley and effective multi-agency working is pushing forward the personalisation agenda and improving local provision. Examples include improved short breaks, innovative use of funding resulting in short breaks with a difference, and the involvement of young people in monitoring local services.

In response to consultations with and involvement by disabled young people and their families, local provision such as youth services and short breaks are increasingly tailored to meet individual needs. The result is that disabled young people are more involved in their local community, families and carers are better supported, and there is less demand for residential placements out of borough.

Main transferable learning points

- Joined up working between local authority departments makes for better planning
- Pooling budgets helps reduce the need for external services and pay for improved personalised services
- Involving disabled young people and their families in service development improves satisfaction with local services
- Involving disabled young people in high quality local services means they prefer to stay in borough to maintain social ties.

Introduction

The Children and Young People's Trust in Dudley is the key strategic partnership that co-ordinates the delivery of services to children and young people. A combination of more joined-up working between different local authority departments and effective multi-agency working is encouraging the development of personalised services and is improving provision for young disabled people in transition. Examples include improved short breaks, innovative use of funding resulting in short breaks with a difference, and the involvement of young people in monitoring local services.

Background

In common with many areas, in the past disabled young people in Dudley experienced a fragmented transition. For example, as a disabled young person came to the end of a foster placement or residential school placement they were sometimes placed externally because of a lack of co-ordination and planning. The Dudley Children and Young People's Plan has the strategic aim of strengthening transition arrangements to adult services across the Trust. A multi agency transition protocol is in progress and will continue to inform future commissioning of transition services.

A multi agency transition group was set up to oversee Dudley's transition strategy and take forward the Trust's strategic aims set out in the Plan. The transition group includes representatives from Children's Services, DACHS/Adult Services, education, health, an employment initiative and Connexions.

Another bigger group with representatives from colleges, schools and providers helps steer transition at a more operational level. Adult Services now have two transition workers and there is a growing commitment to the personalisation agenda.

Uptake of Direct Payments was slow to start in Dudley: both staff and parents showed some resistance. However, nurses in particular but also Social workers from the Children's Disability Team pioneered their use and around 40 young people now use Direct Payments, many supported by the A4e organisation which assists families with recruiting and employing personal advisers, banking etc.

Aims and objectives

- To make the transitions between services and from children's services to adult services more positive
- To improve the quality and range of local provision so that disabled people receive a more personalised service
- To reduce the numbers of disabled young people with complex needs leaving the borough for services by developing new services to meet those needs
- To build the needs of people coming through transition into budgetary planning processes.

Approach

Dudley's focus on improving services has been supported by multi-agency working with health, education and children's social care services agreeing a pooled budget to enable in-borough solutions and improve local services. The benefits of this are that young people can be near their families and friends and enjoy improved services provided more cost effectively.

Expansion of short break provision when Dudley received Pathfinder status in 2008 has been one of the main areas of improvement. The authority is receiving over £2.5 million over a three year period to improve short break provision for children with severe disabilities and their families.

To ensure that the money was invested in the right services, Dudley's Children's Specialist Services commissioned its panel of young disabled people – Me2 – to consult with children, young people, parents and carers about how short break provision could be improved and how they wanted to be involved in the planning, commissioning, delivery and evaluation of future short break service.

From the consultations came recommendations which have resulted in the development of existing short break services and the creation of new ones. The improvement to short breaks provision has reduced the need to seek solutions out of borough and prevented families being overwhelmed by the pressure of caring.

Innovative use of the short breaks money has also seen funding for the youth service including support for mainstream youth clubs providing for disabled children and young people. The local authority has found that if the young person builds up a life in the area by going to youth clubs and taking part in their chosen social activities, they are more likely to be keen to stay in the area and don't want to go into residential care out of the borough.

Ensuring carers get enough breaks from caring also has an impact on the numbers of families seeking residential care for a young person. The Carers Direct initiative involves using a proportion of the carers grant that comes into the authority for children's services together with some short break funding to help support carers of people with long term illnesses or disabilities. Following assessment, carers can be awarded up to £300 to fund a break or leisure activity that gives them time off to do something outside their caring role. As well as conventional holidays the grants have been used to enable parents to do something for themselves. One mother used the money to learn to drive while a father spent his money on a shed to give him time out of the house. Carers often enjoy pampering treats – such as relaxation treatments and massage. Meeting the criteria for a grant is made very simple. The children's disability team arrange for an assisted assessment which also enables them to pick up any problems which they may be able to help with.

Me2 in Dudley

Young disabled people are among a group of young people in Dudley involved in helping services, ranging from play settings to youth clubs, to improve. The Me2 young people's panel members award a kitemark to settings they feel are truly inclusive and offer advice and support where they identify the need for improvements. Twenty-seven disabled and non-disabled young people have been trained to support the project by carrying out audits on services to see how welcoming and accessible they are for all children and young people. They check them out against a set of standards that they have helped write, guided by workers from Mencap who also provide training if the setting is not meeting the standards.

Challenges

The personalisation agenda has required major changes to the way departments work and a new IT and financial infrastructure is being developed to support costing, planning and commissioning. Delays to getting a new financial formula to work out personal budgets have been a frustrating process, although once this is in place financial planning should be simpler. Despite savings from doing more in borough, there are ongoing extra costs associated with employing staff to deal with the financial and IT requirements involved.

Successes

- At a strategic level, there have been challenges in reaching agreement about how to spend the pooled money but better joined-up working means there is now greater co-ordination resulting in better in-borough provision
- Better co-ordination also means that concerns such as safeguarding issues are followed through as a young person moves into Adult Services
- After a slow start, there are now around 40 disabled young people benefiting from Direct Payments and more in the pipeline

- The enhanced short breaks programme is helping to reduce the pressure on parents who are now less likely to seek a residential placement
- Young people are involved in checking out local services and awarding kitemarks to those that meet agreed standards. As well as giving the young people greater confidence and teaching them new skills, parents can feel more confident in their children using settings which have received the kitemark.

Conclusion

Although a higher than average number of disabled young people are moving from Children's Services to Adult Services this year, better planning and provision means that Dudley is more confident of being able to meet their needs in-borough than in previous years. The confidence is shared with most parents and young people who have been involved at different levels in improving services from working through the strategic multi-agency transition group or checking out local services on the ground.

How to improve services to reduce out of borough placements

- Make better use of resources by focusing on improving local services
- Bring together a wide range of agencies to plan strategically
- Agree to pool budgets to enable more personalised solutions to be found.
- Involve families and disabled young people at strategic and operational levels
- Use relatively modest grants to support parents and carers and give them a say in how they use the money
- Use person-centred planning and Direct Payments to personalise services for disabled young people
- Involve disabled young people in shaping and monitoring local services for accessibility.

Key legislation and guidance

The Children Act 2004 provides the legal underpinning for the transformation of children's services as set out in the Every Child Matters: change for children programme.

Section 10 provides the statutory basis for Children's Trusts (the duty to cooperate).

The relevant partners are placed under a 'duty to cooperate in the making of arrangements to improve well-being' and have a power to pool budgets and share other resources.

Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learners Act 2009 (ASCL) builds on the Children Act 2004 and strengthens Children's Trusts by extending the number of statutory 'relevant partners' to include maintained schools, non-maintained special schools, Academies, sixth-form and further education colleges, Jobcentre Plus and Pupil Referral Units/Short Stay Schools

The Community Care (Direct Payments) Act 1996 gave Social Service departments the power to make direct cash payments.

The Carers and Disabled Children Act 2000 extended access to direct payments to 16 and 17 year old disabled young people.

Children's Trusts: Statutory guidance on cooperation arrangements, including the Children's Trust Board and the Children and Young People's Plan brings together statutory guidance on Children's Trust co-operation arrangements, and the procedures and functions of the Children's Trust Board including the Board's role in preparing, reviewing and monitoring the CYPP.

Resources

Guidance on direct payments for community care, services for carers and children's services

Department of Health, 2009

Independence, choice and risk: a guide to best practice in supported decision making

Department for Health, 2007

Putting People First: personalisation toolkit

Department for Health, 2008

Journey to independence: How to run your life with direct payments

British Institute for Learning Disabilities, 2003
www.bild.org.uk

How to involve children and young people with communication impairments in decision-making

National Children's Bureau and Participation Works, 2008

A transition guide for all services: key information for professionals about the transition process for disabled young people
Department for Children, Schools and Families, 2007. Available to download from
www.transitionsupportprogramme.org.uk

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National Transition Support Team (NTST)

NTST is working alongside the National Strategies and the Child Health and Maternity Partnership to coordinate the delivery of the Transition Support Programme.

NTST is based at the Council for Disabled Children (CDC), the umbrella body for the disabled children's sector in England. CDC is hosted by NCB.

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