

# national transition support team

working together to improve transition  
for disabled young people

## Case Study: Hertfordshire County Council (joint assessments)

### Introduction

**This case study describes how Hertfordshire is using the Learning for Living and Work Framework as the basis for joint planning.**

#### Overview

Early involvement with the pilot for the Learning for Living and Work framework (LfLW) in Hertfordshire has given the council a headstart in developing a single planning framework for disabled young people in transition. Building on statutory requirements and the range of planning tools already used with different groups of young people in schools, the single framework is being piloted in around 12 schools, both special and mainstream, in the county. The approach is underpinned by person-centred planning and young people, parents and carers are involved in drawing up a plan for the young person's future. The multi-agency approach brings agencies together to pool resources and create bespoke packages for each young person.

#### Main transferable learning points

The LfLW framework provides a structure for multi-agency working and person centred planning.

Senior management buy in was crucial to getting commitment from schools and agencies.

Person centred planning can only be as good as the provision available.

Having a process where bespoke packages can be brokered with a range of agencies, including the third sector, is important.

Bringing agencies together to pool resources provides a closer match between meeting needs and aspirations.

Cross agency training will enable the work to progress to the next stage.

#### Introduction

Early involvement with the pilot for the Learning, Living and Work assessment framework in Hertfordshire has given the council a headstart in developing a single assessment and planning framework which genuinely represents the aspirations, needs and support for disabled young people in transition. The development coincided with the move to a more holistic, person centred approach to the planning and delivery of services which supports progression from school to adult life

#### Background

The Eastern Region was a pilot area for the Improving Choice Assessment Framework in 2006, taking a trail blazing role in terms of the format and process.

The framework (now referred to in Hertfordshire as the Learning for Living and Work Framework) has helped achieve good outcomes for disabled young people with very complex needs – in particular those who attract Improving Choice funding at the point the young person moves on to college. Improving Choice was an East of England Pathfinder that set out to develop local post 16 provision for young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities whose only alternative if they wished to continue in education would be to attend a specialist, residential college.

The idea to extend the use of the LfLW framework as a single transition plan for young people aged between 14 and 25 was developed through meetings between Hertfordshire's Children, Schools and Families division and Adult Services, local colleges and Connexions. The breakthrough came when a pilot was agreed at a strategic level by the county's transition steering group. Hertfordshire now has a newly set up transition team which includes transition social workers, a number of transition coordinators and a Senior Community Learning Disability Nurse. The team sits within Adult Care Services.

### **Approach: Developing the framework**

The starting point for the single transition plan is the LfLW framework which lends itself to multi agency assessments and planning.

Key features include:

- Section 139A reviews (carried out by Connexions) embedded into the framework.
- Adult care services in Hertfordshire committed to map all their statutory assessments.
- The planning builds on the transition review in Year 9 and includes all aspects of a young person's life. Other school based planning mechanisms such as Individual Education Plans, Behaviour Management Plans, health action plans and statement reviews. Pathway Planning and Personal Education Plans for looked after children are also fed into the process where relevant.
- The framework also incorporates planning for medical support needs.

The thinking was to make the framework as comprehensive as possible right from the start. It made sense for the work to begin within schools rather than the Connexions PA taking on the entire responsibility. That way the existing assessment and planning information on individual pupils within schools was fed into the process and joint multi-agency responsibility for the framework was there from the beginning.

### **Getting the pilot off the ground**

The Chief Officer for education in Hertfordshire invited all the secondary schools in the county to take part in the pilot, resulting in four MLD special schools, four SLD special schools and four mainstream schools joining up. Senior sign up was felt to be a key reason for the good response to the invitation.

With the help of the National Transition Support Team and funding from the Transition Support Programme a full-time post was created to support the pilot and a working group was set up which set out an ambitious working plan. With a brief to develop transition arrangements and provision for learners with learning difficulties, especially those with complex/high support needs, the Learning for Living and Work Implementation Manager works with schools, colleges, third sector providers and work based learning providers, such as the YMCA, to develop provision.

He manages three LfLW brokers, each covering a separate area of MLD, SLD and BESD. They meet with other agencies and the young people and their parents/carers to ensure appropriate decisions are taken and learning packages are negotiated. Each broker works with around 30 young people, mainly aged between 16 and 19, who are about to leave school or college and who need a package of care, education and/or support. Their role is to create bespoke packages in response to person centred planning. This means that if a college is unable to make suitable provision, other providers can be commissioned and a third party contract is drawn up.

### **Importance of the process**

The approach focuses much more on the process, in particular building in a much more person centred and innovative way of working but structured by the framework which covers aspirations for future education and training, employment, housing, independence, personal care and leisure.

Parental involvement is a crucial part of the framework form with parents and carers invited to contribute their hopes and expectations for their son or daughter's adult life, and to describe their needs for post school provision,

leisure and housing etc. The holistic process which the framework encourages also prevents parents being asked the same questions repeatedly by different professionals. The national charity Kids are involved to ensure the views of parents and carers are heard.

## Challenges

While there were difficulties in winning hearts and minds in schools and amongst managers in social care who were daunted by the enormity of the framework, the response to the invitation to take part in the pilot was overwhelmingly enthusiastic.

The challenge is to ensure schools work with other agencies and understand the person centred holistic approach. For example, the common complaint from schools that it is difficult to get the right people around the table at reviews can be addressed by working with other agencies before the review meeting. If young people are at the heart of the process, the schools' existing curriculum should ensure thinking and planning that takes place in PSHE and careers lessons, for example, feeds into the process. For some young people, the brokers play an important part in working closely with schools to involve the parents and young people in the process. The challenge for the LfLW team is that with so many people involved in transition planning, they need to ensure that everyone owns the process.

## Successes

The framework has enabled a closer match between meeting needs and aspirations, bringing agencies together to pool resources and problem solving. The process enables the right person to come around the table to broker individual learning and support packages locally. This can result in cost savings both in human and financial terms, whereas before, a more expensive placement away from the local community may have been arranged because of the difficulty of accessing the full range of local services.

Examples of individual success stories include young people with complex needs working on a local farm with specialist support bought in as

part of their learning package. They are enrolled at their local FE college, which has a quality assurance role, but attend Church Farm run by a not for profit company, Rural Care. The progress the young people are making speaks for itself. One participant, who was a non-attender at school, has not missed a single day since his course at the farm and another has moved into paid employment in the farm café. So schemes such as this have the advantage of linking in to post college provision as well, opening up new pathways for disabled young people. Review mechanisms are built in so that planning for progression after a placement is finished takes place.

Bespoke packages can take place in college too. One example is of a young man with Asperger's syndrome who had experienced difficulty accessing education in the past. An individual induction programme, 1:1 support in class and 2 hours a week specialist support to pre-empt problems and create a support network, has enabled the young man to complete his course and plan another.

Clearly person centred planning can only be as good as the provision available. Having a process where bespoke packages can be brokered with a range of agencies, including the third sector, has been a crucial part of the success story for many young people benefiting from the new approach.

## Conclusion

The strength of Hertfordshire's planning framework lies in its ability to change to match changing aspirations. The success of the approach means that the county is likely to extend the framework to more schools using the planning tools developed during the year.

There remains a lot to do to win all hearts and minds and work out how to roll out the framework across the authority. Cross agency training and extra resources will be needed to take the work to the next stage. There is, however, a growing commitment to the framework across the authority and a long term aim that the framework will form the basis of transition planning for all young people with special educational needs.

## How to use multi-agency structures to improve services

### Key issues and principles

- Multi-agency working enables more holistic assessment and improves opportunities to create bespoke provision
- Person centred planning is central to the development of a single plan and assessment
- The framework is seen as an organic document adaptable to changing circumstances.

### Barriers

Legal requirements for different services have to be reflected in planning and assessment. Hertfordshire has been able to incorporate these by mapping the statutory requirements and including these in the framework and by making sure that good quality assurance processes are in place.

### Key legislation

#### **Section 325 (5) Education Act 1996**

Requires LAs to review a statement at least every 12 months.

#### **The Education and Skills Act 2008**

Made LAs responsible for Connexions' duties in April 2008.

#### **The Learning and Skills Act 2000**

#### **Section 139A (amended by section 80 of the Education and Skills Act 2008)**

Local authorities now responsible for ensuring learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are assessed in their final year of compulsory schooling.

#### **The Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learners Act 2009**

Responsibility for the funding and organisation of 16-19 education and training transferred to local authorities from the Learning and Skills Council. Includes the responsibility for LLDD up to the age of 25 and is supported by the Young People's Learning Agency for England (YPLA) and the Skills Funding Agency (SFA)

### How to turn development of a single transition plan into good practice

#### Top tips

- Senior leadership buy in
- Energy to run cross agency training
- Commitment from senior managers who will pilot it
- Commitment to resource it
- Mapping the statutory requirements
- Ensuring parents and carers have their say.

### Key policy

#### **The Improving Choice Assessment**

**Framework** was introduced by the Learning and Skills Council in the Eastern Region as the mechanism for gathering information about the aspirations, strengths and support needs of disabled young people wishing to take up places with further education providers, including work based learning providers.

The **Improving Choice Pathfinder** reflected the view that young people with LDD have a right to a place in their local community and to access the same opportunities as their peers.

#### **Improving the Life Chances of Disabled**

**People**, a 2005 report from the Prime Minister's Strategy Unit, set out the vision for disabled people to have greater opportunities to take part in mainstream life. Transition of disabled young people into adulthood came under particular focus with an emphasis on putting in place improved mechanisms for effective planning giving disabled young people access

to a more transparent and more appropriate range of opportunities and choices.

**Through Inclusion to Excellence**, the Learning and Skills Council's report on funding and provision for learners with LDD, made recommendations for taking forward the inclusion agenda.

Alongside this, there has been an increasing focus on person centred planning set out in **Valuing People**, the Government's strategy for learning disability, which highlighted the need to plan holistically to meet individual needs across the whole spectrum of a person's life.

### **Aiming High for Disabled Children**

(AHDC): better support for families, launched in May 2007, is the transformation programme for disabled children's services.

As part of the AHDC programme the **Transition Support Programme (TSP)** was set up. This is a national programme to improve support for disabled young people in their transition to adulthood. TSP is running over three years with £19m of funding committed between 2008 and 2011.

### **Resources**

#### **Children's Workforce Development Council**

Covers Integrated Working including setting up and developing multi-agency teams.

[www.cwdcouncil.org.uk/multiagencyworking](http://www.cwdcouncil.org.uk/multiagencyworking)

#### **Setting up multi-agency services**

Information from the Every Child Matters website, including a toolkit for practitioners and managers.

[www.dcsf.gov.uk/everychildmatters/strategy/deliveringservices1/multiagencyworking/multiagencyworking/](http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/everychildmatters/strategy/deliveringservices1/multiagencyworking/multiagencyworking/)

#### **A Transition Guide for All Services**

This guide brings together all key information for professionals about the transition process including multi agency working (DCSF, 2007).

[www.transitionsupportprogramme.org.uk](http://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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