

# national transition support team

working together to improve transition  
for disabled young people

## Case Study: Kirklees Council and Cool2Care

### Introduction

**A project using the Innovations and Outcomes fund to provide personal assistants to disabled young people over 18 years of age using a national provider Cool2Care.**

### Overview

Kirklees already had a project for young people going through transition up to the age of 18 but had received a number of requests for this to be extended.

29 personal assistants and 11 volunteer befrienders are now available to provide personal assistant support to young people to enable them to access various leisure opportunities in their local community.

All Cool2Care personal assistants and befrienders are trained and supported by the agency and are “matched” to young people and their families who have a similar background and some shared interests.

It is hoped that the project will be sustained beyond the funding by young people purchasing the service using their own personal budgets.

### Main Transferable Learning Points

- It is important to engage with young people right from the outset when starting a new project or service. One of the key successes came out of young people being involved in recruitment of personal assistants and befrienders
- Person centred approaches can ensure that you have information about the young person’s likes and interests and their family background
- Supporting young people to be part of their community can increase their self-esteem and help to keep them safe, and consider local options for the future
- Ensure that both children’s and adult

services are signed up to a project that will support young people through transition age and beyond

- Use the opportunity to support young people to develop their independence skills as part of a project like this – travel training, managing money, making decisions

### Introduction

This case study describes how Kirklees Council commissioned Cool2Care to extend a successful project they had commissioned using short breaks funding, to support young people in the transition to adulthood. Using the Innovation and Outcomes Fund, Cool2Care have recruited both Personal Assistants and Volunteer Befrienders to work with disabled young people.

The aim of the pilot project was to enable disabled young people to fulfill their hopes and aspirations by recruiting younger people as carers. The outcomes for disabled young people have been that they are now able to get out and about in their local community with young people of their own age-group and enjoy ordinary activities like outings to cinemas and bowling. Despite the challenges faced along the way, Cool2Care and local authority staff have worked together to overcome the barriers and created an energetic and enthusiastic staff group that can be called upon to act as both personal assistants and befrienders by disabled young people and their families.

The key achievements have been the creation of a bank of personal assistants, improved access to a range of positive activities for disabled young people and for local young

people considering working in the caring professions, an opportunity to experience working with disabled young people with full training and support from Cool2Care.

## Background

The inspiration for the project came from an opportunity to extend a project already operating in Kirklees for younger disabled children and their families using the Aiming High for Disabled Children Short Breaks funding. Cool2Care were starting to receive inquiries from an older age group and realised that there was a demand for the scheme for over 18 year olds. Kirklees, like many local areas has a shortfall in the number of carers required with the skills and knowledge to support disabled young people in the community. Cool2Care have expertise in recruitment, training and retaining staff. They also have the drive and energy to engage young people in caring and as the name says, make caring – cool!

Throughout the Aiming High for Disabled Children programme, the consultation with families and disabled young people about short breaks described the shortfall of staff with the specialist skills to care for disabled children. Where they are known to families, they are often already employed, for example as teaching assistants. This means that unless this pool of carers is increased the same staff are often in demand through the school holidays and evenings and weekends as these are notoriously difficult periods for recruiting staff to provide short breaks.

Throughout the Transition Support Programme, events have been held where disabled young people said they wanted to have Personal Assistants who would take part in leisure activities, go to the cinema or just hang out with their friends, especially with young people of their own age group. Funding for short breaks is available to provide breaks up to the age of 18 years. It became apparent that if funding could be used to extend the Cool2Care remit to recruit personal assistants for the older age group, this would have the advantage of providing continuity into adulthood where personal budgets could then be used to fund personal assistants.

## Aims and Objectives

Cool2Care is a dynamic and innovative new service founded by Phil Conway, the father of a disabled child, in August 2007. It is a non-profit Social Enterprise that carries out activities which benefit the community and in particular help families with disabled children, young people and adults by finding skilled care workers or personal assistants who will provide care and support at home and in communities and train care-workers in the skills needed to offer support to families with disabled people.

Cool2Care have now become a national provider organisation, by developing a highly experienced workforce who understand how difficult it can be to find trusted and skilled carers.

They offer a matching service to disabled young people and their families and by listening to young people and recruiting a young workforce who think it's "cool to care", they can offer choice and continuity through transition as well as new opportunities for disabled young people to try activities and develop life skills.

The main purpose of the project was to achieve personalisation and self-directed support for disabled young people and their families at the point of transition to adulthood.

The aim and objectives described in the service level agreement were:

- To provide positive experiences for disabled young people and their families
- To ensure that disabled young people and their families have timely access to an appropriately skilled and competent Personal Assistant (PA)
- That all employed PAs have access to an ongoing programme of training and support to ensure high quality support
- That the service is planned to suit the needs of young people and their families in Kirklees
- That families and carers are provided with a break from their regular caring role
- That disabled young people and their families have access to the service

without a statutory assessment

The anticipated long-term benefits for disabled young people are to provide personal assistants and befriending volunteers who can support disabled young people up to the age of 25 years. This could enable disabled young people to access work opportunities, attend college, or become independent in using public transport.

The outcomes for disabled young people are:

- Increased independence for disabled young people who now have access to trained and vetted Personal Assistants and befriending volunteers during transition and they can choose where they want to go and what they want to do
- Increased confidence as disabled young people can develop new skills and try out new hobbies or interests
- Increased safeguarding and strengthening local communities as disabled young people are “out and about” and known rather than invisible
- Increased confidence as there is a smooth transition from childhood to adulthood with the same PA available to the young person and their family
- Increased wellbeing as innovative and fun activities are enjoyed by disabled young people

The benefits and measures of success for the project in the longer term may be far reaching as fewer disabled young people become isolated and stay at home and through improved networks and friendships are more likely to stay in their local community than be placed in out-of-authority residential settings.

### **Approach**

A service level agreement had already been developed as Cool2Care were already providing a successful Personal Assistant and Voluntary Befriending Scheme on behalf of the Local Authority up to the age of 18 years.

Cool2Care has a well developed

training programme which covers:

- Health and safety
- Supporting an individual with their medication
- Supporting someone to lead a healthy lifestyle
- Personal development
- Supporting an individual with relationships
- Supporting someone with daily living skills
- Confidentiality
- How to work in partnership with others
- Equality and diversity
- Discrimination
- Supporting an individual to find work or an education placement
- Mental Capacity Act
- Safeguarding
- Rights and Responsibilities

Kirklees was already planning to develop self-directed support and this fitted with the strategy they were developing. The project is funded by the Innovations and Outcomes Fund until the end of March 2011. The project has now recruited and trained a total of 29 personal assistants and 11 volunteer befrienders. The project will become sustainable as it is funded by disabled young people using personal budgets to purchase support from Cool2Care once the young person reaches the age of 18 years.

The key people in the Project are Cool2Care staff working in partnership with local people and Kirklees Council, young people and their families. The success of the project can in part be attributed to the dynamic approach taken by Cool2Care in their recruitment and matching process and as a provider offering what disabled young people and their families need.

One of the keys to success is the involvement of disabled young people themselves in the recruitment process, which offers a level of assurance and choice that is not always available elsewhere. Cool2Care acts in a 'matchmaker' agency role, linking family and PA, who then agree the terms of employment. All of Cool2Care's PAs are carefully matched to families, taking into consideration elements such as the hobbies and interests of the disabled person, cultural requirements and other specific needs. The services that PAs can provide are not restricted to short breaks only and include befriending, sitting, mentoring, life and independence skills.

## Challenges

The main challenge has been to ensure that both Adult Services and Children's Services were both fully committed to working collaboratively and both shared the same objectives. Already seen as a success by Children's services in delivering the Aiming High for Disabled Children's short breaks programme, Cool2Care has been welcomed by Adult Services who have transformed support for disabled adults in line with the Valuing People Programme and the personalisation agenda. The Cool2Care project has "bridged" the two national programmes and Kirklees vision for support in the future by enabling disabled young people to use a personal assistant and local facilities during transition to adulthood.

## Successes

Workforce issues are a challenge for most local areas and by using Cool2Care and through their energetic approach to recruitment the local economy benefits as new jobs are created. There is less chance of staff working in other settings such as schools becoming overburdened by the requests from families to provide care during holiday periods, weekends and evenings on top of their day job.

Feedback from disabled young people and their families has been extremely positive:

- "I love going to Lazerquest but couldn't go before, now I have my PA we can go together, we even go on the bus!"

- "If it's rainy or I'm not feeling too well, we might stay in and play on the playstation, Helen never wins, I'm too good."
- "I didn't like being around other people before, but now we go to a drama club together and it's great"
- "Thursdays are my best days. Before we go out we make a shopping list of all the things we want to buy, then we go shopping and buy them from my own money that I give to the people at the till."

## Conclusion

There is now a dedicated, trained and committed workforce available to work with disabled young people in Kirklees.

## Top tips

1. Think about using an external organisation with a track record in developing the local workforce as this can be beneficial by bringing energy and drive to recruitment practices and developed skills in matching carers and families
2. Listen to disabled young people who often prefer to have younger people who are more like friends to do things with
3. Be realistic - start with a small number of disabled young people and personal assistants and build up a bank of carers
4. Build the strategic support before you start the project particularly if there will be an impact on Adult Services budgets in the longer term
5. Think about what is available in the community and how accessible this will be for disabled young people, accessible changing rooms etc.
6. Decide on organisations where potential young carers may be found, further education colleges, universities etc.
7. Be prepared to invest time and local area staff to work with an organisation

who are new to the area and may not know what is available locally.

8. Ensure that families are involved in commissioning the provider and feel confident about the approach and the aims and objectives of the provider.
9. Involve schools and NHS providers to ensure that all the young person's needs are met and where there are health issues the carers have received all the appropriate training required.
10. Involve the third sector to extend the project and create new opportunities and innovation, sports opportunities, using Outdoor Learning Centres, Church Halls etc.

### Key policy and legislation

The Green Paper on Special Education Needs and Disabilities proposes the introduction of personal budgets for all disabled young people. This project has stimulated the provider market in Kirklees and will be useful in the preparation for change.

### Further Information

- **Cool2Care**  
[www.cool2care.co.uk](http://www.cool2care.co.uk)
- **Kirklees Council**  
[www.kirklees.gov.uk](http://www.kirklees.gov.uk)
- **Netta Stead**

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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. [www.ncb.org.uk/cdc](http://www.ncb.org.uk/cdc)

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