

national transition support team

working together to improve transition
for disabled young people

Case Study: Lincolnshire County Council (Participation)

Introduction

The case study describes how the creation of a shadow transition board has ensured that the voice of disabled young people is central to and informs the developing work of the transition service in Lincolnshire.

Overview

In this case study Lincolnshire County Council demonstrates that involving disabled young people within Strategic Transition Forums requires a real commitment to ensuring that disabled young people have the support and resources to make meaningful contributions. Equally they showcase a number of innovative ways of engaging disabled young people and describe the different approaches that they have taken.

Main transferable learning points

- Ensuring meaningful participation of disabled young people with a range of impairments and complexity of impairments requires an innovative approach and suitable resourcing and support from skilled participation workers.
- Key to the success of any such venture is ensuring that there is a good structure in place for consultation and responding to the views of disabled young people.
- A forum such as this should encompass a broad range of disability from different regions of the County.
- Participation activities should provide opportunities for a whole range of experiences, making friends, having fun, learning skills, planning futures and therefore meet a wide range of Every Child Matters Outcomes.

Introduction

Action for Children is a national charity committed to helping the most vulnerable children and young people, including those with disabilities, in England, Wales and Scotland. It works with a large number of local authorities to deliver a wide range of services and includes transition to adulthood as a focus in improving services for disabled children.

Action for Children has worked in Lincolnshire since 1988 and works with Lincolnshire County Council to provide services through Disability Lincolnshire. These services include:

- Crèches – specialist early years provision for pre-school children with severe, profound and complex needs.
- Domiciliary care – delivering support to disabled children and young people in their home.
- Community services – facilitating specialist activities and youth groups.
- Lincolnshire Shadow Transition Board, formerly Listen 2 Learn, is a project which works alongside young people up to the age of 25. It started as a participation project and engages in consultation and evaluation work. One example of Listen 2 Learn's work has been to look at accessibility in Lincolnshire libraries and the Shadow Board was involved in work, as part of East Midlands Planning Aid, in exploring what sustainable communities should look like in the future.

Background

The Lincolnshire County Council Transition Service Governance Board was established in 2007 with two disabled young people who were representatives on this board.

After an initial eighteen month pilot period with these arrangements in place, where two young people were members of the Executive Board, Action for Children was invited to bid for a three year project to establish a Lincolnshire Shadow Transition Board.

The Lincolnshire Shadow Transition Board was developed because the County Council Transition Service Governance Board decided that it wanted a wider group of young people to inform its thinking and to ensure that the views of a wide range of disabled young people were meaningfully represented.

Aims and Objectives

The aims of the transition service governance board are:

- To drive the change towards the best outcomes for young people with complex needs through the integration and realignment of transitional services.
- To provide the best experience of the transition process for disabled young people and their families.

The establishment of the Lincolnshire Shadow Transition Board was designed to support the achievement of these objectives in two ways – by including two elected disabled young people on the executive board and by undertaking wider consultation work that would ensure that the views expressed were fully reflective of disabled young people with differing levels of need, including those with the most complex needs, across the county. The wider group of young people participate in service development and services have a mechanism in place that would enable it to develop in a person centred way, responding to the identified needs of the young people that use them.

The delivery plan for the work ensured that there were practical opportunities for members of the Executive Board to engage with the Lincolnshire Shadow Transition Board and develop a real and meaningful understanding of their issues. For the young people themselves, being a member of the Shadow Board and being involved in its activities would provide personal and skills development opportunities, which would be valuable in adult life.

Approach

Action for Children's successful bid included proposals to:

- Establish a Lincolnshire Shadow Transition Board based in Lincoln and develop this to include young people from other parts of the county with physical and/or learning disabilities.
- Develop a formal process to elect two members per year to attend the Executive Board.
- Elect Lincolnshire Shadow Transition Board members to other key roles, e.g. Vice Chair, Secretary etc. within the Lincolnshire Shadow Transition Board.
- Establish a shadow board through Listen 2 Learn, developing it to include young people from other parts of the county (Listen 2 Learn is Lincoln based).
- Provide appropriate support to enable the young people to fully participate in the activities of the shadow board.
- Use creative mechanisms for consultation via four consultative events per year and two conferences, one for families and one for young people.
- A team building event for the Transition Shadow Board and the Transition Executive Board.
- Employ a support worker to facilitate the Shadow Board and support the elected members' attendance at the Transition Executive Board, including preparation, communications and transport.

- Financial contributions to enable the young people to attend the Board meetings.
- Specific activities including consultations and feedback on the outcomes, participation in the development of the transitions service communication strategy and the training and support of young people in the recruitment and selection of staff.
- The key issues and principles were around providing disabled young people with a voice in how services are structured and delivered. Peer consultation delivers much better results and Lincolnshire wanted to build on this to ensure that everyone had the opportunity to contribute.

Other issues the group felt to be important included raising awareness of disabled young people, their aspirations and their contribution, so that they felt listened to and valued. For example, the Lincolnshire County Council Communication Strategy could have been put together by a group of professionals but the Lincolnshire Shadow Transition Board made changes to the draft strategy that made sense to them, because how they wanted to be communicated with was different to the strategy the County Council had in place.

Challenges

It has been important to ensure that the representation on both the Executive and Lincolnshire Shadow Transition Board is not tokenistic and that it encompasses and fully represents a wide range of disabled young people.

This has been achieved in that the chair of the Shadow Transition Board is a young man with learning difficulties and the vice chair has a physical impairment. The group also includes young people with autism and profoundly disabled young people.

The practical activities completed by the Lincolnshire Shadow Transition Board and the Transition Executive Board have helped to ensure that the young people are full members of the groups. For example, there has been a training event where a formal meeting of the Transition Executive Board was planned to

take place at a Lincolnshire Shadow Transition Board meeting with the Chair of the Executive Board taking responsibility for ensuring that other councillors and members were aware of the meeting date and the need for all members to attend.

A recent joint Shadow and Executive Board meeting was extremely successful and it has been agreed that these meetings will now take place four times a year and there will be a joint summer activity. Additionally, a councillor who is on the Executive Board has successfully worked on the radio show which is one of the Shadow Transition Board's activities and has invited one of the young people who wants to be an MP to a Council meeting.

There have been practical issues relating to involving the wide range of young people, partly created by the vastness and rural nature of the area covered by the Lincolnshire Shadow Transition Board. These have been addressed by holding one meeting per month in Lincoln and taking the second meeting out to other areas. It has also been necessary to timetable meetings in the evenings or school holidays to facilitate attendance. The Lincolnshire Shadow Transition Board is a central group of young people whose role it is to consult with and engage other young people across Lincolnshire as well as those placed out of county.

Barriers have been around pooling budgets across Children's and Adult Services (ASC) and contract management arrangements. For example, Adult Social Care were reluctant to fund what they saw as a children's service and they already commissioned and supported advocacy services. They felt this was duplication. However, it was acknowledged that these advocacy services don't consult with young people and feedback views to decision making forums. The information that has been collated from the Lincolnshire Shadow Transition Board's consultations and the recognition it has received as a good practice model have offset some of their initial difficulties. ASC was persuaded that the Shadow Board could influence future commissioning.

Successes

The Lincolnshire Shadow Transition Board has been successful in engaging with members of the Transition Executive Board and ensuring they take account of the voice of disabled young people.

They have organised and run successful events including a transition information day for young people and their parents/carers.

They have extended the scope of consultation with disabled young people taking it into mainstream schools.

They have designed a questionnaire and produced figures and facts that reflect young people's experiences of transition planning which informs the work of the Transition Service.

They are currently engaged in a process of consultation with schools, gathering information on young people's experience of transition planning and person centred approaches.

They are supporting the achievement of Governance targets of ensuring the participation of young people and adults with complex needs.

Their work ensures that transition work is underpinned by consultation with the young people that the process is designed to support.

One of the current Lincolnshire Shadow Transition Board members reports that she enjoys her role, in particular interviewing people as part of the County Council recruitment and selection process. Parents have also responded positively to their young people's involvement in the Shadow Board.

Ensuring adequate support for the young people to prepare and contribute to meetings and to address practical issues such as transport has been one of the key factors to the success of the project.

Conclusion

The Lincolnshire Shadow Transition Board's aim is to engage with a range of disabled young people and young adults across Lincolnshire and those placed out of county, so that their views and opinions are represented and passed on to key agencies involved in transition, through a multi agency Executive Board.

The Lincolnshire Shadow Transition Board meets regularly with the Service Manager from the Transition Service to pass on their views about the Service and wider issues disabled young people face, thereby ensuring some accountability for the consultation and engagement work they have completed.

Lincolnshire Shadow Transition Board members have been involved in the recruitment and selection of each member of staff within the multi agency Transition Team. In addition they have been involved in a number of projects including the organisation and delivery of a local radio programme, to raise awareness of disability issues.

Funding for the Lincolnshire Shadow Transition Board is jointly provided across Children's and Adult Services. Listen 2 Learn were approached to become members of the Executive Board during the initial development phase of the Transition service. Once the service became operational, it was recognised that a wider group of disabled young people needed to be engaged and represented.

Lincolnshire County Council invited agencies to tender for the project and Action for Children were successful. At this point the Listen 2 Learn group rebranded to become the Lincolnshire Shadow Transition Board.

Future plans include an arts media project that will support disabled young people to share their views and opinions using a range of media, and a conference organised and facilitated by the Board. Training for members of the Lincolnshire Shadow Transition Board is to be provided, which will support them to train groups and agencies and raise awareness of disability issues, which could potentially be developed into a micro-enterprise.

Resources

A transition guide for all services

This guide, written by the Council for Disabled Children, brings together all key information for professionals about the transition process. It includes information on statutory duties and offers examples of effective practice to illustrate how services are addressing local need. It includes a chapter on the participation of disabled young people in the transition process.

(Department for Children, Schools and Families, 2007)

Disability Toolkit

Produced by the Children's Society, this website includes useful resources and case studies about involving disabled children and young people in participation and decision-making activities.

www.disabilitytoolkit.org.uk

Hear by Right

Hear by Right is a standards framework for organisations across the statutory and voluntary sectors to assess and improve practice and policy on the active participation of children and young people.

www.nya.org.uk/hear-by-right

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

This guide is produced by Participation Works and the Council for Disabled Children (2008).

www.participationworks.org.uk

Making Ourselves Heard

Making Ourselves Heard is a project which aims to ensure the active participation of disabled children and young people in all decisions directly affecting them; in the development of their local communities; in the strategic planning of services; and in all aspects of the work of the Council for Disabled Children.

www.ncb.org.uk/cdc/networks/making_ourselves_heard.aspx

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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

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