

Case Study: Luton Borough Council

Introduction

Providing support to young people who may not be eligible for adult services – one young person's pathway.

Overview

It is acknowledge that for some young people going through transition, that whilst they may meet criteria for children's services, they may not continue to meet the criteria once their support is provided through adult services. This particular group continue to be vulnerable and often only need a small amount of support to reach their potential. This case study follows the pathway of one young person who received a service from the children's team due to having some mental health difficulties, but was unlikely to meet the criteria for adult services.

This young person was supported through the Improving Choice for Learning and Living for Work framework as part of her section 139a Connexions assessment. This framework was used to broker a personal package of support for this young person that included education in her local community.

Main transferable learning points

- Supporting young people with person centred packages that include education can help to maintain them in their local community and avoid the need for expensive out-of-county residential placements
- Young people who are not likely to meet the criteria for adult services may fall through the net and end up needing greater support in the long run
- When looking at developing personalised support packages it is worth considering how a broker might be able to support the young person and their family to access the right services or create them when they are not available

It is important to ensure that there is a key person (this may be the broker) who is named that the young person and their family can develop a relationship with and who can drive the plan forward.

Introduction

Luton has recently restructured its Children's Services to offer a multi-disciplinary and integrated service to the children, young people and their families which it supports. The 'Integrated Service for Children with Additional Needs' team now includes the Special Educational Needs Education Teams for children with Autism, Speech and Language Difficulties and Visual Impairments. The team also supports the educational needs of children with additional needs under five, and the Children with Disabilities Social Care team and Occupational Therapy also sit within this integrated team, as do the Short Break services.

The Transition Team is the final team within the Integrated Service for Children with Additional Needs and is emerging as an integrated team within its own right. The Team Manager role is funded by both children and adult social care. This role links very closely with the practitioners within the Children with Disabilities social care team and the Transition Social Worker within the Adult Learning Disability Team. The Transition Team also includes specialist staff to support the educational transition needs of young people. The team is allocated two specialist Personal Advisors (one post is currently vacant) and a Broker, this is a grant funded post. The Team liases closely with the Transition Nurse who currently sits within Special Needs School Nursing Team, soon to be part of the new integrated service.

This case study looks at supporting those

young people who 'fall through the service gap' and at the age of 18 are often no longer eligible for specialised support. It highlights how the principles behind 'Improving Choice for Living and Work' has secured additional education funding which is supporting this group to both remain engaged and also to focus on a positive future.

For the benefit of this case study, I will be using one young person as an example of enhanced integrated practices, our brokerage service and an approach to the delivery of a 'personalised' or 'bespoke' FE package. I will refer to the young person as 'she' throughout the document.

Background

The term 'falling through the gap' refers to young people who have received a service from Children's services (either Education, Health and/or Social Care) but who will, at the age of eighteen, not meet the tight eligibility criteria for Adult Services. However because of their specific needs they remain vulnerable and in need of some support. The group of young people who 'fall through the gap' will often have similar issues – commonly a diagnosis of Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder or Asperger's Syndrome. Young people who have been looked after by the borough may also fall into this group.

Last year, within Luton, we had a number of young people who had received a service from children's services – namely overnight short breaks alongside a five day per week package of specialist education provision. As they approached their eighteenth birthday it became evident that there was not an Adult Social Care team which would be able to support them as the young people did not meet their eligibility criteria.

Luton has four adult social care teams:

1. Adult Learning Disability Team
2. Mental Health
3. Physical Disability
4. Older Person's

The young person in this case study does not have a learning disability in the way that the

Adult Learning Disability Team would formally recognise. They usually support young people and adults who have an IQ of around 70 or below. They also work with people who have a diagnosed learning disability, which this young person does not.

Although the young person has a diagnosed mental health condition she struggled to access the Mental Health team as it offers a very different level of support and intervention to what she has been used to receiving: namely Children and Adolescents Mental Health Services and short breaks via the Children with Disabilities Social Care Team. Asperger's Syndrome is not recognised within the services commissioned for Adult Mental Health. This is currently under review within Luton's Autism Strategy. The young person does not have a physical disability and is aged only eighteen, this means she is unable to access either of the other two teams.

As a result of this and the discussions going on with adult social care, it was felt that this young person needed to be supported to focus on her strengths and future aspirations, that without support she would easily become disengaged or 'lost'. The concern was that any hiatus in her progression at this point could potentially lead to a permanent exit from education and employment, which as a consequence could lead to a family breakdown and potential homelessness or worse.

She previously had a Statement of Special Educational Needs and due to her complexity she was supported by a specialist Personal Advisor within the Transition Team. It was important for her to be supported holistically and for positive interactions to take place which would allow her to plan for her future. With this in mind the Improving Choice for Living and Work document was completed with the young person, her family and the other professionals involved in her care.

The Improving Choice for Living and Work document incorporates the Section 139a Assessment. It is the tool which is used to share information on the young person with future training providers and sources funding for such educational packages.

Aims and Objectives

In Luton the Improving Choice for Living and Work tool is used to source bespoke brokered packages of education which keeps young people living within their community instead of attending Independent Specialist Providers (residential colleges) if a local college is unable to meet their needs. In this case 'Improving Choice for Living and Work' was being explored to fund a brokered package of education within the young person's community which would support her in reaching her goals.

The package being offered to the young person was a mixed package of education which encompassed five days per week. It involved three days undertaking an Accredited Award which would promote her skills and interest in an art vocational area. Alongside this were sessions on a one to one basis to develop her functional skills. Both providers offered life and social skills as an integral part of their programmes.

Through providing such a bespoke and needs-lead package of education to the young person, it was hoped that this would engage her in activities which would broaden her skills and focus on economic activity for the future. It was also envisaged that such a package would promote her positive mental health and enable her to celebrate successes. By having an activity to do every day this maintained her routine and sense of purpose which would mean she would be more liable to stay engaged with the programmes. Such a package would hopefully prevent her from engaging in anti-social or self harmful behaviours and provide an alternative pathway for her to follow.

Approach

Whilst adult social care were discussing the young person's needs and considering the best ways to support her in being successful in the future, the Improving Choice for Living and Work document was completed. This took the form of gathering information from the young person, her family, professionals involved in her care and contacting previously involved organisations. This created a picture of the young person's needs and incorporated her aspirations.

This document was then shared with possible training providers, with the consent of the young person. Due to the complexity of the case the Transition Team Broker supported this part of the activity by visiting the training providers and supporting them both to view their provision flexibly, and to complete the tool following their own assessment of her. Once a robust package had been compiled this was then taken to the Post 16 Education Panel for a decision on funding to be made. Following negotiations around fees the package was confirmed. The package is funded through an integrated strategic Luton decision making forum, with money from the Young People's Learning Agency.

The role of the broker has proven critical in implementing bespoke services for young people with complex needs in county. Sometimes this might also involve the use of self directed support. This role assists funding decisions to be objective about the investment required for vulnerable young people during transition that might otherwise fall through a service/eligibility gap.

Challenges

One of the greatest challenges experienced was trying to engage, and then maintain this engagement, with the young person whilst various options were explored and either confirmed or removed from the list. She found this challenging as she struggles with uncertainty. She also has very clear and rigid views on what she will and will not do and this made sourcing provisions a great challenge for the Broker.

It is very difficult to source training providers which can successfully meet the needs of young people who have such complex needs. Training providers tend to either offer education to mainstream young people, even those with additional needs, or they support young people with severe learning disabilities.

Young people who 'fall through the gap' are somewhere in between. The skills required of the training provider are great and varied. This is where the Broker role was invaluable in explaining the support needed and suggesting ways of overcoming barriers, e.g. suggesting

the implementation of a personalised behaviour contract.

The development and success of this role has lead us to consider new ways that we might assist and support the role by both streamlining some of the process involved and also developing the flexibility of the available training provision.

Successes

The greatest success with this young person has been her maintained engagement with the Transition Team and the training providers offering her support. She has attended a lot of her sessions and although she has encountered barriers along the way, she has remained focused. This has been greatly supported by the positive relationship that has been forged between the Transition Team and the training providers in supporting the young person.

The young person has undertaken community based learning activities and has developed her skills within creative studies which are contributing towards her Accredited Award. This has been hugely successful in supporting the young person to overcome some of her anxieties and obsessions as the training provider has discovered which activities motivate her.

Through regular face to face meetings the Broker has been able to resolve any issues as they have arisen and provided continuity and ongoing support to both the training providers and the young person. This has enabled her anxieties and fears to remain 'contained' whilst adult social care undertake further assessments and propose different future strategies of support. It also gave the training providers the confidence to continue with the programme and consider other young people with similar needs in the future.

The Transition Team feel that through using YPLA funding to assist a high risk transition we have been able to support a young person to remain engaged and focus on a future, rather than lose contact with her. As a young person who runs the risk of 'falling through the gap', this has been very advantageous to both her and the team.

Conclusion

The principles behind 'Improving Choice for Living and Work' have created an opportunity for a young person who, without this support, would have 'fallen through the gap'. If this had happened she would have most likely ended up within the criminal justice system or may have seriously injured herself. The package in place has created routine and structure in her life and provided her with a positive focus. The package works with her aspirations and uses universal providers to meet her needs. This enables her to learn the life skills she requires for a successful future within universal services and to become economically active. Although it has not always been plain sailing, the fact that she engages with a training provider five days a week allows the staff supporting her to keep her focussed and on track. It means that at difficult time in her life she is in regular contact with people who can mentor and support her. Any issues have been dealt with straight away.

It is our belief that delivering affordable bespoke training at a key point in a vulnerable but 'non eligible' young persons life, affords significantly greater likelihood of both future success and independence.

This example has allowed the Transition Team to see the potential of this approach to supporting this vulnerable group. It is anticipated that in the following academic year it will be used to support another young person to remain engaged and focus on his life and vocational skills. We confidently anticipate that as the broker role develops greater numbers of young people may be supported in this way.

For young people, this particular stage of an educational transition will be only one of the many that they will encounter in their early adulthood, getting this one right, the way in which it is managed, their full engagement in the process, and the quality of the outcomes, will help enhance all future transitions; to employment, independent living and full citizenship.

The success of this case has been very dependant on the excellent networking and relationship building the Broker has put in place with the training providers and the young

person and their family. Through an open and transparent approach success has been achieved as all involved parties were actively participating in the process from the beginning, alongside the young person.

How to...?

Young people who 'fall through the gap' are a very vulnerable group and without support they easily become disengaged or 'lost'. This group of young people contribute to NEET figures (Not in Employment, Education or Training) which Luton, along with all other authorities, is trying to reduce. It is important to maintain contact with this group and their participation in activities. If this does not happen it is highly likely these young people will proceed to lead unhealthy and/or chaotic lives which will often end up with them accessing adult health and social care through a critical intervention later on in their lives. However, through careful planning and appropriate investment at the time of Transition, it is hoped this need for crisis intervention will be reduced.

This case study highlighted some key 'top tips' which will be used again by the Transition Team:

1. The continuing development of the 'Broker' role
2. An honest and open approach to everyone involved, which is transparent. This promotes a baseline standard as well as trust and clarity from the training providers, and centres on the young person and family.
3. Opportunities for frequent regular one to one interactions so everyone had a forum to raise concerns and develop their confidence.
4. It was also beneficial to meet as a whole Team Around the Child so everyone knew what all other agencies were doing which promoted team work.
5. Asking for advice from others – the Transition Team always say that supporting this group of young people can be a challenge and no one service has all the answers.

The National Transition Support Programme has led on a fixed period of intense work which has seen 'Transition' become a focus for change and improvement. Luton has developed its skills in this area and credits a lot of its success to the establishment of the integrated Transition Team within the larger Integrated Service for Children with Additional Needs.

The Apprenticeship, Skill, Children and Learning Act 2009 transferred power to the Local Authority to plan and fund further education provisions and placements for all young people including those with learning disabilities / difficulties. This has allowed Luton greater flexibility in sourcing and funding local need-lead provision. It has also allowed the opportunity to explore provisions for young people who 'fall through the gap'.

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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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