

national transition support team

working together to improve transition
for disabled young people

Case Study: Nottingham City Council (multi-agency working)

Introduction

This case study describes how Nottingham City Council has set up a multi-agency transition team with Connexions at the hub of the transition process, overseen by a multi-agency transitions steering group.

Overview

Multi-agency working and co-location of transition services is providing the stimulus for more consistent planning and support for disabled young people in Nottingham. Connexions, which operates within the city and county, is at the hub of the transitions process which is overseen by a multi-agency transitions steering group.

Main transferable learning points

- A multi-agency steering group can work at both strategic and operational level and is needed to co-ordinate resources and services.
- A transition co-ordinator management post helps the smooth running of services.
- Co-located services create more opportunities for joint working.
- Connexions is a good base for a multi-agency team because it works with both Children's and Adult Services.
- Quality assurance work, such as mapping different groups in transition, gives professionals the opportunity to stand back and evaluate services and identify areas for improvement

Introduction

Multi-agency working and co-location of transition services is providing the stimulus for more consistent planning and support for disabled young people in Nottingham. Connexions, which operates within the city and county, is at the hub of the transitions process working with Children's and Adult Services and linking these to some of the functions it has taken over from the Learning and Skills Council, such as post 16 commissioning and a business enterprise alliance.

Background

Nottingham City Council set up a multi-agency transition team following concerns about transition in the authority. A half time post had been given by a team manager in children's services to look into transition and this was followed by a research report from Nottingham University working in conjunction with Mencap.

Young people and their families voiced familiar complaints that moving from children's to adult services felt like dropping off a cliff edge and they found changes in staff difficult. They also wanted more support in transition.

Marie Halford, who was involved in the research, went on to become a Children's Services manager, setting up a strategic level steering group which doubles as a practitioner level working group. This group includes senior managers from Connexions, Children's Services, Adult Services, Health, Parent Partnership Service, Housing and a

Commissioning manager (now representing both Children's and Adult Services).

The key result has been a single transition protocol for disabled young people involving all agencies, bringing together transition resources into one team co-located at Connexions and managed by Amanda Payne who reports to the strategic group. Connexions is now jointly owned by the city and county councils and recently took over the functions of Learning and Skills Council staff in relation to post 16 commissioning and the education business alliance, a business improvement team which out-sources itself to carry out work such as process mapping and change management.

With various different areas of responsibility taking place under one roof, Nottingham and Nottinghamshire Futures, which operates under the Connexions brand, co-ordinates transitions and influences strategy based on its knowledge of the picture of young people in transition through to post 16 education commissioning.

Aims and objectives

- to bring together current resources in transition into one team
- to reduce duplication
- to achieve earlier and better communication between workers
- to achieve a greater level of case co-ordination
- to effect better outcomes.

Approach

The transitions steering group began by working through all the issues of implementing a co-located team e.g. resources, budgets. It is now moving its remit slightly to focus on strategic planning and barrier busting.

The transitions team is based in Connexions and consists of some specialist Connexions PAs and transition social workers. The hope is, if agreement can be made, to have a transitions nurse coming into the team.

The advantages of co-location include:

- all the information about the young people in one place
- easier to establish person centred planning approaches
- easier to drive change
- improves decision making and planning.

Challenges

The different and changing structures of organisations can be a challenge to multi-agency working. For example, Nottingham City NHS is not a provider but is a commissioner so the role of transition nurse is half paid by the City and she sits within the county, so there are complexities about the fit between that and her role as part of the transitions team.

Restructuring of PCTs in Nottinghamshire also adds to the complexity and can slow up agreements although, crucially, there has always been a commitment to the transitions work despite the day to day practicalities.

Successes

Nottingham's structures are creating a number of benefits. They include:

- **Better communication aiding operational consistency**

Although communication was good before co-location, much of it was over the phone. Now the multi-agency team benefits from joint working co-ordinated by the transitions team manager. A person centred planning facilitator has been appointed for the transitions team and, with professionals based together, there is a more consistent approach and better planning between the different roles around the young people. The team is located in Connexions which itself sits in the middle of Adult and Children's Services. This enables the team manager to understand the concerns of each service and smooth over some of the difficulties of joint working.

- **Better communication at a strategic level**

The services now have a much better picture of the young people coming through. Better data and better quality of information informs more timely and cost effective commissioning.

- **Greater consistency**

The steering group includes both a strategic (head of directorate) level representative of each agency as well as an operational level service manager which means that they are both involved in making the decisions and implementing them. This in turn means that there is improved consistency at both the strategic and operational level.

- **Developing quality assurance**

Using funding from the Transition Support Programme, the strategic group has commissioned transitions process mapping work beginning with statemented young people in special schools who would clearly meet Adult Service criteria and looking at the stages they undergo from 14 through to 18/19 depending on their circumstances. An operational group from the business improvement team mapped that process and was able to make some recommendations and raised issues including:

- improvements to annual reviews in schools, ensuring that key people were invited and informed and that the young person was supported to attend
- concerns about safeguarding
- aligning the age at which different groups of young people moved into Adult Services.

Conclusion

Multi-agency working is now well on the way to being embedded within Nottingham City, supported by its structures at both strategic and operational level. Connexions, as an organisation which straddles both Children's and Adult Services, is well-placed to smooth the way for further joint working. While there may be less of a fit between local authority services and health, there is a willingness to overcome day to day problems. With further process mapping of different groups of disabled and vulnerable young people planned, Nottingham's structures are able to take a more strategic, problem solving view of services.

How to use multi-agency structures to improve services

- Ensuring structures and services are fit for purpose
- Being very clear about outcomes for young people
- Consistency and effective communication across and between agencies
- Person centred planning across agencies.

Barriers

Changing structures can slow down the process of agreeing multi-agency working but can sometimes bring improvements e.g. Connexions' wider role has given it a greater overview and enabled it to contribute strategically to local planning. Perseverance is needed in some cases as it can take a long time to work out agreements.

How to make multi-agency working good practice

Practical ideas

- Quality assurance work, such as mapping different groups in transition, gives professionals the opportunity to stand back and evaluate services and identify areas for improvement
- Co-locating professionals and services to improve communication and effect more opportunities for working together
- A multi-agency steering group to oversee policy and processes. Consider including strategic and operational level managers
- A transition co-ordinator post within Connexions helps the smooth running of services.

Key legislation

The Education and Skills Act 2008

Made local authorities 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)

Resources

Children's Workforce Development Council

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

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

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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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