

national transition support team

working together to improve transition
for disabled young people

Case Study: Nottinghamshire County Council

Introduction

This case study describes Nottinghamshire County Council using person centred approaches in schools to support transition.

Overview

Using person centred approaches is fundamental to good transition planning. This case study looks at how Nottinghamshire County Council are developing person centred approaches in schools to support planning and reviews for disabled children and young people.

Main transferable learning points

- Engage with professionals to ensure you still meet review requirements through the person centred review
- Information from young people's reviews can be used to support local commissioning and development
- A person centred approach is just that and is likely to be slightly different for each young person – don't get too caught up on the process
- Ensure time is set aside to prepare young people and parents/carers for a person centred review
- Ensure responsibility for following up actions is allocated at the review and that the young person and their family know who is responsible for what

Introduction

This case study describes how Nottinghamshire is developing person centred approaches in schools with the long term aim that all schools will use person centred approaches in their planning and reviews for disabled children.

Nottinghamshire approached the development of person centred approaches in schools through a range of consecutive strands of development including a programme of training, the launch of a new Multi-agency Transition Protocol, the amendment of statutory paperwork used for the recording of transition reviews and a pilot in four schools, mainstream and special, to develop a whole school approach to person centred planning and reviews for disabled children.

Background

Nottinghamshire local authority recognised that: parents/carers and young people with disabilities found the process of transition to adulthood disjointed and confusing; parents were dissatisfied with their lack of involvement in planning for their children's future; transition planning was very education focussed; information gathered through the planning process was not being used at a strategic level to inform the development of appropriate provision, which meant that disabled young people were generally expected to fit into available provision which was not always the most appropriate.

Person centred planning was relatively well

developed in Adult Services where colleagues were becoming increasingly frustrated by their lack of involvement at the school based planning stages for transition. It was agreed that Children's and Adult Services needed to work more closely together and that good quality, person centred transition planning needs to begin in schools.

Colleagues from the Connexions Service had attended regional training events on Person Centred Approaches delivered by an independent organisation and were keen to promote this across the local area. Some of these colleagues had received training in how to be trainers themselves and a comprehensive training programme for schools, services and parents/carers had begun to be developed.

Government drive towards a more personalised approach for young people with disabilities and associated policy and guidance strengthened resolve to review transition planning processes to make them more person centred and the transition support programme with the extra funding it brought provided further impetus.

Aims and Objectives

The long term aim is that all schools will use person centred approaches in their planning and reviews for disabled children. By putting young people and their families at the centre of planning for transition to adulthood, services will be better able to personalise their provision and local areas will be better informed about what needs to be commissioned for future developments that will enable young people to achieve their aspirations.

Approach

A pilot was established in four schools to develop a whole school approach to Person Centred planning and review. Two of these schools are special schools, one is a mainstream comprehensive and one is a provision for children and young people with complex needs and challenging behaviour. These particular schools were decided upon because they have a positive and inclusive ethos towards young people with a wide range of disabilities and had already had some staff trained in person centred approaches.

Each school was supported by a named Connexions worker who had been trained in person centred approaches and in the delivery of training. The Connexions worker initially helped to facilitate reviews and delivered training to other members of school staff.

Local Authority paperwork for the recording of statutory transition reviews for young people with statements of SEN was amended to make it more appropriate for use in recording the outcomes from person centred reviews and was distributed to the pilot schools for trialling.

Systems and related paperwork were devised for use in schools regarding preparation for reviews, conducting of reviews, follow up and monitoring:

The process followed in pilot schools:

- Inset is provided for tutors and meetings held or home visits made for parents/carers to explain the process
- Key workers work with the young people to prepare them for their review meeting and find out how they want it to be conducted, who they want to invite, what information they want to present and in what format. Some young people chose to make a powerpoint presentation about themselves to show at the review meeting and they design their own invitations and chose what food, drinks and music they want at their meeting.
- The room where the review meeting is held is set out and the review conducted in a relaxed and informal way.
- What is recorded on flip charts around the room during the review, including the agreed action plan, is typed up using the newly amended local authority paperwork and suggestions about its further development fed back to the LA.
- A record of the review is sent out within 10 working days to all who attended the

review meeting and an accessible version given to the young person.

- The young person's action plan serves as his/her Individual Education Plan and is reviewed termly
- Each young person has their own personalised transition folder
- School staff evaluate the review process with the young person. In one of the special schools the details of the review, including the action plan, are held on the school's intranet system to enable staff to check action point follow up and a home visit is made to evaluate the person centred review process and review the action points. Any outstanding action points are taken back to school to be followed up.

Structures in place to oversee the development of transition processes were reviewed and a Transition Implementation Group established. This is multi-agency in its constitution and includes children and adult social care and health services as well as education and Connexions. The local authority's Person Centred Coordinator is a key member of the group.

A new multi-agency transition protocol was developed with an emphasis on person centred planning and reviews. The starting point for development of the protocol was a full day event for all relevant agencies and services. The day was facilitated by the Person Centred Coordinator using person centred tools throughout.

The transition protocol was developed with the aim of setting out the minimum standard of support a young person with SEN or a disability should receive during key transition phases with a view to ensuring consistent good practice across Nottinghamshire. The planning around transition took into account the low level of statementing in Nottinghamshire and sets out the various groups of young people entitled to a person

centred transition plan whether or not they have a statement of SEN.

The Transition Implementation Group gathered and collated the names and schools attended by all those young people who, according to definition in the protocol, should receive a person centred transition review in the current year and undertook to monitor the implementation and quality of those reviews and the provision of necessary training in person centred planning and review for school staff. Letters have been sent to all schools listing those young people in each school for whom a person centred transition review should be held within the current school year and offering £200 funding towards the training in person centred approaches of relevant school staff.

The new protocol was signed off by key strategic leads from all relevant agencies and was launched/disseminated at a series of briefings for elected members and senior managers and at 4 locality events across the county. These were whole day events attended by a wide range of multi-agency professionals and non professionals. They were led and facilitated by the transition lead and the Person Centred Coordinator using person centred approaches and tools, and included a workshop on a person centred review meeting and a workshop on producing a Health Action Plan as well as a presentation by one of the pilot special schools on its progress in developing person centred planning and reviews.

Challenges

Time to conduct review meetings: The increased time needed to conduct a person centred review compared to the time taken by schools under their old systems has been a challenge for schools. Dissemination of the work in pilot schools and addressing this issue through the training programme has helped to alleviate concerns and encourage colleagues as they realise the enormous benefits to young people and appreciate that, as the processes become more embedded the time needed is reduced.

Time/resources to undertake training: Releasing school staff to undertake person centred training has been a challenge. The offer of funding by the LA to cover some of the costs of releasing school staff has helped to address this

as has the flexible nature of the training programme, which includes twilight sessions for schools.

Who should facilitate reviews: Some schools felt that teaching assistants were often best placed to undertake person centred training and facilitate reviews because of their relationship with the young people concerned but there could be an issue about increased levels of associated responsibility and related implications for grading/salaries. It is important that whoever undertakes this role has the permission/authority to suggest changes that may need to be put in place and that they have the support of senior managers.

It is vital therefore that managers themselves understand the process and appreciate its benefits, not only to the young people and their families but also the wider benefits in relation to review outcomes being able to inform school development plans and future commissioning of appropriate provision. The person centred training programme includes a “Leadership Day” for senior managers and core staff in schools aimed at addressing this.

Progression to further education: Concern was expressed that the person centred review process and the personalised transition folders created for young people in school are not continued and built on when the young person leaves school to take up further education, sometimes leading to a gap in the provision of necessary support. It is important therefore that there is early liaison with the provider of further education to explain the process and encourage its continuation if this is felt to be beneficial to the young person.

A “whole life” plan: Person centred planning and review is seen by some as a school process. Those agencies and services that are involved, or will need to be involved in the future, in providing what is needed for the young person to achieve their aspirations in all elements of their lives need to be encouraged to attend relevant review meetings.

Drawing up the action plan: When drawing up the action plan for a young person, schools may not always be able to suggest solutions to issues raised by young people or their families and therefore need to be prepared to signpost

to other sources for help or information.

Statements of SEN: Schools are often worried that a person centred review will not address all the necessary elements covered in the review of a statement of SEN and think that they will need to fill in two separate lots of paperwork, one showing the outcomes from the person centred review and another on LA paperwork produced for the review of a statement of SEN. It is perfectly possible to ensure that relevant questions relating to a statement are addressed within the person centred tools used in a review meeting. Nottinghamshire has reviewed their standard LA review paperwork to ensure that it can be used in a person centred review.

Successes

Young people and families are at the centre of reviews. Young people enjoy the positive experience of being told what people like and admire about them and they have grown in confidence. Families feel their views are listened to and that school is working in partnership with them in providing what is necessary for their children and they are sometimes pleasantly surprised by what they learn about their child in a person centred review. Person centred planning tools make it easier to raise difficult issues with parents/carers.

Reviews are holistic with more multi-agency involvement and issues such as leisure and possible future employment are being talked about and prepared for.

Young people feel they have ownership of their personalised transition folders and their action plans. The action plans are “live” documents and are reviewed and updated more frequently.

Person centred records are more informative. Senior managers in the LA are starting to give more consideration to joint commissioning arrangements due to better understanding in the current economic climate of efficiency savings that can be made by taking more account of individual aspirations. Managers in schools are starting to understand that the information gathered through person centred planning can inform their school development plans.

Conclusion

There is a greater understanding amongst

schools and across the local area of the benefits to young people and their families of person centred planning and reviews. A significant number of school staff in both special and mainstream schools have received training and a large number of young people have had person centred transition reviews. The comprehensive training programme continues to be delivered and further dissemination of work in the pilot schools will encourage more schools to adopt person centred approaches.

Where schools have used person centred planning and reviews, the young people involved feel ownership of their future plans and their families feel their views are listened to and taken account of. Provision made is more holistic and services more joined up and personalised to needs.

Schools and the local authority are beginning to appreciate the value of outcomes from person centred planning in informing commissioning for future developments.

Future plans

The local authority's plans include: to continue to deliver the person centred training programme to all schools; to further amend, based on feedback from the pilot schools, the new person centred paperwork for the recording of reviews and roll this out for use across all schools; to further develop their monitoring of outcomes from person centred planning and reviews and processes of ensuring this informs strategic commissioning.

The pilot schools' plans include: to extend person centred transition reviews to all pupils who would benefit from the process, whether or not they have a statement of SEN (mainstream school); to use the person centred review process for all annual reviews and not just transition reviews; to carry out a person centred review for those children with complex needs when they are in year 6 in the feeder school; to continue to use the new LA paperwork and feed suggestions for improvement back to the LA.

Key learning points

The quality of the experience for young people and their families is unquestionable. Parents/carers feel properly involved and young

people feel they have real ownership of their reviews, which are more holistic and result in more personalised and joined up services.

The process of person centred planning and review can lead to a massive culture change in schools with teachers having more and a better quality of interaction with parents/carers.

Because action plans drawn up at person centred reviews are clear and succinct, they are likely to get reviewed more often and their implementation leads to incorporating more user friendly tools across the curriculum.

It is easier to raise difficult issues with parents/carers in a person centred review because it is a more relaxed and supportive environment and the headings in the tools used to collect and record information lend themselves to being able to address difficult questions.

The process of person centred reviews ensures that everyone who attends takes responsibility for specific actions and so spreads the workload involved in follow up actions.

Although person centred transition planning and reviews can take a little more time initially, time is saved as those involved become more familiar with the process and feel better prepared at reviews.

It is essential to have a preparatory meeting with parents/carers and with the young person, to ensure that all necessary information is gathered during the review process and, particularly if it is their first experience of a person centred review, the process can be daunting for some who are unfamiliar with this type of meeting.

It is best if everyone in school is familiar with and understands the process of person centred planning and review before adopting it.

Transition review meetings need to be booked a year in advance to ensure the attendance of all relevant professionals

If possible, have someone at the review meeting who can type up information as it is generated during the review as this can save a lot of time

It's important to have a budget to pay for treats like cakes and drinks to be available at review meetings and to have an open mind towards what

a young person might chose to include in his/her review meeting e.g. a CD of Radiohead playing!

Key legislation and Guidance

Key Policy: Participation is a key element of the Core Offer made under the Government's Aiming High for Disabled Children programme. This sets out a national statement of expectations for how disabled children and their families will be informed and involved in assessments and services.

The Core offer covers: Information, Transparency, Assessment, Participation, Feedback

Section 328 (5) Education Act 1996: Requires LEAs to review a statement at least every 12 months.

Education (Special Educational Needs (England) (Consolidation) Regulations 2001 (as amended)

Reg 20 details the procedure for annual reviews of statements of children attending school (except for those in their 10th year of compulsory education); Reg 21 details the additional procedures for the Transition Review of statements of young people in their 10th year.

SEN Code of Practice, Chapter 9: Provides statutory guidance on annual reviews of statements.

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.transitionssupportprogramme.org.uk

Person Centred Planning Good Practice Guidance: This good practice guidance published by the Putting People First and Valuing People Now teams has been developed to help local areas understand how person-centred planning can help deliver Putting People First. It is one of the commitments in Valuing People Now (DH, 2010). <http://valuingpeople.gov.uk/dynamic/valuingpeople373.js>

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Contact: chris.c.harrison@nottscc.gov.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. www.ncb.org.uk/cdc

National Transition Support Team
Information line: 020 7843 6348
Email: tsp@ncb.org.uk
www.transitionssupportprogramme.org.uk

