

national transition support team

working together to improve transition
for disabled young people

Case Study: Sunderland Futures Team

Introduction

This case study describes the work of the Sunderland Futures Team and their use of person centred planning.

Overview

This case study highlights the work of the Futures Team in Sunderland who focus on a person centred planning approach to transition for disabled young people in Sunderland. The team take a different approach to a number of transition teams and highlight some of the advantages and disadvantages of this approach.

Main transferable learning points

- Transition planning for young people needs to start at 14 (if not earlier) and particularly for those with the most complex needs
- Using person centred approaches can support people to come up with their own solutions and can help with local commissioning and development of services

Developing local information for young people and their families in an accessible format can really support positive transition

Introduction

This case study describes the development and work of the Futures Team, which was set up to support all young people with disabilities in Sunderland who are likely to need long term adult social care support. It is jointly funded by Children's Services (CS) and Health Housing and Adult Services (HHAS) and based in Health, Housing and Adult Services of Sunderland City Council.

Introduction to Case Study

The formation of the Futures team is the approach taken by Sunderland City Council to respond to some of the problems around the transition process. Those specifically identified in Sunderland were:-

- low aspirations by many professionals, parents and young people.
- lack of priority given by social workers from adult services and children's services in working together to plan a smooth transition at the age of 18
- significant resource shortfalls for young people age 18-25 compared to those aged 14-18 making it difficult to achieve a smooth transition.
- the need to have a clear plan for young people to move from living at home with their family or in a residential placement

to supported living in the community.

Background

The aim of the Futures Team is:-

- to make transition smoother;
- to stop young people falling down the gap between Children's Services and Adult Services;
- to give families and young people some consistency of support and confidence in the process;
- to give the young people a voice, trying to ensure that services are built round them.

Drivers for Change

- problems with the transition process were identified and discussions took place over a two year time frame to seek to address them;
- government papers including *Valuing People Now – from progress to transformation 2007*, *Aiming High for Disabled Children – better support for families 2007*
- belief that Person Centred Planning should be at the core of practice.

Context for the Work

The Futures Team was set up within Adult Services as it was felt to be important that Adult Services should be pulling the transition process through rather than Children's Services pushing the process.

It was steered through by a Transitions Board established across HHAS and CS with Health involvement.

The Futures Team, which is line managed by the General Manager, HHAS, comprises 4 Person Centred Planning Facilitators, one of whom is a senior planner, 2 Transition Nurses and a Business Support Officer. The Transitions Board meets quarterly and is jointly chaired by the Head of Safeguarding (Children's Services) and Head of Personalisation (HHAS). The Board also

includes the General Manager HHAS, Strategic Manager, Disabled Children CS, Connexions Manager, SEN and Inclusion Manager, Senior Person Centred Planning Facilitator, Transition Nurses and a parent/carer. The Board is there:-

- to consider the transition process as a whole;
- to be involved in decision making;
- to identify common trends and
- to seek to unblock blockages.

Aims and Objectives

Purpose

The Person Centred Transition Team was established to support young people with disabilities and their families through the transition into adulthood period (age 14-25) where they are likely to need long term adult social care support.

Benefits to be realised

- excellent commissioning, providing and organising services rooted in listening to what people want and enabling them to live in their communities as they choose;
- transition process to be truly person centred, with young people and their families having access to information that helps them understand what happens at transition, how to participate in the planning process and how to make informed decisions about the future;
- shared action and responsibility to find creative solutions rather than fitting people into what is already there.

Approach

The Executive Management Team within Sunderland City Council was asked to endorse a report setting up the establishment of a Person Centred Transition Team in January 2009.

A decision was made that this team would concentrate on person centred planning and not take on case responsibility for individuals. The

reasons for this were:-

- different statutory framework for children and adults;
- a significant number of young people aged 14-18 were within the Looked After System, including those using overnight short breaks;
- the key issue to be addressed was planning and co-ordination

Team members from HHAS formed the team in July and August 2009 and began work straight away. They were joined some months later by two transition nurses.

Delivery

The key strategic managers are the General Manager, HHAS, and the Strategic Manager, Disabled Children, CS. The key operational staff are the members of the Futures team.

The Futures Team is financed by core funding from Adult Services, Children's Services and Health.

The intention is that Futures will work with young people from the age of 14-25. Because it was felt urgent to address concerns with the planning process for young people especially on the point of leaving school (around the age of 18-19) it was decided that this cohort should be the first ones to be actively supported by the team and then for the team to continue working with them in a more passive role as the young people move further through the transition process. The team would as capacity became available extend backwards first to include the 16-17 year olds and eventually start working with young people from the age of 14 onwards.

The Team was given a relatively blank canvas to work with, so it has been important for them to come together to work co-operatively as a team, to set up team processes and procedures, to publicise their role (including both what they can do and what they can't), to meet with social workers firstly in Adult Services and more recently those within Children's Services and to build relationships with schools.

Challenges

There have been a number of challenges to face the Futures team:-

- their role has needed to be communicated to professionals and families and carers;
- the plan to work with 18-19 year olds meant that there were expectations from parents/carers of other age groups that they would receive this support and it has not as yet been able to be provided;
- the staff of the Futures team all came from Adult Services and Health. This introduced two distinct cultures and ways of working;
- links with Children's Services and their staff have had to be set up;
- a protocol has needed to be developed to establish priorities for working outside this group;
- staff working in Children's Services and HHAS, including the Futures Team, were not able to access each other's information, so a new system had to be devised to hold information relevant to Futures and both Directorates.

Responding to these challenges has required the team to develop their own procedures, internal recording systems and tracking systems and ensure appropriate information sharing systems are in place. They have needed to communicate with different teams, Boards, forums, the housing subgroup, the BME steering group, the employment steering group and develop links into schools. They have also required abundant enthusiasm for their role.

With hindsight several things have been identified which could have been done differently:-

1. Much of the planning had been done by the Board in advance of the team being set up. It then needed to "hit the ground running." More logistical planning, including involvement by at least some of the Futures Team might have been helpful;
2. More selective marketing would have been beneficial so that false hopes were not raised;

3. Consideration of starting working with the 14 year old cohort and working through with them might have been an easier place for the team to start and would have meant that they were not now trying to work forwards with one group and backwards at the same time. This would, however, have meant that Adult Services would not have received the benefit of their input for some years. An alternative scenario might have been to have split the team with some seeking to work with the 14-15 year olds and others with the 18-19 year olds.

There still remains duplication in the transition process and more needs to be done to streamline the process to ensure that professional time is used to maximum effect and to reduce the number of meetings needed to be attended by families and young people.

Successes

1. There has been positive feedback from service users/parents/carers on the work undertaken by the Futures team with continuity of support, consistency of contact and feeling cared for being appreciated.
2. The Person Centred Planning Facilitators have been able to develop as planners and to design and customise plans making the process more bespoke. This has been enhanced by creative team thinking.
3. There has been the opportunity to develop links to gain a holistic picture of employment options eg developing links with Nexus, City Hospitals etc as well as within social care.
4. They have developed a Transitions Information Pack to go to young people at 14. This includes a dvd (funded through Aiming High for Disabled Children) which includes young people interviewing professionals and giving their stories about how they have achieved.
5. They are developing, through a

community software company, a software package for use in schools to support the transition process.

6. The team has won two regional awards - for health and social care for supporting independence and a Great North East award for putting people first/personalisation.

Achievements

1. Positive feedback from service users and their families;
2. Being able to influence the way services are planned;
3. Influencing the transition process;
4. Social Workers using person centred planning for service users with Individual Budgets;
5. Developing links with both Children's Services and Adult Services;
6. The Strategic Board has been able to bring people together.

Future Potential Benefits

1. Better outcomes for Young People;
2. The ability as an authority to become more person centred in its planning;
3. The ability to cascade the skills of the team to other parts of Children's and Adult Services, to make this tool more widely available;
4. The ability to influence the way that systems work etc.

Key Issues

1. Good communications are vital within social care and with outside agencies to ensure smooth transition.
2. The main principle on which they work is that the young people and the family need to be at the centre in how services are planned and delivered. The family needs to be seen as the primary supportive network and it needs to have confidence in Futures.

Practical Tips

1. The development of an information pack to ensure that the service user and parents/carers have information about the process. A dvd with young people sharing their experiences can be a powerful tool to help empower and build confidence.
2. The development of a software package to be used in schools to help inform practice and to enhance their work with the young person.
3. The use of films and multi media in the person centred plans to capture what the service user likes doing, and writing the plans in the first person so that they are live for the individual and help those who read them see the person behind the plan.

As with many areas of life there is a tension between the quality and quantity of person centred plans which can be developed and this is particularly relevant in the current economic climate.

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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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