

national transition support team

working together to improve transition
for disabled young people

Case Study: City of York Council (Post 16 opportunities)

Introduction

This case study describes how City of York Council is supporting disabled young people through its York Independent Living and Travel Skills Initiative (YILTS).

Overview

Over 100 disabled young people in York, once dependent on taxis, now travel independently to school and college after being taught the skills to use public transport, walk or cycle by a council funded scheme, the York Independent Living and Travel Skills Initiative (YILTS). The scheme, which was piloted in 2004, has resulted in substantial savings to the local authority which aims to extend it to a wider age group. Schools are supporting YILTS by putting travel on the curriculum and giving teaching assistants the opportunity to train as travel skills trainers. The call for greater independence from disabled young people and their parents and carers inspired YILTS and some are now confident enough to use public transport in their leisure time as well as travelling to college and school.

Main transferable learning points

- Travel skills training is a crucial prerequisite to helping disabled young people access employment and mainstream services as well as school and college.
- As well as empowering disabled young people, substantial savings can be made as they move from expensive taxi provision to independent travel.
- Training has to be personalised to suit the child, family and circumstances.
- Good links with organisations such as the local bus company and the local police force are needed to pre-empt or follow up problems.

Introduction

The York Independent Living and Travel Skills Initiative (YILTS) is located within the Special Educational Needs department of City of York Council's (CYC) Learning, Culture and Children's Services Directorate.

Over 100 young people have gained the necessary skills and confidence to travel independently since the scheme's inception in 2004. This has also resulted in increasing savings on Local Authority specialist transport costs.

Background

The idea for travel skills training came from the strong views of young people and their parents/carers about achieving greater independence. The combination of an overspent SEN home-to-school transport budget and a lack of movement in the development of an independent-travel training scheme in York also prompted this initiative. Staff operating the scheme sit on York's newly formed multi-agency Transition Team so have access to other professionals including:

- Children's social workers
- Adult social workers
- Connexions/IAG advisors
- Community nurses
- Therapists
- Educational psychologists
- LA SEN staff

Aims and objectives

The overall aim was to redirect money spent on home to school and college transport to training for disabled young people to enable them to work towards independent travel. The training scheme aims to provide the young people, particularly those dependent on one-to-one taxi services, with all the necessary skills to travel independently to school and college. Each YILTS training/support programme has the overall learning target of maximum personal independence.

Approach

YILTS helps students learn the skills to get to and from school or college on their own: walking, cycling, going by bus—or a combination of all three. Underpinning this practical initiative is the view that the young people are empowered by an approach which promotes the social model of disability with its emphasis on access for all through the identification and removal of barriers.

At each stage the student, their parents or carers, their teachers and other relevant staff agree upon appropriate learning targets, carefully assessing any risks that might be involved.

YILTS staff developed a method of risk assessing and risk managing each young person's current level of independent travel skills on any given travel route in and around York.

From this a bespoke training package and Independent Travel Plan was devised for each young person aimed at mitigating the level of risk identified and using the three-phase approach of 'accompany', 'follow' and 'meet'.

The initiative started off by acquiring £25,000 of Learning and Skills Council (LSC) 'capacity building' project funding. This was used to appoint a YILTS Coordinator for up to two days per week for a one-year period (November 2004 to July 2005). The YILTS Coordinator was to work with a pilot cohort of 13 Year 10 and 11 students, who all held Statements of SEN for mild to moderate learning difficulties and who all accessed taxi transportation, funded by the LA, to get to and from school each day.

From September 2004 to July 2005, six of the

pilot cohort of 13 students on the YILTS initiative were supported to move from taxis to public transport, cycling, walking or a combination for their journey to and from school with a gross saving to the LA of £20,290.

From September 2005 to March 2006, the remaining seven students were supported to become independent travellers. Each student who successfully transfers from one mode of transport to another through YILTS input is issued with a free concessionary bus pass for a 12-month period.

From September 2005 to March 2006, the YILTS Coordinator expanded his caseload to 20 students. This post became completely self-financing, as for every young person who became an independent traveller, the LA saved an average of between £1,540 and £1,900 per year.

From April 2006 to March 2008, the YILTS Coordinator post was increased to full-time on a fixed-term basis, becoming permanent in October 2008. A further YILTS Mentor post for students aged 16 to 25 + was approved for a two-year fixed-term period (term time only) beginning in January 2009.

The LSC contributions continued to be provided year-on-year and increased in size as the YILTS project developed, off-setting all of the running costs.

The following table provides:

- a) a breakdown of the number of students who were supported to be independent travellers from the academic year 2006/7;
- b) the gross savings made to the LA;
- c) the net savings made to the LA minus the YILTS Service Officer salaries and on costs at a total of £57,971.00 per year; and
- d) the year-on-year LSC contributions and any remaining cost saving out turn to the LA.

Period:	No. of pupils becoming independent	Gross savings made (£):	Net savings made (£):	LSC contribution made:	Total remaining out turn:
2006 – 2007	20	68,584.00	10,613.00	31,639.00	-21,216.00
2007 – 2008	33	84,372.00	26,401.00	32,669.00	- 6,268.00
2008 – 2009	39	79,794.00	21,823.00	30,038.00	- 8,215.00
	92	232,750.00	58,837.00	94,346.00	-35,699.00

The above figures have been based on a nominal cost calculation of each York-based pupil with SEND being transported from home to school via taxi costing the LA a total of £5.00 per day x 2 journeys per day x 190 days = £1,900 per head per year. Each young person moved off taxis onto being an independent traveller will, in the absence of clear ongoing evidence, nominally save the LA up to 2-years worth of gross cost savings e.g. £1,900 - £360 (issuing x 12 free monthly bus passes @ £30 per pupil aged under 19) = £1,540 for the first year + £1,900 savings for the second year.

Challenges

Perhaps the greatest challenge has been dealing with the small, but nevertheless significant, number of incidents of harassment of YILTS participants on public transport and on the street. YILTS consulted with both senior management at First York (bus company) and with North Yorkshire Police (in the first instance via their Vulnerable Persons Unit). As a result, the bus company First York have guaranteed appropriate access to bus CCTV footage if requested in evidence. In one case, a Community Support Officer issued the culprits with official warnings under the Disability Discrimination Act.

Curriculum initiatives to improve awareness among pupils in mainstream schools of the rights of disabled young people to travel without harassment were also initiated.

Successes

Some of the young people travelling by bus agreed that participating in this project had developed their independence, confidence and self-esteem. Feedback provided via the

Children’s Society PACT project found that some young people felt safer, more adult and more able to socialise with their friends by travelling on the buses. Some young people preferred cycling or walking to bus travel because they disliked the noise and numbers of people associated with buses. One young person still preferred to travel by taxi because “*you wait at home, travel in a comfy vehicle*”.

At the outset, some parents were anxious about their child’s safety and the risk of them getting lost, although most were reassured as their child learnt to travel independently and welcomed the new skills they developed. The YILTS Coordinator, Don Burbidge, points out in a report on the scheme that working with parents is an important factor in young people becoming able to travel independently:

“The most successful cases were those where parents took an active part, for example, some parents travelled by bus instead of by car in order to enable their child to practise travelling. Another parent designed a booklet to help their child remember bus stops and numbers.”

Parents interviewed by the PACT project said that the service provided more independence and freedom for their child and flexibility for the family. Some parents said that their children had learnt social skills such as “*queuing for buses, fitting in with others, using money and generally being safer on the roads.*” Another parent stated their child had improved their telling the time skills and had a better concept of time, something they thought they would never achieve. Some parents commented their children had learnt to use their mobile phones as a clock and alarm clock.

Mr Burbidge reported that the travel training had given the young people self-confidence to resolve difficulties, for example, when one

young person decided to get off a bus stuck in traffic and run to another bus stop to avoid missing the connection. Prior to the project it was unlikely that this young person would have had the confidence or initiative to take this action.

Traditionally there has been a tendency, even amongst special schools, to view travel skills for pupils with SEN as outside the curriculum. YILTS believed it important that schools as well as parents support the initiative and has acted as the catalyst in getting independent travel on the curriculum at Applefields School, a school for pupils with severe learning difficulties.

'Using Transport' is now being taught alongside a strong YILTS presence in school working with students on 1:1 training. Working with all 16+ students at the school has also improved YILTS' capacity to recruit appropriate students to its 1:1 training, which has led to an increase in the number of students travelling independently.

Conclusion

Students with a range of SEN and disabilities have been supported to become independent travellers – 92 students in total since the pilot. In addition to this, there has been a further pilot to train other trainers in using the YILTS model, and there have been three successful examples of teaching assistants in schools being trained to use the YILTS model with students.

The scheme has had an impact on the City of York Council's SEN policy. In Year 6 students with identified transport needs can be referred by a range of SEN service caseworkers or school staff via the Special Education Needs Assessment Panel to the YILTS service as part of the transition planning process.

The curriculum work on 'Using Transport' at Applefields School has impacted positively on other learning, particularly in helping young people gain practical literacy skills, such as reading travel brochures and numeracy skills such as counting out money and calculating change. Both sets of skills have been developed by reading timetables.

Lessons learned

- Get active support from parents: this improves the success rate.
- Get schools involved: this helps identify young people who could benefit from the service.
- Ensure referrals leave plenty of time to prepare a student. A referral following a Year 11 review is too late if a young person is about to transfer from school to college, for example.
- Establish external links and strategic links with organisations such as the local bus company and the local police force. This can help pre-empt or deal with any problems.
- Consider applying the model to other cohorts or areas of work, for example, as well as students with SEN and disabilities extend the model to adults with learning difficulties and/or looked-after children.

Looking ahead, the YILTS service will maintain a team of two members of staff who will continue to work with a cohort of 35 students being supported at any one time. YILTS training for teaching assistants in schools will increase capacity.

Developments already in the early stages include:

- Developing links with mainstream schools and providing advice to them.
- Establishing a curriculum subject that offers a menu of independent travel, travel training experience and travel studies for use across the ability/aptitude range and therefore appropriate to any key stage.
- Developing an outreach programme delivered by teaching assistants working with students with longer term needs. By redefining the role of taxi escorts to become escorts supporting YILTS training, students are able to eventually move to independent travel.

Top tips

- Look at how any costs saved can be ploughed back into current service provision/activities, for example, cost-neutral arrangements to pay for additional staff and activities.
- Build in an independent review facility to assess your pilot phase. These findings and recommendations will be invaluable when progressing your project onto its next phase.
- Use the expertise of outside agencies, for example the Health and Safety Executive; the Cycling Proficiency scheme.
- Ensure you offer follow-up support where needed by maintaining a YILTS Aftercare Register.
- Make sure someone from the independent travel scheme attends annual reviews, particularly Transition Reviews in year 9, or even earlier.
- Consider behavioural issues when considering transport options.
- Consider providing helmets and high visibility clothing free of charge for disabled young people cycling to school.
- Offer a free bus concession for the first year once a young person successfully 'graduates'.

Disabled Young Person's Experience

From the Project Review carried out by the Children's Society PACT project.

This case study shows the successful provision of a mixed training programme: cycling and public transport.

Student details

Student D is male and a student in Year 14 (Post 16) at Applefields School.

He has Moderate Learning Difficulties and a hearing impairment and is currently being assessed for ASD.

Student's History

Student D was included on YILTS's Focus Group in September 2005. From the start, parental support was strong, with his mother requesting the Coordinator's help to familiarize D, already a very able cyclist (holding a Cycling Proficiency Advanced Certificate), with a safe cycle route to Applefields School from home.

At the first home visit YILTS spent time identifying the safest route across the city, agreeing the use of National and City Cycle Routes. Risk assessments were established and learning targets agreed. The Coordinator cycled to and from school and home with D once a week for several months, guaranteeing his gradual confidence in travelling this route.

By June 2006, D was judged by YILTS, parent, school and Cycling Proficiency to be able to ride to school independently. However concern about D's competence if a 'technical' accident such as a puncture occurred and the risk of severe weather in winter meant there was reluctance to suspend taxi provision. For some time D had been wary of the idea of independent bus travel, but given the new found confidence that had come with independent cycling, he agreed to train on public transport. D picked up skills very quickly and graduated to totally independent travel, with a choice of transport (bike or bus).

D is now a confident and flexible traveller who delights in trying out new routes. His mother is pleased with the impact his new confidence has made upon other aspects of his behaviour.

D's mother had concerns about certain obsessive behaviours he has displayed but the increased confidence D demonstrated since gaining more independence has helped with this. He also seems less anxious. His mother reported that after first travelling home independently on the bus he said, "I love my life!"

However she is concerned about money skills and possibly obsessive unwillingness to use money. YILTS will be able to monitor this as part of aftercare, either liaising with school if he remains there or until transition to Adult Services.

Key policy and legislation

The Education and Skills Act 2008

Raised age for young people to stay in education to 17 from 2013 and 18 from 2015

Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learners Act 2009 (ASCL)

Transfer of funding and organisations of 16-19 education and training (19-24 for those with LDD) from the Learning and Skills Council to Local Authorities. The Young People's Learning Agency for England (the YPLA) and the Skills Funding Agency (the SFA) now support local authorities in their new role.

Section 57 of ASCL 2009

Duty on local authorities to prepare and publish a new Transport Policy Statement for young people aged 19 -24 with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. This can be produced in conjunction with the Transport Policy Statement for young people of sixth form age.

Section 139a of the Learning and Skills Act 2000 (formerly section 140)

The transport needs of learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities should be considered in assessments made under this Act

The Education and Inspections Act 2006

Local authorities have a duty to make necessary travel arrangements for all 'eligible children' from home to school, and discretion to make travel arrangements for all other children and young people. 'Eligible children' as defined by the Act includes children with SEN, disabilities and mobility problems.

Guidance

2010 Post-16 Transport Guidance

Department for Children, Schools and Families and Learning and Skills Council (2010)

2010 Transport Partnership Funding Guidance

Department for Children, Schools and Families and Learning and Skills Council (2010)

Home to School Travel and Transport Guidance

This guidance explains the legislation. Home to School Travel for Pupils Requiring Special Arrangements gives guidance to local authorities on good practice, including journey times, arrangements for pupils with severe learning difficulties, staff training, pupils with health needs, and travel assistance policies. Department for Education and Skills (2007)

www.education.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

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