

National Strategies Transition Support Programme

Oldham Project January 2009

Preparing Young People for
Person Centred Transition
Reviews

National Transition Support Programme Oldham Project

Aims

- Enable pupils with special educational needs who are at risk of exclusion to benefit from person centred planning in year 9.
- Ascertain the impact of a no blame, solution focussed approach and person centred planning in maintaining the presence and participation of young people at risk of exclusion in school.

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- High proportion of young people with special educational needs are being excluded from mainstream schools.
- Challenging behaviour is a major concern to teachers in mainstream and special schools.
- Zero tolerance?
- Blanket behaviour policies and punitive sanctions not working.

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- Negative view of young person rather than a negative view of behaviour.
- Challenging behaviour is often attributed to the child, young person or 'the family'
- Most families regardless of their background or circumstances love their children and want the best for them.

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- Naughty Child?
- Or a long term subtle disability or associated condition?
- Most children and young people who exhibit challenging behaviour want to do well and be a valued part of school life.

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- 1 in 86 children have some form of Autistic Spectrum Disorder.
- 1 in 20 children have Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder.
- Studies show that the areas of the brain which involve self control and inhibit impulsive behaviour are underdeveloped in some groups.

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Studies also show that

- children and young people who have difficulty interpreting the world around them can be taught to make sense of it, participate in school life and make good progress.
- Children and young people who have difficulty controlling impulsive behaviour can be taught to have more self control.

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- Children and young people with autistic spectrum disorders, attention deficit hyperactivity disorders and others who are unable to fully understand what is going on are very patient and resilient most of the time.
- Ever changing circumstances and increasingly and persistently chaotic environments may pressurise already vulnerable children and young people to behave in a challenging way from time to time.

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- The Children and Young People's Plan promotes personalised learning for all children and young people.
- Personalised learning and teaching is about taking a highly structured and responsive approach to each child and young person's learning.

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Personalised learning involves

- strengthening the link between learning and teaching by engaging pupils and their parents as partners in learning.
- consulting children and young people about their education, taking account of their views
- and has a direct correlation with improving outcomes.

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This much we know

- Central to all successful intervention is the knowledge of the child or young person.
- Parents know their children best.
- Involving children and young people in their own learning has a huge impact on their progress.
- Some children and young people need a highly individualised approach to enable them to participate and make good progress on their terms.
- Most parents want to help their children learn and take a full and active part in school life.

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We also know what works,

- Forward planning.
- Support from senior leadership and a whole school approach.
- Skilled staff who identify with children, young people and their families
- Effective theories and models of teaching and learning, matched and applied consistently to individual need that includes
- Flexible responses from confident robust staff who have high expectations and a no blame approach.

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The National Strategies Transition Project gave us the opportunity to

- Pilot a short term case study approach in Oldham High Schools.
- The aim was to support young people with special educational needs who were at risk of exclusion from their mainstream school and
- Prepare those young people to get the best from a person centred Year 9 transition review and
- Make sure they were still in school to do so.

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December/January

- Discussed the project with the Special Educational Needs Coordinators.
- Invited each High School to prepare an outline project plan for their school
- Commissioned a consultant to lead on the project.
- Identified training needs.

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Six High Schools

- Identified year 8 pupils with special educational needs at risk of exclusion
- Got the permission of the young person and their parents or carers to take part.
- Submitted an outline of a proposed project that best suited their needs within the parameters of the project.

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Each High School

- Identified a permanent member of staff to be trained in solution focussed brief therapy, building positive reputations, and person centred planning
- Ensured the permanent member of staff would be able to provide an agreed 8-10 hours of individual support per week for eight weeks to the pupil in February and March

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Each High School

- Planned the pupil's programme to ensure the pupils followed the core curriculum with support as necessary as well as the additional interventions.
- Agreed to work with the consultant and keep records of the strategies and interventions and monitor ongoing progress.

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The Local Authority commissioned

- A consultant project officer to monitor the project, support the delivery of training and mentor the participants.
- Additional teacher time to support the project officer
- Training in solution focused brief therapy, building positive reputations, and person centred planning
- Parents as trainers to support Building Positive Reputations and develop training materials.
- A CD record of the project and
- Allocated £5,000 to each participating school to backfill the permanent member of staff who was working with the pupils.

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Interim Update

- All six high schools continue to be enthusiastic.
- Staff have valued the training; in particular the solution focussed training, the building positive reputations materials and parental involvement.
- The person centred planning training was well attended and stimulated a lot of discussion.

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- There was a tension between the perceptions of 'high expectations and 'being realistic'.
- Some people thought there was a fine line between having high expectations and being patronising.
- There was concern about the need to give the appropriate amount of time to a 'person centred review' and fitting in with allocated schedules.
- The ethos of person centred planning has been recognised as highly important by everyone.

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- The person centred approach is felt to be the key to reducing the avoidable high incidence of mental health problems of so many young people with special educational needs particularly those that relate to communication, social and emotional difficulties.
- The person centred approach needs to start as soon as possible, even before a young person enters high school.
- The person centred approach works best when it is a planned and integrated part of routine activities.
- The impact of the project has been very positive most notably on the continued presence and increasing participation of the young people involved who are still in school.

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The project was implemented over eight weeks and ended at the end of March.

- Evaluation will be through analysis of structured interviews with participants and school colleagues and written reports from all schools.
- Interviews will be conducted by the consultant, teacher and parent trainer.
- ConneXions Staff, Parents, SENCos, and one pupil and parent from each school will be interviewed.
- The project report will be ready on 24 April.

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Next Steps

- The schools that took part are developing the project and embedding the approach.
- There will be training for other high schools in all three elements.
- Transfer the project to the Special Schools.
- Colleagues in the Primary Care Trust are adopting the Total Communication Policy.