

national transition support team

working together to improve transition
for disabled young people

Birmingham Transition Case Study

The transition process

Developing a strategic transition protocol

In 2007 Birmingham developed a five-year strategy to improve the physical health, behaviour, emotional health, literacy and numeracy, and social literacy of children and young people, called “A Brighter Future for Children and Young People – The Birmingham Strategy.” The strategy was informed by the consultation of over 500 families of children aged 0-6, and 6000 children and young people aged 7-18, and from the information provided priority areas for development were identified. The families completed a self-completion survey, and the children and young people completed an online survey. The strategy was prepared by a team of 35 multi-disciplinary leaders, supported by 200 stakeholders.

The focus on preparing the strategy was to identify the outcomes that they were hoping to achieve in Birmingham. Using the information provided by the children, young people and families, alongside national policy, and information on what is already working well they identified the priority outcomes, and were then able to look at the activities that would deliver these outcomes, such as policies or services. This process is completed before any services are changed, or new investments made, to ensure that any provision can meet the expected outcomes. The Brighter Futures Strategy makes it clear that services should be designed around the desired outcomes.

The strategy sets out to deliver improved outcomes for all children and young people in Birmingham, and it is the expectation that this will lead to improved outcomes for children in need, although they may still need to access specialist support. The strategy also establishes the Transition to Adulthood as the responsibility of both children’s and adult’s services. An important part of the strategy is the evaluation, and it is expected that the consultation of children, young people and families will take place annually. Evaluation will be used to move the strategy forward in the future.

In Birmingham they have created the post of Transition Manager. This manager is responsible for the transition of all vulnerable young people, including looked after children, disabled children, young people leaving care, young people with special educational needs, young people involved in substance misuse, young offenders and asylum seekers.

The Transition Manager has developed a multi-agency transition policy document that has recently been agreed by city councillors as the framework for transition. The key policy principles are to improve the identification of those needing support,

to create an integrated pathway and process, to provide young people with more choice and opportunities, to ensure that the infrastructure is able to meet the needs of young people, and to ensure a coordinated multi-agency approach, that leads to better outcomes for young people. The policy directly links in to the Brighter Futures Strategy, and has been developed using the same principles.

To develop the policy the Transition Manager consulted with large amounts of young people and their parents, using already existing forums. He met with over 40 young people in seven different groups. This included some young people with special educational needs or disabilities at college, care leavers (including disabled care leavers), and a number of groups involving young people, that were either about to go through transition, or had recently been through it. Some disabled young adults were consulted as part of the Learning Disability Partnership Board, and this group is likely to be consulted more for the strategy and implementation.

180 parents were consulted in different groups, and 100 foster care professionals were also consulted. Foster carers had very similar opinions to those of parents.

The Transition Manager also arranged for 4 stakeholder events and more than 40 people came to each. It was important to get managerial commitment to the policy, so the stakeholder days were targeted at a middle or senior manager level. Around 23 people attended all four events. The sessions were facilitated by the Transition Manager, and lead by an independent consultant, and began to identify what was needed to improve transition in Birmingham. There were some key groups that did not attend the events, and who had to be consulted on separate occasions. The protocol was then drawn together from this information, and the information gathered from young people and their families. Representation at the stakeholders days was not perfect, however a wide range of professionals were involved. The Transition Manager felt that it is important to have the involvement of an independent person, who can stand outside of the process, to facilitate the events.

The CYP Board, the Disabled children's group, and the leaving care work stream group were given the opportunity to comment on the contents of the draft and any issues that arose from it. City Councillors chair the CYP Board and the Learning Disability Partnership Board, and were engaged in an early stage of the development of the policy, ensuring the support of the council.

The draft "Transition for Vulnerable Young People" policy document has now been agreed by the directorate, and will also be presented to the CYP board for its approval.

The policy contains key elements. These are:-

1. Identification – to be clear about the target group for the policy, and to look at ensuring a smooth transition path.

2. Smooth Pathways – There will be a small number of integrated transition pathways.

Developing a local transition pathway

Within the policy there will be 2 pathways that a young person in transition may follow. These are:-

1. *The vulnerable young persons pathway*

This will be for young people who have received additional services as a child, perhaps in education or social care, but who are unlikely to qualify for adult social care services. These young people will receive a range of adult services like the rest of the community. They will receive support in transition planning, guidance and preparation as part of the transition path.

2. *Young people who qualify for adult social care services pathway*

This is for young people who will receive support from adult social care services. They will have a handover transition into adult social care, where an identified adult worker, works alongside the allocated children's worker from the young person's 17th Birthday.

Transition Champions

In Birmingham the Transition Manager is also the Transition Champion. He therefore has a responsibility to the city councillors to champion transition. He believes that it is important for a Transition Champion to be someone quite senior who is able to influence change across the authority, and who has direct access to management at a director level. The Transition Champion does not currently know of any regional groups that meet to look at transition, but feels that this may be beneficial.

Transition reviews and Person-centred approaches

In 2004 The Transition Pathway was piloted in the West Midlands, and this pilot included two schools in Birmingham. A number of children in the two schools have therefore been through the Transition Pathway process over a number of years, and the staff and young people are now very familiar with the process. This has not yet been independently evaluated, however the feedback from those involved seems to have been generally positive.

Birmingham have agreed the Transition Pathway as their way to implement Person-Centred approaches in schools. By the end of the 2006/07 school year, 14 schools in Birmingham had received training in it, and have begun to implement it in the 2007/08 school year. The process has only been used with a small minority of students so far, as it can take a long time to implement and develop the processes. An independent consultant has been employed to evaluate the work that has been done so far in implementing the Pathway.

45 schools in Birmingham, both mainstream and special schools, and 114 staff have now received training in this approach. This is over a third of secondary schools in

Birmingham, and it is hoped that over the next two years all secondary schools will be trained in this approach. Professionals from other organizations such as Connexions and Social Services are also offered the training, however at present the focus is on the schools, as they will be leading the way with the implementation.

Each school nominates one member of staff to attend the training, who will then become the Transition Pathway Leader in their school, and become responsible for the implementation, initially with just two students. The Leaders are also expected to raise awareness amongst other staff within their school. Each school is also given a financial incentive to implement the programme.

Birmingham has a Transition Pathway Coordinator who is responsible for supporting the schools in implementing the Pathway. She is available by e-mail, telephone or to visit and to support in anyway appropriate. This role is vital in ensuring that the Pathway is effectively implemented, and it is anticipated that the demand for this role will increase as more schools are trained, and it will be necessary to employ more people in this role.

The initial plan for the role out of the Transition Pathway had been to train staff in all 64 schools immediately, however it was decided that a more gradual approach would be used to ensure that schools could get the support that they needed to implement it. Schools are asked to only complete the pathway for 2-3 young people initially, and then each year this number is expected to grow.

The Transition Pathway model can be used to enhance curriculum development around the young person. The tools can be used in the classroom, and when young people identify their dreams and aspirations, areas can be built in to the curriculum to help them accomplish these. It can be difficult to gain staff support as many see it as extra work, however it is simply a different way of working, and using the tools usually helps staff to understand this.

The Transition Pathway approach has a focus on implementing person-centred approaches into the classroom. It was written by Chris Sholl and Fran Dancyger, and was piloted in the West Midlands. It is a flexible approach that allows the tools to be used in whichever way best suits the service or young person using it. The tools can be used to support a young person to look at all areas of their lives, and what is important to them. The training allows staff to practice using person-centred planning tools, and to begin to think creatively about working with young people.

For the Transition Pathway an emphasis is placed on planning prior to the meeting, and to the tools being integrated into day-to-day working with a young person. This can then be used to feed into a Person-Centred Review, which can immediately focus on what is important to the young person, as the information is already available, and an action plan can be drawn together from that.

Also in Birmingham the Inclusion Services have strong links with Helen Sanderson Associates to look at person-centred approaches in schools. The Inclusion team have

been focusing on providing mainstream schools with training, and mainly for children up to year 9. The Transition Pathway focuses on special schools for year 9 and above. Schools are able to access training for both approaches. Work is currently underway to ensure that roles are clear in these processes, and that each department is clear about its responsibilities. (Birmingham uses the PATH tool for transition planning)

Statutory services – an overview

Children’s trust models and multi-agency working in the transition process

The One Plan Project

There are currently 14 young people in Birmingham who have a special educational need, and are looked after by the local authority. The project plan is to ensure that these young people have one plan. There have been occasions in Birmingham when the Looked After review had been combined with the review of educational statement, however this is not the norm. There is now a senior level agreement to look at the merging of the LAC review, the SEN review, and at year 9 the transition plan. It has already been agreed that the plan from the Transition Pathway can be used as the transition plan, and an independent evaluator has been commissioned to review the one plan project, and in particular how it links to the Transition Pathway.

As part of the Transition Policy it has been agreed that a Vulnerable Young Adults Service will be piloted, initially for 5-6 young people. It will be linked to the transition model, and a range of services will be linked in. Young people will be supported to develop the skills that they need for adult life.

As part of the transition agenda it has been advocated that Birmingham adopt the early support model, in children’s centres across the city. Early support managers have been introduced to the idea of transition as a broader concept by the Transition Manager. This was one of the first things done for the transition to adulthood agenda, as this early investment has a big impact later in life. The Early Support has now had 3 launches, and is being established across the city.

The Early Support Programme is a Child and family centred approach, and therefore makes person-centred planning a more natural progression. Implementing this at an early age changes the expectations of families, and empowers them early on.

Supporting disabled young people and their families:

- ***key workers and lead professionals***
- ***direct payments and individual budgets***

A pilot looking at self-directed support and personalised budgets for young people in transition is about to begin in Birmingham, around the In Control agenda. The project lead was involved in the development of the Transition Pathway and was the lead implementer for Birmingham. The initial project is aimed at young people who

have already been through the Transition Pathway process, and therefore already have a person-centred plan. Issues have arisen, particularly around families not realizing that their young person has already got a person-centred plan, and it is therefore apparent that the link between different processes and approaches needs to be made clear.

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