

# **national transition support team**

working together to improve transition  
for disabled young people

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## **Sunderland Transition Case Study**

### **The transition process**

#### ***Developing a strategic transition protocol***

In 2005 Sunderland commissioned the Council for Disabled Children to assist with the development of a strategy for Transition to adulthood, and as part of this to look at the possibility of a Multiagency Transitional Team. This work led to several recommendations including developing processes for gathering information about young people with learning disabilities and difficulties and reviewing the information provided to young people and their families and reviewing transition protocols, following the appointment of a Transitions Development Officer. The report also suggested several ways forward for the developing of transition processes.

Sunderland has developed a guide for professionals to transition planning, which looks at the stages of transition, statutory requirements, and how that translates to Sunderland. It was developed by Connexions Tyne and Wear and Sunderland City Council. A more formal protocol has not yet been developed, as decisions are still being made about the form that multi-agency working will take.

#### ***Post-16 options: education and employment***

Sunderland recently received funding from the LSC to run a project around positive transitions for young people with learning difficulties and disabilities, particularly for those not in education, employment or training (NEET). A steering group was established to advise on the project which included Sunderland College and Connexions. A DVD was produced to inform parents and young people about the project and its aims. The target set by the LSC was to work with 80 young people, and to get a certain percentage of these into full time employment, training or education.

The decision was to manage the project through staff resources already available, and to spend the majority of the money on supporting young people. Outreach support was offered to young people who had previously been difficult to engage, and through building up relationships more young people were able to access the provision on offer. Colleges are unable to access a similar outreach provision, as they will only work with young people on the role. The project team also set up a series of taster sessions for young people to access, to give them an idea about the options available to them. They also gave young people the opportunity to see what it was like to be an apprentice. The feedback from the project has been positive, and more community based learning opportunities have been accessed. The project managed to work with twice as many young people as they were asked to, however did not receive the full funding, as not as many young people as required moved into full-time employment. Sunderland is now looking at ways in which some of the learning can be implemented in the longer term.

### ***Transition reviews and Person-centred approaches***

Sunderland were part of the original national pilot for person-centered reviews at the age of 14, however schools have had a lack of resources to maintain the process. Sunderland would also like to ensure that all young people with complex needs, or who are Looked After have an active person-centered plan by the age of 16, that influences the planning for their future, however are trying to identify where the resource for making this happen will come from. Children's services only have two person-centered planning facilitators, and in adults services young people in transition are often not the priority, so young people are put on a waiting list. In Sunderland the Special Educational Needs Section was initially reluctant to engage with the person-centred planning process, as they are concerned about the implications to the statement. More recently they have started to support 2 schools to implement person centred planning reviews using the Standards Fund. This will involve improving the paperwork being used for transition reviews and increasing staffing to undertake the process.

### ***Statutory services – an overview***

#### ***Children's trust models and multi-agency working in the transition process***

Following the piece of work completed by the Council for Disabled Children Sunderland seconded a social worker from the Disabled Children's Team to the post of Transition Development Worker in order to pull together the processes for transition and the Guide for Professionals.

Sunderland are still intending to develop a transitions service and have established a small multiagency working group, tasked with exploring the options and make recommendations as to what form this should take. One possibility was to establish an integrated multi-agency team for all disabled young people age 14-25, with pooled budgets etc and located in Adult Services. This was felt to be too ambitious for a number of reasons and more modest options are now being explored.

A performance analyst within Children's services has gathered information about the number of children and young people in Sunderland, with learning difficulties or disabilities, using the broadest definition of LDD. Information was gathered from a number of sources including the SEN database, the social care database, the Autism Outreach Team and the Portage service. One in every six children and young people was found to have a learning difficulty or disability. This information will now feed into the development of an LDD strategy for Sunderland, which will address the issues of inclusion, and interfacing with universal services. It will cover young people to the age of 25, and the AHDC core offer will be a part of it. The LDD strategy will cover all health and council services.

In Sunderland quarterly transitions meetings are held, where the needs of all young people age 14+ and known to Services for Disabled Children are monitored and tracked. This has had a positive effect for young people with less complex needs,

with planning being more coordinated, however there are still concerns that the information for young people with more complex needs, needs to be used more effectively.

### ***Connexions, information, advice and guidance arrangements***

Sunderland has a team of Specialist Advisers that work with young people in schools. They are part of the coordinating group, and support the development of processes. Connexions were a key partner in the development of the Guide for Professionals.

## ***Participation and further support***

### ***Participation of disabled young people in the transition process***

City Equals is a group of young people aged between 13 and 25. They meet regularly, write reports, make visits, consult with other groups and take part in local and national consultations – all in order to remove barriers to inclusion for young people who, like themselves, have learning difficulties or disabilities.

Funded by the Sunderland Youth Development Group and the Strategic Initiative Budget, with support from Connexions and Services for Disabled Children, staff have helped the young people to develop their communication with others and their comprehension of the issues. Decision makers consult with City Equals, enabling these young people to have a real role in building a more inclusive society

City Equals is recognised nationally as good practice in enabling young disabled people to shape services – so much so that two members delivered a workshop at a prestigious Young People Now conference in Birmingham.

Sunderland is considering employing a young people’s participation officer as part of the Aiming High for Disabled Children’s Short Break pathfinder.

### ***Participation of families in the transition process***

Parents in Sunderland have set up a Parent/Carer Council, which is run by and for parents, and can look at any issue relating to disabled children. An Annual Parent Carer Forum, chaired by parents, also gives parents the opportunity to contribute to strategic Planning as well as being a useful information exchange.

Parents sit as equal partners on the Aiming High for Disabled Children board in Sunderland. The board is responsible for making all decisions about how Sunderland will take the pathfinder forward.

Parents also sit on the Disabled Children’s Strategic Partnership, and on the Direct Payments Steering Group. The parents involved in the Direct Payments group have recently asked to lead a consultation with current users of Direct Payments.

### ***Supporting disabled young people and their families:***

- ***key workers and lead professionals***

- ***direct payments and individual budgets***

Work has been undertaken to ensure that the children's and adults direct payment schemes are compatible, as there have previously been issues between the two.

Adult services in Sunderland are piloting individual budgets, and Children's Services plan to look at their feasibility as part of AHDC work on short breaks.

### ***Information for disabled young people and their families about the transition process***

Sunderland has a website specifically for the families of children and young people with special needs. The website contains a directory, and has useful information for families about the transition process. The "Parent and Carers Transition Leaflet" is also available to download from the website. There is also information on the website on topics such as money, leisure and transport, as well as links to other useful websites.

### ***Youth services and activities***

In the year 2000, youth services in Sunderland were reviewed, as they were struggling to support disabled young people. There were several youth clubs running jointly between youth and disability services, but there was a lack of accountability, as neither service was leading. The Head of Youth Services and the Strategic Manager for Disabled Children developed a plan for youth services to take the lead in supporting disabled young people, but with a pooled budget. Service level agreements were developed in order to achieve this.

Sunderland funds an outdoor education centre in the Lake District, which all young people have access to, usually through school. The centre is equipped to support disabled young people, and Sunderland is looking at ways of increasing short break provision through the use of the centre. Young people are also supported to access the Duke of Edinburgh Award; expeditions are run from the centre. Resources include all terrain wheelchairs for young people to use on expeditions.

### ***Housing***

Sunderland has introduced a 15-year plan to eliminate all institutionalised care. This has an impact on young people in transition, as it is less likely that they will be offered care like this. Young people have previously not been a priority for accommodating, so it is hoped that the new policy will change this.

### ***Other information***

Sunderland is an Aiming High for Disabled Children short break pathfinder. They are currently identifying ways in which the funding will be invested. Young people currently have access to one in-house overnight short break unit, and a children's hospice, however this provision ends at 18, and there is often reduced level of provision above this age and nothing specific to younger disabled children. Sunderland is considering how the short breaks provision for young people aged 16-25 could be expanded.

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