

national transition support team

working together to improve transition
for disabled young people

West Gate School Transition Case Study

Top Tips for Embedding Person-Centred Approaches

- **Start small**

At West Gate the process began with a few staff attending a day to raise awareness of person-centred approaches. It then moved onto trying out a person-centred review.

- **Good training**

Several staff in the local authority and at West Gate School received person-centred review training, and more will receive it this year. The training was provided by Helen Sanderson Associates. The school have also developed a policy to raise awareness in the school about what person-centred approaches are.

- **Involve parents early**

West Gate now provides an information session for the parents of year 9 pupils, to inform them about the person-centred review process, and to give them the opportunity to ask questions. Information booklets are given to parents, however these are currently in the process of being simplified.

- **Well organised and structured**

Leicester City are not rolling out person-centred approaches until the systems and processes that need to be in place are identified.

- **Involve other professionals in PCA awareness training.**

All staff at West Gate School, including administrators and caretakers have attended a training day in person-centred thinking. In Leicester City, the Transition Support Coordinator has now run awareness days in person-centred approaches for a range of professionals working in the city.

- **Local authority coordination**

The local authority has a planning group for person-centred approaches, which is ensuring that systems are in place before the approaches are rolled out to more schools.

- **Strategic oversight**

The Head Teacher of West Gate school is part of the project team responsible for embedding person-centred approaches on Leicester City. This team is often asked to report back to Learning Disability Partnership board

- **Beware of the possible pitfalls**

It is important to be aware of issues that may arise, so that they can be tackled pro-actively. In Leicester City they are trying to address the issues that have been raised in piloting the processes, prior to rolling the programme out.

- **Train the right people**

It is important to ensure that the initial group of people trained have a good understanding of person-centred approaches, and are enthusiastic about seeing them implemented. In West Gate School staff have been asked to volunteer to participate in several aspects of the work, so that the initial staff involved are in it because they want to be, and can enthuse other members of staff.

- **Work/Life balance**

West Gate School have tried to implement some elements of a work-life balance programme to ensure that staff have the time to implement the changes.

- **Good communication**

West Gate school have ensured that there are channels for feeding information into and out of the leadership team, informing staff of changes that are happening, and ensuring that staff are able to provide feedback and raise issues.

Possible Issues

- **Resources**

West Gate school are committed to the principles of person-centred approaches, and have therefore invested in them. Although the local authority has funded the training so far, the school have purchased large television screens to be used in the reviews, and also spend money on ensuring the young people's pupil profiles can be printed in colour. The school also purchased memory sticks, to store young people's work on.

- **Staff time**

West Gate School have employed a Communication Teacher whose role it is to develop communication passports for all young people with communication needs. She is also trained as a person-centred review facilitator, and takes the lead in ensuring that young people are prepared for their reviews. Reviews themselves take a lot of preparation, so having a person responsible for this eases the workload of classroom staff.

- **Taking people with you**

It is important to be able to communicate to staff clearly what we mean by person-centred approaches, and why they are implemented.

- **Continuing to talk the talk**

West Gate school will ensure that they run regular training and information sessions to staff, and are committed to continually developing their practice.

West Gate School in Leicester City have been working to embed person-centred thinking and approaches throughout the school. They had an away day for all staff in the school, including the administration staff and premises officers, and spent the day looking at person-centred approaches. It was important to the head teacher that all contact with children is conducted in a person-centred way, and that a complete change in staffs understanding of Person Centred Approaches was needed to accomplish this.

In West Gate school the curriculum has been developed throughout the school, and all subjects now include a person-centred approach. This is documented in the daily curriculum plan, and is the responsibility of all staff.

All young people in the school with communication needs have a communication passport, and one-page profiles are now being developed to replace Individual Education Plans. These profiles are person-centred, although targets are included in them. The targets are selected on the basis of what is important to the young person, both academically and personally and then an action plan is created. The class teacher then regularly reviews the targets and the profile with the student during class time. The action plan will have three key points – What would I like to do? Who is going to help? Have I done it? How will I know?

The actions identified in the one page profile will also be reflected in the annual review. Each young person will also have a pupil profile containing essential information about the young person. Kept in the booklet is a memory stick containing evidence of a young person's achievements and work. Copies of the young person's communication passport, where appropriate, one page profile and action plan are also kept on the memory stick, as are videos of the young person engaging in activities, and information about what people like and admire about the young person. The memory stick will replace the record of achievement, and the school are considering ways in which families can contribute, and how it can move on with the young person. The school are also looking at inviting families 10 minutes earlier to reviews, to enable them to look through the work that the young people have been doing, in the classroom, with the young person before the review.

The school are working to a Work-Life Balance programme to ensure that teachers in the school are able to manage the new ways of working. It is important to the Leadership Team of the school that school staff embrace Person-Centred approaches as the way of working and that they replace old approaches.

The school continues to use person-centred reviews for some young people from year 9. This year seventeen young people have participated in person-centred reviews and it is hoped that by 2010 forty young people will be involved in the process.

West Gate School are developing a programme to provide work experience for as many of the young people as possible. This will begin at Key Stage 3 with a mini enterprise based in the classroom, such as making and selling cakes to the class, moving on to a mini enterprise based in the school in Key Stage 4, such as washing cars, with the hope that most young people will access a work based placement in Key Stage 5. Some young people in Key Stage 3 are now accessing a gardening project, in which they are developing the school environment, to develop their skills.

The school are developing links with New College. This is a mainstream secondary school located close to West Gate, and young people from West Gate will be able to access the facilities there for work experience. For example young people will be able to access hairdressing and health and beauty training facilities at the college. The link will also support young people accessing New College, who perhaps have low self-esteem or difficulties at school, by accessing support from West Gate School.

West Gate School now have person-centred leavers meetings for young people in their final year of school. Adult social services (where appropriate), Connexions, School Staff, the student and their parents attend the meeting and ensure that everything on the transition plan has been carried out. These meetings are held in each term of the final year, and one of them is combined with the annual review. A college may also be invited to attend these meetings if the young person is planning to go to college.

The school currently have a very pro-active Connexions personal adviser linked to them. He is actively involved in the transition planning process, and in the 2008/09 school year will be spending more time in the school, to develop better relationships with the young people, and better understanding of their needs. He also has regular contact with the parents of the young people at the school, throughout the transition process. The Connexions PA takes responsibility for ensuring that any actions agreed in the transition plan are carried out.

The deputy head teacher of West Gate School is currently working with the transport department to ensure that all young people travelling to and from school have a positive experience. Teachers have been asked to provide additional information about young people, and the transport department will endeavour to match the children and young people more appropriately. Escorts and drivers can then be offered more appropriate training around the needs of the young people that they are supporting. The school will also be providing information about communication strategies that work and don't work for the young people. With young people's permission they may in the future share one page profiles with the drivers and escorts.

The school continue to develop their person-centred thinking and approaches, however in the process of doing so they have encountered some difficulties. Parents can be a key part of the process, and although much of the feedback from parents has been positive, some parents have explained that they feel uncomfortable having

to get up at the review and write on the large sheet of paper, and parents often struggle to think creatively about what their young person can achieve. Parents also have concerns about the process, and its uses, if it makes no perceptible difference to the life of the young person, and professionals also have concerns about being able to deliver what a young person is asking for. The school make every effort to engage with parents prior to the review, and to ensure that any support that they may need to engage in the process is established. Booklets and information about the review process is also being simplified for those parents who may have literacy difficulties.

The Head Teacher of West Gate School is part of the Person-Centred Approaches working party, which looks at what is being done, and what still needs to be developed. The school expect to be able to support other schools in developing their processes, when Leicester City role out the programme. The Head Teacher has also had to report back to the Learning Disability Partnership Board about the progress that the school is making.

Sara Merriman

Practice Development Coordinator

national transition support team

Information line: 0207 843 6348

Email: tsp@ncb.org.uk

Web: www.transitionsupportprogramme.org.uk