MORE CHOICES MORE CHANCES

SUMMARY REPORT OF THE REVIEW OF SUPPORT FOR YOUNG PEOPLE WITH ADDITIONAL SUPPORT NEEDS IN

ABERDEEN CITY, ABERDEENSHIRE, CLACKMANNANSHIRE AND SOUTH LANARKSHIRE
Context 3

The Review Process 4

Partnership 5 - 6

Data Sharing 7

Learning Provision 8

Support 9

Employer Engagement 10 - 11
1. **Context**

1.1 Despite some improvements in leaver destinations across Scotland during the last few years, meeting the needs of young people who require additional support for their learning remains a tough agenda, particularly during recession.

1.2 Under current legislation, local authorities are required to initiate transitional planning for this group of children and young people at least 12 months prior to their intended school leaving date and to share with appropriate post-school agencies what the plan for the young person would be. They are also required to consult relevant post-school providers at the assessment stage and also seek the views of the young person and their parents.

1.3 In 2010, local authorities began up-dating their guidance to take account of the 2009 Act amendments to the 2004 Act which became law in November 2010. However, feedback from local authorities, young people and their parents, provided to the Scottish Government’s More Choices More Chances (MCMC) Team during a focused piece of work looking at the impact of the Act suggested that weaknesses in the process remained at the point at which statutory responsibility for a young person moved between Child and Adult Services.

1.4 The MCMC Team agreed that a short review should be carried out to identify the systems and processes which should be in place for young people who have enduring and persistent additional support needs (ASN) so that 16+ Learning Choices delivers for them in a consistent, sustainable and coherent way from school to post-school. It should also ensure they get the choices and chances they need to progress to positive and sustained destinations.

1.5 This summary report (October 2012) highlights key findings and areas for improvement identified during the review period. It is anticipated that the local authority More Choices More Chances Partnerships not involved in this review will use the findings to consider and improve the transition process from child to adult services which should be in place for young people who have enduring and persistent additional support needs (ASN).

1.6 It is important that robust post-16 transition planning delivers for all young people, particularly the more vulnerable, in a consistent, sustainable and coherent way from school to post-school, ensuring they get the choices and chances they need to participate in appropriate further learning, training or employment.
2. The Review Process

2.1 With these young people in mind, the review focused on:

- increasing the number of such young people who make and sustain an effective transition from school to post-school, thereby reducing the number of young people who are not engaged in learning, training or employment and

- identifying reasons why some young people who require additional support for their learning fail to progress into a positive destination.

2.2 In particular, the review concentrated on establishing:

- strategies and systems for identifying this group

- how professionals in Education Services, Social Work and Health currently plan the school to post-school transition for these young people and which other partners are key to the process

- the effectiveness of the articulation between Children’s and Adult Services

- what arrangements were in place to monitor and track these young people as they progressed through and beyond school to post-school opportunities

2.3 Four local authorities, Aberdeen City, Aberdeenshire, Clackmannanshire and South Lanarkshire agreed to take part in the review and members of the team were grateful to all respondents for their willingness to share ideas and experience and suggest ways in which outcomes could be improved for this group of vulnerable young people

2.4 Visits were made to the local authorities between January and the end of March 2012 and individual draft reports highlighting areas of good practice and current challenges were shared with each local authority for consideration and comment before finalising.
3. Partnership

Good Practice

3.1 All four local authorities have the stated commitment of senior officers and elected members to the agenda and each has established a multi-agency MCMC Partnership. Whilst the strength of the Partnership and reporting arrangements varies in each locality, each one has been successful in obtaining the involvement of a wide range of partners in support of this agenda.

3.2 South Lanarkshire has taken a systematic approach to governance using a locality-based approach to delivery with support for young people in transition being delivered through four locality groups and four authority-wide implementation groups. Social Work Services has been restructured from a central specification to an area-based focus with the relocation of specialised transition teams working alongside ‘core’ education teams centred around secondary schools. Partners consider that this approach has resulted in more robust delivery in the pilot areas, fostered joint training and has helped to break down the divide, encouraging earlier planning and discussion around capacity. It is expected that the process will be rolled out over time.

3.3 In Aberdeen City, the More Choices More Chances agenda is led by the successful Transitions to Adulthood Group which has clear lines of reporting through the Integrated Children’s Service Partnership to the Community Planning Group for the city. They have taken a proactive approach to the Family Firm agenda with the introduction of internships for young people and long-term placements for looked after young people and care leavers. The authority is working collaboratively with Glasgow City Council, Skills Development Scotland and Marriott Hotels to develop an extended ‘family firm’ approach.

3.4 In Aberdeenshire the agenda is linked up at a very senior level and the MCMC strategy is channelled through six community planning groups. This approach recognises the expertise and the contribution of the Third Sector to the employability agenda, especially at a strategic level.

3.5 The co-ordinated strategic approach begun by Clackmannanshire in 2010 is now beginning to have a positive impact on the agenda.
Areas for Improvement

- Ongoing Local Authority commitment to improving post-school destinations and the employability agenda particularly when faced with budget pressures
- Third Sector engagement, at strategic and operational level
- Co-ordination and partnership at all management levels to improve strategic and operational activity
- Consistent partner engagement resulting in improved services and transitions for young people
- Partner contribution to the transition process to ensure support is provided in a robust and timely manner
4. Data Sharing

Good Practice

4.1 South Lanarkshire has well-structured planning processes for the identification, monitoring and tracking of young people with ASN within and outwith the local authority. In addition to monitoring and tracking at a corporate level, details of young people are held by the Area Manager at a locality level, enabling local links to be made and appropriate support put in place.

4.2 In Aberdeenshire, good practice was demonstrated by some secondary schools using a proportion of their administrative staff time to log destinations on SEEMIS for up-loading to the data hub as well as using the information in case conferencing.

4.3 Clackmannanshire and South Lanarkshire are using the Risk Matrix to identify young people at risk of moving into a negative destination so that steps can be taken to improve their outcome.

4.4 The pro-active role of the 16+ Learning Choices Co-ordinator in Aberdeenshire and Clackmannanshire to encourage individual schools, as well as the wider Partnership, to use the data to identify individuals in need of additional help and support is important to this agenda.

4.5 All four local authorities have signed a data sharing agreement with Skills Development Scotland.

Areas for Improvement

- Data sharing arrangements between key organisations e.g health, local authority, schools, colleges to facilitate timely and appropriate support for vulnerable young people

- Data recording in line with Scottish Government expectations – which will be clearly set out in the soon to be published Data Practice Framework.
5. **Learning Provision**

**Good Practice**

5.1 All four partnerships spoke of reductions in college funding which had resulted in fewer places for young people with additional support needs. However, in Aberdeen City and in Clackmannanshire, Senior Managers had taken a decision to protect provision for young people with additional support needs. In Clackmannanshire, two new social enterprises have been created at the Alloa campus of Forth Valley College to provide opportunities for students.

5.2 South Lanarkshire students with additional support needs are well supported by Motherwell College based in north Lanarkshire. In addition South Lanarkshire Council, Motherwell College and the local community fund and support The Coalyard\(^1\) laundry and tearoom which provides a supported learning and transition environment for people with additional support needs.

**Areas for Improvement**

- Relevant, appropriate and timely information sharing to support transition process from school to college or training provision and onward progression beyond the first transition.

- Appropriate identification of school to post-school next steps for young people with additional support needs: working with parents and providers to consider whether college is the right destination for some young people.

- Sufficient range of college and other learning provision for young people with additional support needs.

- Ongoing/regular review of range of learning provision to ensure it is appropriate and timely and meets the needs of all young people with additional support needs.

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6. Support

Good Practice

6.1 All four local authorities demonstrated some excellent examples of support for young people with additional support needs:

- Effective transition processes in place from P6 and multi-agency meetings from P7 onwards prepare for, and support, pupils during and after transition

- The use of the Risk Matrix in better and earlier identification of need in South Lanarkshire and Clackmannanshire

- Tailored support from services such as SDS and CLD and Psychological Services making a difference to children’s lives.

- A simplified governance structure together with co-located professionals on school sites paying significant dividends in terms of multi-agency support for young people in South Lanarkshire.

- A Family Support Worker employed by South Lanarkshire Council, supported by workers from Education, Health and Social Services, to organise activity-based events for vulnerable young people to help raise their self-confidence and prepare them for transition.

- A local authority Transition Coordinator post to facilitate networking with a wide range of partner agencies, so that information can be shared effectively and support provided in a timely manner in Clackmannanshire

- A protocol to ensure that looked after young people receive an initial six-month tenancy at the point at which they leave residential school and re-settle in their home area, to avoid problems of homelessness in Clackmannanshire.

- In Aberdeen City Children’s Services and Adult Services are increasingly working with schools and community organisations as well as with parents to brief them about their role and to manage expectations.
Areas for Improvement

- Aligned delivery of Children’s and Adult Social Work Services based on the principles of Getting It Right for Every Child and the Additional Support for Learning legislation to ensure effective continuity of support. This is particularly important for high-functioning autistic young people.

- Improved referral and transition planning between services to reduce the risk of ‘taking on’ a young person for fear of being left ‘holding’ the case.

- Early partnership engagement, regardless of budget pressures, to avoid delays in progressing transitional arrangements e.g. Health where appointments may be necessary

- Managing service user expectations by improving parental awareness and understanding of the transitions process from an earlier stage
7. **Employer Engagement**

**Good Practice**

7.1 Across Aberdeenshire and Aberdeen City, Jobcentre Plus has explored skills gaps with local employers with a view to working with SDS to develop careers modules around employability and local labour market information for use in school careers education programmes.

7.2 The Work Experience Unit in Aberdeenshire Council works closely with the Aberdeen City Communities Team on work experience arrangements, using common health and safety checks and awareness raising sessions with pupils. Both local authorities intend to put in place arrangements for a personalised offer of work experience, personal development and employability in line with Curriculum for Excellence from 2012/2013.

7.3 In Aberdeen City, the Chief Executive and Directors of Service committed, as part of its’ Corporate Parenting Policy, to take an ‘intern’ and provide a ‘long term’ flexible work placement within their Directorate for a looked after young person or care leaver, with support provided by an internal mentor.

7.4 In South Lanarkshire, the local authority acknowledged its corporate social responsibility by encouraging its managers to mentor young people with additional support needs on a trial basis.

7.5 Sanderson High School in South Lanarkshire, a local school for pupils with additional support needs, has created in-house work experience through its ‘Café Fantastico’ and has staged themed events linked to the curriculum to raise employability awareness amongst pupils.

7.6 Clackmannanshire Works was recognised as playing an important role in the interface with local employers through its brokerage services and targeted support.

**Areas for Improvement**

- Corporate Parenting providing employment opportunities.

- Employment, supported as necessary, as a viable destination for those young people with additional support needs who are able to work.

- The role of all public sector organisations, in extending the scope and range of employer engagement to support young people with additional support needs.