Onwards transitions from school for young people with learning disabilities

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About this study - method

- Study within a single English local authority
- Scoping interviews with stakeholders in (child and adult) education and social care
- Observed ‘transition information’ events
- Survey of school leavers with special educational needs
- Longitudinal case studies of 5 (initially 7) young people with learning disabilities and their families
Transition planning in Council X

- Transitions worker allocated when young person is 14
- Annual meetings
- Plans aim to ensure a smooth transition from child to adult services
## Key findings

<table>
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<tr>
<th>What? We found echoes other studies</th>
<th>Why? We identified new causes of these difficulties</th>
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<tr>
<td>1. Families fearful of ‘what comes next’</td>
<td>1. Fragmentation of services</td>
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<td>2. Lack of joined-up provision</td>
<td>2. No link between individual and strategic planning</td>
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<td>3. Professional awareness of the ‘problem of transition’</td>
<td>3. Multiple and ongoing transitions</td>
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<td>4. Limited (insufficient) resources/services</td>
<td>4. Some issues not considered within transition planning</td>
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<td>5. Disruptions to family life</td>
<td>5. Impact of transitions on whole family</td>
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1. Fragmented services

- No clear or automatic path after school
- Lots of ‘choice’, little information
- Few statutory (local authority) day services
- Voluntary sector services limited in scope
- Personal assistants hard to recruit
2. From individual to strategic planning

- No system exists by which data on individual needs can be aggregated
- This has significant consequences...
3. Multiple and ongoing transitions

- Transition planning focuses on leaving school, but this is only the start
- Transition plans focus on FE college, but this lasts only 3 years (max)
- Other transitions occur in health care, social care and benefit entitlement
- Families valued social workers (and other professionals) who they knew over the long-term
4. Overlooked issues

- Sex
- Relationships
- Loneliness
- Friendships
- Bullying
- Safeguarding
- Internet safety
- Mate crime

Personal transitions are not just about services; they are also social, biological and psychological.
5. Impact on whole family

- Stresses on young person: changes in behaviour
- Stresses on parents (and siblings)
- Changes to patterns of family life and employment as 5 days per week (school) is lost
So what conclusions can be drawn?

- Small scale study
- One local authority
- BUT... the key findings do echo those of earlier studies
- AND... the study is rare in being longitudinal
Transitions are changing

‘Traditional’ transitions

- Special school until aged 19
- Local authority day centre
- Group home when parents become old

Current transitions

- FE college
- Voluntary sector day services
- Personal budgets
- Service Brokers
- Residential college
- Adult social care
- Direct payments
How services need to change

• Link individual transitions plans and local authority strategic plans
• Better information for young people with learning disabilities and their families
• Recognition of personal transitions and transformations that take place during this period
Social work needs to adapt

• Not all aspects of ‘transition’ are the responsibility of social workers
• But social workers need to understand how their role fits within the wider picture