

Briefing Paper

Personalised Transition: Citizenship & Further Education

by

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The issue addressed in this briefing paper is the difficulty young people with profound and multiple learning disabilities currently have regarding access to Further Education (FE).

Executive summary

A curriculum for citizenship is one of the four pillars of Personalised Transition¹. Further Education Colleges should be working towards providing effective provision for **all** young people with learning difficulties, including those with the most complex impairments and highest support needs. This briefing paper outlines the urgent need to do things differently in order to create opportunities for:

- Independence and a meaningful life style for young people with multiple learning disabilities
- Savings – significant cash efficiencies can be made by providing local, high quality provision

Our present system of providing out of area placements means that money coming in to Local Authorities is being invested in colleges a long way from home. The difference between local and out of city provision is sometimes as much as £200,000 for each student, every year. This money can come from education, social care and health. We propose to redirect that money so that it is available to develop the local infrastructure. By creating local learning opportunities for a small group of young people who are presently unable to access FE, and therefore eligible for funding for out of city placements, we are paving the way for many more to do the same. This paper outlines how this can happen and how we can help.

¹ The other three pillars are: Family Leadership; Integrated Funding; Expert Co-ordinated Support. For more information see: Alison Cowan (2010) Personalised Transition: Innovations in health, education and support (Centre for Welfare Reform) [Personalised Transition: Innovations in health, education and support](#)

The current situation

Personal development and learning is vital to all of us. But what we need to learn and how we learn varies. This is especially true for people with complex impairments and high support needs:

Whilst their achievements may be measured in much smaller steps, people with profound and multiple learning disabilities [PMLD] continue to learn and develop all their lives. There needs to be a redefinition of learning to include a wider range of non academic services, outcomes and funding criteria so that people with PMLD can access appropriate FE opportunities. (PMLD Network, 2006)²

Further Education Colleges should be working towards providing effective provision for **all** young people with learning difficulties, including those with the most complex impairments and highest support needs.

There is no national data available about the quantity or the quality of FE provision for young people with complex impairments and high support needs, but recent research backs up our experience: young people and families are requesting FE provision that is not commonly offered and can be difficult to put in place:

Since people with learning disabilities have difficulty learning, further education is potentially a very important opportunity for people to continue to grow and develop. Only 14% of people with profound intellectual and multiple disabilities were in further education in 2003/4. Since then, there has been a marked reduction in further education provision for people with learning disabilities³.

At the moment, young people with high support needs are commonly offered Day Centre Provision rather than opportunities to extend their learning:

J. takes a long time to learn things and develop. I recently met someone with the same condition as J. who has started walking independently for the first time in her life. She is 43 years old. J. goes to a day centre because there is nowhere else for him to go. But I am not happy with the way they treat him there. In fact I don't let him go alone. He always has one of his Personal Assistants with him. I have talked with the Day Centre about designing a

² [PMLD Network](#)

³ Jim Mansell (2010) Raising Our Sights: services for adults with profound intellectual and multiple disabilities

http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/+/www.dh.gov.uk/en/Publicationsandstatistics/Publications/PublicationsPolicyAndGuidance/DH_114346

learning programme for J. but they don't understand. I feel like he has been written off. (Parent, 2010)

I am not sure if K is happy at the day centre - she has stopped eating. She seems anxious - it could just be the change from the structure school offered to the unstructured environment at the centre. We are not finished yet. If she settles there we won't do anything else, but if she doesn't we will be looking for something different. (Parent, 2011)

Families are not alone in their dissatisfaction. Professionals too are concerned about the lack of educational provision available to students with complex impairments:

"I am concerned that pupils with complex learning disabilities have no opportunity to continue their education post 19. In general provision in local colleges is designed to meet the needs of pupils working at or above Entry Level 1. Pupils working below this level are directed to Adult Services as if they have no right to continue their education or are incapable of doing so. It is true that progress for young people with complex needs may be very slow and may be about generalising a skill rather a hierarchical progression. However if we accept the premise that we can educate them, there is no reason to draw a line in the sand at 19." (Head of Post 16, Special School)

The rigid focus on academic progression as a means of demonstrating success in the education system works against many disabled students, particularly those with profound and multiple learning disabilities. The sad fact remains that the majority of students with complex impairments go on to an adult life of dependency and non-participation.

Other groups of young people facing similar challenges with respect to access to local FE are those on the autistic spectrum⁴, those with complex communication impairments and young disabled people attending local mainstream schools.

The traditional response with respect to young people on the autistic spectrum has been to make the case for an out of city placement. Such placements are often encouraged by professionals working directly with young people and families because of the dearth of local alternatives.

The negative impact a long-term placement in a residential school has on the

⁴ [Finished at school: What next for young people with autism?](#)

lives of young people is well documented.⁵ This has led to a move away from out-of-authority provision. We do not know of any similar research with respect to residential college placements, but we do have anecdotal evidence that young people are likely to be isolated and disenfranchised when they return to their local communities.

We also have anecdotal evidence of families requesting residential provision for Post 16 education for young people who have been in a mainstream school up to this point. This is because the requirements to show progression and participate in the exam system make it impossible for some young people to stay on at Post 16 in mainstream schools. A local college place is often unsuitable and, in addition, provides a logistical challenge for working parents as a full time college course often adds up to no more than 3 days a week attendance at college. Unless resources and people are in place to support the young person during the other two days, the only available option appears to be a residential placement.

Cost effectiveness

In respect of young people with complex needs, our education system represents poor value for money. Special education is costly, and yet at the end of 16 or 19 years in full time education very few disabled students go on to FE and/or employment. Residential colleges and care homes cost a great deal, seldom have a positive impact on people's lives, and rarely lead to improved outcomes. Although saving money is not the primary reason for developing a personalised response, it is nevertheless a compelling argument.

In our early work in Sheffield⁶ young people with high support needs (young people whose families had been told a residential care home was the only option open to them) are flourishing on personalised learning and support packages. Several young people are now living independently of their families.

Our experience from the young people and families we have met this year in the course of working on Personalised Transition is that young people with PMLD are excluded from FE provision and their options are frequently narrowed down to expensive traditional services such as day care or residential homes. While some families go down this route, others opt out of any available support, and keep their son or daughter at home without any additional help. Although this can be a reasonable short-term solution for some, it almost

⁵ [Transition to adulthood for young disabled people with 'complex health and support needs'](#) - Joseph Rowntree Findings (1999).

⁶ Alison Cowan (2010) Personalised Transition: Innovations in health, education and support (Centre for Welfare Reform) [Personalised Transition: Innovations in health, education and support](#)

always leads to a crisis at some point when the main carer becomes too old, or too tired or too ill to care. The service response at this point is likely to be a costly (and unwanted) residential care home.

Although comprehensive national data is lacking, there is evidence that the number of young people with PMLD is rising significantly⁷. A study in Sheffield in 2006 found that the number of 10-14 year olds with PMLD has increased by 75% in the last 5 years⁸.

We want to increase opportunities for young adults with complex needs to live meaningful lives in their own communities. The total cost of a personalised package is likely to be less than half the annual cost of residential care. This amounts to significant savings over the lifetime of an individual and when we aggregate these costs the savings go into millions of pounds. In the present climate, this becomes a reason to support people differently.

Policy direction: the need to respond differently

With funding for Independent Service Providers (ISPS) being transferred to Local Authorities in 2013, there is an urgent need for Local Authorities to develop strategies that lead to improved outcomes for young people with complex needs and their families. Creating integrated pathways before this date will ease this transition and set up a positive way forward.

Although young people with the most complex impairments are more likely to remain in school until they are 19 years old, the SEN Green Paper provides opportunities for FE Colleges to expand their offer to all learners with LDD. Raising the Participation Age (RPA) means that those young people entering Y10 this September will have to engage in education or training until the year of their 17th birthday.

Learning from the Personalised Transition work carried out in the Yorkshire and Humber region earlier this year⁹, alongside exploratory meetings with families, special schools and FE Colleges suggest all parties are keen to develop

⁷ Carpenter, B: 'Sustaining the family. Meeting the needs of families of children with disabilities' BJSE, September 2000

⁷ Kirk, S and C. Glendinning (2004) 'Developing services to support parents caring for a technology-dependent child at home' in. *Child: Care, Health & Development* **30**, 3, 209–218.

⁸ The Sheffield Care Trust (2006) Summary of findings from Adult Learning Disability Day Services PMLD sub group and additional Case Register information

⁹ [Centre for Welfare Reform: Personalised Transition](#)

provision, but are uncertain about how to take this forward in ways that genuinely produce high quality provision and improved outcomes.

Our proposal

Our proposal supports the development of local Further Education in order that young people with PMLD, young people on the autistic spectrum and young disabled people going to FE college at the age of 16/17 are helped to create meaningful and fulfilling lives. Our learning so far is that a truly personalised response creates a greater chance of disabled adults remaining within their communities as opposed to going into residential care homes.

Transition to adulthood is everyone's business and requires a strategic approach across a range of partners, using a common language. The outcomes we are working towards include:

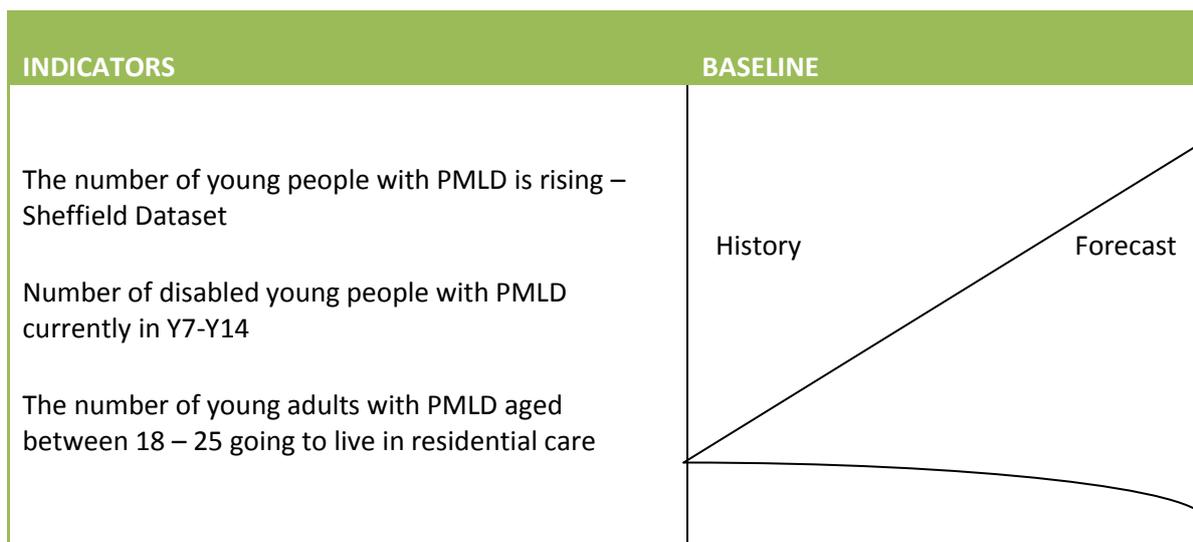
- **All** disabled young people being supported to stay in their own community
- **All** disabled young people fulfilling their potential
- **All** disabled young people being included in local mainstream clubs and activities of their choice or preference

Creating a local personalised education for students with high support needs, alongside increased opportunities to access leisure activities in local community resources are the next stage in the development of Personalised Transition.

The development of supported personalised learning opportunities (on and off college sites) for young people with complex impairments will mean they have opportunities for learning as they enter adulthood. This will inevitably increase their chances of shaping a meaningful and fulfilling life beyond 25.

As the key innovators behind the development of Personalised Transition in Sheffield¹⁰, we want to continue breaking down the structural barriers around access to FE and to stop the spiralling costs of current trends to out of city/local area placements. We want young people with PMLD to have improved outcomes and better lives.

¹⁰ Alison Cowan (2010) Personalised Transition: Innovations in health, education and support (Centre for Welfare Reform) [Personalised Transition: Innovations in health, education and support](#)



The table above is based on Mark Friedman’s model of Outcomes Based Accountability (OBA)¹¹. It gives a picture of what will happen if we carry on working in the way we are currently working. By looking at the history for each indicator and a forecast of likely demand over a three year period, the straight line shows the path we will inevitably follow if we keep doing the same as we are currently doing. In contrast to this, the curve demonstrates the changes we will make as we adopt different ways of working. The measure of success is the curve turning away from the baseline.

We have already brought together schools and colleges in South Yorkshire who want to work differently. These meetings came about because we knew the people across the sub region interested in developing the agenda and were able to pull them together as a group. As a result of these meetings steps are being taken in Sheffield, Rotherham and Barnsley to enable small groups of young people to explore the possibility of FE. We have begun to turn the curve.

In order to continue building this momentum, we are offering to develop local innovations that include:

- Work with local colleges to widen the range of learning opportunities in order to make FE accessible to all young people, irrespective of impairment or support need

¹¹ Mark Friedman (2005) Trying Hard is not Good Enough: How to produce measurable improvements for customers and communities (Trafford Publishing)

- Individual budgets for FE (these might be stand alone, or be integrated with funding from health and social care)
- Creative learning taking place in community settings (overseen by schools, colleges & Independent Providers)
- Involvement of mainstream providers e.g. Youth Hostel Association, Sheffield International Venues to extend existing local offers
- Work with local schools to prepare a case for the learning needs of all young people with complex impairments and help them put forward a case to the YPLA for each individual confirming that assessed learning needs cannot be met through current provision
- Help agencies work with families to ensure they are involved and informed at the earliest possible opportunity

All our innovations take advantage of the fact that locally designed support and education is likely to be both of a higher quality and more efficient than solutions taking people away from home, family and community.

Funding and progression pathway

All young people are entitled to Further Education (FE). The problem has been that eligibility to FE courses is dependent on all young people having to show developmental progression in limited ways. This prevents young people with profound and multiple learning disabilities being able to access Further Education. However, there are ways around this problem.

The present Foundation Learning Model includes programmes of learning containing Personal and Social Development; Vocational & Subject Skills; and Functional Skills at Pre-Entry Level, Entry Level & Level 1. A bespoke programme enabling students to achieve and progress according to their abilities, needs and aspirations should be put together when young people leave school. This would allow all young people to access FE.

This information sheet outlines the steps needed to secure the Additional Learning Support Funding that would enable this to happen.

1. Funding arrangements

Funding is available for young people with profound and multiple learning difficulties and/or complex needs to carry on learning when they leave school. Although this funding is presently co-ordinated by the Young People's Learning Agency (YPLA), the Local Authority has the lead role as they have the statutory responsibility for learning places for young people with learning disabilities. This means both the YPLA and the Local Authority need to be involved.

The relevant budget is known as **Additional Learning Support** and can be made available to young people whose complex learning needs cannot easily be met through local FE colleges or Independent Service Providers.

The funding cannot go straight to the individual learner, but has to go through a learning provider (school, college, independent service provider etc). This does not mean the student has to attend ready-made courses. Rather, the provider taking responsibility for the additional funding will oversee an individually designed programme of learning that takes place in appropriate settings.

Additional Learning Support covers funding for learning, and support for learning. Personal care needs are presently understood to be outside of a learning experience and so it is likely that additional money from social care or health will be needed to make a learning package possible. Families should contact their local social services to find out the arrangements for assessments for a Personal Budget through social care and/or health at the same time as trying to secure funding for learning.

2. Section 139A Assessment

Young people eligible for learning post 19 (or 16 -18) need to complete a Section 139a Assessment to identify the best route for their future learning. This is usually co-ordinated by a Connexions PA and should include schools.

The completed Section 139A Assessment Form should include information about:

- a) how the school is presently meeting the student's learning needs (e.g. sensory curriculum)
- b) details of the student's learning style, and the support they need to learn
- c) outline of a plan to meet future learning needs, & identification of a local learning provider. (If there is not a local learning provider to meet identified learning needs, a plan should be put together for an existing provider to manage the budget and release it as required by the learner. This could be a school, FE college or Independent Service Provider.)

It is the responsibility of Local Authorities to communicate with parents and learners about what is and is not available. Any questions about decision making on 139a Assessments, appropriate courses, Independent Service

Provider placements etc is the responsibility of the Local Authority and in the case of FE, the college sector.

About us

This proposal is a collaboration between Simon Duffy (The Centre for Welfare Reform), Pippa Murray (ibk initiatives) and Jane Shepherd (Maddocks Associates).

We bring a wealth of experience with regards to developing and supporting innovations; designing new technologies for personalisation; working with young people and their families; supporting professionals to work in ways that empower those they seek to support. Most importantly, our work leads to positive outcomes for young people and their families.

For further information about our work on Personalised Transition, please see:

[Centre for Welfare Reform: Personalised Transition](#)

[ibk initiatives: Personalised Transition & Further Education](#)

Our costs depend on your requirements and the number of Local Authorities working together. Please contact Pippa Murray for detailed discussions about costs: pippa@ibkinitiatives.com

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