

The Green Paper Project: Support and aspiration

Blackpool and Fylde College- Leadership of transition



This case study focuses on the leadership of transition for learners with Special Educational Needs (SEN) into Further Education (FE). The materials outline the historic context of the college, the changes which have been introduced and the ongoing review and evaluation of evolving practices. The case study depicts the smarter working practices in college and beyond and outline the transition process through flowchart representation.

Our organisation

Blackpool & The Fylde College is a multi sited seaside college and a provider of Further and Higher academic and vocational education that support on average 900 – 1100 FE learners with varying support needs including: Visual Impairment, Hearing Impairment, Dyslexia, those with Mental Health issues, those with physical mobility challenges, Moderate Learning Difficulties, Severe Learning Difficulties, Aspergers, those with emotional and behavioural needs, and Young People Looked After. Learning Support has designated specialists for: Young People Young Looked After (YPLA), Visual and Hearing Impairments, Dyslexia, teams of Communication Support Workers, Educational Support Workers and Learning Support Tutors. Learning Support is currently training an Aspergers specialist. The college is divided into different departments known as 'schools' with each school focusing on teaching a specific vocation e.g. School of Construction, School of Computing. For each school area Learning Support has a designated Support Coordinator that oversees and facilitates the support.

Our approach

This case study focuses on the leadership of transition for learners with Special Educational Needs (SEN) into Further Education (FE). *The accompanying flowchart illustrates the transition process currently used for learners starting September 2012 (attached at 1a).*

Student Support and Guidance Services feature 2 divisions including Student Services and Learning Support. Within the Learning Support division is a Transition

Team. There are 2 Transition Coordinators with 0.5 contracts each – equating to a Full time role, with a Curriculum Leader who has responsibility to overseeing and participating. Along with these members are 2 others members that spend approx. 0.2 of their contract attending reviews and supporting transition activities as required.

Previously, the Transition Team spent large amounts of time attending SEN reviews from Year 9 upwards to year 11 (mainstream) or Year 14 (special School) and then collating evidence to put in transition files for learners progressing on to Blackpool & The Fylde College. Transition activity with progressing individuals was therefore limited and was mainly conducted with the ‘high support need’ cohort and others that made specific enquiry. Evidence gathered was read and specific support strategies were logged onto the Perspective Learners Spreadsheet for the Support Coordinators to facilitate.

The aim has been to develop and continually improve our transition service and processes in order for prospective learners to feel ‘college ready’ and for Learning Support to have appropriate support measures in place.

In order to achieve this transition policy and processes have been shaped by leaders to secure the following outcomes;

- Attendance at Year 11 or Year 14 reviews only – unless otherwise requested by SENCOs
- More learners to be supported with their specific transition needs in order to feel ‘college ready’
- Assessment of a greater number of prospective learners in order to gather accurate support need/package detail.
- Use of Learning Support Specialists – to enable specialist assessments to take place and very specific support package detail to be available and logged
- Learners to meet with appropriate Learning Support Specialists and provide an opportunity to discuss their specific support needs and visit college
- Support packages to be logged electronically with detail and costs attached
- Accurate support package data including costings to be readily available for Managers to inform funding bodies in the time periods specified – to use SpirALS
- Continued logging of support need/package detail in ‘school’ area for the designated Support Coordinator in spreadsheet format
- Received support evidence to be scanned electronically on to a ‘Central Register’
- Continued storage of paper based evidence in the designated Transition area

The changes that have been made have meant a more cost effective and learner focused initiative enabling prospective learners to have more supported individually tailored transition and support package.

(Attached is the flowchart titled ‘1a Transition Processes used in 11/12’ which highlights activities of the Transition Team starting from an enquiry regarding support

to compiling a transition plan and predictive support package. This process is used for SEN learners and YPLA learners in order to attain the outcomes listed above.)

In brief:

1. A transition learner can be identified in the following ways:
 - At an SEN/YPLA Review
 - Application form data
 - Other: including phone call enquiry, referral from an external agency including Young Peoples Service (YPS, formerly Connexions), Special Educational Needs Coordinator (SENCo), Leaving Care Team etc
2. All information is logged onto the '*Prospective Learners*' Spreadsheet which records data such as, name, phone details, course/s applied for, evidence sent, assessments needed or completed e.g. Learning Support assessment, specialist assessment, Risk assessment, PEEP, Duty of Care for medical reasons & support package
3. Information is then logged and scanned onto the Central Register – a central electronic system allowing evidence to be available for those requiring it e.g. specialists, Access arrangements, Support Coordinators etc.
4. Assessments are carried out as appropriate and evidence and findings are logged as required onto the Central register and Prospective Learners spreadsheets.
5. Using this information a Transition Plan is formulated and a Predictive Support Package agreed and costed. Costings are then put on to SpirALS. Managers then use data, for example, to agree funding with funding bodies, budgeting, allocating of support/contracts etc.

How we implemented it...

Improvements to the transition process are seen by managers and the frontline team as a continual work in progress' as the aim is to strive to develop SMARTer working methods and fall inline with developments in other departments in college e.g. admissions procedures. In order to shape SMARTer approaches and capture the learning the transition team meet weekly to discuss issues relating to transition including processes.

A number of cross college development, training initiatives and partnership practices have been introduced through the learning so far:

- Review attendance: Worked with SENCO's and Leaving Care Team to inform about the change in attendance at reviews. An evidence list was compiled by the Transition Team highlighting documents that are very useful to aid a smooth transition and handed to SENCO's and YPS colleagues in order for support evidence to be identified and more readily available.
- Application form procedure – Supported Admissions and Marketing to implement significant changes to the application and interview procedures.
- Other methods – often enquiries from YPS - discussed Section 139a's to be more timely i.e. throughout the year not just sent as a 'bulk lot' in June.
- SpirALS installation and training for Transition Team members inputting data.
- 3 hours of x1 Learning Support Admin staff to carry out Transition admin tasks.
- Development of the Central Register.
- Continued close working with Learning Support Specialists.

The outcome and impact of the work

Some aspects of the new procedure were carried out last year such as, attending less reviews and allowing more time to assess learners support needs. The outcome was that a significantly higher number of prospective learners were assessed with more detailed assessments such as; involving the specialists earlier in the transition process and other departments for risk assessments, PEEP and Duty of Care documents. Costs, funding allocations and staffing requirements were known earlier and acted upon. The Transition Team are set to secure all 10 outcomes identified above, as this year they will develop and deliver live data which will be readily available, logged on SpirALS and scanned onto the Central Register

Learners have had support needs identified earlier. A number of learners have visited the college as they felt necessary. Support Coordinators and those conducting assessments are currently using the central register and are on target to have information to those requiring it in a timely way. Where learners were supported through some of these new measures last year, they reported back saying that they felt their support needs were addressed and the Transition service offered a friendly informative haven for learners and parents worrying about moving on.

The college also envisage securing the following improvements in the short term future; enrolments for learners with more complicated needs will be smoother i.e. fewer halts at enrolment or enrolment postponements to conduct risk assessments or Duty of Care medical documents. Support Coordinators have said they feel they will receive more accurate information especially those working on other campuses.

Learners are at the very heart of the transition procedures. Where possible learners are involved in the assessments conducted and consulted as to their transition needs, the aim is to involve, with permission, other agencies that the young person is involved with.

Prospective learners that apply via application form are sent a Learning Support Questionnaire to complete and return, this gives the Transition Team an idea as to the support needs and information to act on. Once transitioned and enrolled, learners are sent a Learning Support Transition Questionnaire allowing the learner to have their say about the service received.

An extensive review of the developments will be undertaken at the end of academic year 2012 and the learning will inform future developments in structure, training and processes.

Consideration has already been given to re-establishing Steering Group meetings, last year they were held termly and involved outside agencies and other local colleges and sixth forms. These were very successful and achieved some excellent joint working partnerships to the benefit of the prospective learners. Due to the restructure and rebranding of Connexions/Young Peoples Service, the loss of some key members in other agencies worked with etc the Steering Group was disbanded. The Transition Team are looking to reinstate this due to demand from other agencies, YPS now more static and key people identified.

Next steps and future plans

The Transition team are constantly working to improve systems and is sensitive to the developments and changes in other college departments and legislation that can impact on the current transition procedures.

Whilst making these constant adjustments the Transition Team is mindful that many other departments and colleagues are reliant on the data it provides in order to operate a SMART service both to the staff and the prospective learners. It is anticipated that whilst this is the process this academic year as changes to policies and procedures continue the aim is to evolve and develop as these dictate.

The aim will always be to provide appropriate support packages and activities to allow learners to be 'college ready' and put them at the heart of college policy and practice in order to support learners to be the very best that they can be.

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