

Facilitators and blockers to partnership working – the experience of the Essex Chelmsford Cluster



The Local Context

Being involved in the LSIS Green Paper project provided an opportunity for providers with a limited history of collaborative working to come together with a specific purpose. This was particularly significant because prior to this project there was a history of bad experiences that had led to a breakdown in working practices between the special schools, college and adult and community learning. Project Objectives

The group worked together to identify a number of collective objectives. These were as follows:

Objective 1

To create a culture where personalised learning plans for an identified sample group of young people can be developed by adopting a collaborative approach that utilizes expertise and facilities within the locality.

Objective 2

To produce 'wrap around' learning plans that meet the needs of young people regardless of constraints such as academic years

Objective 3

To ensure that young people, families and advocates are at the centre of the impartial personalised collaborative planning process and feel confident to participate in the planning process

Emerging themes

As the cluster members came together a couple of themes which had resonance for all parties began to emerge. Both related to gaps in information relating to transition:

- Transition – guidance and reflections on developing partnerships
- Transition – guidance on pathways

Transition – guidance and reflections on developing partnerships

The cluster group was not a natural group as it was made up of a number of providers who had failed to work effectively together in the past. As a consequence there was a need to develop trust and confidence in each other before real planning could commence. Although one partner a local special school, sadly decided not to continue with the project relatively early in the process the other cluster group members have worked effectively together to develop a collaborative style of working that we are confident will underpin future plans at a local level and ensure continued partnership working in the future.

Lessons Learned

We feel we have not only benefited from increased partnership working, but also learned a lot from the process which may be of interest to others in a similar position.

The guidance that we would offer to other providers who aim to establish partnership working where there has been none before is as follows:

- Allow yourselves time to share expectations and fears;
- Be honest and open with each other, ensuring that there are no residual fears or hidden agendas;
- Listen to each other's' viewpoints regardless of how difficult they are to hear;
- Be prepared to be challenged and to challenge each other;
- Involve others who may bring with them different viewpoints.
- There have been a number of positive outcomes associated with our increased partnership working, both for us as professionals, but more importantly for those we work with. These include: Parent/ family transition fair: plan and objectives, podcast and reflection/ learning from event.
- Cluster pathways – visual representation, incorporating pathways to independence and demonstrating employment and health and social care interventions.
- Case study: 2 examples of successful learners whose pathways have been effectively supported by partnership working

Parent/ family transition fair: plan and objectives, podcast and reflection/ learning from event. The transition fair took place on Saturday 6th July 2013 at the Columbus School and College Campus Chelmsford. The purpose of this was for local SEND educators and social care practitioners to come together to offer parents a clear view on what “the local offer” is for their young person once they reach the age of 19 and their Statement of Special Educational Need ceases.

Local groups including the Essex Coalition of Disabled People, Essex cares, Adult Community Education, The Transitions Pathway Team, Columbus and Chelmsford Colleges were all represented. A presentation as well as a range of workshops to sample the sorts of activities that each setting offers was presented in order that the young people and their families could begin to learn more about the services they can access throughout the Chelmsford area. The event was a great success with very positive responses from all who attended.

The transition fair built on current best practice already established in Essex, by Essex Transition pathway Service. Enabling parents and students to explore options by meeting face to face with potential new providers within a familiar environment was instrumental in supporting them to begin to think about the future. Whilst we are starting our transition fair with a group of students who have reached the end of their schooling, we would recommend that transition fairs are introduced to students and their parents at a much earlier stage.

We believe that this model would be of interest to all providers who are responsible for supporting learners and their families through the often stressful time of transition.

Pathways – visual representation, incorporating pathways to independence and demonstrating employment and health and social care interventions.

A second outcome from increased partnership delivery is the visual representation of transition pathways plan.

This plan provides a visual representation of the personalised routes that students can plan to take. The creation of this document is the result of members from a number of very different organisations coming together and agreeing on a collaborative approach. The pathway plan is wide ranging and varied and provides routes of learning that will prepare young people with difficulties and disabilities for adulthood, be it to supported living or employment.

The guidance that we would offer to other providers who aim to develop a pathway plan is: Share expertise;

- Refer to published best practice guides on curriculum planning;
- Test your pathway plans by matching against needs of students;

- Agree that the document will be the key document that will be used.

The pathways visual representation is significant because it was developed by our team and represents what we believe we can offer to our young people. It is important that anyone else considering developing similar pathways recognises that whilst this document is the formal output from our collaboration, it was the work that went into developing it, and the resulting increase in partnership working that has made it invaluable to us.

We believe that this document and approach to developing collaborative provision would be of interest to all providers of 19+ provision to learners with learning difficulties and disabilities.

Case study: successful learner supported by partnership

The case studies bring our work alive. When we have reviewed the experience of students who had experienced a smaller scale collaborative approach we could see the progress they had made and their success.

The case studies would be of interest to anyone response for learners aged 19+ with learning difficulties or disabilities.

Legacy Plan

In order to ensure our partnership working is sustained and continues to impact positively on those we work with, we have collectively developed a legacy plan. The legacy plan addresses the following objectives

Objective 1

To embed current practices

Objective 2

To develop our transition service so that students embark on their transition planning at least 2 years prior to transition

Objective 3

To develop subcontracting arrangements to ensure that there are finances available to fund learners aged 19+ regardless of setting

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