

Annual Planning Cycle 'Heads Up'



Summary

There was a local concern from schools and parents that there was an upcoming cohort of complex learners whose needs could not be addressed locally after they left school. We wanted to develop a way of giving post 16 and post 19 providers a 'heads up' and to prepare to meet the needs of these young people.

What challenges were addressed?

- There was a 'feeling' that students in the local special schools were becoming more complex but we wanted to find the facts in order to confirm if this was actually the case.
- Historically post 16 and/or post 19 providers were only becoming aware of the next cohort of learners a year before they arrived – if providers knew the learners' needs further in advance they would have more time to make preparations to match the needs of learners.
- Post 16 and post 19 providers wanted to know the aspirations of the young people progressing to them in advance of their arrival, in order to be able to modify curriculum if necessary.
- We wanted to develop better working relationships between a geographically local range of providers.

Key lessons learned

- Information about the upcoming cohort of students can be used effectively to place successful joint bids for future funding.
- It is necessary to identify a way of being able to compare the needs of learners and group them – we used the funding bandings that the Local Authority use in schools.
- It is clear that locally Special Schools and F.E Colleges are being expected to deal with more complex learners
- The planning cycle is only the starting point – something has to be done with the information collected.
- The data of learner numbers and needs was relatively easy to collect. We used a graphic advocate to facilitate the collection of learner dreams and aspirations.
- Using an annual planning cycle helps to identify gaps in future provision.
- There is a local trend of more complex learners coming through to general F.E

Introduction

Provider names and Sector coverage

- New College Stamford – a general college of further education with a designated specialist provision for 70 learners
- Queen Eleanor School – mainstream secondary
- Willoughby School – Special School
- Wild's Lodge – Independent Special school for BESD
- Garth School – Special School
- Priory School – Special School for MLD
- Sense College – Independent Specialist Provider

Outcomes and impacts

What we achieved

- Data did confirm that the feelings staff had that learners were becoming more complex was indeed true.
- A pattern clearly evolved of a group of learners with severe autism and profound and multiple disabilities who would be hard to place in the future, with provision as it exists at present.
- With this knowledge a bid was put together jointly for a £300,000 new centre for these learners based at the local Further Education (FE) College – the Local Authority included the data collected from the project in the bid and said this was a valuable planning tool.
- An annual planning cycle was developed (see attached graphic) and all parties have agreed to continue the use of this in order to continually inform local provision.
- The learner's views expressed through the graphic facilitator are being used to develop the curriculum (see LSIS case study on Graphic facilitation)
- An unexpected success has been the close working relationships that have developed between providers. This has helped to attain funding for other things such as a transition worker, a High Street enterprise project and the launch of a supported internship programme.

What we learned

- The importance of making sure everyone was using the same way of reporting learners' needs.
- Having a lead person to collate all the data
- Having a person who was available and enthusiastic at each provider to ensure that deadlines did not slip and information was made available.
- For the planning cycle to work we estimate a need for the planning group to meet approximately 4 times a year.
- A willingness to share data and information – providers cannot be competitive with each other!
- Learners with more complex needs are wanting to/and expected to head to general F.E.

What we are taking forward

- We are using the annual planning cycle each year with our local partners
- We are hopefully developing a new provision for learners with severe autism and profound and complex disabilities.
- The group will work together on planning some dual delivery models and joint bids in the future.
- We hope to include more local providers in the planning cycle in the future.

How we are sharing it

- There is a local network of providers for learners with Learning Difficulties and Disabilities – the plan will be discussed at these meetings and other providers encouraged to join.
- The local authority likes the way the data has been collected and is considering sharing this way of working with providers in other regions of the county.

What advice we would give to others

- You need enthusiastic work partners from the providers – who understand this might take some of their time.
- A method that everyone can use to measure a learner's needs such as a banding system
- Have a plan of what you want to do with the data afterwards – do not just collect it for the sake of it.
- Encourage reluctant providers to join the cycle by sharing with them the tangible successes that have been achieved elsewhere.
- Ensure learners views are taken into account in a 'real and meaningful' way.

Further reading

LSIS report on Professional Advocacy

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