

## Transition work in practice

### Tracy Sharples New Fosseway School; Julie Osborn City of Bristol College



## Summary

This case study highlights some of the challenges involved in supporting young people with learning difficulties to make the transition from school to college. The lack of clear, accurate information can make appropriate decisions difficult for recruiting staff particularly where high levels of support will be required.

## Background

'Darren' (not his real name) is a likeable and resourceful 18 year old young man who prefers to keep busy. He lives at home with his father who is not always well enough to look after him and school plays an important role in Darren's life. Darren has developed a high level of independence, making his own way to school or college if his transport fails. He enjoys practical work and has for the past year spent several days each week in a college environment achieving above average results in practical tasks.

Darren has severe learning difficulties and social, emotional and behavioural problems and in the past, this has led to him being excluded from school. In 2010 he transferred to his current school where a personalised plan was put in place to provide support and structure to pro-actively manage Darren's behaviour, ensure he was challenged and engaged and to help him develop coping strategies to manage occasions when he became frustrated. In the current year 12 he has had an individual programme with significant integration into college. He is supported on a one-to-one basis five days a week.

Darren now needs new challenges in order to move forward in his skill development and entry into college as a full time student was therefore planned for September 2013 when he will be 18 years old. His application to college was initially met with a negative response from the teaching team who were concerned that they would not be able to meet his specific needs and the significant safety issues in a group workshop environment. Reports that were available to them identified incidents of challenging behaviours. Information about his family circumstances

highlighted a range of safeguarding issues. At this point there was every likelihood that Darren would be refused a place as a full time student for 2013/14.

As a result, Learning Partnership West and the college Disability Support Manager decided it was necessary to hold a meeting with all staff involved, from both school and college, to review Darren's application. This provided an opportunity to discuss the concerns of the college teaching staff team and to talk through the various reports. It became clear that staff were being influenced by informal and in some cases verbal reports that did not present an accurate picture. The most recent college reports were reviewed and it became clear that Darren's behaviour at college during the last year had generally been appropriate. It was agreed that a Behaviour Management Plan would be put in place and this detailed specific behaviours, agreed strategies aimed at reducing the occurrences of these behaviours, consequences for non compliance and rewards such as trips and visits. The intention was to review the plan alongside ongoing tutorial reviews.

## What we wanted to achieve

The impetus for trying to improve transition planning was recognition that the process needed to be strengthened for some learners. The original college system was based on a bureaucratic model of processing forms but the system needed to be more responsive to individual student needs. Staff making decisions about recruitment of learners with learning difficulties or disabilities needed to be confident that appropriate support was in place for the learner but also for the staff involved.

## Implementation

### Planning our approach

Details of how the activity was scoped and developed including:

- Preliminary meetings between the school Transition Worker and the college Disability Support Manager to identify barriers.
- Meetings were planned to bring together key staff from both school and college
- Meetings with Darren to discuss his options
- Discussions to agree a programme
- Taster sessions introduced during later part of Summer Term
- Regular meetings between Darren and relevant college staff to ensure smooth transition for September
- Identification of any staff development needs

### What we did

- Activity started once Darren's school made a formal application to college.
- Meetings took place with Darren and the teaching teams to discuss his choice of subject and ways of overcoming potential difficulties
- Further meetings were held with the teaching team to focus on specific concerns and how these could be addressed
- Personal Support Worker allocated to Darren
- A transition Programme was put in place to include
  - Meetings and classroom time spent with the Personal Support Worker
  - Introduction to the Disability Support Co-ordinator as a point of contact for concerns
  - Specific time spent in class with the relevant teaching team

- Regular discussions meant that ongoing concerns could be addressed quickly and the transition activity moved forward
- Person Centred Plan (PCP) and Behaviour Management Plan agreed.

## Outcomes and impacts

### What we achieved

- Darren secured a place at College for September 2013
- Clear identification of Darren's support needs and strategies for managing his behaviour
- Darren's PCP has been put in place and will be used as part of regular reviews
- Future applications from learners with learning difficulties and disabilities will involve the Disability Support Manager
- Training and support for staff where learners with learning difficulties and disabilities are recruited
- Guidelines agreed for transition planning for these learners
- Disability Support team involved to a greater degree in the early part of the first term

### Key lessons learned strategically

- Transition planning requires time and energy to get right. Sharing information about individuals with a range of complex support needs cannot be done through documents alone.
- Written reports provide a useful basis of information about learners but need to be used alongside information from those professionals who know the student well.
- Key people need to work together when the new Education, Health and Social Care Plan is implemented. This case study highlights the need for direct communication with the learner at the centre of this process.
- Transition from school to college is a major step for all learners but can present additional challenges for students with learning difficulties or disabilities. These need to be identified and plans put in place to address them.
- Face-to-face meetings provide the opportunity to discuss concerns and get a better understanding of the young person's needs. Information from a variety of sources can usefully be included in this activity and giving key staff the opportunity to talk is helpful.
- A programme of transition meetings need to be a key part of any process
- Clear, structured personalised transition plans need to be agreed and put in place
- Contingency plans need to be in place to deal with specific situations as they arise and staff need to know in advance what course of action to take in each situation.

### What we learned operationally

- Establishing named contracts that facilitated communication between staff at both organisations was instrumental in ensuring that systemic barriers were removed
- Talking face-to-face and on a regular basis was important in addressing misinformation and underlying anxieties that could not have been shared via other forms of communication
- Transition planning takes time to carry out effectively. This needs to be formally recognised and key staff given responsibility and time to engage in working with staff from other organisations.
- Staff need training and support to ensure that they are aware of the importance of transition work.

## What we are taking forward

As a result of the collaborative work undertaken for this student future transition planning is starting much earlier and involving more staff.

## How we are sharing it

Information is being shared through this report and throughout the cluster partners.

## What advice we would give to others

- Transition planning for learners with limited advocacy skills requires careful management. Advocates may be in possession of personal and sensitive information that needs to be shared in an appropriate manner.
- Effective transition planning for learners with disabilities is an activity that requires skilled individuals with the time to meet with all relevant partners and have full and meaningful dialogue to negotiate appropriate adjustments and support.
- It is vitally important that teaching staff in vocational areas working with learners with learning difficulties and disabilities develop an understanding of specific needs and the necessary skills they need to support these learners effectively.

## Further reading

1. Information on the special educational needs and disability (SEND) green paper 'Support and aspiration: A new approach to special educational needs and disability'.

SEND green paper: our vision

<http://www.education.gov.uk/childrenandyoungpeople/send/b0075291/green-paper/vision>

2. Person Centred Approached to Transition Planning

[http://www.transitionsupportprogramme.org.uk/pdf/NTST\\_Person\\_Centred\\_Approaches.pdf](http://www.transitionsupportprogramme.org.uk/pdf/NTST_Person_Centred_Approaches.pdf)

<b>Date published</b>	June 2013
<b>Provider names</b>	New Fosseway School; City of Bristol College
<b>Sector coverage</b>	Relevant to FE practitioners involved in transitions planning
<b>Contact information</b>	Julie Osborn ( <a href="mailto:julie.osborn@cityofbristol.ac.uk">julie.osborn@cityofbristol.ac.uk</a> ) City of Bristol College Tracy Sharples ( <a href="mailto:tsharples123@bridgelearningcampus.com">tsharples123@bridgelearningcampus.com</a> ) New Fosseway School

This resource can also be located at <http://www.bridgelearningcampus.org.uk/new-fosseway>

## About City of Bristol College and New Fosseway School

Both providers involved in this case study are located in South Bristol which has high levels of deprivation (e.g. Multiple Deprivation Index 2010).

**New Fosseway School** provides schooling for pupils with severe learning difficulties. It is part of a complex that is geographically near a range of other services including a leisure centre and hospital.

**City of Bristol College** has provision throughout the city including the campus which is 10 minutes walk from New Fosseway School. This LSIS project has enabled key people from both organisations to work together to forge new relationships, processes and information sharing between the two organisations in order to ensure effective transition planning.