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TRANSITION UNIT PROJECT: SKILLS FOR CARE EVALUATION REPORT

This evaluation report comes at the end of the Skills for Care Transition Project within the London Borough of Sutton. The content of this evaluation follows the format specified in the Skills for Care contract.

1. Background

1.1 Funding Arrangements and Project Aims

Sutton Disability Partnership for Children and Young People (formerly Sutton Trust for Children and Young People) was awarded funding by Skills for Care to deliver a project to create better outcomes for young disabled people in transition from children's to adult's services. The original proposal was for a two-year project but with just one years funding being granted adaptations to the original proposal were required, impacting on the outcomes achievable within the time frame available.

The overall aim of the project was to establish effective joint working between key agencies so that disabled young people (aged between 14 and 25) and their parents/carers were better supported during this transition phase, enabling them to make informed choices, experience continuity of care and achieve their potential in terms of independence, self-care, health relationships, educational attainment, employment and self fulfilment.

Transition has become an increasingly prominent topic over the past few years within social care and health. Across the country, the effectiveness of transition planning has been raised as a concern and continues to creep up the political agenda. Central government is raising it as a key area and recognises the need to improve services. The National Service Framework for Children, Young People and Maternity Services (2004) highlights the importance of ensuring safe and effective transition throughout children's services to adulthood.

Locally, concerns about the effectiveness of transition had been expressed in a number of arenas: the pilot Joint Area Review (unpublished) in 2005, from parents/carers, from professionals and from other organisations supporting young disabled people and their families. It was therefore essential that these issues be addressed and it was envisaged that the establishment of the Transition Project would lead to improvements.

The project was launched in November 2005 with the introduction of a multi agency transition team consisting of a project co-ordinator and three part time professionals: a transitions social worker from the Children with Disabilities Team (CWDT), a care manager from the adult Community Team for People with Learning Disabilities (SCTPLD), a Prospects Connexions Personal Adviser, along with an administrator. Overseeing these developments was a steering group made up of senior managers from these three professional teams. In addition, the project was accountable to a project group that consisted of representatives of the key stakeholders within the borough.

1.2 Evaluation Methodology

This report is the culmination of the ongoing evaluation that has taken place over the life of the project and those specific evaluation activities that have taken place towards the end. The evaluation aims to demonstrate the effectiveness of the project, help strengthen it and seek a way forward.

A mixed method evaluation was used with qualitative, quantitative, formal and informal data collected. Much of the evaluation has been action research where by the process of the project has been the continual evaluation of new developments and their levels of success. These activities include,

- Observations of various work activities: investigations have taken place during the life cycle of the project. A number of different work activities have been observed, for example care planning meetings, joint professional planning meetings, and information gathered has been linked in to new developments.

- Informal conversational interviews: information has been gathered at various opportunities from a range of stakeholders, for example, staff team meetings, meetings with parents and carers at planning meetings, steering group meetings, Transition Unit development meetings.
- Formal participatory evaluation event: stakeholders were afforded a purposeful meeting where their views on transition were gathered at a stakeholder event and the feedback used to help further development.
- Written questionnaire: a range of stakeholders were asked to complete a formal questionnaire towards the end of the project. The stakeholders approached were the Transition Unit Team; front line workers from Connexions, Children with Disabilities Team and Community Team for People with Learning Disabilities; members of the Transition Casework Group who represent a range of agencies; parents/carers attending the parents meetings; the Transition Unit Steering Group members. (Appendix A)
- Analysis of the Transition Unit Targets: a set of indicators devised to monitor the outcomes of the Transition Unit.

2. Achievement of the Objectives

The main purpose of the project was to improve the transition planning for young people and their families. Four objectives were identified and a number of activities put in place to achieve them.

2.1 Objective 1: Establish integrated, person-centred pathways for young people in transition

2.1.1 Project Activities:

Person centred pathways have been established by the development of protocols. Each partner agency, including children's social services, adult social services and Prospects/Connexions, was consulted during the development stage. The Transition Unit team has tested these protocols out throughout their work with families. Ongoing improvements have been made during this pilot phase.

Progress has been made in enabling the Connexions and social services meetings with young people to be more person centred. The Personal Adviser and Social Worker now jointly meet with the young person before their school transition review. By using a range of 'person centred' tools a clear holistic picture of the students' aspirations are gained and when presented at the transition review have greater influence on the outcomes.

Additional work has taken place to support these protocols within the school setting to make transition planning more person centred. Negotiations are ongoing to engage the special schools in devising ways of improving the management of the transition review system, encouraging a more holistic approach.

A series of parents meetings have been developed in Sutton. These were designed to support and empower parents and carers to improve their knowledge of the transition and therefore become more involved in supporting their children (fig. 1)



Fig. 1

2.1.2 Outcomes and Benefits:

A number of benefits have been achieved through the delivery of these activities:

- Clear guidelines for transition workers resulting in less ambiguity about procedures and roles.
- Young people are now more involved in their transition planning and their views are taken in to account.
- Families are clearer about transition and are able to better support their son or daughter in their planning
- Over forty families have attended the parents transition meetings

2.1.3 Areas for Further Development:

The protocols are seen to be effective by the professionals working for the Transition Unit. However, there is still an amount of work to do in embedding these within each agency to ensure that all professionals supporting young people in transition are working to the same format. Training is planned and this will have an impact on building links between partner agencies and also give each professional clearer guidelines of what is expected. To ensure reinforcement of the transition protocols this training will be incorporated in the council's training programme, suitable as refresher training for existing personnel and part of the induction training for new staff.

Health planning and the preparation for health transitions has been an area that the Transition Project has had limited opportunity to develop due to a lack of time. Through another funding stream, a transition health worker is now attached to the Transition Unit. Her role is to identify and provide support to families where there is a complex health need. Ongoing work is required to develop this role and to engage a range of health professionals in these developments, such as Health Action Planning, across the borough.

2.2 Objective 2: Develop the mapping and tracking of young people up to and through transition from 14 – 25.

2.2.1 Project Activities:

A spreadsheet, the Transition Tracking Database, has been created to identify and track over thirteen hundred young people through the transition phase. Guidance for updating the database has been written to ensure its ongoing use. Agreements have been established with the main providers of

information to enable consistency and accuracy of the data within the spreadsheet. Of the large cohort, the Transition Unit Co-ordinator monitors closely the transition planning of seventy young people who will be supported by an adult community care team post eighteen.

Yearly Transition Planning Meetings have been established with the managers and commissioners of community agencies attending. Young people in transition are presented, particularly those who will require adult community services. A decision is made as to which team is best served to support the teenagers as they move in to adult services. Quarterly update meetings are used to track the progress of these cases. At this first meeting, one hundred and seventy two cases were talked about, either to decide on the appropriate team or to clarify progress on transition planning where the young person was already supported by an adult team.

The Transition Casework Group, that meets six times a year, has supported front line professionals working directly with young people in transition. Over thirty young people have been discussed at these meetings. Terms of reference have been produced and a wide range of agencies support the meeting.

Transition Casework Group

These meetings have improved the networking of professionals and thus have facilitated pertinent discussions of transition cases.

At one meeting a discussion between the CAMHS worker and personal adviser centred on a young persons ongoing counselling needs once she went to college. Using the personal advisers knowledge of the schools' counselling provision, a clearer plan was created to improve the continuity of provision between the local CAMHS and the educational establishment.

2.2.2 Outcomes and Benefits:

- The identification and tracking process has led to earlier and improved identification of trends and deficits in service provision. This promotes an improved commissioning strategy and planning for services.
- Decisions made at the Yearly Planning meetings ensure that young people are supported by the most appropriate agency.
- Transition Planning Meetings enable agencies to improve their budget planning.
- Planning for families is better coordinated leading to more appropriate outcomes and services being arranged.
- The Transition casework group has improved networking between agencies, with a better understanding of each other's roles. Previously unknown cases have been identified which has an impact on tracking.

2.2.3 Areas for Further Development:

Protocols have been agreed and they work well within the Transition Unit Team. There is now a need for their integration in to the working practices of all managers and front line workers supporting young people in transition. There is still some progress to be made in fully engaging all adult community teams including mental health. Involving all agencies in transition training will promote good practice and a series of training is planned over the next six months.

As with anything there is still room for development and currently a wider range of professionals are being asked to make use of the Transition Casework Meeting to support them in their work. The impact of this will be a wider range of families supported by the promotion of this group.

Feedback from the last Transition Planning Meeting indicated that more information was required on each young person to aid the decision making process to identify the appropriate community team. A form for gathering and presenting this information has been designed and will be presented at the next meeting.

Extension of the new Transition Unit developments to generalist Connexions Personal Advisers will improve the identification and tracking of young people in mainstream schools.

2.3 Objective 3: Change and align the culture between the key agencies.

2.3.1 Project Activities:

Some changes in culture were felt as soon as the Transition Unit formed at the outset of the project. This was due to the more focused nature of the work, having a key professional in each team to work on transition, regular meetings between key professionals and key managers from each agency, and the acknowledgement that there was a genuine commitment to making positive and lasting changes. These comments were reported both at a management level and by the front line workers within the transition team.

The transition unit has provided ... “the relevant support whilst proactively developing the service required for our transitional clients and carers”.

Care Manager, SCTPLD

The Transition Unit team has been co-located for the time of the project for part of each week. Weekly development meetings conducted by the Transition Unit Co-ordinator have reinforced collaboration and joint working within an environment of improved understanding of the position and circumstances of each team and a greater knowledge of roles and the influences dictating the nature of these roles.

Having a transition link in each team has dramatically improved the service for families. The purpose of this transition role is to be a link between the transition unit and their respective team, to champion transition within their team as a specialist supporting colleagues where required, to work directly with a number of the families and young people in transition (although this is not the case in all teams), and to represent their team at meetings such as the transition casework meetings.

A stakeholder event in July 2006, with a wide range of agencies represented, reinforced the message that working relationships have greatly improved. For the first time each participant was able to work together to put forward suggestions on how things could be improved. There was a sharing of ideas with a common goal.

2.3.2 Outcomes and Benefits:

Having a dedicated Transition Unit team that spends some time co-located has lessened differences in culture. This in turn strengthens services for families. Conversations and the exchange of information is easier. The Transition Unit identify themselves as a unified team and this has established effective working relationships. Any problems and difficulties are worked out together quickly rather than allowing things to escalate.

The link role in each team has enabled transition to be more effective within their team, giving it greater credence. In the teams where there is now a main caseworker who takes the majority of transition cases, for example the learning disability adult team, the support families have received has reportedly improved. This link role has also improved the working relationships between all of the teams because of the connection the link personnel provide.

Improvements in culture have enabled all workers to concentrate on the activities that support families rather than the issues clouding the work. Issues are generally dealt with better because of improved relationships and thus are dealt with quicker.

2.3.3 Areas for Further Development:

There are a number of areas where improvements are still required. As stated above cultural changes have been seen at management level and within the Transition Unit team itself. However, there is still some way to go in building links between other front line staff. The proposed transition training planned over the next six months is mandatory for anyone working with transition cases, including the generalist Personal Advisers working in mainstream schools with transition cases. It is hoped that the content of this training along with the chance to team build will address these issues at a caseworker level.



Figure 2: Professionals networking at a transition event.

2.4 Objective 4: Develop indicators to enable the relevant boards to monitor improvements in outcomes.

2.4.1 Project Activities:

Members of the Transition Unit Steering Group were involved in devising indicators to assess the quantity and quality outcomes of the Transition Unit. The key areas that they aimed to measure were the success of the transition protocols and the care pathway, transition planning and young peoples involvement in their planning, the effectiveness and outcomes of transition planning and the multi agency involvement in planning.

Seven indicators were developed and they are as follows;

- The percentage of young people whose care is co-ordinated by the transition unit (as part of the Children's Trust)

- The percentage of young people involved in their transition reviews
- The percentage of young people with a transition plan
- The percentage of young people whose care plan was agreed and resources committed before they reached 17yrs and 9 months
- The percentage of young people with a Learning Difficulty or Disability (LDD) aged 16 to 19 who are Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET)
- The percentage of young people with a disabilities aged 16-17 or their carers, in receipt of direct payments
- The numbers of young people with disabilities aged 17 to 21 with three or more separate destinations in the previous 12 months. A destination is identified as education, training or employment.

The indicators are collated on a quarterly basis and reported at the Sutton Disability Partnership for Children and Young People and the operational subgroup of the Learning Disability Partnership Board.

2.4.2 Outcomes and Benefits:

The indicators have enabled those managing transition to monitor the development of the Transition Unit on a regular basis. The reporting structure ensures that the Transition Unit is accountable and open to scrutiny.

Analysis of the data also tests the protocols and the activities that have been put in place. Ultimately the achievement of these indicators should indicate improvements in transition planning for young people and their families within the borough.

2.4.3 Areas for Further Development:

The indicators are in place and have been reported on for a year. It would be wise for these indicators to be reviewed on a yearly basis to ensure that they usefully measure what is required.

2.5 Objective 5: Dissemination of learning

Dissemination of learning is considered from three aspects: dissemination of good transition practices developed by the Transition Unit to wider groups of staff within Sutton; enabling other Local Authorities to learn from Sutton's experience of tackling Transition in this particular way; and dissemination of general lessons gained from this project about integrated working and modernising services.

2.5.1 Dissemination of good transition practices developed by the Transition Unit to wider groups of staff within Sutton:

A care pathway flow chart was designed and piloted within the Transition Unit by the three professionals working within the team, namely the Connexions Personal Adviser, children's Social Worker and adult learning disability Care Manager. To support the development of the care pathway flow chart, weekly training and development meetings took place to assess impact and to make ongoing improvements. The initial training and piloting progressed well within the Transition Unit team and this learning has influenced the other workers within the teams where transition is part of their job.

2.5.2 Enabling other Local Authorities to learn from Sutton's experience of tackling Transition in this particular way:

The learning that Sutton has gained throughout the project has been beneficial to neighbouring authorities. Meetings have taken place with consultants and managers from the London Boroughs of Merton and Brent to support transition developments in these localities. The issues identified in both boroughs were not dissimilar to those documented in Sutton a year ago. The common themes of tracking, information for parents/carers, co-ordination of transition and the relationships between key agencies were discussed. A number of key documents were shared including the Sutton transition protocols, the parent/carer fact sheets.

2.5.3 Learning for Sutton about integrating and modernising services: Lessons learned from the project have also informed and influences policy within Sutton. It has been recognised that transition must remain high on the

Local Authority agenda and thus has become one of the key objectives in the Children and Young Peoples Plan.

2.5.4 Outcomes and Benefits

Dissemination of learning to all key professionals impacts on the way in which planning supports families. There is informal evidence and feedback from team managers that complaints from parents/carers decreased significantly with the introduction of the protocols and this was attributed to the processes in place.

Over forty parents and carers attended the parents meetings, which will benefit the transition planning for these families.

Transition Parents Meetings

"It's useful as a support group where you will be listened to"

"Finding out that there is help for my daughter even after school, as most of the time I have felt I was on my own."

"Very informative, relaxed atmosphere – certainly gave me direction. Thank you"

Parent/carers comments from evaluation forms

Learning obtained through the integrated team has assisted improved collection of data on young people. This has benefited all community services as improved judgements are made where services are required, financial planning and appropriateness of services commissioned.

The sharing of ideas with other authorities has improved the cross boarder relationships and is useful for the continued development in Sutton. It has also raised Sutton's profile. The discussions also looked at the process of how Sutton had achieved what it had and this helped with the review of the processes.

2.5.5 Areas for Further Development

The improved processes have also had a positive impact on the work of those colleagues who are not part of the Transition Unit. Formal training for this group of professionals is planned and will be mandatory for anyone working with transition cases. The aim of the training is to encourage all personnel to work towards the same good practice that the Transition Unit team adhere to.

A future priority must be the provision of information on transition in an appropriate format for young people with disabilities. There is nothing currently available within Sutton and this should be addressed.

2.6 Objective 6: The involvement of service users

2.6.1 Project Activities

Service users have been involved in the project in a variety of ways. They have had the opportunity to influence service provision, the development of transition protocols and the production of information for families.

Parents and carers are represented on the Transition Strategic Planning Group (previously the Transition Project Group) and the Sutton Disability Partnership Group for Children and Young People (formerly the Sutton Trust for Children and Young People). At both groups elements of the Transition Unit work has been presented and all stakeholders, including parents and carers, have had the opportunity to question and contribute to these developments.

Two main advocacy charities within Sutton support young people and their families through the transition process. These organisations are Jigsaw4U (a charity advocating on behalf of young people) and Contact a Family (a charity supporting parents/carers of young people with disabilities). Both have been very involved from the start in influencing the developments to ensure that any work produced is appropriate and represented the views of user groups.

A Stakeholder event was held in July 2006 with the aim of facilitating effective joint working between key stakeholders in transition, to enable them to

contribute and make important practical decisions to aid positive outcomes for young people. A range of stakeholders were invited to attend including parents, carers and young people.

Parents and carers participated in the review and development of a series of Sutton transition leaflets for families. The initial consultation directly influenced the look and content of the fact sheets that were finally produced.

A number of parents meetings have taken place in the last few months (fig. 3).



These meetings are a forum for imparting information on transition topics and additionally give parents/carers a chance to discuss issues. From these meetings any comments raised about service provision are forwarded to providers

and commissioners. At the September meeting questionnaires were distributed to parents/carers in attendance to gather information in a formal way.

2.6.2 Outcomes and Benefits

Messages that came across at the Stakeholder event in July from the service users were very powerful and had a huge impact on the outcomes of the day. These outcomes have formed a large part of the current action plan for transition.

Six fact sheets have been produced and will be distributed to families this autumn. The information in the fact sheets will directly support parents and carers.

2.6.3 Areas for Development

It is still felt that the ongoing involvement of families is important for transition to continue to improve. Focus groups with Jigsaw4U and Connexions in schools over the next months will help to further canvas the opinions of young people in special schools.

Many of the developments would not have been effective without the involvement of service users and thus their ongoing involvement is required.

2.7 Limitations to the Project

All reports have been submitted, indicating the level to which the milestones have been achieved.

Achievements have been attained as per the original plan. There have however been limitations to the depth and breadth of the work due to the time limit set for the project (one year rather than the originally proposed two). This has had an impact on three main areas: the timing of the training programme for all staff involved in transition, the opportunity to fully engage a wider range of adult community teams than originally envisaged, the opportunity to fully evaluate the impact of any new processes and services put in place. All of these areas are being addressed by a commitment from the key agencies to continue the project until the end of March 2007 in it's current guise and then look to ways of sustaining the work from then on.

The direction of the project went ahead as planned. It was recognised early on that, for success to be wide ranging and impact on all young people with disabilities, it was important to engage all adult community teams in the development of the protocols rather than just the learning disability adult team as originally envisaged.

There is wide ranging evidence to demonstrate the achievement of the objectives and milestones. Examples include,

- The achievement of the transition unit indicators can be used to demonstrate many of the achievements of the project and evidence is kept to support these.
- Information has been produced to support the new protocols. This has been distributed to all the Transition Unit personnel and a good practice training pack will be distributed to all staff during the planned training workshops.
- Reports and minutes have been taken at each of the parent/carer meetings.
- Six parent/carer fact sheets have been produced and will be distributed in Autumn 2006.
- Minutes of the casework group meetings, transition planning meetings and the stakeholder event have been produced and circulated.
- The Transition Tracking Database is established and is used by those who need to access the data for tracking and planning purposes.
- An action plan has been developed to sustain the ongoing development of transition.
- Completed evaluation forms and questionnaires support the findings.
- Although not quantifiable, there is evidence that there is a reduction in the number of formal and informal complaints from families and other professionals. This leads to a reliable assumption that improvements have been made.

3 Service User Responses

A variety of methods have been used to capture the opinions of stakeholders, namely parents, carers and young people. These have included parents meetings and a stakeholder event.

Two sets of transition parents' meetings have taken place within the borough, in July and September 2006. The objective for both meetings was to better inform parents of transition and the new processes locally. Also, to answer questions from parents and to gain their views on transition to shape the continued improvements. The first meeting was called 'Transition: an

not longer. The project came about partly due to the concerns that parents and carers raised about the quality of the transition process. Improvements and changes have been introduced and their impact and whether this has made transition a smoother journey for some families will not be fully measurable for a year or so when some of these families have fully experienced the whole process. However, this does not mean that there are not some real gains within the short period of time that the project has been in existence.

When consulted, some families felt that it was too early on to comment fully. Their sons/daughters were aged 14 and thus just beginning on the transition path. They felt that they had not had enough experience of the process to make a judgement. Others felt it was too early to comment because the new developments had not been established long enough to bed down and have enough of an impact. Others stated the transition experience had been really positive. Some felt very supported by the range of professionals. One parent said he was “very satisfied”, another saying that previously they “had no idea.... now I know a lot more of what to expect”. Some felt it was “important to have continuity” in the people who supported them through this time in their child’s life. Not all comments were positive with a parent commenting that transition was still “patchy” although her daughter was now settled due to the involvement of the Transition Unit.

When questioned about transition, many of the comments focussed on the provision and availability of services to support their son or daughter rather than the processes. Examples include the availability of life skills training for young people with autism to equip them with the skills to live independently, as many are not eligible for direct payments or social services support. Others felt that there was a greater need for local provision and services available for young people with more complex needs. In addition other families required more supported employment schemes especially supported summer placements and part time employment for all young people with disabilities.

When asked at the stakeholder meeting, there was an acknowledgment that things were improving as a result of the project. However, it was identified that there were specific topics that still needed to be addressed.

- There had been improvements to the timing of transition planning for many families but not for all and thus this needed to be managed better,
- Some families felt overwhelmed by the numbers of professionals involved within the transition process,
- Families and young people wanted more influence and control over their futures and the services provided,
- There was a need for greater breadth of provision and services to cater for all groups of young people with disabilities, including those with complex needs and those with Aspergers Syndrome. Linked with this there was a feeling that some professionals can be risk averse and this can limit creativity over the provision of services.

It would seem prudent, as a result of many comments, to canvas opinion again in twelve months when many of the families have had greater experience of the new transition processes.

4. Staff Responses

All staff from Connexions, Children with Disabilities Team and Community Team for People with Learning Disabilities, working with young people in transition, were asked to complete a questionnaire. The purpose of the questionnaire was to gather the views of team members on the impact the Transition Unit has made to their work by asking them specific questions that compared their working practices before and after.

Analysing the feedback there was a significant reaction to the improvement in transition since the start of the project. In addition there were suggestions of ways things could continue to be improved.

Firstly, staff were asked to comment on their impression of transition before the project began. There was awareness that there were problems around

transition both for professionals and their working practices and how this impacted on families. Some commented that they thought families could feel isolated and many lacked the information about the future options. Some felt that at times things were disorganised and lacked planning with limited joined up working between agencies leading to plans not being in place for a young persons 18th birthday.

Looking at the changes since the project started, professionals feel that there has been increased guidance on transition issues to support families, better joined up working between the agencies involved in transition, for example the parents evenings and professionals network meetings. Some felt that young people and families had been better supported, with those educated out of the borough cited as an example. The transition unit has enabled the lack of provision in certain areas to be identified. Others felt that there was a feeling of co-operation from all service providers. There was a recognition that some difficulties remain but the general experience was of smoother transitions.

Professionals were asked to comment on the identified positive aspects that had been noticed over the last twelve months. The Connexions Personal Advisers particularly liked the location of the Transition Unit within the one-stop shop Connexions centre run by Prospects, and felt this encouraged improved networking and joined up working. Many felt that there was a better provision of information to professionals supporting the transition process, for example an updated list of personal advisers from around the country to support the home host arrangement. A number of examples of improved joint working were mentioned; the person centred interviews and reviews taking place within special schools in the borough and the parents meetings. There were comments that the planned and co-ordinated transfer to adult services involving relevant professionals at the appropriate stage had improved and that the transition database supported this. Finally, a number of people commented that they felt more confident in the fact that there was a specialist team dealing with transition who had the knowledge to support colleagues, discuss issues and share relevant information.

Colleagues were also asked to suggest where things still needed to be improved. A range of examples were put forward including the continued work to raise the profile of the unit with a range of agencies such as schools, to encourage increased joint working and improved transition; the unit to influence policy development and local provision; to consult with young people/parents around their needs; ongoing improvements to the timing of transition planning as this is still not happening in every case; improve the communication of information from adult social services to children's where joint working is happening and from children's to adults in the transfer of relevant assessments and interventions and finally to continue with the work that has been achieved and not to let it slip away.

Improved Joint Working

A physically disabled 15-year-old with Aspergers has been supported by improved joint working by the professionals involved in transition. His mother was not coping well with his transition planning. Due to the complexity of the case a network meeting was organised early to start to identify and plan for the young persons future. This meeting involved the mother, the key agencies and a young persons advocate from a local charity.

To support the mothers emotional state she was invited and attended a Transition parents meeting. This enabled her to find out more about transition and liaise with other families in similar situations.

Finally, they were asked whether there had been any perceived impact on service users and their relationship with them. Some felt there had been improvements for parents, carers and young people and quoted examples such as the "better identification of health needs have meant an increase in continuing care assessments" and that the support available for parents and carers had been raised however there was feelings that the quantity and quality of provision available was variable.

Responses to the questionnaire gave an impression that the project has had a positive impact on job satisfaction but generally this is harder to quantify.

Indicators show that the transition unit team, who have been greatly involved in all the developments of the project, have experienced varying levels of job satisfaction throughout the twelve months. Measurable information such as sickness absence has been extremely low throughout the project, there has been a real commitment to being involved in any new development work even when pressures of work from their caseload has been very high, and there has been full attendance at all development meetings and evening work to support their work with parents. However, there have also been frustrations when plans have not always gone according to plan or systems change elsewhere that impact on the developments that have been put in place within transition.

Job satisfaction and recruitment and retention are usually linked but there is no information that can be provided with regards to the transition project in Sutton having any influence on the recruitment or retention of staff. Any changes in staff within the teams can not be directly linked to the project and any of its developments.

5. Cost Savings

Calculations have not been made to identify whether the project has had an impact on savings for the service. In some cases there is an increase in the costs to this area of work.

Improvements to the management and analysis of the data on the Transition Unit Database has led to improved identification and tracking of young people in transition. However, dedicated management and administrative capacity is required and this puts demands on resources.

Improvements to the identification of young people, the empowerment of families and information on services has led to a greater demand and take up of services. This also impacts on the planning required. In addition the development and delivery of information for service users whether it be presentations to parents and young people or leaflets requires the input of resources.

Conversely, it is expected that longer term cost savings will be gained by many of the other developments put forward by the Transition Unit. Not least that a decrease in the numbers of cases going to judicial review has a direct impact on the budget for a department. Additionally, the Transition Planning Meetings allow for more informed forecasting of the services required locally. The provision of adequate local services will ensure that people can be supported within their local environment, where appropriate, rather than at a residential placements which could be more costly. It is predicted that improved transition planning encourages greater stability in placements for young people. This in turn reduced the time aspect that staff need when placements breakdown and alternative plans are required.

Currently there has been a commitment from each service to financially support the project to continue to the end of March 2007. A review in the New Year will look at the future of the unit, the continuation of the work and the financial implications.

6. Inclusiveness

There is evidence that the developments and changes to the working practices of transition have drawn in a wider group of people, both service users and professionals.

As mentioned above the transition tracking database now identifies a wider range of people who may need services from professionals to support their transition. The use of parents meetings and other professionals to recommend the services has accessed a wider group of service users.

A larger number of professionals have made a formal commitment to support transition and the developments. This can be illustrated in the Transition Planning Meetings where there are representatives from a wider range of departments than previously.

Inclusiveness can also be evidenced in more young people having a say in the planning of their future through the development of person centred reviews, person centred interviews and more holistic transition reviews. One young man was able to express his desire to return to his local area rather than remain at a residential college away from his family. Improved joint working at an earlier stage allowed this discussion to take place and enough time for care planning to happen.

7. Changes to the Professional and Non - Professional Role

This project has focussed on the joint working between personnel and the division of work between unqualified and professionally qualified staff. The project has identified that there is a potential to develop the Connexion Personal Adviser role through use of the Common Assessment Framework (CAF). In particular, where a Personal Advisers identify families who are eligible for low-level services from social services. There could be the opportunity to access these using the CAF, where previously access would have required direct involvement of a qualified social worker.

There has been some experience over the last year of using a social work assistant to support the work of the transition social worker in the children with disabilities team. This has been very successful and many families have benefited from this support. There is more to learn about this experience and in the first year of the project we have not see the full potential.

8. Sustainability

There is no doubt that Transition Unit has made a different. As a Transition Unit steering group member stated "There are substantial benefits to having the unit in place". As mentioned above, there is a commitment for the work of the Transition Unit to continue in its current format until the end of March 2007. There is a planned review in January/February where a decision will be made about its future. There are a number of key areas that need to be addressed as part of this review. These are,

- the ongoing work to ensure that all key partnership are signed up and involved, strategically and operationally

- the ongoing management and coordination of transition within the borough with a key person assigned with this task
- administrative support for the transition tracking database to ensure the ongoing identification and tracking of young people
- information to plan budgets and commissioning
- Structural arrangements that bring front-line workers together to achieve shared goals, communicate effectively and develop efficient/flexible working practices
- Identification of the activities that need to continue to promote the ongoing improvements, such as an increase in person centred planning, holistic transition reviews, a more creative look at the roles of professionals working in transition, ongoing work with the health professionals.

However transition is managed in the future it is imperative that it is not lost and the improved way of working is maintained.

Appendices

Appendix A:

1) Questionnaire to parents/carers and young people

When your/your son/daughter turned 14, what did you expect transition to look like?

What has your experience been like up to now?

Was this better or worse than you expected and why?

Over the last year have there been any improvement/deterioration to transition (since the Transition Unit has been in existence). If so how?

Are there ways in which we could improve transition?

Other comments?

2) Evaluation of the Transition Unit Project Steering Group

Achievement of the objectives

To what extent have the original objectives been achieved?

What have been the blockages to achievement?

What evidence do you have to demonstrate that objectives have been achieved and milestones reached?

What still needs to be done?

Improvements to the Quality of the service provided

To what extent has the quality of service been improved?

What evidence do you have?

Staff Responses

Have recruitment and retention problems become easier or not?

Has there been an increase in job satisfaction for staff?

How can you measured this/what is your evidence?

Cost Savings

Have the changes affected overall cost of the service?

Have there been savings?

Have there been knock-on costs?

Have agency costs decreased?

What evidence is there of added value within the service overall?

Have the changes implemented streamlined existing funding arrangements?

What evidence have you collected to demonstrate any of these?

Other comments

Name (if you wish):

Date:

3) Evaluation of the Impact of the Casework Group on Transition

The casework group has now been running for a few months and we would like to get your views around how you feel it is working and ideas around improvements.

1) How did you discuss transition cases before the casework group started?

2) What are the benefits to your work since attending the group (working relationships, time savings, improved work with families, information sharing, increasing knowledge of options/services etc)? Please give examples

3) What improvements could be made to the group to aid your transition work?

4) Has there been any impact on service users? Please give examples

5) Please make any other comments or suggestions

Name:

Organisation:

Date:

4) Questionnaire to team members:

- 1) What was your impression of transition before the unit started?

- 2) What changes have there been since the start of the transition unit?

- 3) What do you feel are the positive aspects?

- 4) What still needs to be improved?

- 5) Are there ways in which the Transition Unit helps you in your work?

- 6) Has there been impact on service users and your relationship with them?

- 7) Anything else, please comment?

Name:

Date:

Team: SCTPLD, CNX, CWDT, PD, MH