

## **Transition between children's and adult services at age 18: Final Report**

### **1.0 Recommendations**

- 1.1 The overall purpose of the investigation was to evaluate the transition between children's and adult services at age 18 across the County and make recommendations aimed at improving the quality of these services, to be considered by the Committee, and then the Executive.
- 1.2 The recommendations have been drawn up, using evidence obtained from witnesses, site visits and a background evidence that were brought to the Task Group's attention.
- 1.3 The Task Group would like to place on record its gratitude to everyone who contributed to the review process by providing information and/or being interviewed. The Task Group welcomed the responses from the public and advised that in submitting the recommendations its findings were supported with evidence and information, which it feels, justifies the proposals.
- 1.4 The Task Group recommends:

#### **Recommendation 1**

That there is a dedicated transition officer operating jointly within Children and Young People's Services (CYPS), Adult and Community Services (ACS) and Health Services to oversee the transition process in Devon.

#### **Rationale**

The Task Group felt that a dedicated officer who could work with CYPS, ACS and Health Services would help mitigate the inherent problems of the transition from one service to another.

#### **Recommendation 2**

That a key worker be identified from CYPS or ACS to work with a young person through the transition process and a year beyond.

#### **Rationale**

Evidence indicates that there is a need for continuity with a young person's care package for at least a year beyond transition. At present a young person can potentially have three different workers in less than four years. One of the problems inherent in the transition process is that of 'case ownership' and this would obviate that problem.

Planning the transition process is key and it needs to be done at the right time and with all the relevant people present. Care managers need to be assigned at the earliest possible stage in order to help get funding decisions right. If the transition is not right then the effects could be disastrous. It is vital that there is recognition of the support that young people need through the transition process.

#### **Recommendation 3**

That at the first Transition Arrangements Review meeting when the child is in Year 9 information is provided to families on the statutory differences in provision between children's and adults services. One of the key aims of doing this is to more effectively manage expectations relating to adult services.

#### Rationale

It is essential that there is absolute clarity in terms of what service could be delivered to families, as there are statutory differences in provision between children's and adult services. It needs to be explained to families what changes are going to occur and how their legal rights will be affected. ACS could possibly have a list of the provision that is readily available for parents/carers to get some prior awareness of the types of services they will hopefully be able to access.

At this stage the family also ought to be offered a free and independent money advice check and support as the child approaches 16 years, then through into adulthood (see 6.12).

#### **Recommendation 4**

That pupil statementing records are transferred as a matter of course from school to Further Education (FE) provider.

#### Rationale

The Task Group agreed that there is a need for a formal approach to passing on pupil statementing records to FE colleges, so that pupils' additional needs, as well as their involvement in the transition process are flagged up.

It would also be useful if this record came across to ACS as part of the transition process and to feed into other post-18 services such as employment.

#### **Recommendation 5**

That a database be created of young people coming through to the transition stage. This database should be available for CYPS, ACS and Health Services to access.

#### Rationale

It needs to be ensured that young people reaching Year 9 and the start of the transition process are being picked up, and the type of provision a young person needed is being assessed with the appropriate services being flagged up to attend review meetings. IT software would provide the Council with a way of sharing information electronically across NHS and social care. An IT system could be employed to ensure that all the relevant information on a client would immediately be accessible to the people who need it.

#### **Recommendation 6**

That a Member be appointed as a Transition Champion.

#### Rationale

It would be beneficial to have a dedicated Member to act as a Transition Champion who could try to address problems of transition.

#### **Recommendation 7**

That in accordance with the transition protocol there is an integrated review to minimise duplication of assessment and planning activity for the young person involved.

#### Rationale

Review meetings are held in addition to transition and care review meetings, which could be very confusing for the young person involved. Measures need to be taken to avoid unnecessary meetings and instead hold integrated reviews in accordance with the transition protocol.

### **Recommendation 8**

That the Council work with local authorities across Devon to increase work opportunities for Children in Care and young people with physical and / or learning disabilities. That the Council also seek to work with businesses across the County on employment initiatives for young people.

#### Rationale

It is apparent that there is a lack of employment opportunities for young people with special educational needs as they made the transition from CYPS to ACS. The Council need to be proactive in creating employment and work experience placements for those young people who most need them. This might be progressed through LAA and the Sustainable Community Strategy.

### **Recommendation 9**

That Health Scrutiny be asked to undertake a combined review with CSOS of CAMHS.

#### Rationale

Members agreed that there is a particular need to address transfers for children with chronic conditions and mental health issues, in particular the lack of CAMHS crisis provision. The Task Group resolved that although it is within their terms of reference to examine the arrangements for transition between CAMHS and adult mental health services, this was something that needed to be done in conjunction with Health Scrutiny, and should be part of a separate review. It would be advantageous if a non-executive PCT member be part of a Task Group looking into this.

## **2.0 Background**

2.1 On **18 July 2006** Community Services Overview/Scrutiny Committee endorsed the Children's Trust Scrutiny Panel recommendation to establish a Task Group on the transition between children's and adults services at age 18. It was further agreed that this Task Group comprise Councillors Newcombe (Chairman), Bray, Fry, Lee and Spence.

2.2 The following terms of reference were set by the Task Group;

1. To examine the transition of Children in Care and children with physical and / or learning disabilities from children's to adult services. To gain an understanding of the current position and the Council's statutory duties.
2. To gain an understanding of the cost implications for care services which are associated with transition. To examine how services are commissioned with the Council's partner organisations.
3. To discuss the practical effects with the young people and their families as they go into adult social care, and whether there is adequate support services from CYPS and ACS.
4. To investigate and review whether there is a clear strategic vision and framework that is sufficiently flexible for transition delivery on the ground.
5. To examine the arrangements for transition between CAMHS and adult mental health services.
6. To consider the report of the Ofsted Joint Area Review.

7. To consider the findings and recommendations of the CSCI Inspection of Physical and Sensory Disability Services and the Annual Review meeting of Adult Services as they relate to issues of transition.
8. To make detailed recommendations to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on the findings of the Task Group.

### **3.0 Links to Strategic Plan**

- 3.1 The study into transition across the County directly links to the priorities of the Strategic Plan.
- 3.2 From the Strategic Plan 2006–2011, the priority states that 'Devon's children should have the best possible start in life and gain the knowledge and skills they need to lead happy, healthy and fulfilling lives'. One of the objectives under this remit is to support parents, families and carers to help children and young people enjoy learning, aim for excellence and achieve to the best of their ability.

### **4.0 Task Group Activities**

- 4.1 This section of the report gives some background on the activities of the Task Group. A composite witness list is appended to the report.
- 4.2 The first meeting took place on **30 January 2007**. The aim of this initial scoping meeting was to determine the focus for the investigation, gauge Task Group members' viewpoints and plan the next steps for the investigation, including witnesses. A schedule of future meetings was also outlined.
- 4.3 A further scoping meeting of the Task Group took place on **15 February 2007** attended by representatives from ACS and CYPS as well as the lead officers from the Young Devon Transition Project.
- 4.4 On **1 March 2007** the Task Group received evidence from the Deputy Head and the Head of Student Services at Exeter College, and from foster carers.
- 4.5 On **12 March 2007** the Task Group interviewed the Head of Oaklands Special School, Dawlish; the Executive Member for Children and Young People's Services and the Interim Assistant Director CYPS.
- 4.6 At the **26 March 2007** meeting the Task Group spoke to representatives from Connexions Cornwall and Devon; The West of England School and College; officers from ACS and a Mid-Devon District Councillor.
- 4.7 On **16 April 2007** the Task Group received further evidence from the lead officers from the Young Devon Transition Project, as well as from foster carers.
- 4.8 On **25 April 2007** Members interviewed a representative from the Learning and Skills Council; the County Chair, Parent Carer Voice; Executive Member for Adult and Community Services; a Fostering Social Worker; 2 foster carers and 2 former Children in Care.
- 4.9 At the **12 June 2007** meeting the Task Group received evidence from the Operations Manager CYPS; Devon Youth Offending Services Manager; Head of Barley Lane and the Devon Parent Partnership Officer.
- 4.10 On the **26 June 2007** Members convened to consider the findings of the Task Group and to formulate recommendations for Committee.

### **5.0 Transition Project**

- 5.1 The Joint Area Review (JAR) has been critical of the Council's transition process. There is some good joint work being undertaken in terms of transition, but not consistently enough. The JAR reports that historical differences in provision across the county are not being tackled systematically to ensure equal access. Protocols are not in place for all the areas that need to be covered. The Council needs to work in a more integrated and collaborative way. The JAR also flagged up that in order to improve performance there is a need for the Council to look at best practice from around the country.
- 5.2 In 2006 CYPS proposed a 2 year Transition Project. Following agreement with ACS, officers from Young Devon have been seconded on a part-time basis to lead a 2 year Transition Project for the Council concentrating on following:
- issues for transition in schools;
  - issues for young people as they approach 18 and the transition process;
  - revision of case transfer protocol.
- 5.3 The Transition Project is also examining how the transition process for children with SEN could be dovetailed more effectively with adult services. The project aims to make recommendations to improve how CYPS and ACS operate in terms of transition. The officers are trying to identify the key strategic partners so that everyone is together; not just the managers of policy and strategy, but those managers of practice as well.
- 5.4 The Task Group has met on 2 occasions with the Transition Project Lead and Assistant Lead officers to discuss their project in relation to the Members review and ensure that instead of there being duplication; these pieces of work are complementary.

## **6.0 Findings**

### **Transition Planning**

#### **6.1 Transition Process**

A number of witnesses to the review used the analogy of falling off a cliff to describe the transition in service between CYPS and ACS. Evidence indicates that the problems experienced in the transition process may have been exacerbated with the split between ACS and CYPS.

The major problem is in terms of what happened to young people when they left college at 18, as parents' report a lack of clarity in terms of what provision was out there for a young person and they often did not know what to do with their child. The sudden change in support of carer/social worker increased the level of anxiety felt at this time by both the young person and their parents/carer.

#### **6.2 Transition Planning**

The main problems identified by the Task Group which led to breakdowns in the transition planning process is the lack of a consistent approach; late funding decisions; a general lack of clarity in terms of who is providing the care and delays between assessments and actual case involvement.

In Year 9 pupils have a transitional arrangement review which is usually led by Connexions Personal Advisors and also to be attended by teachers, social care staff and parents. In some cases speech language therapists and the Occupational Therapist would be present depending on the needs of the young persons'. A consensus is formed and by the end of the meeting a transitional

arrangement plan is drawn up for a young persons' move into FE or work. Transition review meetings are subsequently held on a regular basis about what the young person would like to do up until they leave CYPS. Situations are often fairly clear and it is possible to diagnose the provision of care needed for someone at the age of 14 for when they were in their 20s. Connexions advised that they met quarterly with social care representatives to discuss those young people leaving care and their needs such as their access to training and employment opportunities.

The Devon Transition Protocol was jointly written by the Council with a number of other agencies, and has recently been revisited. The Task Group are concerned that ACS had not however been involved in the production of this protocol and the Transition Implementation Group had not had senior ACS officer presence. This is all the more surprising as one of the key aims is to bring partners together.

The lack of a consistent approach to the transition planning process is apparent from the evidence received by the Task Group, and is an area of concern highlighted in the JAR. It seems to be particularly problematic getting ACS representatives to attend reviews at either Year 9 or Year 10, while sometimes social workers are also not attending Year 9 transition reviews. There are clearly different working practices in operation across Devon. Although support from social services should follow assessed need, it was reported to the Task Group that different levels of support are often provided depending on management.

The transition protocol recommends transition review meetings. The actual gold standards for these reviews is the Person Centred Planning review, which did not just cover statutory needs, but is a review built around an individuals needs. This did potentially create more work but evidence indicates it is of real added benefit. It also concerned Members that Special Educational Needs Coordinators (SENCOs) are sometimes not being invited to care meetings.

At the end of Year 12 the transitional arrangements should be mapped out. It is important that this is done sufficiently early in order to assess the level of care needed and how this care could be met. There are always tensions when a child reaches the age of transition, but these can be eased by identifying who is going to take responsibility of the young person at the earliest possible opportunity.

### 6.3 Case Transfer Protocol

The case transfer protocol specifies areas that need to be considered for children, and to prepare young people and their families for the differences in legal rights that occur after transition. There is a need to be mindful of where young people move into the County whom the Council has not had adequate time to work with. Devon is a huge importer of Children in Care, which causes a demand on finances. Exeter in particular is something of a geographical magnet when children are placed by another authority. This is one of a number of issues affecting Councils across the country that CSCI highlighted.

### 6.4 Responsibility of services

The main transfer of responsibility to ACS is at 18. If the young person is out of full-time education and receiving care from CYPS then the age of transfer is at 18; if the young person is still in full-time education then the transfer is at 19, although there are a number of other factors that increase the age for some until 21. The key responsibility of CYPS is the development and education of young people in care; for ACS the emphasis is not on development and education, the remit instead shifted to independence and safety.

The Task Group are concerned that young people who might have been accommodated or be voluntarily in care; have a care order or are intending to

continue in education are being cared for up until that time but when they reach 18 they are left to fend for themselves, whether or not they are emotionally or psychologically ready. A number of representations to the Task Group indicate that if a young person has severe learning difficulties they are catered for as they move into adult services, yet if they are borderline in terms of meeting the criteria for ACS then they are often not provided for.

#### 6.5 Children in Care

Members are concerned that some of the most vulnerable young people, whose needs fell below the statutory level, are not being identified in the system at the transition stage. Children in Care appear to be particularly vulnerable in terms of not being recognised at the age of transition. The CYPS Interim Assistant Director advised that young people with very specific needs have automatic transition talks, while the hope is that most Children in Care would not need to be supported by ACS, they would instead go into FE, and employment.

Children in Care have care managers, while other statemented pupils did not. This is something of a grey area that needs to be addressed.

#### 6.6 Expense for ACS

Young people with complex needs who have been receiving very expensive care provision, had this cost met by a number of different agencies such as the PCT, not just CYPS. ACS has to take responsibility for funding the young person at 18 as no money follows a child through the transition process. This could be in the region of £3,000 or £4,000 a week. 85 children in 2007/2008 are anticipated to go through to ACS at an anticipated cost of £1,250,000. The cost of just a couple of extra placements has significant budgetary implications.

There is a lack of clarity about how some cases are to be funded over the transition period, which gives rise to great uncertainty to families. The Task Group feels that this could be mitigated by better joint working (see Recommendation 1).

#### 6.7 Health Services

A number of concerns were raised throughout the review process about the transfers to health services of young people with chronic conditions and mental health issues. There were also real concerns about the lack of CAMHS provision, not just with parents but from professionals as well, which needs to be addressed in a separate review (see Recommendation 9).

ACS reported to be working much closer together with Health Services to use expertise alongside care managers and social workers, particularly in relation to children with long term needs. Health services are now trying to adopt a more consistent approach than they have in the past, dovetailing more closely with social care. Previously when there were 6 PCTS across Devon there were greater variations in service and operation, now that there is just 1 PCT it helped the Council greatly. There is now a set of protocols as to how a child is funded.

#### 6.8 Care Leavers

In 2006/2007 there were 326 care leavers in the County. 91 of these the Council still have to discharge parental responsibility; 38 have left care, but are still only 16/17 years old; and there are a further 197 for whom the Council is not financially responsible, but is still supporting with an allocated care manager. Some of these young people are being provided with financial assistance for accessing further education and are being helped to finance the equipment and resources that they might need.

A child with a profound disability would at 16 remain within the Joint Agency Team and would not be transferred to the Care Leavers Service. There are a number of these children every year that would not be transferred to the Care Leavers Service.

There are differences in terms of the way in which the Care Leavers Service operated across the County. More work is being undertaken with the Care Leavers Service on mentoring schemes in the South and the West of the County. This is extremely positive for the young people and their mentors, and is something the Care Leavers Team is looking to roll out across Devon.

The setting up grant to help a care leaver into independent living is £1,000. Young people could come back and access that funding at anytime until the age of 21.

#### 6.9 Transition Workers

Most of the children that went through the transition process are supported by a care manager. In some parts of the County, care managers could allocate a transition worker for those young people with complex needs. The transition worker has specialist skills and knowledge in order to be able to support the care manager and keep them up to date and informed with the process.

### **Parents and Carers**

#### 6.10 Parents and Carers

There is a Parent and Carer's Forum, and also Parents Carer Voice, both of which provide valuable support to parents and carers. The Task Group are concerned however that not all parents and carers are being reached.

It is important that the Local Authority continues to educate parents and carers through the transition process about the services their child could receive as they move into adult services. The Task Group recognise that parental and carer expectation, in terms of what the local authority could support, is in some cases unrealistic. There is a finite amount of money to be distributed and the Council has a duty to discharge the public purse in a reasonable and equitable way.

It is apparent also that some parents/carers may have different viewpoints from their child in terms of priorities in the transition process, which care managers need to help manage. Parents reported to the Task Group that it is extremely frustrating to suddenly stop being listened to by the Local Authority when their child reaches 18, and instead have independent advocates used in their place.

An important issue for ACS and Health was that while the authorities need to respect Gillick competency, for those young people who at 18 are able to make decisions, on the other side they must also respect the lack of capacity that some young people have in being able to make decisions about their future provision of services when they reached this age. Some young people are simply not able to make these very important decisions and that needs to be recognised.

#### 6.11 Foster Carers

There needs to be a more flexible and person-centred response to foster carers. It is important that lessons are learned from the difficulties reported to the Task Group (See Case Studies 1- 3 on Page 14). Members felt that foster parents need to be helped wherever possible and their problems listened to. The Council simply could not afford to lose quality carers who provide such an excellent service to the young people involved and who also save the Local Authority significant sums of money. Some young people with substance abuse problems, who would have



been offending daily, had been turned around largely due to the input of a quality foster carer.

It is essential that quality carers are adequately supported, as foster carers currently feel more undervalued than ever before, and reported that many other carers are now quitting or are close to doing so. It did not appear to be accepted that some people need foster parents all their life. Often it is the case that Children in Care need more security from the family home post-18 than children who had been brought up in that environment throughout their life. Evidence indicates that social services are overly reliant on the good will of quality foster carers.

The Task Group received a number of representations detailing the lack of a common sense approach. Concerns were raised about the inflexibility of the artificial age barrier that is a young persons 18<sup>th</sup> birthday, whereby foster carers often have to change as there is a different classification for an adult carer than a young person's foster carer. This causes a considerable amount of unnecessary trauma for the young person and families involved.

#### 6.12 Benefits

One of the Local Public Service Agreement 2 targets has been to assist families with a child with special needs to access their full entitlement to benefits. The project has found that over 60% of families who made contact (now over 700) are not getting their entitlement. The project is now securing an average of over £4,000 per family. A number of important issues are emerging about why families are missing out to such an extent and one of the key learning points relates to the importance of high quality advice to families as young people enter adulthood.

Families face a dilemma as to whether they continue to claim for their child as a member of the family unit or whether their child should claim in their own right. The context for each family is different and the decision about what is best for them is therefore very individual. It is vitally important that families have access to independent expert advice and support as the child approaches 16 yrs and then through into adulthood.

There are problems sometimes for 16 year olds who for some reason have left home and are on income support, whom for some reason have a lapse in their benefits during the period between getting their income support and college starting in the September.

#### 6.13 Direct Payments

Parents reported feeling like accountants rather than carers with the direct payment system, as every month they have to fill in forms stating what they have done in relation to their child's care. ACS is working to make direct payments less bureaucratic and more accessible.

#### 6.14 Respite

The issue of respite is a matter of real concern for parents, particularly at the transition stage when parents are unsure whether their provision of respite is going to be continued.

Evidence indicates that the Council did not currently have an adequate provision of respite services. Respite is essential for parents and carers continuing health and continuing ability to look after their child/foster child. It is significantly cheaper for the authority to provide 1 or 2 nights a week respite than full time residential care, and more importantly it is often in everyone's best interests to give parents/carers the necessary break so that they are able to continue to look after their child within the home.

6.15 Supported Lodgings

At 16 years old care leavers are in some cases being encouraged to go into supported lodgings. These children have often had extremely difficult lives and in most cases are not ready to live on their own. There is a lack of places where youngsters could be accommodated and begin to live independent lives, but still have someone in a supervisory capacity to provide support.

Evidence indicates that at some Foyers, like the one in Exeter, thresholds are created which meant that the most vulnerable and most in need of the facility are not able to use it. A panel approach might be advantageous whereby there is a more transparent and discussed process to establish who can be accommodated in a Foyer.

6.16 Parent Partnership

The Parent Partnership advise parents as to what services and resources are available to them and their child. The work was focused on individuals, and giving parents the necessary skills and tools; signposting parents to services; helping to manage parental expectations and providing a greater awareness of more general issues. The Parent Partnership could help support parents and carers sharing tools and training. Members agree that the Parent Partnership needs to be routinely highlighted to all parents with children with an SEN.

6.17 District Councils

There is a need to work with district councils to ensure they provide quality accommodation for young people. Discussions tend to start at 16, or sometimes earlier, about what accommodation the young person in transition wants, although they are not allowed into supported lodgings until they are 16.

## **Further Education and Employment**

6.18 Further Education

Statistically the Council is performing well in terms of numbers of young people at 19 in education and employment. The vast majority of young people with SEN went into FE. Very few young people with SEN left education completely at 16; those that did might go into supported employment. It is clear that the more young people that could be supported in FE the greater the number that are likely to go onto higher education, although the number of Children in Care or those with an SEN going onto university is very low indeed.

There is evidence to suggest there are significant numbers of young people who are progressing to FE colleges but doing a similar course year on year, therefore making little progress. Effectively FE is, at times, being used as day care provision, as it is difficult for over 18s with physical or learning disabilities to access facilities, as day care centre provision across the County has been cut.

The Learning and Skills Council is trying to change the way that FE courses are delivered to ensure that there is a progression from learning to gaining employment or independent living and preparing young people for the next stage in their lives. Exeter College for instance has a purpose built flat on the campus to teach 'life skills' to pupils.

The provision of FE is planned in advance by the LSC. Therefore it is vital that the LSC is aware the numbers of young people moving into further education with special educational needs in order to make the appropriate provisions across the county both in terms of funding and planning places. The number of young people

with autism is growing, but the LSC is not sure how many young people in Devon had needs on the autistic spectrum. There are therefore problems in terms of creating the necessary places in FE colleges to meet those needs.

#### 6.19 Student Records

Evidence indicates a need for a formal approach to forwarding pupil records from schools and social services to FE colleges so that pupils' additional needs, as well as their involvement in the transition process, are flagged up. Exeter College reports that they have to ask social services for individual pupil records and often these would come too late in the process to be useful. Frequently staff did not know if a young person is in care. Members are extremely concerned that there are vulnerable students entering FE colleges who are not being flagged up as having an SEN, or whose eating disorder or history of self-harm are not being highlighted to the relevant welfare officers. The Care Leavers Team had a policy about informing FEs about care leavers, but links between FE colleges and the Care Leavers Team could be improved upon.

It is also very important for ACS to have good links with education providers, so that the right foundations are put in place. Evidence indicates that there is a particular lack of continuity in terms of the passing on of records for children on the Autistic Spectrum as they went through transition from CYPS to ACS.

The education aspect of student records is not a problem as exam results made this relatively straightforward. The difficulty is in terms of a young person's welfare, so that there is an automatic system and protection for each pupil as they went through the transition process. However it was reported to the Task Group that some Children in Care did not want to have their records passed on to colleges.

It was also reported that there were a lot of undiagnosed students with mental health problems presenting at Exeter College.

#### 6.20 Employment opportunities

Many witnesses to the review are concerned at the lack of young people with SEN who are going into employment. Many employers are fearful and lack awareness in terms of how they could support young people with SEN in the workplace. A significant amount of support for employers is available from the Department of Work and Pensions, although as this scheme is not widely promoted many employers would perhaps not be aware of this government funding.

Members felt that there is tremendous potential in young people with SEN that is not always realised. Technological advancements for instance had given young people with visual impairments a lot more scope. The Authority needs to have high, albeit realistic, expectations of what could be delivered. The Council and the PCT have been looking at how they could offer work experience opportunities and modern apprenticeships for young people with SEN.

ACS are working on social enterprise initiatives, and are trying to be innovative in providing young people with opportunities for employment, rather than just day care centres. It is vital there is the appropriate level of care tailored for each young person, but there also has to be the right level of opportunities whether it is in training or available employment.

ACS officers are also working on the modernisation of the Pluss contract. Pluss have a long history of networks to support young people into employment, and provide young people with a range of activities.

#### 6.21 Connexions

Connexions advised Members that they maintain contact with every young person from the age of 16-19, which is in the region of 60,000 young people a year. Connexions collaborate with schools and colleges on work experience placements and vocational training initiatives, looking to address specific needs of the young people.

It was however reported to the Task Group that the work that Connexions did is not embedded in the school and education system. There needs to be a more joined up and integrated approach, as evidence indicates that Connexions remit is based more around the provision of career guidance to young people, with child protection and other welfare issues not being a significant part of their role.

In terms of an integrated approach, Connexions had strong links with the Youth Offending Team for instance, but there did not appear to be such a link with the Care Leavers Team.

It appears that young people in some schools saw a Connexions advisor, with parents not actually being aware that they are doing so. Parents subsequently are concerned that their child might not be making the best of this opportunity without their parental involvement and support. This seems to be a problem with those young people who are not statemented, but who might still have significant problems.

#### 6.22 Learning and Skills Council

The Learning and Skills Council (LSC) is responsible for planning and funding further education and training for everyone in England other than those in universities. The major provision is for young people aged 16-18, but the LSC also provides evening classes and skills based training for adults. The LSC's vision is that by 2010, young people and adults in England would have the knowledge and skills matching the best in the world and be part of a competitive workforce. The Leech Report outlined the need to make sure the workforce was sufficiently skilled to take part in work, as there are now less jobs available for people with few or no skills.

Those 16-18-year-olds not in education, employment or training (NEET) is a priority for the LSC and also for Connexions. There are issues to consider in terms of the LSC's focus on hitting targets. This is apparent with the employment programme, where the LSC are trying to get people to Level 2 qualification in as short a time as possible, and those that need more time are then not necessarily deemed as being suitable for programme. The LSC's funding has to be linked to a qualification provider. There is a need for joint agency working to ensure that those with more complex needs are not slipping through the net.

#### 6.23 Statements of SEN

SEN statements did not carry on into FE, yet with the implication of education to 18 for all in the 'Raising Expectations: Staying in education and training post-16' green paper, this is an area that needs to be revisited. There is also a lot of pressure to reduce the number of statements. Members considered whether schools that are not statementing are flagging up on a list those pupils with SEN. If they are not doing this then there is a likelihood that it would look like the numbers of SEN are reducing and then the LSC would not know the right number of places. Information needs to be passed on early. Members also expressed concern as to whether the LSC would fund places with an FE provider if a measurable outcome could not realistically be hoped to be achieved. There is a need for recognition that for many special needs young people the age of 18 is an irrelevance for them and their families. Instead of focusing on the age of 18, service provision and funding needs to be based upon what is actually appropriate.

## 6.24 Transition Toolkit

The West of England Special School had led on a transition toolkit project aimed at improving retention, achievement and employment outcomes for learners with learning difficulties and disabilities when they move from specialist residential and day schools/colleges to mainstream providers and into employment. The transition toolkit focuses on individual disabilities; coping strategies and pooling expertise. The toolkit contains a set of standards and protocol agreed by partners, which most people involved in transition had signed up to.

## 6.25 Data

Young Devon reported a number of difficulties accessing data for their Transition project. In some parts of the County data quality is excellent, while there are others where it is shockingly inadequate.

## 6.26 University holidays

The Task Group identified problems with university holidays for Children in Care, where funding for accommodation is in some instances provided for the summer breaks but not for the winter and Easter holidays. There are also problems for Children in Care in terms of getting a room in a flat for students going into their second year, as landlords want a deposit in advance and there appeared to be no system in place within social services to be able to provide that deposit.

The CYPS Operations Manager advised that the Care Leaving Team has certainly improved its ways of working in terms of providing support through university to young people who have been in care since handling issues like those detailed in Case Study 1 and 2 (Page 13/14). Young people are now able to get benefits beyond 18 if they are in full time education. Partly as a result of the work of the Task Group the Council is now implementing a protocol to fund foster carers throughout the academic year for any young person in their care going to university.

# 7.0 **Case Studies**

## 7.1 Case Study 1 – Mr H

Mr H is a 19 year old student, studying for a Sports Science BTEC, who had been in the care of social services for more than 6 years.

Mr H advised that a couple of weeks before his 18<sup>th</sup> birthday a review meeting took place where he was told he would remain with his foster carer. 4 days after his 18<sup>th</sup> birthday He was instead actively encouraged to move from foster care into Exeter Foyer. After an extremely unsettling period where there were many meetings and correspondence with social services it was agreed that it would be in his best interest if he was to remain with his foster carer, Jane Smith, whom he had been with for the 6 years he had been in care.

At 16 Mr H had wanted to do a part-time job, but due to the benefits he received he was only allowed to earn a maximum of £45 a week. This had stopped him from being able to better support himself and his studies and also from doing the football coaching of children, which he greatly enjoyed. As Mr H was doing a sports course at college this has made it very difficult to afford all the necessary equipment. Mr H was also told he could not get any financial help because he had a job that he had applied to the social services funding panel for getting help with buying his necessary sports kit. Mr H questioned how young people at the age of 16 were expected to be able to support themselves living alone or being in a difficult placement and at the same time concentrate on their education.

## 7.2 Case Study 2 – Sophie Miles

Sophie Miles had been in care since she was 8 years old and had gone to live with foster carer, Sue McCabe at the age of 16. During her childhood Sophie had been in over 20 different placements all over Devon, during that time Sophie had attended 10 different schools.

From the age of 16 to 18 Sophie did not have a social worker, and therefore no reviews were carried out. The only contact from social services was the occasional phone call to tell Sue she was doing a great job etc. The day before Sophie's 18<sup>th</sup> birthday, she was told that the money for her foster care would stop, and she was encouraged to move out from living with Sue. This was a great shock; as she thought everything had been put in motion to allow her stay with Sue post-18 while she completed her fine art studies. At this time Sophie was very poorly having spent time in hospital; she was also approaching the end of her full-time A-Level course. Sophie had to apply for housing benefit and income support with social services making up the shortfall to allow her to continue to live with Sue. At 19 the funding from social services stopped again and she was advised to go into supported lodgings 6 months before going to university.

Sophie's materials for her fine art course were very expensive. Sophie had worked since the age of 15, but could not afford to pay for all the necessary materials. No money was made available from social services to support Sophie. Sue had given Sophie the money for her materials, but clearly not every foster carer would have been able to do this.

## 7.3 Cast Study 3 – Mr and Mrs Hayes

Mr and Mrs Hayes advised that for 16 years they had cared for Robin, who as a small child was diagnosed with severe Autism, no learning potential and challenging behaviour. On Robin's 18<sup>th</sup> birthday at a meeting with the Joint Agency Practice Manager and the Community Nurse, it was revealed that there was no money in the budget not only for Robin's adult respite, but also for his day-to-day care.

The Hayes could not understand why Robin, with his complex needs, was not part of an ongoing budget despite reaching the age of maturity. At the time when the Hayes took on Robin, senior social workers advised them to 'hang in there' until a suitable residential unit could be found. After 16 years they were devastated that there was still no suitable provision for Robin. The Hayes had subsequently spent weeks exploring every avenue with regard to Robin's living allowance until they finally received direct payments for him, but the journey to receiving these payments had been long and extremely traumatic. The process had not been aided in any way by their dealings with ACS.

## 8.0 **Conclusions**

- 8.1 It is evident to the Task Group on the conclusion of this review that however smooth the transition process, the gap in provision of services between CYPS and ACS is significant, even when handled well. It is apparent that the transition process is not always being managed by the Council as well as it could be. It is essential that young people, their families and their carers are provided with more support and there is consistency of key workers. A young person involved in transition needs to be comprehensively supported and crucially so do parents and carers. The transition process is an extremely difficult time for the young person and family involved and it is vital that more support is provided to all concerned. A great deal of anxiety could be alleviated if the process is clearly outlined from the onset, with relevant information and support worker contacts readily available.

- 8.2 ACS and CYPS had only been created one year ago, but officers from both directorates recognise that some time is needed to improve certain areas of working. The Task Group is particularly concerned that there is a gulf between theory and practice, which needs to be addressed. It is also essential that joint working between ACS and CYPS is improved. A more unified approach to transition needs to be adopted, with a consistent delivery of services, as historically different processes appear to be going on across Devon.
- 8.3 Partnership working with other agencies is essential for successful transition. Evidence indicates that there is a need to look at the key drivers for successful partnership working in transition: time; resources; involving families in the early stages and making the process as focused on the young person's needs as possible.
- 8.4 The Task Group felt that there is currently a lack of clarity in terms of what provision is available to a young person as they made the transition, which needs to be urgently addressed. ACS should have a list of the provision that may be available for the individual young person so that parents/carers get some prior awareness of the types of services their child would hopefully be able to access. It is also vital that the transition protocol is better shared with parents and carers.
- 8.5 Members felt that more common sense should be used by the Council in its approach to helping young people through the transition process. The case studies of Elton and Sophie both evidence the need for greater understanding of a young person's needs and best interests. The Council has the responsibility of 'corporate parent' and in the case of Sophie and Elton had not actually provided the consistent level of support a parent should. It is absolutely vital that young people were not just allowed to disappear at 16; support had to be maintained.

Councillor Vanessa Newcombe (Chair)  
 Councillor Chris Bray  
 Councillor Ann Fry  
 Councillor Michael Lee  
 Councillor Saxon Spence

<b>Local Government Act 1972 List of Background Papers</b>		
Report originated by:	Dan Looker	
Room:	G.36	
Tel No:	01392 382722	
<b>Background Papers</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>File Reference</b>
—	—	—

## Appendix 1

### Witnesses to the Review (in the order that they appeared before the Task Group)

<u>Witness</u>	<u>Position</u>	<u>Organisation</u>
Michael Lloyd,	Deputy Assistant Director, Learning Disability	Devon PCT
Paul Grimsey	Policy Projects Manager;	Devon County Council
John Shaw	Lead Officer Strategy & Development Joint Agency Services	Devon County Council
Tim Tod	Lead Transition Project	Young Devon
Kate Sandler	Assistant Lead Transition Project	Young Devon
Jennie Hamilton	Deputy Head	Exeter College
Sarah O'Shea	Head of Student Services	Exeter College
Mr Hayes	Foster Carer	
Mrs Hayes	Foster Carer	



Bob Pugh	Head of Oaklands Special School	Oaklands Special School, Dawlish
Councillor John Smith	Executive Member for CYPS	Devon County Council
Kevin Peers	Interim Assistant Director CYPS	Devon County Council
John Davey	Director of Service	Connexions Devon and Cornwall
Sarah Taylor	Exeter Team Leader	Connexions Devon and Cornwall
Alex Janes	Director of External Relations	The West of England School and College
Kate Lock	Assistant Director with responsibility for implementation of Physical and Sensory Disability Services Review	Devon County Council
Jennie Stephens	Assistant Director Strategic Planning and Commissioning	Devon County Council
Councillor Margaret Squires	Councillor	Mid Devon District Council
Mr Ostler	Foster Carer	
Mrs Ostler	Foster Carer	
Matthew Garbett	South West Regional Learners with Learning Difficulties and Disabilities Manager	Learning and Skills Council
Jeanette Kemlo	County Chair	Parent Carer Voice
John Rawlinson	Executive Member for Adult and Community Services	Devon County Council
Frances Burgess	Social Worker	Devon County Council
Sue McCabe	Foster Carer	
Jane Smith	Foster Carer	
Miss M	Formerly in care	
Mr H	Formerly in care	
Ian Stewart-Watson	Operations Manager CYPS	Devon County Council
Martin Spragg	Devon Youth Offending Services Manager	Devon County Council
Paul Wright	Head of Barley Lane	
Cath Butland	Devon Parent Partnership Officer	

**Written / Telephone Representations to the Review (in the order that they were received)**

<b><u>Witness</u></b>	<b><u>Position</u></b>	<b><u>Organisation</u></b>
Patsy Down	Senior Officer	Exeter Job Centre Plus
Steve Matson		Teignbridge District Council
Alan Robinson	Strategic Director (Community)	South Hams District Council
Councillor Hugo Barton	Executive Support Member for Social Care	Devon County Council

Bronwyn Nott	Parent	
Jane & Peter Mulholland	Parents	
Ian Hobbs	County Community Strategy Officer - North Devon & Torridge	Devon County Council