Advice and Guidance on Workforce Development for Social Care, Education and Health Services working with young people aged 14-25 with SEN and Disabilities
Purpose of this Document

The Children and Families Act 2014 and the Care Act 2014 have significantly changed both policy and expectations around how services work with and support young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) as they move into adulthood. These changes have major implications for the workforce in social care, education, healthcare and beyond.

The Government-funded Preparing for Adulthood programme has been helping local authorities and their partners prepare for and implement these changes. This short document introduces new advice and guidance on workforce development around the transition to adulthood. It has been endorsed by Skills for Care and Skills for Health. It summarises the headline issues of things that those responsible for workforce development need to consider if local practice is really to change. For those people with responsibility for taking this work forward, more detailed guidance with links to resources and best practice documents can be found at http://www.preparingforadulthood.org.uk/what-we-do/workforce-development.

Both documents are written for employers and staff within education services - schools, further education colleges and Local Authority; social care within both children’s and adult services; and health services - community, specialist, hospital and primary care. It includes interfaces with other services such as housing, transport, employment and leisure. The more detailed guide referred to above aims to offer overarching workforce support and development guidance. This incorporates evidence and common core messages across the sectors, to help employers develop good practice over young people’s preparation for, and transition to adult life.
How Things Are Changing

The central message from both the SEND reforms and the Care Act 2014 is a clear focus on positive life outcomes for all young people. This includes a clear emphasis on:

- Raising aspirations for young people with SEND and those around them.
- Delivering support to enable young people to reach their goals and be included and involved in their communities.
- Promoting choice and control for young people and their families over their life and over their care and support, including use of personal budgets.
- Providing transparent, accessible information about support options.
- A personalised approach and person centred practice for assessment, planning and support.
- Real engagement and participation of parent/carers, young people and adults.
- Working together in partnership to coordinate assessments, plans and support.

The ‘Preparing for Adulthood’ element of the reforms places important new demands on service commissioners and providers, namely that they focus on the achievement of four key life outcomes:

- Paid employment (or Higher Education)
- Good health
- Independent living
- Community inclusion.

These things clearly require a shift in the focus of workforce development and staff training. Rather than a focus on internal practice and traditional service delivery, a new set of competencies and requirements become important. This includes things like a detailed understanding of person centred approaches, knowledge about how to achieve community inclusion through maximising access to community resources and an in depth understanding of how the voice of young people and their families will influence and steer all aspects of services and support.

The new advice and guidance document produced by the Preparing for Adulthood Programme, in partnership with Skills for Care, Skills for Health, and supported by the Department for Education, discusses how those responsible for workforce development and staff management can achieve this change.

It offers suggestions on how to build workforce skills and knowledge and also change organisational practice to support and enable staff to work differently. Links are provided to a wide range of freely available resources to help with these challenges.

Developed in consultation with those from the sector, the guide is based around a number of general themes:

- **Voice of young people and families** - listening, advocacy, communication, choice and control
- **Raising aspirations for a fulfilling life** as an active member of the community, rather than just as a recipient of services
- **Focus on good life outcomes in the community** - employment, independent living, health and wellbeing, and friends, relationships and community inclusion
- **Being Person Centred** – personalised approach, personalised curriculums, person centred planning, personal budgets and individual service design
- **Plan together; work together** – multi-agency working, joint assessments and planning, key-working, joint commissioning, integration and maximising joint resources
Summary of Key Messages

The key messages and related resources that can be accessed through the main document are:

**Voice of young people and families**

The new policies require that staff always start by hearing what is important to each young person; providing space for their voice to be heard and finding out their views, strengths, aspirations and interests. This should be supported by the provision of clear information, which is separately tailored for young people as well their parent carers, to enable them to make informed choices and supported decisions about their life. Consequently:

- Workers need to have confidence in accessing and using a range of open and accessible approaches to communication and in their skills at building and maintaining positive, open and informative relationships. Those relationships should enable the young person’s voice, whether spoken or not, and that of their families and carers, to be clearly heard.

- Organisations need to maximise how a young person’s voice feeds into decision making around workforce planning, review and staff selection. Effective two way communication strategies should be promoted within the organisation and between the workforce and young people and families, so that the workforce can successfully meets the needs of young people as they prepare for and enter adulthood.

**Raising aspirations for a fulfilling life**

Children and young people with SEND can experience particular barriers to aiming high, to taking risks and achieving what they want in life. Workers need to be aware of what is possible for young people with SEND, and what helps support their aspirations and enables them to reach their goals. An individual and organisational approach that focuses on what people are good at and builds on their skills, interests and experiences as well as personal and community resources, is vital in raising a young person’s aspirations for their life. Consequently:

- Workers need to have a belief in what next and be able to raise aspirations in a variety of ways: conversation; actively highlighting a person’s strengths; knowing about, having access to and sharing stories and examples of positive change and what is possible for young people.

- Organisations need to embed a culture that recognises and focuses on life outcomes and what young people, their families and workers are good at, building on their skills, experiences and networks.
Focus on good Life Outcomes in the community

This involves helping young people and their families identify and work towards good outcomes for themselves, based on their expressed aspirations. It involves helping young people to live independently, learn and work, be healthy and safe, have friends and relationships and be part of their local communities. It requires an outcome focused, rather than service led, approach which recognises and builds on the strengths within a young person’s natural support networks and community and enables workers to look beyond purely traditional services in developing support plans that lead to better lives for young people. Consequently:

- Workers need a comprehensive knowledge of a range of options, available within mainstream, statutory and community resources, in order to support young people with SEND. This includes pathways through education into employment, independent living, good health and community inclusion.

- Organisations need to retain a clear focus on outcomes, and use this evidence to inform staff of the impact of their work and to feedback on performance.

Being person centred

Being person centred involves continual listening and learning by staff about all aspects of a person’s life, including their wishes and aspirations, the skills and resources they and their families can contribute and the role of informal supports. Staff should then plan and design services around this shared vision of what is important for the young person both now and in the future. Systems, policies, assessment and planning processes, and curriculums need to support and enable workers to work with young people in a personalised and outcome focused way and ensure that person centred planning remains at the heart of staff practice. Consequently:

- Workers need to retain a focus on the child or young person as an individual and develop knowledge and confidence to use a range of person centred planning tools and techniques across all stages and pathways for young people.

- Organisations need to adopt person centred approaches in all aspects of structure, policy, management and activity - “do with” rather than “do to”.
Plan together; work together

It is essential for agencies and workers across the range of children and young people’s services, as well as across adult services, to plan and work together in more integrated and coordinated ways. This will bring together the range of knowledge, expertise and resources to offer holistic support that enables young people to achieve the four life outcomes of paid employment, independent living, good health and community inclusion. Consequently:

- Workers need to demonstrate commitment to partnership working with professionals and with young people and families and be supported to communicate and negotiate effectively with a wide range of partners, including those outside traditional services.

- Organisations need to bring together a range of different types of knowledge and expertise and develop a joint approach and understanding of the outcomes to be achieved for young people in the community, maximising the benefit from use of wider resources and services.

Planning, developing and supporting the workforce

The main document offers suggestions and resources on organisational strategies that will help make these changes, including:

- Planning and designing the workforce to ensure the right mix and numbers of workers, with the right skills and knowledge, to meet the needs of the young people and families they are supporting.

- Developing and supporting staff, throughout their employment, to ensure they deliver a service that is person centred, outcome focussed and that is right for the young people and families that they are supporting. This involves recruiting and selecting the right workers, ensuring they have effective inductions, supporting and supervising them, appraising their performance and focusing on their continual professional development.

- Offering a range of training and development options including formal or accredited training courses, informal training such as mentoring, shadowing, practical toolkits and learning from and sharing best practice – including through the involvement of young people in designing and delivering such training and development.
Specialist approaches

Finally, whilst the common messages in the guide apply to all young people with a range of conditions and special needs, there are some additional aspects to be considered when working with young people with specific needs or particular situations.

- **For young people with complex health or life limiting conditions.** In addition to good person centred, outcome focussed practice and planning, transition planning needs to incorporate plans for managing symptoms, potential deterioration, emergency care plans for medical crisis and end of life choices, as appropriate to the young person’s situation.

- **For young people on the autistic spectrum.** It is important to consider factors specific to autism such as specific sensory issues that can trigger stress and behaviours. Resources are identified that will help enhance staff awareness, develop an understanding of appropriate communication styles and achieve the best outcomes for young people with autism.

- **For young people with mental health conditions.** People experience different episodes of mental health and ill health and recovery is a personal and unique process. This means that different approaches may be needed through which young people with mental health issues can positively gain and experience choice and control of their lives. Various personalisation tools, such as Wellness Recovery Action Plans (WRAP) can help young people on this pathway to recovery.

- **For young people who display or are at risk of displaying behaviour which challenges.** All those working with young people with SEND should have basic awareness of how to support people who challenge services. Those specifically supporting young people whose behaviours challenge need information to understand the causes of that behaviour and training to develop and use the skills in approaches such as Positive Behavioural Support (PBS).

- **For young people who are care leavers.** Processes and practice need to be developed to support workers to co-ordinate and streamline (as far as possible) the statutory planning and review required for care leavers with SEND, with the new Education, Health and Care plans and the Care Act assessment, planning and transition review processes.
About this publication

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