

Improving Outcomes for Disabled Children and Young People

Developing an outstanding multi-disciplinary transition pathway in Kent for disabled children and young people

Lifespan Pathway

In this presentation we'll show how and why we developed the Lifespan Pathway in 2017, the impact for young disabled people and their families and the continuing developments to improve further

We'll cover data – who we are, where we operate, who we work with and our team structures

The journey we have been on and why we settled on this particular transition pathway

The impact for young people and their families/carers

A Young Person's Experience

N is now 21. He came into Local Authority care under S.20 aged 16 and has been supported within the Young People's team (16-25).

His SW has been working with N since he was 18 and supported him to plan and move back to Kent at the age of 19 from a residential education placement to supported living accommodation

He has settled well in his new flat which he shares with another young man.

He likes canoeing and swimming and does voluntary work with a Nature Trust but now wants to return to college to follow a course in animation and film-making.

His SW knows his history, his family, his needs and will support him in this goal.

N's autism, selective mutism, MH difficulties and LD are no barrier.

Young People's team have been on the journey with N through this stage of transition, an incredibly important time for all young people.



Feedback from the manager of the children's home where N lived previously

“N's move went very well yesterday and although he expressed that he was sad, he understood why he was moving, signing to adults that it was because he was now an adult himself. We are very happy that he is moving into such a lovely place and hope that he will be happy and will continue to develop as he has come so far already. I just wanted to also thank you for your support with NR over the years he has been with us. Kind regards RH – manager”



Kent – Facts and Figures

- Kent is the largest geographical Local Authority in England. It is a 2-tier authority with 12 district/borough councils in addition to the County Council
- We have 4 disabled children teams 0-15 and 4 Young People's teams 16-25, 1 County Sensory team 0-25 (HI, VI and MSI) and 2 OT teams 0-25, within the Children, Young People and Education Directorate in KCC and the SEND Division – Director for both SEN and DCYPS
- At age 26 young adults transfer to 26+ teams in Adult Services and we work closely with them, anticipating the needs of those transferring.

Disabled Children and Young People Service

- We currently work with 2550+ children and young people aged 0-25
- Those with a Learning Disability, complex physical disability, sensory needs, Autism without a Learning Disability where the impact of the autism is the primary need, and any combination of the above
- Over the 5 years of the Lifespan Pathway, referrals and caseloads have grown across the service by 13% and trajectory continues to grow upwards



Why we developed the Lifespan Pathway

- Prior to 2017 we spent 2 years researching and planning the Lifespan Pathway, assessing the right age for Young People's teams to start.
- Driving factors were:
 - Complaints from families about transition process – virtually no complaints about transition now
 - Removing the cliff edge at 18, transferring from children to adult services, with high anxiety for families
 - Clear mandate from families for team change to start at 16 to give time to prepare for their YP becoming an adult and align with legislation and other changes at 16, going up to 25 in line with C&F Act 2014
 - Christine Lenehan's (Director of Council for Disabled Children) diagnostic report into DCYPS, at that time sitting in Adult Services Directorate



Aspirations

- Focus on aspiration for disabled young people
- Need for a more streamlined join-up between children and adult teams so creates the all-age Lifespan Pathway
- Right support for young people becoming adults, individually tailored, to increase resilience and independence
- Same worker/team co-ordinating the support through transition from school/college to adult life – a challenging time with a lot of change (cf N)



Multi-Disciplinary Involvement

Adult 18+ LD teams already had Health LD staff embedded – OT, SLT, nurses, access to psychiatry and psychology.

From 2017 have provided in-reach to Young People's teams, and gradually working towards 16+

“Just wanted to say thank you L . Myself and the rest of the nursing team always have such a positive experience working with you, you are so proactive and go above and beyond.” LD nurse.

Transforming Care/Designated Keyworker programme, started in April 2021, is increasing range of support available to children and young people with LD/A at risk of admission to Tier 4, with an expanding team of various disciplines.

Numbers in Tier 4 have gone down from 20 to 5 currently and support/intervention starting earlier at Tier2/3.

New SEND division within CYPE Directorate, bringing Disabled children and young people's service and SEN closer together.



Ingredients for Success

- Listening to disabled young people and their families and supporting them through this natural period of change.
- Focus on the individual, person-centred, removing the bureaucratic blocks at age 18.
- Mixture of staff from adults and children's teams in the 16-25 teams which brought experience from both.
- Staff with specialist interest, commitment and skills including in communication: *“lovely rich communication with [disabled children and young people in care] using a wide range of styles, including some as basic as touch and reading facial expressions... Children's needs are championed to ensure that they get the best care and support. “ OFSTED ILACS report July 2022.*
- Continuous focus on adapting and improving.



Feedback from the parent of another young person moving from education to care

“I wanted to write again to express properly our thanks for all the work you have done to secure the new care package for Freddie. He has had a great first week with his new PA and the team. I cannot stress enough how grateful I am that back in January, you encouraged us to consider a "plan C" - to look outside the education sector. I am optimistic that Freddie will have every opportunity to thrive and grow in independence with the new care package supporting him. Thank you for taking the time over the last year or so to get to know us and Freddie and for being such a strong advocate for him.” Freddie’s mother (name changed).



Impact: The So What? Question

- Reduction in residential placements.
- Increase in supported living or remaining living with family with the right support.
- Continuity of support enabling young people and families to be confident to explore all the options, not just continuing in education.
- Became a full 0-25 service including Sensory and OT.
- High satisfaction feedback from young people and families; reduction in complaints about transition.

Future Plans and Developments

- Reduce Young People's team's workload to more manageable level – “Leaders accept that caseloads are too high in parts of the service and are not sustainable.” OFSTED 2022.
- Focus on earlier intervention to strengthen independence and build resilience.
- Greater focus on aspiration, ordinary life, support to work – numbers in full or part-time work are still stubbornly low.
- Continuous cycle of improvement and development.

Challenge to All Our Services

- Ultimately what difference have we all made to the lives of disabled young people and their families?
- Have we supported them to become as independent as possible, to live the rich full lives they aspire to like anyone else?
- And have we done it in a way that removes blocks and cliff edges that traditionally as a whole system we have put in the way, and which make no sense to young people and their families?