

# Experiences of Transitions to Adult Years and Adult Services (Summary and Recommendations)

Health and Social Care Alliance Scotland

Scottish Government Directorate for Children  
and Families

May 2017



Scottish Government  
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## Summary

- This qualitative study about transitions to adult years and services was commissioned by Scottish Government and completed by the Health and Social Care Alliance between July 2016 and March 2017.
- The study is primarily based upon the experience of some 30 individuals and families for whom the transition paths to adult years and services has been impacted by a broad spectrum of complex and interacting disabilities.
- The geographical study area covers East Lothian, Midlothian, West Lothian, the Scottish Borders and the City of Edinburgh. The age span of most participants is 15-24 although younger siblings and older participants have contributed, alongside parents, family members and carers.
- The participant spread includes diverse family structure; home base; economic opportunity; rural/urban location; legal situation and stage in transition.
- The views of professionals and managers from a wide range of statutory and third sector agencies have been taken in to account.
- There is a central interest in the experience of application of core components of the Getting it Right for Every Child approach. There is a specific interest, where applicable, in the experience of a co-ordinating lead professional; and in the experience of planning for each person that is based on a holistic consideration of wellbeing. There is an interest in the extent to which these core components are experienced in service transitions.
- The study is not an inspection or an audit but does seek to recognise aspects of professional systems and approaches that have contributed to successful bridging, support and inclusion during a life phase that is unavoidably affected by loss and change in service and relationship.
- Conversely there is a reflection on generic themes in approach and systems that appear to have increased a sense of isolation, confusion and anxiety about practical cliffs to be negotiated.
- The ALLIANCE seeks to bring the voice of contributors to bear on widespread efforts at improving transition pathways. The aims of the study are to make a practical difference.
- Publication of the study is intended to complement the Scottish Government commissioned national mapping of transitions processes for individuals with additional support needs; and correlates in time and theme with Principles of Good Transitions.

### **Effective transitional support has depended upon:**

- An understanding of family and of the interaction of relationships that are part of each young person's growth and development through transitional stages
- Sufficient continuity of a co-ordinating key professional during transitional phases
- Approachability and pro-activity of key professionals
- Practicality and expertise of key professionals offering guidance during loss, separation and service change
- Early, guided accessibility to information about processes, resources and timelines
- Adequacy/inadequacy of budget allocation in relation to all wellbeing needs
- Creative bridging of gaps for individuals through partnerships between family, third sector and statutory services
- Respect, honesty, encouragement and support for parents and carers who may find themselves in adversarial positions.

## **Recommendations**

1. **Wellbeing:** Use of the Wellbeing Indicators should be supported in transitional planning processes across services.
2. **Principles of Good Transitions 3:** This resource should be adopted as the standard approach to transitions across all statutory and voluntary sector transitions services. It clearly demonstrates how to ensure good transitions, and is the standard all services are expected to work towards attaining.
3. **Information:** There is a need for improvement in access to local information about resources and processes. Information about local pathways is needed to help individuals, parents and professionals navigate local systems and to signpost support. Local areas should consider the potential application of vehicles such as ALISS (A Local Information System for Scotland) as a platform for a locally self-generating directory.
4. **Training:** There is scope for a pre-qualifying and cross-service training module covering effective support for transition, for example in social work, nursing and housing. There is scope for development of introductory, interactive training materials online. The Scottish Government and other partners should consider the feasibility of developing such a resource.

5. **Outreach:** Consideration should be given by Scottish Government, local authorities and health boards to developing an outreach role. This would be designed to reach (a) those with additional support needs who may be at significant risk and (b) those who have not been well known to services because they have not been at known risk but who may become isolated and exhausted without proactive contact, signposting, networking and support as needed.
6. **Coordination and Point of Contact:** A lead professional is very important when there are interlocking services in transition planning. The availability of a lead professional to coordinate services for families within statutory health and social care and through third sector services during transitional years, e.g. at least from 14-21, would offer a considerable improvement in the experience of many families. Ensuring processes are in place so that families going through transition have access to a lead professional should be considered by local authorities and other statutory services.
7. **Structures:** Some children's social work services in the study area are planning for potential continuity of service to age 26, taking service user feedback into account. Restructuring services in this way should be considered by relevant service providers and lessons learned from future evaluation of this structural initiative should be shared and acted upon.
8. **Planning in Partnership:** Family Group Decision Making is a model that could offer a range of benefits in family led, co-produced transition planning for families in which family members, statutory and third sector services have a part to play. This is a form of collaborative, practical and person-centred planning with individuals and family members or those most important to the wellbeing of the young person. The neutrality of the coordinator and the careful preparation of these processes are key to their success. Scottish Government and statutory partners should explore the feasibility of developing such a model.
9. **Resourcing:** Local authorities should give consideration to initiating a policy and practice review in relation to those respite or short break arrangements which are significantly cut because a young person turns 17 rather than because of change in need.

**To request the full report please email [sarah.wardrop@alliance-scotland.org.uk](mailto:sarah.wardrop@alliance-scotland.org.uk)**

Published May 2017.

Health and Social Care Alliance Scotland (the ALLIANCE), Venlaw Building, 349 Bath Street, Glasgow G2 4AA  
T:0141 404 0231 E: [info@alliance-scotland.org.uk](mailto:info@alliance-scotland.org.uk) [www.alliance-scotland.org.uk](http://www.alliance-scotland.org.uk)

The ALLIANCE is supported by a grant from Scottish Government.

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