

Education, Children and Young People Committee

Informal session with practitioners, supported by ARC Scotland - 23 February 2023

What are key issues children face as they move out of school and access adult services?

Practitioner 5 – One of the biggest issues I'm finding, particularly for more complex needs individuals, places are an issue. Recruitment crisis not helping. Identifying and clarity about who single point of contact beyond school is big issue at the moment. I'm hearing a lot from parents, they feel they're not prepared enough at an early enough stage for transitions. We are trying to tackle this at x council. Why my position has been created. It is a 2 year secondment.

Practitioner 3 – I'd echo what Practitioner 5 is saying. Depth and range of opportunities available for those with complex needs. We find not a great range of opportunities available. This is our biggest challenge. Some people do have funding but capacity in the workforce affecting things. Some things have disappeared after covid.

Practitioner 1 – I'm third sector, not funded at all. We asked young people – 1. Anxiety 2. Lack of information. 3. Stigma. 4. Bullying. We did a lot of work with parents who had a lack of knowledge about transitions process and didn't understand their role. Young people had lack of self-advocacy and not understanding their role. Not prepared for adulthood and the expectations of adulthood, social skills etc.

Practitioner 8 – process of transition from children to adult services a barrier. We would like it to be seamless. We can't always explain the adult process as it is different to ours. Families find this very difficult. Families would like services they have already got to carry on but Care Commission registration means they have to move on to adult services. Can be very difficult, a big change. A lot of transition, more than one transition at once from school, health.

Practitioner 10 – confusion around use of words. Transition is used for a lot of different transitions but families often think it is one process. The bill doesn't make it clear it is many different processes. Children with complex needs - their need to

become an adult as a person is sometimes overlooked. It feels more service driven than person centred. Assumption you become mature when you become an adult but not always the case. Children with development disabilities more likely to have disparity in abilities. Assumption that they are ready to become an adult at 18. Preparedness of adult services. As a health professional, assumption that in GIRFEC the 3 services each have the same level of complexity but health complexity on a different level from one service to the next service. The age criteria in a lot of the frameworks, between 16 and 18 all these services depend on young person being in school but they may no longer be there but under UNCRC definition they are still children.

Practitioner 2 – agree with everyone else. What's working in my area at the moment is having transition coordinator who straddles the whole [age range] from 14 right through to adult services. I'm a qualified nurse and social worker, I have a link with adult services and I think that helps. The barriers are [there] – yes they can have positive experience from a transitions coordinator – it is when they get to adult services there is a lack of support staff out there. We are looking at training support staff to encourage others to come into our area. We are thinking about most vulnerable people in society here and they need the best. Things shut down after covid. We are listening to young people what they want to do post-school. Just set up a festival for those with ASN from S6 onwards. Got health and education professionals involved. We are also looking at walking football, wheelchair football and looking and mental health. Work very closely with health colleagues. Not costing councils any extra money, working with what we have.

Practitioner 9 – I'd want to emphasise – picking up Practitioner 10's point – is one of biggest challenges for us is leaving security of school and paediatrics with wrap-around service now they need to go to Glasgow or Edinburgh for ventilation and we need to coordinate all of that. Big challenge and not an easy job to coordinate. Also coordinating joint funding a big challenge for us.

Practitioner 5 – just to mention that something a lot of schools are reporting to me is the language barrier and lack of support from interpretation services. Schools don't know where to turn if lack of support from translations services they have. A bit of let down for some families.

Practitioner 9 – need for communication support is huge for many areas we work in. Sometimes alternative formats for written information don't include the formats young people with disabilities are using. We need to be aware of spectrum of needs for communication for young people and their families. Disparity in IT systems and sharing information across health boards. They all have autonomy to do things their own way and families having to negotiate many different systems.

How are young people and their families' views taken into account and collaborate?

Practitioner 9 – In my area we have dedicated transitions team who work with people from S4. At that time we gather round table and opportunity for young people and parents to meet everyone including advocacy. An approach that takes everyone's view into account.

Practitioner 3 – we also have dedicated transition team recently developed into multi disciplinary support team. Start at very early age, social work. Focus is planning. Adult services transitions worker works very closely with young people and families. Continual conversation. Help young people to explore options. Transitions worker follows them on past school – a life-long key worker.

Practitioner 1 – we don't have transitions worker in my area. From a survey from parents they have advised us they don't feel like equal partners. Many of the meetings are led by service people, not held in neutral venues, no info given on how young people might communicate information they would like to discuss. Not having a transitions service is a point coming from parents. Parents said often meetings are called upon, no information, feel like spare parts, disempowered and unable to express what they want.

Practitioner 8 – we have list of young people who have complex needs who will need support. We have pathway for parents and one for schools to understand process. We are asking social workers to have these conversations earlier with parents and families but sometimes not ready to have those discussions. We are trying to prepare people. A lot of work ongoing and Practitioner 5 becoming development officer [meant we came on] leaps and bounds. We start highlighting [transitions] at age of 14.

Practitioner 5 – as Practitioner 8 was describing, pathways, particularly school guidance, we are trying to combine it with existing paperwork and practice to alleviate some of additional workload for staff. This documentation [has] only just been produced for summer, currently in consultation - so staff and parents can feed back, so at early stages. On back of what Practitioner 8 said on sharing information and collaboration, there is definitely an issue in a number of cases for us in regards to data protection – to do with staff not being very sure what their role is in it, being overly cautious and secondly, parents and young people who are not wishing or consenting for information to be shared. For example, they might be sharing

information with school but refusing to share with social work so schools are in position where they don't know how to help.

Practitioner 6 – locally we don't have a transition team. We are working on improving services and getting the right people round table. But those young people with more complex needs are not invited. Developing young workforce work with young people on career stuff and those who can communicate more are involved. But feedback from parents on careers [is] they don't feel part of the process. Sometimes they come to meetings and it's already been agreed they're going to college. [There is a] need for more training around comms, comms passports and advocacy. Really helpful meeting with PAMIS around passports. A lot of young people are using communication aids in school which would help with services but when come to adult arena there are no workers trained in these so young people stop using them and lose that ability to communicate. Whether using Makaton or talking mats there is a real training need but unclear who is undertaking that to give young people a voice.

Practitioner 4 – we are also mapping out the pathway in my area. Something fed back to us on ASN review – worst transition for parents is leaving school. They feel they have them in a happy place but fear for parents that their young person needs to go into adult world and become more independent. We've asked our partners to not just map out pathway but what improvements you'll make for practice. We're asking people to get involved earlier and understand others' roles so we can work collaboratively for [the] benefit of young people and their parents. Going well at the moment, employment training unit wouldn't usually get involved post-16 but are starting to visit school and letting their faces known. Drip feed services as early as possible in our high school. UNCRC is key to help our team around the child meetings. Focus on what young person wants, their strength and needs. Trying to make it more person-centred planning. Greater need for advocacy. If your parents and young people understand the pathway, they will understand if there is a gap. Hoping that pathway will empower our parents and young people. Also created a portfolio document – allow people to tell their story in the way they want to tell their story instead of feeling they need to go back to the beginning with a new service. We want warmer handovers. The earlier we are involved in our young people's lives in school, the better that process will happen. Trying to remove barrier caused by assessment and criteria. Some less complex and more neurodivergent young people might not want to go through assessment for disability but doesn't mean they shouldn't be eligible for support.

Practitioner 7 – lots of points raised. My experience is a secondary teacher - so [I am] well versed in how transition works in mainstream. We would introduce college, work experience early. But this doesn't always happen for young people who are disabled. We have school in our area for young people with complex needs and we have DWP worker in there and getting young people placements. It's great. Most

stay with us until S6 because parents worried about what's next. Parents worry. If we start early then it gets parents and young people more comfortable. Getting their minds open to all opportunities available as early as possible.

Practitioner 1 – assumption that parents are able to do all this. They are carers. Many have their own mental health [issues] or other factors [to consider]. Huge lack of support for parents.

Principles into Practice – how was this changed your practice and how are you measuring success?

Practitioner 4 – We have created transitions coordinator and very quickly realised we need transitions team but also need everyone with a role in transition to understand that. Looking at work Practitioner 2 does – how can we make sure other people take over some of that? Every school has a transition lead so how can we make sure they do signposting Practitioner 2 would have done. How can we upskill and empower leads in mainstream and special schools? It's about empowering the whole system. Our pilot will continue even after work with ARC Scotland and the Scottish Government [is] over. We have agreed to keep working towards improvement. That didn't exist before. Understanding each other's services, roles - and looking for opportunities. Working really collaboratively - stopping working in siloes has been most important thing. [It is] about how it works as a system. That has been massive change. Have had amazing support from health colleagues and third sector partners who have all got on board. That culture and ethos behind making those make a difference for our young people. If we work with them earlier they will have much better understanding of what they want after school. We need better data so adult services can know what's coming and match those needs with resources.

Practitioner 8 – without Principles into Practice we'd be in totally different position. When I came into disability services it was just me as lead. We've had lots of changes, [it has] given us momentum, [we] work with health services much better now. E.g. meeting with senior managers from health and social care and housing - we work together much better and know each other's processes. A huge change for us. We meet every 6 weeks and what we've done, where gaps are. Started invited in third sector and other key people. We have Practitioner 5 now seeing we need someone in education as well as social work. We've improved so much over past 5 years.

Practitioner 1 – [Principles into Practice] really helped me because I'm a third sector worker – [and it] helped me engage with strategic work. All system change is really slow. Had good buy in from some services and restrictions from others due to

demand. We look at equity in budgets and resources – need for young person strategy for local authorities. [Principles into Practice has] definitely been invaluable. Education didn't come to table for first year at least because of various demands on them, but school clusters have valued it so much. It really helped. Children are not just 9-4 education, they are 24 hours a day. They have lives and goals.

Practitioner 9 – working with Principles into Practice - we've had dedicated team in our area for 12 years so took a long time to look at our current practice. Our aspiration is to work with young people from P7 throughout secondary school to give opportunity to be immersed in communities. As young adults they are growing up with aspiration to be as independent and involved in their communities. We are looking to ensure up to leaving college there is a further meaningful destination for them into adulthood and life. Historically young people [have] gone to college and got a job but many of us have jobs at the same time and this opportunity should be open to all young people. We are also trying to gather the views comprehensively from young people and parents. We are trying to support parents the best we can.

Practitioner 5 – measuring success. Difficult one. We are trying to track leavers once they've left. Hope eventually [to track their progress for] 5 years, 10 years. Get views of young person, placements and parents on how successful it has been. Has it sustained? Doesn't always happen. Important to get that info to feedback to schools for transition planning.

What are your thoughts on the ages set out in the Bill and local authorities taking the lead in producing a plan for a young person?

Practitioner 1 – plan needs to have accountability in it. [It] needs to be 14. [I have] reservations about it being led by the Local Authority. Some young people have [a] pathway and support is in place but some people mainstreamed and not as easily identifiable. Could see some young people falling off the cliff edge.

Practitioner 5 – what is termed a disability? Who is eligible for this plan? We need clear guidance. This is already an issue in schools and social workers need clear guidance. If you are imposing this – some young people and their families won't need this or like this. Need to be very careful with expectation that this would happen for everybody.

Is the danger that the plan becomes the focus, rather than the young person and their family?

Practitioner 9 – Absolutely. Legislation is legislation. It is about quality underneath it. It feels like it needs to be earlier, younger than 16. 14 as a minimum. Having a plan will be the focus and that's the risk. It's about achieving lives for young people. People have been excluded and side-lined. Essential we [need to] change culture and the values. Almost feels like we need a national campaign to understand how people have been treated and side-lined, especially cognitive disability and autism. Not sure [a] strategy can do that.

Practitioner 3 – Principles into Practice has allowed my area to look at those who sit below the [threshold of] complex needs. Looking at this bill – who does disabled people encompass? These are the people that are potentially lost? It's the ones that are below that criteria who have lot of potential but high risk of being lost. In relation to plans for this group - they leave primary school where they had annual reviews then nothing happens in secondary school, parents playing catch up becomes parent led rather than schools led. Change only happens in a crisis. It's about criteria in this bill.

Practitioner 8 – I think in terms of a plan [you] have to be very careful. How many plans does one person have? Young people moving on don't necessarily want a plan, they want to have idea of where they're going. Who is it for? Is it for the young person? How person-centred is that plan going to be? Is it an opt in or opt out? Lots of young people and adults don't know where they'll be in the next 5 years? How do we review that? Sometimes young people and parents don't agree. They might want it in a different format, such as comm passports. It's about how we review that plan, if young people want it and how person-centred it would be?

Practitioner 4 – I don't have clear thing to say – there are advantages and disadvantages to [the] plan. We already work with plans – CSPs [co-ordinated support plans], health plans, child plans. CSPs are statutory but doesn't necessarily mean it holds more success for them than a child's plan. Yes, plans are good, we already have child's plan. There is option to tag it as a transitions planning meeting. We need to track and support our young people onto the next step of our journey. For complex learners that is very bespoke. We need [a] bridge between child and adult services. Is making it statutory going to make it reductionist? Is it going to make it a "ticky box"? Our plan in our area is our children will have a transitions plan that will dovetail with child's plan. For our severe and complex learners that plan should start at birth. Our plans will start at 14. Does it need to be statutory? Not sure. Does it safeguard and make it happen or make it tick box? It's how the bill can be clear

enough to make it that protective safeguarding. And not reducing it so people are afraid to put things in the plan. And who owns that plan? And what about our children who are home educated or leave school at 16? Who becomes responsible for the plan? It's hard enough to deliver on named person which is not statutory.

Practitioner 7 – it's is very difficult to hold planning meetings. People will change their minds. We are all aware of no wrong path campaign around exam results. So, if we have to ask young people to make plan at 14 years – is it going to lock them into a journey and not allow them to change their mind? I think the plan should be young people should be exposed to as many different opportunities as possible, we can't fix them into a destination at 14. What happens if they change their mind? A plan is important not be all and end all and needs to be as flexible as possible.

Practitioner 1 – not enough understanding of young people themselves. A top down approach here. If we give young people the opportunity to explore their goals, approached it through less educational setting, [then] we would welcome the plan. We are giving to much responsibility to bodies with this and less on what the young people want. We all change our mind. Can't be too constrictive around that.

[Some] Local Authorities [are] working differently than others. What should a national strategy look like? Could it support more consistent approaches and better outcomes?

Practitioner 1 – I straddle a lot of strategic groups in a voluntary capacity. I think a strategy shows good intent - but where it falls down for me is where it goes into the Local Authority and the pressures on budgets and staff and the ability to deliver that is where it falls down. There's a strategy for everything. We need to start streamlining. It needs to embed itself within existing strategies itself. I'm not a decision maker but I do know there are lots of strategies and the complexity lies in trying to deliver them at a local level with limited resources.

Will what's set out in this Bill make the situation worse?

Practitioner 8 – I just wonder where it sits in terms of national care service. Transitions straddles both adult and children's services. I think it will be really difficult. We have to have a strategy that works and we have to tie it in. In terms of legislation, we have so many different age differences for different things. Criminal justice to 26, looked after to 25 – [it] has to be consistent with whatever else you are doing. How are you going to manage local authority being responsible if they don't have the care for adult services?

Practitioner 4 – taking part in this pilot, every Local Authority has its own needs and [that was] one of the things we were worried about. We've gone on this journey really collaboratively and had support from ARC and the Scottish Government - we're building on things we had already put into place. Every Local Authority works in a different way and this gives them flexibility for what is right for their families. Is this [Bill] going to hamper this? Forced into a model where we all have to achieve the same thing? The more flexible you can be at a local level the better for families. What are the common things that already exist that would make things happen properly? If the Bill does come in it needs to be really clear what it means for Local Authorities. If we are going to live and breathe Principles into Practice, [there] needs [to be] a recognition of the resources required. The FM [Financial Memorandum] doesn't understand everything we are trying to achieve. It is beyond a plan. Not sure this Bill will help us achieve what we want for our children and families.

Practitioner 1 – [I] don't think the Transitions Bill is negative. We underestimate transitions. Huge journey that straddles many things GIRFEC, etc. This is a huge process change. [The Bill is] missing co production under the Community Empowerment Act. Very concerned about lack of finances attached to this. Transitions is significantly attached to employability. Could be tokenistic gesture. Could not be met within existing resources.

Practitioner 5 – not enough detail in the Bill. A lot of what's in it is really positive but I do wonder whether or not it can be shaped into existing legislation e.g. the Additional Support for Learning Act 2004. Would it be better to add detail to that? The flexibility issues – would perhaps be a short term impact, but long term impact could be negative to start [with] but successful in the longer term. Difficult to say that with the detail that's in the Bill.

We have heard about problems with data sharing. If the communication passport became standard for everybody and the content was of a required standard, would that allow you to get round the data sharing issue? Would that help?

Practitioner 1 – I sit on local networks and data sharing is huge - by far the biggest issue. The easiest solution is for the young person to be able to hold that information themselves, with support. That supports all the values. We need to shift the systems change – instead of us doing [it] for them, there needs to be a shift in how we view people's access to support. They have a choice.

Practitioner 2 – just to follow on about sharing information. As part of our local pilot we have document [we are] using from 14 years of age. The document is owned by each young person and [they] can bring it with them into adult services. But don't know if just in our local area - I always ask permission to share info with relevant others at each meeting and explain to parents and young person they have right to say no. To date no one has said no. [That] allows me to deal with Skills Development Scotland, colleges, adult services etc. It is verbal permission and it is documented and I complete a 14-15 year old assessment, and I document the date the young person and parent says they agree. We need more advocacy but we do use our children's rights officers at our meetings.

What is it you really do need to improve transitions? Is it dedicated teams?

Practitioner 9 – absolutely we need transitions coordinator and dedicated team in each [local] authority. Have to work closely across education, families, health, social work. Have to work very closely and be clear on our agenda to ensure young people's lives the best they can be.

Practitioner 2 – Agree with Practitioner 9 about transitions coordinator to work across all services. Also [need to] have qualified nurse on that team. I'm managing health transitions because I have that background. That would allow me to concentrate as coordinator on those with more complex needs. Families where English is not their first language. Each home visit takes 3-4 hours. That's what we need. We need teams. Parents are anxious, parents like rabbits in headlights with professionals. I contact them and say let's have cup of tea and spend time with them. I'm one person. I've been working 7 days a week and can't continue. My council is going to give me a team. We are doing a big plan – person centred plan. Transitions coordinator role very relationships-based role. Parents need to teach me as a worker about their young person - they know best. Give me a team and I'll be a happy lady.

Practitioner 3 – about 8 years ago we didn't have transitions team was all done within local disability team. But [there was a] recognition than transitions got lost. Put a dedicated team together. Has worked really well. Have been able to develop strong relationships with young people, families, services and third sector. We have now developed a scope team to look at individuals with complex needs. Every individual taken out of locality working and transitions been put into this team as well. I think what [the] risk is [is] that [we have] almost gone back to old way of working and individuals with complex needs who are in crisis grab most attention. Priority becomes reactive part of it. Transitions get lost and service diluted. The importance of a transitions team has strong merit.

Practitioner 5 – totally agree transitions coordinator has made big difference ability to straddle different services.

Practitioner 1 - safety and trust and transparency biggest issues. I advocate for transitions team. [It is an] impartial role as everyone comes with their speciality. So it sits and advocates for them within multi-disciplinary team. [It is] much needed.

Practitioner 6 – allow young people to stay at school if appropriate and reach their potential. Listening to teachers – saying [about a young person that they are] bright, [with] great potential but [recognising they] will never get Nat 5s as school environment not working for them. Therefore, post school destinations not working for them either. We need CAMHS to be more available, life coaching working very well for us, more nursing speech and language, occupational therapy. Our educators need these services to keep them [young people] at school and [help them] attain. Mainstream schools I'm talking about – they are saying these young people are going to leave at 16 and their destination will not be sustainable or positive.