



## SOCIAL CARE AND ADULT SERVICES SCRUTINY PANEL

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF THE PANEL'S REVIEW OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF LEARNING DISABILITY SERVICES

**Purpose** - The overall aim of the Scrutiny investigation was to examine how Social Services meet the needs of young people making the transition from Children's Services to Adult Services.

**Findings** – The panel began its review by considering the council's statutory duties and current position. It considered how social services prepared young people for the transition, which services were commissioned and whether those services sufficiently met the needs of young people. The panel also thought it was important to look at the long term financial implications of a future increase in the number of service users. As good practice the panel also met with a number of parents whose children had, or were in the process of, making the transition from Children's to Adult Services.

The panel was keen to establish how the Council's Social Care department ensured that the transition process was co-ordinated. The panel found that this was achieved through a number of initiatives and services including the Council's Transitions Forum, Person Centred Planning and joint working between departments. The panel did find that there needed to be an increase in the numbers of people who are offered a person centred plan and that measures to do this were being put in place.

In terms of the cost implications to the Council, the panel found that there was a predicted increase the number of people who would need services in the future and that this would place an added budgetary pressure on the service. This increase in expenditure was being taken into account in budget planning.

The panel learned about those services that were provided for young people. The panel was in agreement with the Council's policy of ensuring that where possible that there were services for Middlesbrough residents.

### CONCLUSION

Based on evidence given throughout the investigation the Panel made a number of conclusions (paragraph numbers have been included for ease of reference):

- a) That the Council has a statutory duty to ensure that it has proper procedures for the transfer of responsibility from Children's Services to Adult Services and the panel found that those procedures are in place. (*para 10*)
- b) There is a wide range of practical support for young people throughout the transitions process, examples of which includes the Transitions Forum, Person Centred Planning and Benefits Advice. (*para 17-47*)
- c) That Person Centred Plans are an important tool in ensuring the needs and wishes of the young person are taken into account when planning their future. (*para 31*)
- d) However at present there are a limited number of people who have had the opportunity to undertake a Person Centred Plan and the panel recognise the work that is being undertaken to increase those numbers. (*para 27*)
- e) The panel agreed that a Person Centred Plan should be offered as a matter of course and that they are available to all those people who want to undertake them. (*para 25*)
- f) That the agencies and schools that are involved in the Person Centred Planning process must work together to ensure that the best results are gained from those meetings. (*para 44*)

- g) That the development of the Transitions Service Policy is a positive step in bringing together agencies to ensure a co-ordinated approach for the Transition Process. *(para 37)*
- h) The panel recognises the value of the work Connexions undertake and the importance of their close and co-ordinated working relationship with the Council. *(para 42)*
- i) That Person Centred Plans should not be driven by the services that are available. That Adult Services should respond to people's needs and work in developing or sign-posting people to the services that they require. *(para 24)*
- j) The panel recognised the Council's duty to ensure training courses are available to those people with learning disabilities who want them. However the panel were concerned about the current shortage of training opportunities and the Council's ability to ensure they are available especially in the light of the recent government funding cuts in this area. *(para 45)*
- k) That the panel recognises that the rising numbers of potential service users will place additional financial demands on the Council. However the panel recognise that this is being planned for by Social Services as much as the forecasting will allow and that the potential cost is being taken into account when budget planning. *(para 53)*
- l) That the panel agree with the policy direction of the Council, in which the Council strive to provide local services, where this is more cost effective, thus enabling service users to receive their care in Middlesbrough and not to have to travel outside of the area. *(para 81)*

## RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Social Care and Adult Services Scrutiny Panel recommends to the Executive:

- a) Whilst the panel recognise that transitions procedures are in place, the panel suggest that consideration be given to investigating the potential benefits of an overlap between young people's Children's Services Social Worker and their new Adult Services Social Worker. (subject to individual needs)
- b) That work continues to increase the numbers of people being offered a Person Centred Plan and an update on the numbers be provided to the panel in 6 months time.
- c) In order to highlight to parents the benefits of person centred planning, that work be undertaken to provide information on Person Centred Planning to parents prior to the child turning 14.
- d) That agencies involved in the Person Centred Planning process meet to discuss the format of Person Centred Planning meetings to ensure the best use is being made of those meetings.
- e) That Adult Services continue to work with the Connexions Service to encourage the use of Person Centred Planning within schools.
- f) Adult Services ensure that consideration is given to working with training providers to commission additional training courses for people with learning disabilities. That the Government and the Learning Skills Council consider the impact on cuts in funding on the Council's statutory duty to provide training courses for people with learning disabilities.
- g) Continue to explore the needs of Middlesbrough service users and where possible develop services that can also be offered to other local authority service users
- h) That the department continues to pursue the policy direction that ensures that, for those people that want them, and dependent on individual circumstances, that services are available in their own area.

