

The Highland Council
Education, Children and Adult Services Committee
1 March 2017

Agenda Item	12.
Report No	ECAS 20/17

Moving on – life after school: A report on the views of young people with additional support needs on their experiences of moving on from school

Report by Director of Care and Learning

Summary

This report introduces a presentation by the Highland Children’s Forum on their most recent consultation on the views of young people with additional support needs on their experiences of moving on from school.

1. Background

- 1.1 Highland Children’s Forum is a registered charity which aims to ensure that the voices of children and young people with additional support needs are heard in the design and provision of services in Highland.
- 1.2 In 2015, the Highland Children’s Forum was commissioned by Highland Council and NHS Highland to undertake a consultation around transitions planning from secondary school, as part of the review of the Highland Transitions Protocol ‘Getting it Right in Transitions Lifelong’.
- 1.3 The consultation findings will help inform service developments (see the next report on this agenda) and the continued professional development of staff.

2. Moving on – life after school

- 2.1 The brief for this consultation was to consult with young people with additional support needs across the Highland Council area who are approaching transition from secondary education or who have transitioned within the last 6-12 months.
- 2.2 The consultation was undertaken by Highland Children’s Forum Consultation Lead for Children and Young People between February and June 2016.
- 2.3 This consultation can be read in conjunction with previous reports by Highland Children’s Forum on young people’s experiences of the transitions process: Highland Children’s Forum (2007) It’s My Journey, Highland Children’s Forum (2012) How’s your Journey.
- 2.4 The summary report is attached as **Appendix 1**. The full report is available at www.highlandchildrensforum.org

3. Implications

- 3.1 This report raises a number of issues about how resources are organised and needs are met.

- 3.2 The following report at this meeting of the Committee, regarding the scoping of a joint disability team, further considers these matters.
- 3.3 There are no legal, equalities, risk, climate change/carbon clever, Gaelic or rural implications arising from this report.

4. Recommendation

- 4.1 The Committee is asked to consider and comment on the issues raised in this report.

Designation: Director of Care and Learning

Date: 20 February 2017

Author: Bill Alexander, Director of Care and Learning

Moving on – life after school

A report on the views of young people with additional support needs on their experiences of moving on from school

Summary Report 2016

(Full report available from www.highlandchildrensforum.org)



By Emma Thomas

Highland Children's Forum

This report is based on consultation work carried out with young people between February and June 2016.

Highland Children's Forum
New Start Highland Office,
9 Carsegate Rd North,
Inverness IV3 8DU

www.highlandchildrensforum.org Facebook: Highland Children's Forum

Funded by the Highland Council

Contents

	PAGE NO.
Foreword	3
Executive Summary	4-5
Introduction	6
Methodology	7
Key Findings:	
Hopes and Dreams	8-9
What's Important to Young People	10
Positive Feelings about Leaving School	11-12
Negative Feelings about Leaving School	13-14
Preparation for Leaving School	15
Positive Destination	15
Help and Support	16-20
Information Provided	21-22
Planning Meetings	23
Child's Plan Meetings	24
Life Skills	25
Young Carers and Young People with Mental Health Problems	26-27
Improvements	27-30
Questionnaire Results	31-32
Differences between Qualitative and Quantitative Results	33-34
Discussion: an overview of Transitions Planning	35
Recommendations	36-37
Appendix - the Views of Parent-carers	38-39
References	40

Foreword

The “Getting it Right for Transition Lifelong” Protocol, published by NHS Highland and The Highland Council in November 2016 opens with the statement: “See the person, harness the potential”

The experience of young people in this report is varied; some young people feel supported through the transition from school, going on to a chosen positive destination, and feel prepared and ready for what will come next. Other young people do not feel supported and do not feel prepared or are unsure of their destination.

One of the fundamental differences between the two experiences, expressed over and over again in this report, is that where young people did feel that they were “seen as a person”, where someone took the time to listen, to find out about the individual young person and tailored the response to provide the right information, support and life skills, they had a good transitions experience. Where young people did not feel listened to or understood, the transitions experience tended to be more negative.

This report looks at some of the detail of that difference. The introduction of the Highland Practice Model (HPM) and the Transitions Guide do seem to have made an impact, with about half the young people feeling involved in the planning process. However, it should be noted that young people had very mixed experience of Transitions and Child’s Plan meetings.

There are messages in this report which are positive and messages which indicate areas of practice where work is still required. Overall the message is to listen and involve the young person and get to know them. In so doing, professionals will be in a good position to support the transitions planning process of young people with additional challenges in their lives and “harness their potential”.

I commend this report, which alongside the “Getting it Right for Transition Lifelong” Protocol, should be a helpful tool for professionals in gaining insight into the perspective of young people undergoing transition.

Donnie Macleod

Chair
Highland Children’s Forum
December 2016

Acknowledgements

A huge and special thank you to all the young people who were willing to share so much of their stories and experiences.

Thank you too to all the help, support and encouragement from staff within Highland secondary schools and Colleges, Highland Life Highland, Highland Council and Third Sector agencies.

Executive Summary

Highland Children's Forum were commissioned by Highland Council and NHS Highland to consult with children and young people in Highland with additional support needs about their experiences of **transitions planning for moving on from secondary school**.

The consultation forms part of the review of the **Highland Transitions Protocol 'Getting it Right in Transitions Lifelong'** and will inform the continued professional development of staff who play a key role in the transitions process.

The consultation was undertaken by Highland Children's Forum Consultation Lead for Children and Young People between **February and June 2016**. 63 young people took part in the consultation and 4 parent-carers of young people with more complex needs. Consultation methods included both quantitative and qualitative methods and a person-centred approach was used throughout.

The most significant findings of the report are:

- 92% of the young people said employment is an important hope post-school.*
- 83% of the young people said that becoming more independent and becoming an adult are the most positive aspects of leaving school. Missing people was seen as the most negative aspect of leaving school.*
- Overall, more young people felt prepared for leaving school than unprepared.*
- Almost half of the young people (46%) felt planning for leaving school started early enough, and 54% felt either 'Very' or 'A lot' involved in the planning process.*
- The majority of young people said they had a positive post-school destination and 78% said they felt they did have choices.*
- School staff (both mainstream and Additional Support Needs staff) were both the most positive and most negative sources of help and support.*
- 38% of young people felt either 'Very' or 'A lot' supported during transitions planning and 35% 'Not much' or 'Not at all'.*
- Families play a key role in supporting young people during transitions planning yet only 46% of participants said their family had been involved in planning meetings.*
- Overall, the information provided by both schools and Skills Development Scotland was viewed negatively, yet 61% of participants said they got the information they needed.*
- Transitions planning meetings and Child's Plan meetings were overwhelmingly viewed negatively by young people.*
- Young people felt they had some life skills (cooking, personal skills, travel) but lacked key skills such as dealing with money/finances and employment/job search skills.*

-
- *Young carers have unique issues and needs around transitions, such as anxieties about leaving their families and teachers lacking awareness of young carers' needs. Young carers have additional emotional needs due to the mental health impact of their caring.*
 - *Young people with mental health problems face challenges around the transition from Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services to Adult Mental Health Services, with poor transitions planning and lack of continuity of care.*

The Key Recommendations from the finds are:

Help and Support

Young people need to get the help and support they need to ensure a positive transitions planning experience. Staff need to be person-centred and proactive in the help and support they provide to young people.

Listening to and Involving Young People

Staff with a role in transitions planning, such as Guidance and Careers, are available and accessible to young people, listen to the views and wishes of young people and actively involve them in decision-making.

Information and Communication

Information provided to young people around transitions planning is current, specific and personalised and is provided at the right time for each individual young person.

Transition Planning Meetings

Planning meetings should be accessible and person-centred in their approach, with consideration given to the continued and possible changing needs of young people and their family members. Consideration should be given to who is present at meetings and where/when meetings take place.

Life Skills

School staff and Careers Advisers need to provide greater help with money/finance skills and job search skills. Young people need improved practical and personal life skills.

Careers Meetings (Skills Development Scotland)

Young people need more careers meetings. Information provided by the Careers Advisers needs to be relevant, specific and expands young people's range of opportunities.

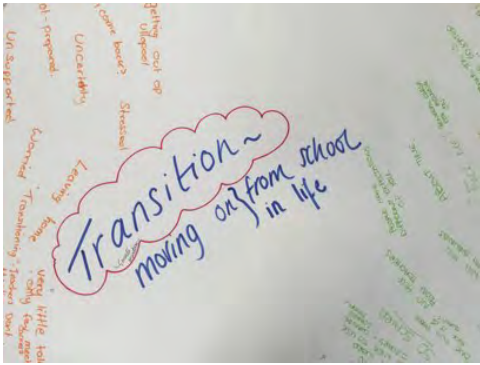
Young Carers' Needs

Staff staff require comprehensive training and awareness raising on young carer issues. Families of young carers require their own support during transitions planning.

Mental Health Services

Mental Health professionals need to ensure the transitions from CAMHS to Adult Mental Health Services is a planned and seamless process, with continuity of care and protocols in place to ensure the mental health needs of vulnerable young people are met.

Introduction



Highland Children's Forum is a registered charity which aims to ensure that the voices of children and young people with additional support needs are heard in the design and provision of services in Highland.

Our Mission is to enable children and young people facing challenges to have their voices heard and to influence positive changes in policy and practice.

This right to be heard is enshrined internationally in Article 12 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) which establishes the right of children to be involved in decisions that affect their lives and, nationally, in 'Getting it Right for Every Child'.

In 2015 Highland Children's Forum were commissioned by Highland Council and NHS Highland to undertake a consultation around transitions planning from secondary school as part of the review of the Highland Transitions Protocol 'Getting it Right in Transitions Lifelong'.

The consultation findings will also help inform the continued professional development of staff who provide a key role in supporting young people with additional support needs through the transition process of moving on from school.

The brief was to consult with young people with additional support needs across the

Highland Council area who are approaching transition from secondary education or who have transitioned within the last 6-12 months.

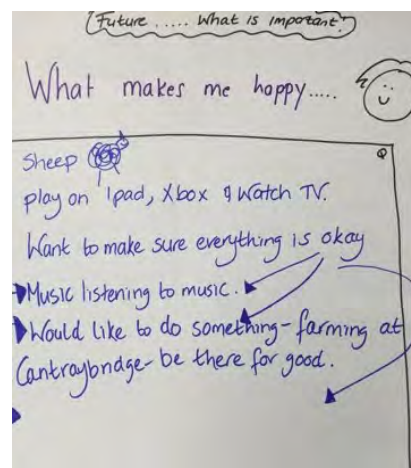
The consultation was undertaken by Highland Children's Forum Consultation Lead for Children and Young People between February and June 2016.

This consultation can be read in conjunction with previous reports by Highland Children's Forum on young people's experiences of the transitions process: Highland Children's Forum (2007) It's My Journey, Highland Children's Forum (2012) How's your Journey.

The Education (Additional Support for Learning) Act defines a young people as having additional support needs if:

'..., for whatever reason, the child or young person is, or is likely to be, unable without the provision of additional support to benefit from school education provided or to be provided for the child or young person.'

63 young people took part in the consultation and 4 parent-carers.

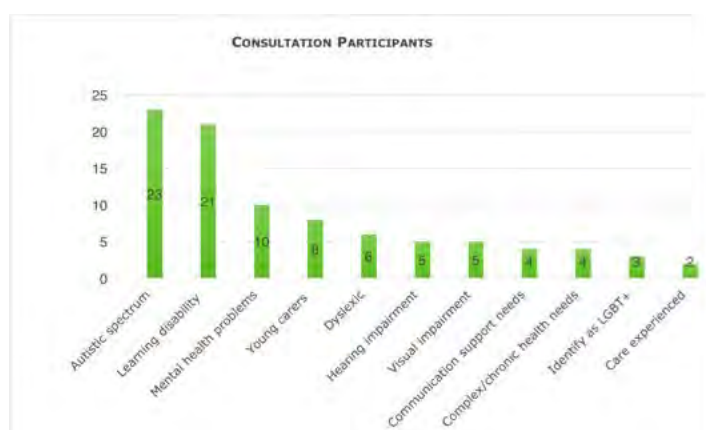


Methodology

Young people were recruited from mainstream and specialist schools and colleges, youth forums, Highland Youth Parliament, Highland Council services and Third Sector organisations.

Informed consent was sought directly from each young person wherever possible; if fully informed consent could not be given, parental consent was obtained and the young person's assent to participate was sought and checked throughout the consultation.

Young people were recruited with a diverse range of additional support needs, with many participants identifying multiple needs:



Of the 63 young people, 33 identified as men (including one trans man), 29 as women and one as gender fluid.

The age of participants was 14 - 18, with the majority of young people being 16 or 17 years old.

Participants were recruited from rural, semi-rural and urban areas.

Consultations mainly took place in schools or colleges, at the request of the young people.

It was made clear to all the participants, either in writing and/or verbally, that

participation was voluntary and consent could be withdrawn at any point.

Confidentiality and anonymity were assured and any identifying features have been anonymised in the report.

Consultation methods included both quantitative and qualitative methods: a questionnaire was developed which was used to gain broad statistical data and semi-structured interviews to gather greater in-depth data, with the participants choosing from a range of interactive methods such as drawing, mind-mapping or writing.

Young people were asked to respond to a set of key and sub-themes to elicit their experience of transitions planning for moving on from school. They were also asked about improvements they would like to see within transitions planning.

Not all young people answered all these questions due to time constraints and the young person's needs or their wish to stop the consultation.

Consultations were offered on an individual basis or group participation depending on the wishes and needs of the young people. The majority of young people (40) opted for one-to-one consultations, there were 2 pairs, 1 small group and 1 larger group.

Consultations ranged from 15 - 90 minutes, with the average being 50 minutes.

4 parent-carers (of young people with more complex communication support needs) were invited to share their views and experience of the transitions process and their views are incorporated into this report.

KEY FINDINGS

Hopes and Dreams

51 young people responded to the question *'What are your hopes and dreams?'*.



The pie chart presents the top 5 listings from the young people

Employment

47 young people (92%) said their hope and dream was around employment; 29 hoped to achieve their specific chosen profession, whilst 18 young people talked about getting a job generally.

For one young person with a chronic health condition, her awareness that her condition was changeable meant she was driven to achieving her goals sooner rather than later:

"I'm apprehensive as my condition is so variable and as I get older I am aware that I need to do things now and take any opportunity now whilst I can."

Employment was a means to achieving specific personal outcomes for some young people, such as: political activism and social change; a sense of achievement; proving other people wrong; having freedom and

financial stability, and having a career that enables them to express their creative skills.

Further and Higher Education

Going to college or university was a hope or dream of 34 of the young people (67%).

"I really want to go to university ... I always want to achieve as much as I can with things..."

"I hope to get to the college and get a good degree and get involved in creative projects such as film."

For 7 young people higher education was a means to reaching goals and dreams. For one young carer it was about personal achievement in the face of family criticism:

"I want to get 100% as I was told as a child by my biological father that if I didn't get 100% it wasn't good enough"

Personal Fulfilment

13 young people talked about personal fulfilment, identifying specific goals such as being treated well (4), being successful (2) and having a nice family (2).



For one transgender young person, their personal dream was to complete their gender reassignment:

"I want to be a cool guy!!"

For one young carer, achieving emotional and mental resilience was a key hope:

"I think my overall aim for myself is to reach resilience. I genuinely think that it's not how many times you fall over, it's how many times you get back up."

Another young carer hoped that leaving school would mean:

"... my career will be taking off and I'd have enough to keep me going. I wouldn't feel so restricted in what I can do and the places I can go."

Other hopes and dreams

For 10 young people their hopes and dreams were around having new experiences or opportunities.

Living or travelling abroad and being independent were each mentioned by 7 young people.

For one young person with a long-term health condition volunteering abroad was a huge dream:

"I am excited about moving onto something totally new. I feel a bit apprehensive about what could go wrong or what issues could be thrown up that we haven't thought of."

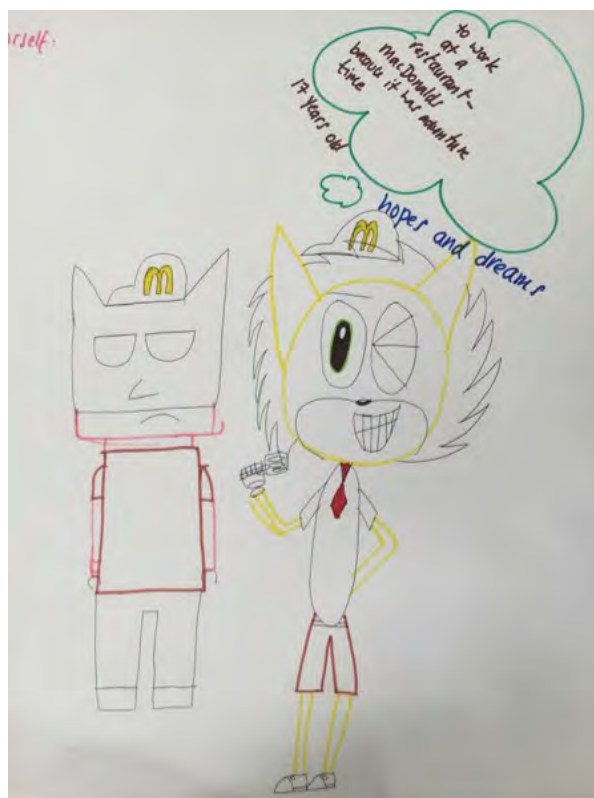
A gradual transitions was a hope for one young person on the autistic spectrum who recognised their own personal need to take

things slowly and gradually if they wished to achieve their hopes and dreams:

"Probably be based at home for a year or two - feels ok - get used to living life without school and try to be a bit more independent"

They felt that once they had achieved greater independence, had learnt about budgeting and paying rent and worked part-time, then they would be ready to take the step of trying to achieve their wider hopes and dreams.

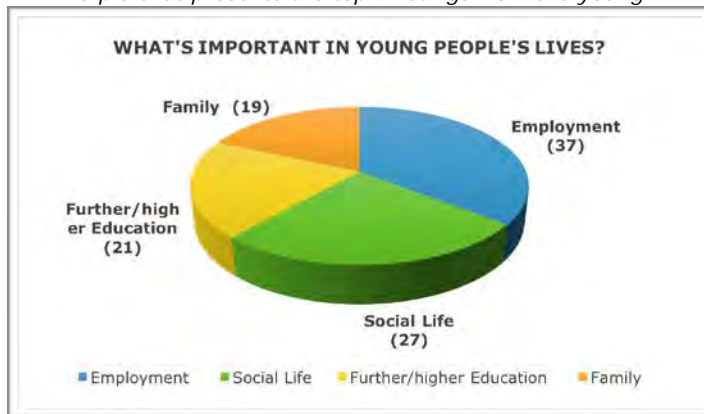
For one young person impacted by domestic abuse, their hope and dream was for their family to get along and one young person said that having enough money for food and rent was their hope or dream.



What's Important to Young People

49 young people responded to the question *'What's important to you in your life?'*

The pie chart presents the top 4 listings from the young



people.

(Of the 27 listings for social life, 'friends' were listed 16 times).

Employment came out top for young people, with 37 listings. Followed by:

- **Social life** - with friends (16), meeting new people (3) and having fun (2) mentioned in particular.
- **Further and higher education** (21)
- **Family** (19)

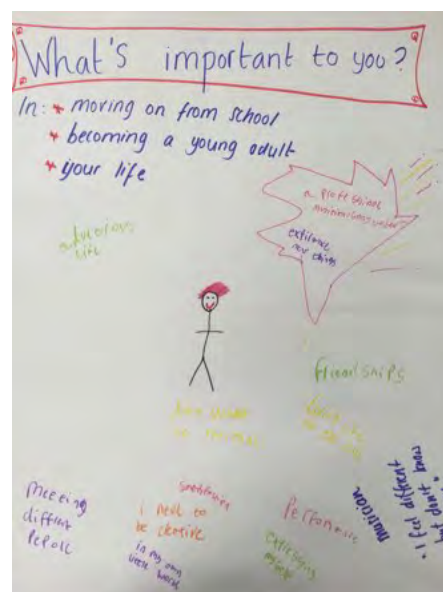
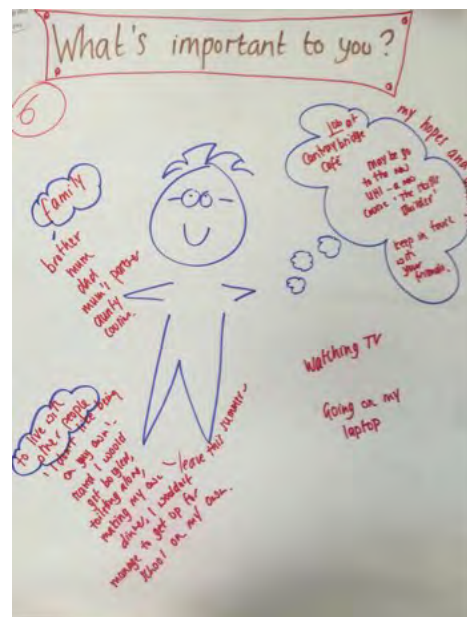
In Highland Children's Forum *What Makes a Good Life?* (2009) Report family, friends and learning were the top (almost equal) indicators of what was important to young people in their lives.

The differences in findings in this report may be accounted for by the fact that the consultation was around transitions and leaving school and young people perhaps answered this question in relation to that wider context of moving on from school.

Other topics listed included:

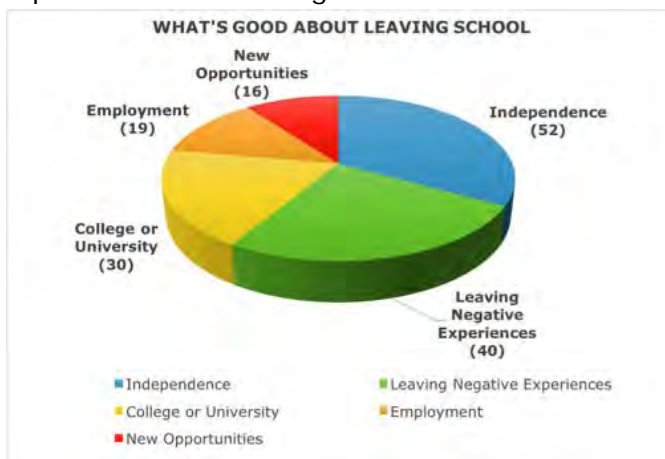
- Being respected (9)
- Health (9)
- Equality and being treated the same as others (8)
- Home and housing (8)
- Sports and hobbies (8)
- Being creative (5)
- Making own choices/decisions (5).

Earning money, TV, wifi/gaming and travel were each mentioned by 4 young people.



Positive Feelings about Leaving School

All 63 participants talked about what was positive about leaving school.



The chart presents the top 5 listings from the young people.

Independence

Being more independent and becoming an adult was listed by 52 young people (83%). This meant having more freedom (17), growing up (7) and having more control (5).

One young person on the autistic spectrum said that:

"[leaving school] makes you feel like an independent person I felt nervous in 1st year and a bit more confident in 2nd year but by the time I was 13 I felt I was stronger and now I've been gradually growing up over the years."

4 young people (2 young carers, a trans man and a care-experienced young person) talked about the importance of being able to put the past behind and not have people view or judge them on how they used to be:

'I'm quite excited that people won't know who I was. It's nice to not spend time with people who still slip up with my name and I can introduce myself to them [as who I am now]'

Transgender young person

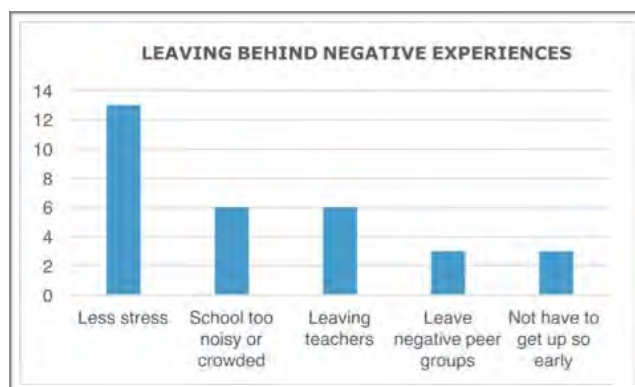
Other factors mentioned were:

- Focusing on myself (4)
- Leaving home (3)
- Leaving the area (3)
- Having more responsibility (2)
- Having more choice (2)
- Not having to worry about other people (1)

Leaving behind negative experiences

40 young people (63%) said that what was good about leaving school was leaving all the negative aspects of school.

Of the 13 young people who said that what



was good about leaving school was there was less stress, 5 specifically talked about the pressure of exams:

"I've broken down both years and the work was too much - I couldn't think straight the stress came from all the deadlines coming at the same time."

Young person on the autistic spectrum

2 young people felt that college was less formal and more relaxed (and hence less stressful):

"They text you and keep in touch with you if you are off, and send you the work needed to help you catch up - this didn't happen in school at all."

School being too noisy and crowded was a big issue for 6 of the young people, all of whom identified as being on the autism spectrum:

"... your head would go nuts - I would take the long way round school so I didn't have to go through the concourse."

Teachers were a negative aspect of school for 6 young people as were negative peer groups (3):

"I had a bad time at school - poor social group at school people are quite immature so it's good to leave that environment behind of bitchiness."

Care-experienced young person

Further and Higher Education

30 young people (48%) said that going to college or university was a positive aspect of moving on from school.

One young person spoke about being able to learn and study subjects *they* were interested in, not what they had to:

"I don't have to do maths anymore or various qualifications to get to where I want to be - I can just do what I want to do now in terms of learning and that's really great."

College or university was seen as a means of enabling young people to get to their chosen careers.

Employment

Getting a job was listed by 19 young people with 7 of these saying it would be good to earn money:

"Jobs, money - having money means you have more freedom and can get a car."

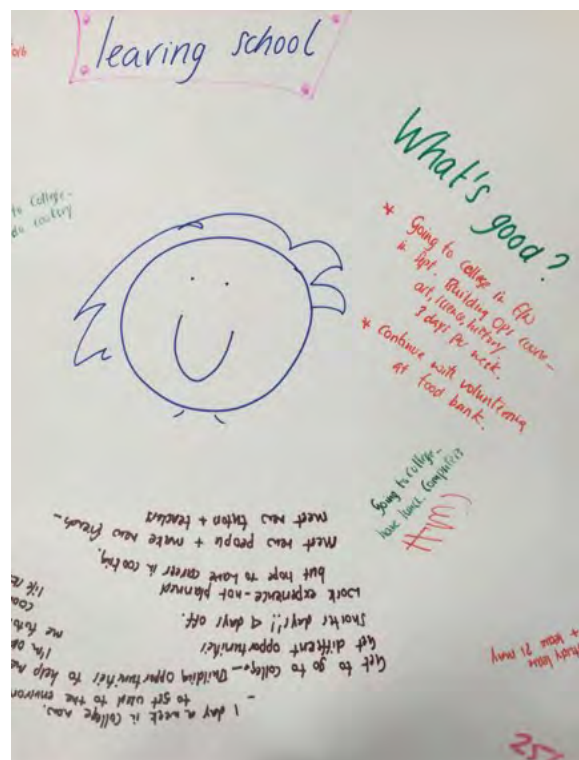
For another young person, getting a job was about being able to do their desired career:

"I am very excited about my future that I'm passionate about and enjoy."

New Opportunities

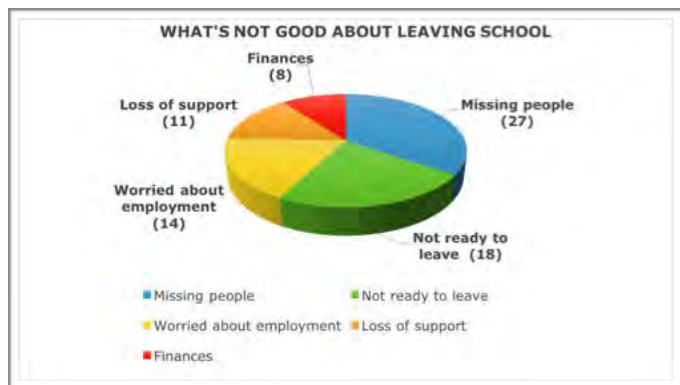
For 16 young people leaving school meant the possibility of new or more opportunities (16) or new experiences (12) which they were looking forward to.

Other reasons given were: meeting new people (9); travelling (5) and being nearer to reaching my goals (5).



Negative Feelings about Leaving School

All 63 participants responded to the question *'What's not good about leaving school?'*



The chart presents top 5 listings from the young people.

Missing people

Missing people came top (27 listings) with 'missing friends' being mentioned by 15 young people:

"I think just leaving people behind that I know and my friends and family. Just having someone to speak to."

Not feeling ready to leave

18 young people said that they did not feel ready to leave school as they were/felt:

- Not prepared (5)
- Pressured to leave (4)
- Unsure they could cope on their own (3)
- The transition happened too fast (2)

One young person impacted by domestic abuse felt very unprepared for leaving:

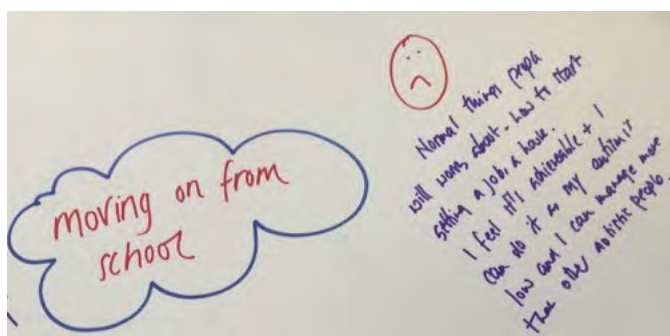
"I don't feel ready to leave school yet - I don't think I have enough knowledge about what I could go on to do later in life ... I don't think I have the confidence yet I don't think I've had enough support yet for leaving school."

For another young person on the autistic spectrum, transition happened too fast:

"I felt I was pushed to move forward too quickly - I wanted to gradually leave school and then eventually find a job. I was pressured into something I didn't want to do I like to get used to things. I did tell them it was too fast and my key teacher did slow down but I wasn't so confident to speak to other teachers about this."

Worried about employment

14 young people were worried about getting a job. Specific issues included lack of confidence, not being able to find a job and concern about finding the right kind of job.



Two young people expressed concern that their additional support needs will adversely affect their ability to work:

"It's having dyslexia and I don't have high qualifications"

"I used to think I couldn't get a job because of what was wrong with me - that was my own thoughts. My head would tell me I would never get a job ... but my mum and dad always told me I could do what I wanted even with the things that were wrong."

Loss of key support networks

11 young people talked about the sudden loss of key support networks once they leave

school e.g. children's services, Guidance staff and ASN teachers.

From interviews with 4 young people, the key issues around this included:

- The loss of staff who have a long-term personal knowledge or connection with the young person
- Lack of continuity of care
- The loss of support around physical and emotional/mental health needs
- The worry of having more responsibility

This young person on the autistic spectrum felt the sudden withdrawal of support:

"I lost lots of support when I left school - my ASN teacher, support worker, Children's Services Worker, children's social worker."

A young person with mental health problems and transitioning gender the loss of people who had long-term knowledge about them was a concern:

"My Guidance teacher is not the best but does have the knowledge and history of what has gone on with me ... the people that I have to meet now are not going to be fully aware of my mental health and that will have to all be explained again if I have a particular bad time."

For one young person with changing physical health needs, a key concern was how she would cope cooking for herself; currently she has help at home if she needs it, along with a wide range of specialist equipment.

Money and finances

Worries about money and finances were raised by 8 young people with concerns specifically mentioned around:

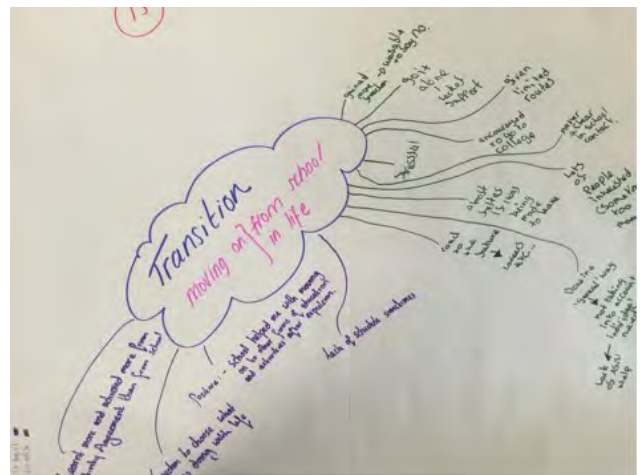
- Lack of money (5)
- Managing money (3)
- Debt (1)

3 of these young people had specific worries as young carers regarding their family's financial circumstances:

"My friends' parents are already saving up for them going away and it's really difficult when your parents are living on benefits because they can't work because of their disabilities."

Other reasons given

For 4 young people, with more complex needs, missing school sports was an issue as disabled sports was an important part of their lives.



Preparation for Leaving School

30 of the 63 participants gave a response about how prepared they felt leaving school.

Many young people gave both negative (19 listings) and positive responses (21 listings). This would suggest that young people felt both prepared and unprepared for leaving school.

Positive responses given included young people:

- Feeling ready to leave when the time comes (9)
- Feeling quite confident about leaving (8)

"I'm waiting to get through my exams - I know what I need to get into the course....I feel ready."

Care-Experienced young person

2 young people said they felt prepared to leave as school was not a positive experience for them.

Negative responses given included young people:

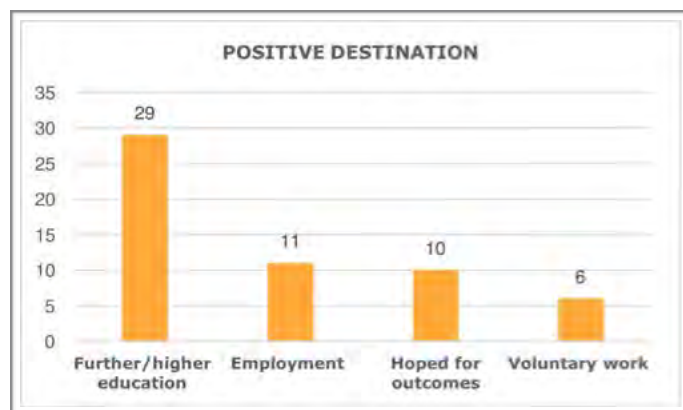
- Not feeling ready to leave school (6)
- Lacking the confidence, knowledge or skills (4)
- Not having a positive destination (2)
- Feeling lost (2)
- Feeling pressured into leave (2)

"I don't think I know what all my options are after leaving school [I want] to know what my options are and to know what I need to do in order to get the job I want and be prepared to leave school so I have peace of mind"

Young person impacted by Domestic Abuse

Positive Destination

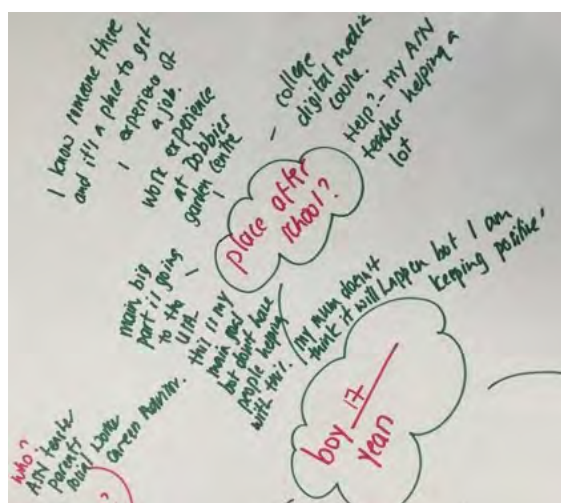
39 young people gave a response about whether they had a positive place (destination) planned when they left school.



29 young people identified college or university as being a positive destination, with 13 young people saying they would attend mainstream College and 7 a specialist College for young people with additional support needs.

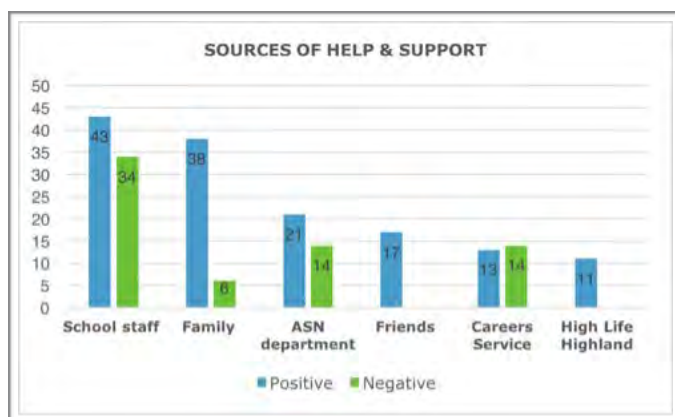
Employment was listed by 11 young people, 10 young people said they had no firm plans as yet but had hoped for outcomes such as a Modern Apprenticeship or disability sports and 6 young people had voluntary work planned.

4 young people said they had no positive destination and 5 said they were worried about getting a job.



Help and Support

All 63 participants responded to the question 'Who has helped and supported you during your planning for leaving school?'



School Staff

School staff were both the most positive and most negative in terms of the help and support they provided.

43 young people (68%) identified school staff as a positive source of help and support, with Guidance being mentioned by 24 young people.

34 young people (54%), felt school staff were unsupportive, with Guidance staff mentioned by 12 young people.

Helpful Responses

School staff who provided positive help and support were **person-centred** in their approach.

Being person-centred meant that staff communicated well with young people, listened to them, were understanding and caring, helped them make informed choices and looked for creative solutions to problems.

Helpful staff knew the young person well and had a trusting relationship:

"Before she was my year head she was my Guidance ...[she]

knows me and knows what I want to do and points me in the right direction."

The importance of staff understanding the young person and their needs was highlighted in this response from a young person on the autistic spectrum:

"It was great to have a teacher who totally understood and didn't think I was stupid as that was how I felt about myself."

One young person talked about teachers who helped build up his confidence:

"My PE teachers ..they would get me to do demonstrations to the class and that gave me confidence."

Understanding and responding flexibly to a young person's needs was important:

"When I was having a really bad time the Depute sorted for me to get a shorter timetable even through it was only for 2 weeks."

One young person's experience of being excluded from school turned out positively as the school responded by helping them to move onto a positive destination; one which reflected the young person's interests and goals:

"... They asked me what my 3 main interests were and they would try to set me up [with an Activity Agreement]. I don't think they could have done anything better to be honest."

Looking out for the young person was important; for some young people simply knowing that there was help there should

they need it was enough. Simple acts of concern and kindness can be of great significance particularly if young people are feeling vulnerable:

“When I was feeling stressed she helped with my college application. It was nice that she worried for me and we got the application off in the end.”

School staff were helpful when they assisted young people with job and college or university applications:

“My Guidance teacher helped me through college courses and applications and she helped me what to put in my personal statement.”

Unhelpful Responses

School staff who were seen as unhelpful and unsupportive did not respond to the young people or their needs in a person-centred way.

The main specific criticism about Guidance was they were too busy (6):

“They are so busy they don't seem to have time. It can take days to see your Guidance. It's just stressful as you have extra things to manage and if you can't get to speak about it you just keep thinking about it.”

Young-Carer

Young people need to access their Guidance teachers quickly and easily, and *when they need them*.

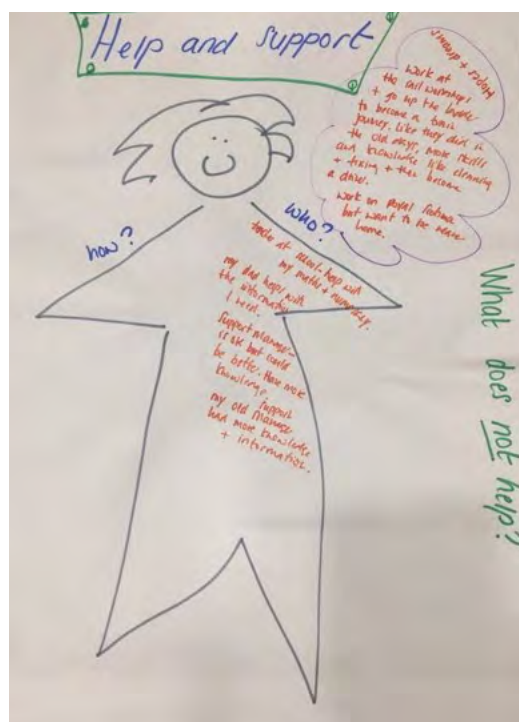
Young people identified unsupportive staff as adults who pressured young people into leaving school before they were ready, and who did not:

- Help with college and university applications
- Respond even when young people asked and requested help
- Listen to young person
- Recognise or respond to young people's additional support needs
- Provide information on career options

One young person impacted by domestic abuse did not get any help or support:

“I'm just overlooked most of the time I've had no help at all. I think I'm just a quiet person and like to blend in and get missed.”

The key messages that emerged are the need for school staff, and Guidance in particular, to give more time to get to know young people, be proactive in offering help and support and listen and respond to the young person's needs.



Help and Support

School Additional Support Needs (ASN) Departments

As with mainstream school staff, school ASN Departments were regarded both positively (21 listings) and negatively (14 listings) by young people.

Helpful Responses

ASN teachers were identified by 11 young people and Pupil Support Assistants (PSA) by 7 young people as positive sources of support.

As with mainstream school staff, the defining features of helpful and supportive ASN staff were those adults who put the young person's needs and wishes at the centre, who provided respectful, individualised support giving young people choice and control.

The quote below shows that, for this young person, their teacher's creative, personalised response and a mutual interest were of huge value:

"My ASN teacher would take me out mountain biking and we shared that interest. He was so understanding. He made a scale about how I was feeling 1 - 10 and we changed it to bikes - 'what bike are you today?' to show how I was feeling and that helped a lot. This was great especially in a busy school with kids all around so they wouldn't know what we were talking about."

For another young person with a chronic health condition staff who put them at the centre and ask what *they* want were very helpful:

"The PSA [Pupil Support Assistants] have been great. They ask what do I want and they will take care of me and be sympathetic if I have a sore belly."

ASN staff who provide opportunities for their pupils to meet other people with similar needs and experiences were valued by this young person:

"My ASN teacher took me to Highland One-Stop-Shop and I met other young people from other schools and this was great..."

Occasionally, key adults stood out during the consultation; these were staff who had strong relationships with the young people they worked alongside, who were reliable, respectful and empathetic.

Unhelpful Responses

The majority of reasons given (10) were around the fact that the young people felt that their additional support needs were not being met in by ASN staff.

"For me it was an issue of generalisation - it was done a certain way and it stopped if they didn't know how to handle it."

Staff not being responsive to the young people's individual needs was an issue and not being flexible enough to overcome barriers such as the difficulties of being able to get an appointment with the GP to access eligibility for adaptations.

Unhelpful responses were those that did not delivering the young person's agreed additional support needs, did not listen, were inflexible and failed to validate the needs expressed by the young person.

Help and Support

Skills Development Scotland (SDS)

Skills Development Scotland, known as the Careers Service, was listed by 13 young people (21%) as an important source of help and support.

14 young people listed the Careers Service as unhelpful or unsupportive, and 4 young people said they had not received any careers meetings at all.

Helpful Responses

For those young people who found the Careers Service helpful and supportive, the Careers Adviser:

- Scheduled early and regular careers meetings
- Showed young people where to access information about college and jobs
- Provide targeted, specific information
- Helped with college applications
- Was supportive and available
- Was interested in the young person
- Knew the young person and their interests and hopes and dreams
- Opened up options and possibilities previously unknown to the young person

“She saw me a lot and it felt as if she was taking an interest in me and helping me to get where I wanted to be. She knew options that I might not have known about.”

Again, the key messages are that helpful and supportive Careers Advisers are those who take a person-centred approach, know the young people they are working with, are proactive in their approaches and open up opportunities that were previously unknown to the young person. Providing relevant, up-to-date information was also important.

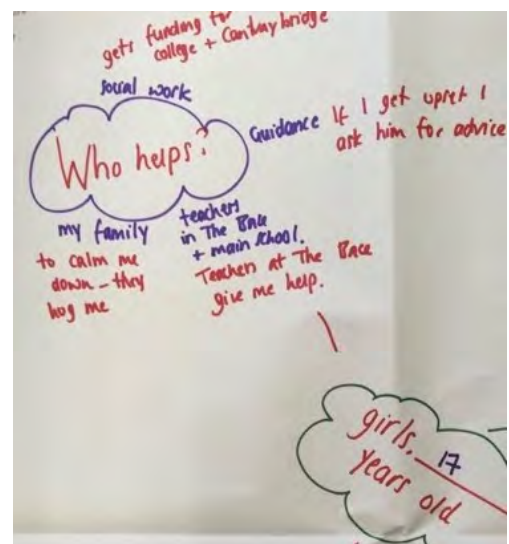
Unhelpful Responses

More detailed messages were gleaned from the interviews of 3 young people (2 young carers and a young person impacted by domestic abuse).

The main issues identified by these young people was that the Careers Advisers did not:

- Listen to the young person
- Follow up on promised future meetings
- Did not have relevant or detailed information to enable the young person to make choices
- Help the young people explore or consider what their options might be
- Give enough time to the young person

“I've had like 3 meetings and I didn't think they were helpful because she doesn't bring or remember what you said last time ... and advises you to 'go look on My World of Work'. This isn't really going to help me if you're just telling me to look somewhere.”



Help and Support

Family

38 young people said family were important sources of help and support, with 'mum' in particular getting the most mentions (19).

Families:

- Provide encouragement and build confidence
- Are supportive and understand their young person's needs
- Provide or support new opportunities (e.g. around jobs and work experience)

"Mum and dad 100% - they say day after day you will be ok and you can try and if I didn't manage they would say it's ok just try again. When they understood my autism they were totally amazing."

Family were identified by 6 young people as having a negative or unsupportive role in their planning for leaving school, with 'dad' in particular being mentioned by 2 young people.

Friends

Friends were seen as an important support mechanism with 17 young people specifically saying that friends were important in helping them plan for leaving school.

Specific roles friends play include:

- Mentoring/peer support
- Making the young person feel good about themselves
- Encouragement
- Shared understanding

"My friend knows what I want and always makes me feel better if I feel bad. She knows exactly where I'm coming from as she's a young carer too."

For one young person, who has a family background impacted by domestic abuse,

her friends were a particularly important part of her support network:

"Friends are such a big part of my life and I am so used to having them for support. My best friend is like my psychiatrist. My friends get me through all this."

Other organisations identified by young people

For some young people, the Youth Development Officers (YDO) played a significant role in helping them plan for leaving school. 9 young people said that their local YDO was the greatest help and support to them.

"I've been talking to my Youth Development Officer. The school haven't helped at all. My YDO is the one who has helped."

College and university staff were listed by 7 young people as being of particular help and support in moving on from school into higher education.

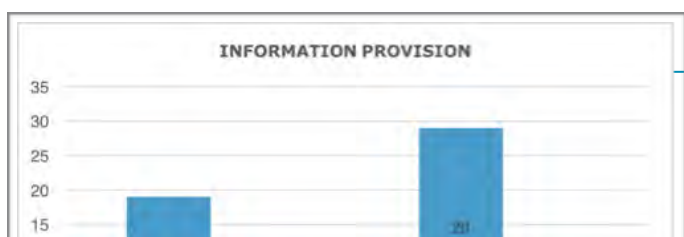
Other people mentioned were:

- Social Work (4)
- Young Carers Support Workers (4)
- Eden Court (3)
- Deaf Support Teachers (3)

Women's Aid Children's Worker were important to 3 young people:

"My Children's Worker has been helping me get confidence ...before I met my Children's Worker I wouldn't have had the confidence to go and ask about things about what I could do in the future."

Information Provided



41 of the 63 participants talked about the information they received, in terms of its quality and content.

Overall the information provided by both schools and the Careers Service was viewed negatively by the young people. However, some young people viewed the information as both positive and negative. This may be depending on whom they received the information from.

From schools

There were 19 listings by the young people saying the information from schools was positive:

“It’s good to get all the information as it’s quite hard to think of it all yourself. As I’m only 16 it’s hard to think beyond school as this is all I know.”

For another young person the Personal Social and Education (PSE) classes had been helpful:

“School tell us in 6th year how to apply for uni - we spend time in PSE, they do loads in PSE”

Other young people felt that PSE is not useful but it could be:

“To use the PSE lessons would be good or a transition lesson in assembly.”

There were 29 listings from the young people saying the information they received from schools was negative and there was no or very limited information about:

- College or university (8)
- Activity Agreements or Modern Apprenticeships (8)
- How to get a job/work experience (5)

6 young people said they had not received any information from school.

Young people need information to be up-to-date, current and opens up their horizons about what careers or opportunities are available to them:

“Well - school, they always want you to make the right choice but I don't know what the right choice is for me I don't know the College courses I would need to take.”

One young carer spoke about how the information they received about Modern Apprenticeships was limited to the traditional jobs and careers:

“.. they [school] said we have Modern Apprenticeships in a subject like nursing and all that kind of stuff but half of us don't want to go into nursing..”

The lack of information about either Activity Agreements or Modern Apprenticeships was mentioned by a number of young people:

“Activity Agreements weren't mentioned at all [in school] - I heard about it via my youth worker.”

Another young person spoke about the lack of information they received about student loans and bursaries:

“I still don't know anything about SAAS [Student Awards Agency Scotland] ... we should be given Guidance leaflets about SAAS.”

From Skills Development Scotland

The Careers Service were identified by 6 young people as positive providers of information.

“Careers get to know about you and your passions and help you find a clear path. This was very helpful and they ... gave me the prospectus for College..”

One young person said that the Careers Adviser:

“.... told me not to focus on just one role, which made sense and they helped widen the spectrum of what I could do.”

Providing information about a wider range of roles and careers, unknown previously by the young person, was seen as useful and helpful.

3 young people said the information from the Careers Service didn't meet their needs:

“The Careers should give more help about what we want to do. I remember sitting down with the Careers Adviser and she asked ‘What do you want to do, why do you want to do it and have you looked up any of the qualifications you will need?’ and it was like you are asking me if I should know all this and I should be asking you.”

All 3 young people had very similar comments as to why the Careers Service had been unhelpful:

- Information was limited and basic
- Young people were told to ‘go on line’ and look up information themselves

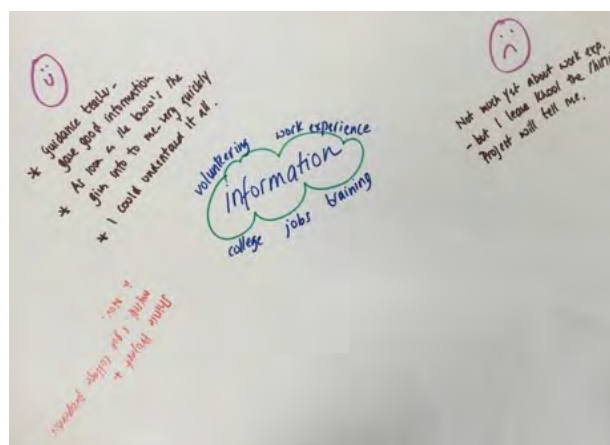
- Staff did not help the young people to explore the range of options that may have been open to them

Young people want careers advice that is relevant, specific and person-centered; information that helps young people truly consider their post-school options and pathways.

9 young people said that they had to get the information they needed themselves; 8 of whom used the internet to research information:

“I spent a long considerable time googling. I kind of did it myself - looking at all the prospectus’ and finding out the best course..”

Other people identified by the participants as having a positive role in information provision were Youth Development Officers (3), Activity Agreement Co-ordinator (2), ASPIRE North (2) and Third Sector Agencies (2).



Planning Meetings

Transitions Planning Meetings

53 young people gave responses around their experience of planning meetings, with positive experiences listed 41 times and negative experiences 74 times.



This young person on the autistic spectrum, valued the fact that meetings were person-centred and met their needs:

"I got little slips to remind me to go to the meetings. I liked the meetings - they were an opportunity to open up about my ideas..."

For those young people who said the planning meetings had not been positive, the main reason given was a general dissatisfaction:



For one young person with a chronic health condition all the focus was on their health needs which overshadowed any talk about leaving school:

"I've had meetings but not about leaving school but about how I'm progressing and my health I haven't had a meeting for ages and I was going to stay on [at school] but now I'm not."

For one young person, the meetings were a very negative experience for a range of reasons:

"I didn't want the Depute there as it's really hard but they wouldn't listen and said she had to be there to Chair. I was shaking my head to show I wasn't happy but no one asked me. They used a lot of jargon that my mum and I didn't know and they didn't even tell me who was in the meeting."

For this young person, no-one was listening to her needs or wishes. Meetings were not flexible and she had no control over who attended, nor opportunities to speak:

"There should have been more meetings where I had a chance to voice my opinion."

14 young people said they did not feel listened to at planning meetings.

One young carer, who did have regular planning meetings, felt they were still not positive:

"I had [planning meetings] with the Careers Adviser. I don't think it really helped. She kind of rambled on a lot and it wasn't for me."

Child's Plan Meetings

Child's Plan meetings were listed 17 times as being a negative experience for young people.

The most commonly mentioned reason was that within the Child's Plan meetings there had been poor transitions planning for moving on (6):

One care-experienced young person said they had to do the planning for leaving school themselves as:

"I had core Child's Plan meetings but none of it was about leaving school..."

A young carer had a similar experience:

"I've been having Child's Plan meetings since I was 3 but no meetings about moving on ..."

For other young people, not having the right people at the meetings was an issue.

One young person with long-term mental health issues had had no say in who attended her Child's Plan meetings; even when they requested certain people to attend this did not happen:

"I asked for my CAMHS worker to see my Child's Plan but the school didn't send it to him I want my CAMHS worker to be involved in the meetings."

A young person with a chronic health condition wanted Social Work to attend their Child's Plan meetings as they were the professionals who could move things forward:

"Social Work should be [at the meetings] - they said they would send all this information about getting grants for equipment

which I would need to help me at university ... but we haven't had anything from them.."

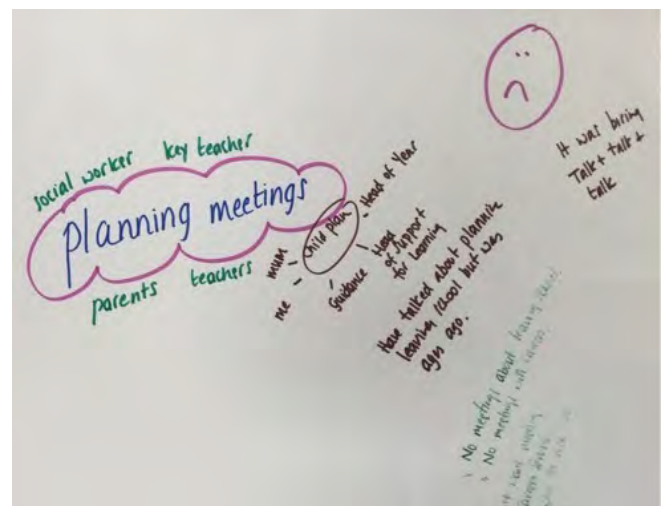
One young person spoke about the impact of the number of people at the meetings:

"... what can be intimidating is loads of professionals sitting there. At one point ... there was 18 professionals involved..."

For one young carer their Child's Plan meetings were not meaningful to them. She explained that what she needed was a relevant, live plan that reflected her future needs:

"Even if it wasn't something that had to be written down but as long as I knew this was going to happen, rather than someone sending me a massive wad of paper that basically says what I told them."

No data was collected from the young people about positive experiences of Child's Plan meetings.



Life Skills

40 young people talked about the life skills they had and the life skills they needed:



Life skills young people felt they had:

- Basic cooking skills (17)
- Personal skills (10), such as planning, being self-motivated, sociable
- Travel independently (9)

Other life skills the young people said they had were: money management (3); job search skills (2); creative/drama skills (2); sports (2).

For one young person being able to tie their laces so they would not trip up was important and for another being able to clean and vacuum the house was a skill they had learnt that was useful to them.

Life skills young people say they need:

- Money, finance or budgeting (17)

“Definitely taxes and stuff. We know about how interest rates work but we don't know how to choose the right one ... and what all the finance means.”

- Employment and job search skills (10)
- Below is an illustration from 2 young people with contrasting experiences:

“School doesn't prepare you in any way for jobs and interviews -

we had no mock interviews for example.”

“.. in Year 3 our PSE teacher explained how to do a CV and our school is offering skills-based courses in retail, travel and tourism and hairdressing”

- Practical skills (7), such as cooking, shopping and personal care:

“Going into town, having to book an optician or doctor's appointment. I don't feel prepared for this ... ”

- Other needs

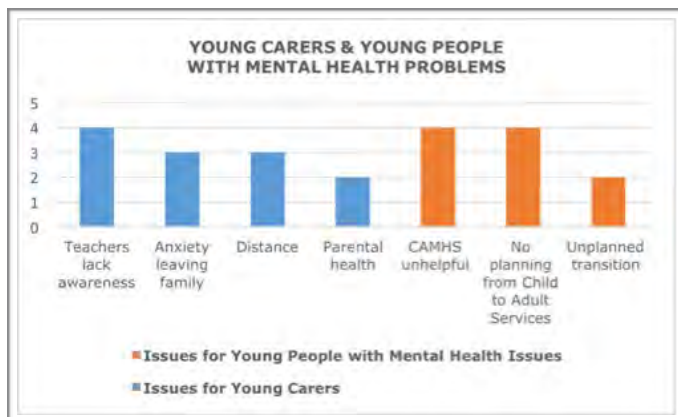
6 young people spoke about the need for greater personal skills, 5 about being able to live independently and 5 about being able to travel:

“My mum and dad [are] trying to plan for me to take a train journey on my own so I could get more independent and feel more confident living on my own.”



Young Carers & Young People with Mental Health Problems

Young carers and young people with mental health problems stood out as having specific needs and issues during transitions planning.



Issues for Young Carers

Teachers lack awareness 4 young carers said teachers did not support young carers or understand the impact of their caring role on their school work:

“If you have a lot of stress on at home because of your caring and you can't do your homework or study and you then get shouted and screamed at and you get detention. And it's not our fault as we have had to care for our brother or sister or mum.”

These young carers were not asking for special treatment; they wanted support to enable them to carry out their caring responsibilities and manage school work:

“I don't think they take us seriously when we have concerns ... If we ask for extra help or an extension it's not because we are being lazy, it's because we really need it.”

A key concern about leaving school was the worry of leaving parents at home with no-

one to take on the caring role or the worry of leaving the responsibility to younger siblings:

“My brother's gone and I know I will be gone so there will be no one at home to help out mum..”

For this young carer the challenge was shedding herself of the carer role after it being such a central feature of her life:

“I'm getting annoyed at myself as I know it shouldn't hold me back but it's just because I have been a young carer for so long..”

For 3 of the young carers the physical distance they felt able to be away from their family was a prime consideration in their decisions post-school:

“I'm really scared of leaving my mum as I will be 5 hours away”

The young carers were also concerned about the emotional and physical health of their parents:

“My friends can't wait to move away as they know their parents will be fine and they know they aren't going to need to call them every single day to check they have eaten and taken their medication and that they aren't drunk or anything.”

Young Carers Support Groups provide a key role in transitions planning, providing information and emotional, practical and financial help and support:

“If you have a problem you can just go to them and speak to them and get a lot of support.”

Mental Health Impact of being a Young Carer For some young carers there was a significant mental health impact of being a young carer; the support to help them deal with the emotional consequences of being a young carer were not being addressed through schools or mental health services.

One young carer spoke about her suicide attempts and how services missed key opportunities to step in:

"I've suffered with depression since I was 9.... there was one guy I had [at the CAMHS] when I was 14 and told him I had pills and he said 'are you going to take them' and I said 'no' and then I did 3 days later ..."

Young carers would have benefited from additional mental health support to deal with the specific worries and anxieties they had about leaving home.

Issues for Young People with Mental Health Problems

Of the 63 young people who took part in the consultation, 10 self-identified as having mental health problems; this was another group who had specific issues as part of their transitions planning.

One care-experienced young person had weekly contact with Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) for 3 years; when they left school all services stopped without support being put in by adult mental health services:

"I had 7 weeks' sessions planned before I had to leave and it was fine and I knew what was planned for those sessions but then it just all suddenly dropped and I still needed the help."

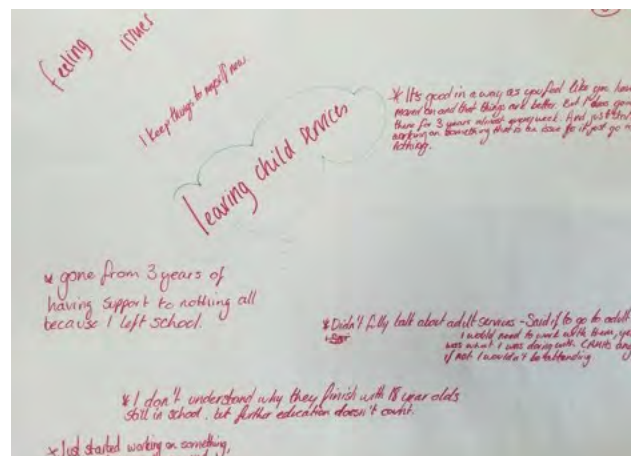
This was a similar experience for another young person:

"It was really bad at the time and I was dropped from everything - Primary Mental Health Worker, CAMHS who I had just started to see, Guidance and GP - everything stopped."

For a transgender young person their time in mental health services had been "pretty tough" with them not feeling they had been listened to and confusion about the role their gender identity had contributing to their mental health problems:

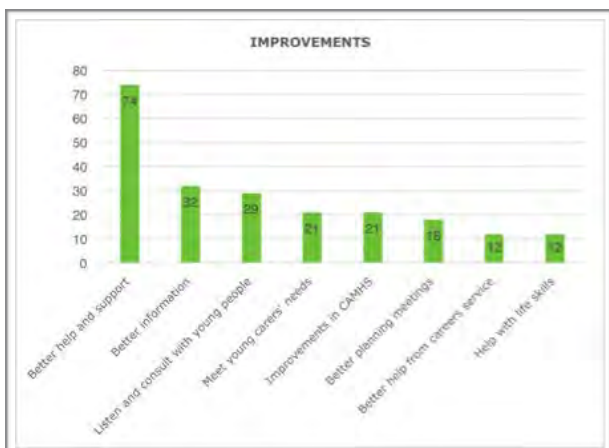
"I don't think this [mental health issues] was linked to my gender identity as I never felt misplaced amongst my friends and the gender wasn't an issue."

Other issues raised were: one young person had not received any information or support when they had their first appointment within adult services and that CAMHS and AMHS did not communicate with one another.



Improvements

49 young people talked about improvements they would like to see around transitions planning:



1. Better help and support for young people

This was the most frequently mentioned improvement (74 listings). Specific improvements included:

- Staff to be more supportive (22)
- Better transitions planning (12)
- Teachers give more time (8)
- Young people helped to find opportunities (8)
- Teachers are more proactive (6)

Staff need to be more person-centred in their responses and interactions, listen to young people and be proactive in reaching out and offering support.

“Consider the individual and not what the piece of paper says and listen to the student as they know themselves better than anyone else.”

“...sometimes you need help without having to ask for it. Some people won’t ask so we just need you [teachers] to realise this and help.”

2. Better information

The need for better information was the second major improvement young people wished to see (32 listings) with:

- More information on education and training (12)
- More information on jobs/careers (6)
- Up-to-date information (3)
- options known earlier (3)

Information need to be proactive, person-centred and specific to the needs of individual young people:

“Give us some input so not only asking us what we need but telling us if we’ve missed anything or telling us the stages we need to go through and this is how you get from A to B to C.”

There was also a strong message about the need for information to be provided earlier in schools, particularly if young people were not planning on staying on until 6th year.

3. Listen to, and consult with, young people

Messages around the need to listen to, consult with and respect young people were listed 29 times. Young people said they wanted:

- Staff to listen to them more (16)
- To be respected and valued (6)
- Staff should consult with young people more (4)
- To be supported to find their own pathway (3).

“Value what we say – value our opinions and just like respect what we say and have respect for us as we do for you. Treat each other the same.”

4. Meet Young Carers' Needs

There were 21 listings about the need to meet young carers' needs:

School Awareness Raising

4 young carers felt strongly about the need for educational and awareness raising work in schools with pupils and, critically, staff.

"I think there should be an education programme for the teachers about being a young carer and mental health because a lot of them don't get it at all. It should be an enforced course and not optional.."

Teachers Meet Young Carers' Needs

One young carer said that young carers need a lot more support from teachers and the need for schools to identify someone young carers could speak to:

"If Guidance are busy then we need to be able to speak to someone else."

3 of the young carers talked about the need for teachers to give extra help and time, for instance, with homework:

"Teachers should give a day more for homework just so we have time to do it or to offer to meet and help after school."

The young carers did not want to be given any special treatment; they just wanted an equal playing field to enable them to achieve and reach their potential, whilst having the recognition of the challenges they faced at home.

The main improvements they wanted to see were relatively simple changes such as teachers being aware if they were struggling and offering additional help and support and a more flexible, responsive approach.

Support for families

This was a significant concern for 3 young carers who felt that a key improvement would be for someone (e.g. a Social Worker or a Support Worker) to work with the families to help them deal with, and prepare for, their young person leaving home. This would then enable the young carers to leave home without such fear and anxiety:

"It's a really long process to realise that I am going to leave home and sometimes you have to bring other people in to help."

Emotional Support

Two young carers spoke about the need for emotional support to enable them to make that transition of moving on.

"If someone sat down with you and gave you emotional support for leaving home.... people will keep you in the loop. When you're away you don't know what's happening or if they are doing ok without you."

5. Improvements in Child & Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS)

There were 21 listings for improvements in CAMHS:

- Planned transitions - CAMHS to AMHS (4)
- Continuity of care (3)
- Mental health support for young carers (2)

One care-experienced young person felt that improvements were needed around continuity of care and support and that:

"There should be some contact even after you leave the service to see how you are getting on, say a month later - there should be some connection"

Support should not suddenly stop for young people once they leave school nor should there be a delay in accessing adult mental health services:

".... I went from having 4 people to support me to having zero"

"I didn't see anyone else until February from New Craigs other than the GP"

Notes should be transferred from CAMHS to adult mental health services as failure to can cause distress:

"I had to repeat all the information about what had happened again – it was reliving repressed memories and they are difficult things to speak to people."

2 young carers raised the need for mental health support to be put in place for them to deal with the stresses of being a young carer.

6. Better planning meetings

The need for better planning meetings was listed 18 times; the most frequently mentioned improvement was around communication with the family, with young people and professionals (5).

Other improvements listed included:

- The importance of looking at young people's NOW not in the past (2)
- Having smaller meeting sizes (2)
- Being able to draw/have something else to do during the meetings (2)

7. Better Help from the Careers Service (Skills Development Scotland)

Listed 12 times was the need for better help from the Careers Service with 7 young people saying they would like to see the Careers Adviser more or have more help from them, and 5 saying they would like the information and/or input earlier:

"Probably the Careers Adviser could help more and this could be good. We only have this 1 or 2 times a year ..."

8. Life skills

There were 12 listings for improvements around the issue of young people's life skills needed for moving on.



Questionnaire Results

Question	Response options	Answers
----------	------------------	---------

Below are the findings from the School Transitions Questionnaire, completed by 41 of the participants.

NUR = No Useful Return

Question	Response options	Answers
Do you have a positive place to go after school? (e.g. a job, training, College, Activity Agreement)	Yes No Don't know NUR	26 (63%) 0 (0%) 13 (32%) (5%)
How prepared or ready are you for leaving school?	Very A lot Quite a lot Not much Not at all NUR	5 (13%) 12 (30%) 10 (25%) 10 (25%) 0 (0%) (7%)
Did the planning for leaving school start early enough?	Yes No Don't know NUR	19 (46%) 14 (34%) 7 (17%) (3%)
How involved in the planning for leaving school are you?	Very A lot Quite a lot Not much Not at all NUR	9 (22%) 13 (32%) 7 (17%) 7 (17%) 2 (5%) (7%)
		<i>NB: 2 young people scored 'very' or 'a lot' but noted that it was only because they did the planning themselves.</i>
Have you got the information you need to help in your planning for leaving school?	Yes No Don't know	25* (61%) 12 (29%) 4 (10%)
		*this included 2 young people who noted that they had to get the information themselves
How much have people listened to what you want?	Very A lot Quite a lot Not much Not at all	9 (22.5%) 7 (17.5%) 8 (20%) 12 (30%) 4 (10%)

Do you have choices about where you go after leaving school?	Yes No Don't know	32 (78%) 6 (15%) 3 (7%)
How supported have you been during your planning for leaving school?	Very A lot Quite a lot Not much Not at all NUR	6 (15%) 9 (23%) 9 (23%) 11 (27%) 3 (8%) (4%)
Have your family/carers been involved in the meetings you are having for leaving school?	Yes No Don't know NUR	19 (46%) 16* (39%) 4 (10%) (5%)
		*2 YP commented that family had not been involved as there had not been any planning meetings.
Who has been the greatest help or support to you during your planning for leaving school?		Family 8 ASN teacher 5 Friends 5 Careers Adviser 4 Deaf support teacher 3 Guidance teacher 3 Myself 3 Teachers (general) 2 TYKES Support Worker 2 Youth Development Officer 2 University/College staff 2 Women's Aid Support Worker 1 Social Worker 1 Day 1 Mentoring 1
Overall, how positive would you describe your planning for leaving school?	Very A lot Quite a lot Not much Not at all NUR	7 (18%) 12 (30%) 8 (20%) 12 (30%) 0 (0%) (2%)

Differences between qualitative and quantitative data

	Qualitative Data - Interviews	Quantitative - Questionnaire (41 returns)	Comments
Preparation for leaving school	From 30 returns almost equally young people felt prepared (21 listings) and unprepared (19 listings)	68% of young people said they felt positive about how prepared they were: Very 13% A lot 30% Quite a lot 25% Only 25% felt 'not much' or 'not at all' prepared.	The data suggests that young people felt both prepared and unprepared for leaving school depending on which aspect or part of the transitions planning process they were commenting on.
Positive Destination	39 returns with all the young people saying they had a positive destination post school or hoped for plans/outcomes.	63% responded 'YES' to having a positive destination. 0% responded 'NO' 32% responded 'DON'T KNOW'	Approximately two thirds of the young people did have a positive destination post-school. A third may have had unconfirmed plans at the time of the consultation but were optimistic about a positive outcome.
Help and Support	63 returns about help and support. Positive sources of help in order of frequency: School staff (43) Family (38) ASN Depart. (21) Friends (17)	Young people identified who had been the <i>greatest</i> help and support: Family (8) ASN teacher (5) Friends (5) Careers Adviser (4) Teachers - general (2)	The two sets of data show similar results. It would suggest that those adults closest to the young people were the <i>greatest</i> help but clearly school staff have key role.
Information	41 returns. 19 listings that information was positive 29 listings that information was negative	61% of repondees said 'YES' they did get the information they needed for leaving school. 29% said 'NO' they did not. 10% said the 'DON'T KNOW' if they did or not.	These two sets of data show a clear discrepancy in the results. An explanation as to why this has not been found.

	Qualitative Data - Interviews	Quantitative - Questionnaire (41 returns)	Comments
Planning Meetings	53 returns. 41 positive listings about planning meetings. 74 negative listings. Negative reasons given were around: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • General dissatisfaction with meetings • Young people didn't feel listened to • Family were not involved. 	Questions were much more specific: <i>How involved in the planning for leaving school were you?</i> 54% said 'Very' or 'A lot' 7% 'Quite a lot' 22% 'not much' or 'not at all' <i>Have your family/carers been involved in the meetings you are having for leaving school?</i> YES 46% NO 39%	Again there is a clear discrepancy between the data collected via the interviews and the results of the Questionnaire. It is possible that this difference is down to <i>positive response bias</i> in how young people responded to the Questionnaire.

It was surprising that there were occasionally discrepancies between the results of the qualitative data (collected via the semi-structured interviews) and the quantitative data (collected via the School Transitions Questionnaire). The possible explanations may be due to *response bias* by the participants.

Response bias is a general term for a wide range of biases that influence the responses of participants away from an accurate or truthful response and are most linked to consultations and research that involve participants self-reporting, such as in questionnaires. From observation within the consultations an additional factor may be that some of the young people with more complex social and communication needs had a positive bias when answering the Questionnaire.

Consultations took place, in the main, within schools and it is unknown if or how this may have impacted on or influenced the responses given by the young people.

Discussion – an overview of Transitions Planning



'Overall, how positive would you describe your planning for leaving school?'
(School Transitions Questionnaire)

Both the qualitative data collected via the semi-structured interviews and the quantitative data collected via the School Transitions Questionnaire show that the young people had very mixed experiences of transitions planning.

For some young people their planning for leaving school was positive and supported. They felt they had choices, good information and a positive destination post-school.

Other young people felt the experience of planning had been very negative and unsupported. They felt that staff did not meet or understand their needs, they felt information was of a poor standard and too generic and they had to rely on friends, family and themselves in order to move planning forward.

Other young people felt some aspects of their planning had been positive and other aspects negative.

The chart above summarizes this and shows a wide range of experiences of transitions planning for young people.

A key issue for staff and services is to ensure that transitions planning is consistent and a positive experience for all young people with additional support needs across Highland.

There also needs to be a recognition that young people with additional support needs often have added barriers and challenges to their transitions planning and staff need to be supportive and person-centred in their responses.

Recommendations

Transitions planning needs to be consistent for all young people with additional support needs across Highland.

Help and Support

- Young people need to get the help and support they need to ensure a positive transitions planning experience.
- All professionals with a role in transitions planning need to be person-centred and proactive in the help and support they provide to young people.

Listening to and Involving Young People

- Key members of staff with a role in transitions planning, such as Guidance and Careers, are available and accessible to young people.
- All professionals with a role in transitions planning need to listen to the views and wishes of young people and actively involve them in decision-making.

Information and Communication

- Information provided to young people around transitions planning is current, specific and personalised.
- Information needs to be provided at the right time for each individual young person.
- Communication between young people, their families and staff needs to be improved.

Transition Planning Meetings

- Planning meetings should be person-centred in their approach, with the young person's needs fully met.
- Consideration should be given to the needs of family members during transition planning and at planning meetings.
- Consideration should be given to who is present at meetings and where and when meetings take place.
- Throughout the meeting checks should be made to ascertain that the young person understands each item being considered and any proposed next step.
- A balanced agenda should be drawn up so that aspects which are important to the young person are given appropriate time for discussion.
- Meetings should be jargon-free and accessible.

Life Skills

- School staff and Careers Advisers need to provide greater help with job search skills.
- Young people need improved practical and personal life skills.
- Young people need greater help with financial and money issues.

Careers Meetings (Skills Development Scotland)

- Young people need more careers meetings during their school years.
- Information provided by the Careers Advisers needs to be relevant and specific for each young person's needs.
- The information provide by Careers Advisers needs to open up the young person's horizons and expands their range of opportunities.

Young Carers' Needs

- Staff staff require comprehensive training and awareness raising on young carer issues.
- Families of young carers require their own support during transitions planning.
- School staff need strategies and training to enable them to meet the practical, emotional and mental health needs of young carers.

Mental Health Services

- Mental Health professionals need to ensure the transitions from CAMHS to Adult Mental Health Services is a planned and seamless process.
- Mental Health professionals need to ensure continuity of care between CAMHS and Adult Mental Health Services.
- Mental Health Staff professionals need to have protocols in place which ensure to meet the mental health needs of vulnerable young people are met.

Appendix - the Views of Parent-carers

4 parent carers were consulted to see if the parents' perspectives and experience reinforced or converged from the main messages given by the young people. The consultations followed the same key themes as in the young people's consultations.

All of the parent-carers said they had flagged up the need for early transitions planning. However, a key issue raised was that planning should be person-centred and:

"... in terms of when a transition starts it shouldn't be a one size fits all - you've got to look at what the child needs and what the parents think..."

Staff play a key role in enabling a well-planned and supported transition:

"... [the careers advisor] would sit down with him and ask him what he wanted to do, she took him to visit places and listened to him and was there at meetings with him and was very very gentle with him."

Staff who focus on the abilities (rather than the perceived disabilities) of young people are critical;

".... a lot of people thought we were expecting too much of him but she [Head Teacher] came in and made an assessment on how he was NOW and that was really important."

* Names have been changed to ensure anonymity.

A significant factor in positive transitions planning is staff who take a person-centred

approach, look at the skills and competencies of the young people and engage with the family in a constructive and supported way.

However, some young people with complex needs and limited verbal communication skills are not consulted with during transitions planning:

"... due to Chris' capacity nobody listened to his voice or our voice..."*

Parents are often forced into becoming 'experts' in policy and procedures to ensure that the needs of their young people are fully met:

"Sam would never have managed if we hadn't been there. Before the meeting we would find out his views and wishes and he would speak at the meetings but we had to do some interpretation of what he wanted as it's difficult for him to say what he wants and he can struggle with this..."*

Child's Plan meetings were both negative and positive in terms of transitions planning; for one family meetings were frustrating and ineffective with no integrate plans across services, for another they felt valued and listened to.

Self-directed Support is another key issue related to transitions planning, where a well-resourced care package can enable a family to use funds creatively to provide tailored, person-centred and flexible support:

"Self-directed Support has revolutionised his life I think a lot of young people would

thrive if their parents had the support to run and manage their package of care..."

However, if Self-directed Support is not regularly reassessed this can result in care packages that may not meet the young person's needs and stifle creativity:

"No one has come back to us to ask if this is working for us ... We would like to be a bit more creative about how we use Self-directed Support."

Perhaps an ultimate test of the success of a transitions process is whether the young person has a positive destination post-school.

Where this does not happen, parents have to take an active role in sourcing possible future options:

"... we spent a lot of time going around different organisations looking at different models of how life could be for Chris after school."

From the consultations with the parent-carers it became evident that they (like the young people consulted) valued professionals who were person-centred in their approaches, flexible and responsive to the family's and young person's needs.

Another clear common message was the importance of listening directly to the young people themselves and respecting their views and wishes for their future lives.

When these things were in place, transitions planning was positive; when they were absent transitions planning was isolating, frustrating and negative.

Messages that came specifically from the parents was the importance of a well-resourced, flexible and creative package of care via Self-directed Support.

Where this was in place, young people could live an independent and well supported life post-school.

Where Self-directed Support was not reviewed regularly this led to inadequate social care provision that failed to meet the families' changing needs and inhibits creative thinking and flexibility.

The wide range of experiences, both positive and negative, of both young people and parent-carers seems to suggest that, in Highland, transitions planning is far from consistent and is precariously dependent on how well (or otherwise) key agencies and individuals engage with, and understand, the transitions process.



References

- Highland Children's Forum (2007) *It's My Journey* [internet] Available from:
http://www.highlandchildrensforum.org/userfiles/file/hcf_reports/Its-MY-Journey-wee.pdf
- Highland Council (2008) *My Transition Guide* [internet] Available
from: http://forhighlandschildren.org/4-icspublication/useful_6_3913159118.pdf
- Highland Children's Forum (2009) *What makes a good life?* [internet] Available from:
http://www.highlandchildrensforum.org/userfiles/file/hcf_reports/whatmakesagoodlifefsummarycompressed-1.pdf
- Highland Children's Forum (2012) *How's your Journey* [internet] Available from:
http://www.highlandchildrensforum.org/userfiles/file/hcf_reports/howyourjourney.pdf
- Highland Council (2014) *Education, Children and Adult Services Committee August 2014, Item 4*
[internet] Available
from: http://www.highland.gov.uk/meetings/meeting/3304/education_children_and_adult_services_committee
- Highland Council (2014) *Highland Young Carers Strategy 2014-2017* [internet] Available
from: http://connectingyoungcarers.org/files/Highland_Young_Carers_Strategy_2014.pdf
- Highland Council (2015) *Highland Practice Model (Getting it Right For Every Child)* [internet] Available
from: <http://www.forhighlandschildren.org/5-practiceguidance/high-pract-model.pdf>
- Scottish Government (1995) *The Children (Scotland) Act 1995* [internet] Available from:
<http://www.gov.scot/Resource/Doc/26350/0023700.pdf>
- Scottish Government (2004) *The Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Acts 2004 and 2009* [internet] Available from: http://www.legislation.gov.uk/asp/2004/4/pdfs/asp_20040004_en.pdf
- Scottish Government (2012) *Post-16 transitions Policy and Practice Framework* [internet] Available
from: <http://www.gov.scot/Resource/0040/00408819.pdf>
- Scottish Government (2014) *Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014* [internet] Available
from: <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/asp/2014/8/contents/enacted>
- United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) [internet] Available from:
<https://www.unicef.org.uk/what-we-do/un-convention-child-rights/>