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Assembly**

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**To: Cathie White**  
**Clerk to the Committee for Employment and Learning**

**From: Peter McCallion**  
**Clerk to the Committee for Education**

**Date: 8 May 2014**

**Subject: CEL SEN Inquiry – Special School Transitions**

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Cathie ,

At its meeting on Wednesday 7 May 2014, the Committee received a briefing from the Department of Education and Education and Library Boards regarding support for children with learning difficulties. The briefing papers included information on transitions for children attending Special Schools.

The Committee agreed to forward the relevant papers to the Committee for Employment and Learning to inform your Inquiry into Post-School Special Educational Needs Provision in Education, Employment and Training for those with Learning Disabilities.

The relevant papers are attached for your information.

Regards

**Peter McCallion**  
**Committee Clerk**  
**Enc.**

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Your ref: PMcC/SMcG/1139

11 February 2014

Dear Peter

## **PUPILS WITH LEARNING DIFFICULTIES**

Thank you for your letter of 24 January, seeking information on the provision of support for pupils with learning difficulties.

### *DE Support and Guidance*

The Department (DE) remains committed to ensuring that all pupils, including those with learning difficulties, receive a high quality education that enables them to fulfil their full potential. As a reflection of this commitment, the Committee will be aware that the Education Minister has protected DE's allocation of funding for special educational needs (SEN) provision over the 2011-15 budget period.

Underpinning DE's commitment to improving outcomes for all pupils is the need to achieve consistency and cohesion across the special and mainstream system in a seamless way that impacts on meeting effectively the needs of all learners and reflects the development of shared and inclusive learning. Mainstream schools, Learning Support Centres and special schools therefore form part of a continuum of provision for children and young people with SEN to ensure their diverse range of needs are met.

Provision for all children and young people with SEN is met within the SEN Framework, which comprises SEN legislation, the Code of Practice on the Identification and Assessment of SEN, and the Supplement to the Code. Within the

SEN Framework, provision is matched to the individual needs of the child, with each case needing to be considered on its own merits.

Under SEN legislation, the Education and Library Boards (ELBs) and Boards of Governors of grant-aided schools must have regard to the provisions of the Code of Practice. The Code addresses the identification, assessment and provision made for all children who may have SEN at some time in their school careers, or even earlier. It provides guidance for the ELBs and schools – and to all those who help them, including the health services and social services – on their roles and responsibilities and the discharge of their statutory functions.

The Supplement to the Code aims to provide a clear understanding and consistency of approach for schools, ELBs and others on the steps to be taken in carrying out their statutory functions as they relate to the SEN aspects of the Special Educational Needs and Disability (NI) Order 2005 (SEND0), and to provide additional guidance in developing inclusive education in schools for pupils with SEN. The Supplement also strengthens the role of parents as partners in the SEN process and reinforces the importance of taking account of the views of the child.

The Supplement to the Code also provides guidance on the resolution of disputes between ELBs or schools (on the one hand) and parents (on the other) about the way in which responsibilities towards children with SEN are carried out. Where parents are unhappy about the nature of any proposed special education provision or support for their child, they have a choice of two routes, informal and formal, to raise their concerns. The informal route is a cross-board Dispute Avoidance and Resolution Service (DARS) that provides an opportunity to resolve areas of disagreement between parents and schools and/or ELBs.

The formal route, which is set in special education legislation, gives parents the right to appeal to the Special Educational Needs and Disability Tribunal (SENDIST) about a Board's decisions on SEN provision.

In addition to the Code and its Supplement, various other guidance materials are readily available to schools and parents in relation to SEN, including:

- a 'Resource File' which contains practical materials to be used by school staff in supporting pupils with SEN;
- Autistic Spectrum Disorders – A Guide to Classroom Practice;
- Evaluating Provision for Autistic Spectrum Disorders in Schools;
- Pastoral Care in Schools: Promoting Positive Behaviour; and
- the "Regional Good Practice Guidelines" which were issued to schools by the ELBs in 2009.

The Department's and the ELBs' websites provide links to the above publications and to various other guidance materials on SEN provision and support for parents/carers and schools.

Building the capacity of school staff to meet effectively the needs of pupils with SEN is an essential aspect of SEN provision. The provision of continuing professional development for teachers, classroom assistants, etc, is the statutory responsibility of the ELBs through their respective Curriculum Advisory Support Service (CASS). All ELBs undertake, on an annual basis, a needs analysis of the training required by schools in the forthcoming academic year. School principals are responsible for determining the training needs of their staff and they can avail of the wide range of courses on all aspects of SEN offered by Boards.

The Review of SEN and Inclusion will ensure the child is placed firmly at the centre of the processes for identification, assessment, provision and review of those with SEN. The key objectives of the revised policy include early identification, intervention and assessment, whilst also ensuring that the SEN support needs of all children and young people are met.

A key aim of the Review is to improve the capacity of schools to recognise and manage children and young people's SEN. The Resource File for schools to support children with SEN mentioned above was developed by practitioners, as part of the work of the Review, to help support a better understanding of a range of SEN and approaches that can be successfully used. In addition to this, the Review is funding a number of pilots being managed by the ELBs.

One pilot is for SEN children in early years settings, which is about improving the early identification, assessment and intervention for children with SEN in statutory nursery settings and in their immediate pre-school year in other DE-funded early years settings. A further pilot on Educational Testing is about increasing the educational assessment skills and capacity of teachers in mainstream schools to identify and assess pupils with SEN.

The Department has also provided funding to enable schools to participate in SEN leadership and management training to help further develop their expertise in identifying and supporting children with SEN in the classroom. DE is also funding a major project, run by Stranmillis and St Mary's University Colleges, to develop the skills of teachers in teaching SEN children who have difficulties in reading, writing and spelling. The opportunity to participate in this Masters level training is being offered to every primary school here, along with the development of whole school skills.

In addition, DE jointly funds, with the Department of Education and Skills in the south of Ireland, the Middletown Centre for Autism. The Centre supports children and young people with autism, their parents and educational professionals. It provides a comprehensive range of training opportunities for parents and those supporting children with autism across all schools, and also provides tailored whole school training upon request. The Centre also provides online support services for parents and professionals in both jurisdictions.

An expansion of the direct support to children and young people with autism, whose needs are more persistent, challenging and complex, is currently being rolled out by the Centre. This involves staff working with each child in their school, home and

community settings and provides invaluable support to help the child, parents and educational professionals to best manage their complex autism and support their learning.

The Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI), NI and the Department of Education and Skills Inspectorate, ROI carried out a joint inspection of the Centre in April 2012. In the work inspected, the quality of the provision was evaluated by the inspectors as outstanding. The centre is meeting very effectively the needs of the young people, their peers, parents and professionals and has demonstrated its capacity for sustained improvement.

DE also recognises the importance of engaging with other Departments in terms of improving services and support for pupils with SEN and building capacity in schools to meet their needs effectively. There are already good examples of joint working across Departments through initiatives such as the Autism Strategy, the Bamford Action Plan and the Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership's Action Plans. DE is also involved in the Public Health Agency's review of Allied Health Professional support for children with SEN Statements.

DE is committed to the continuous improvement of the quality of careers education in schools and both DE and DEL are working well together to take forward the full and continuing implementation of the joint DE/DEL "Preparing for Success – Careers Education, Information, Advice and Guidance Strategy (CEIAG)".

The Strategy recognises that young people who are vulnerable to social exclusion have high priority career guidance needs and that specialist skills are required for this area of work. In this respect, support is available through the ELBs' Transitions Service and DEL's Careers Service. DEL careers advisors can provide information, advice and guidance to the pupil and parents on appropriate progression routes, including accessible post-school educational opportunities.

For pupils with Statements of SEN, the ELBs' Education Transition Co-ordinators work in conjunction with DEL's Careers Service, Health and Social Care Trust professionals and health transition workers to ensure the provision of comprehensive and co-ordinated information about a range of options available.

As the Committee is aware, all post-primary schools and Further Education Colleges are members of Area Learning Communities (ALCs) and special schools are full and active members of the ALCs. ALCs will report, in an annual implementation plan, on 4 key strategic priorities, one of which is the development and delivery of a careers programme to improve pupils' ability to make informed choices around courses and pathways open to them, which best meet their individual need. Through collaboration and through the work of the CEIAG sub groups, pupils in special schools are benefiting from improvements in access to information and a wider range of subject pathways.

Following the Review of SEN and Inclusion, new guidance will stress the importance of school and ELB liaison with DEL's Careers Service, the local Health and Social Care Trust where appropriate, other relevant statutory services such as DEL's

Disability Employment Service, and relevant voluntary sector organisations which may be of assistance.

### *ELB Support for Pupils; Parents/Carers; Schools*

The statutory responsibility for securing provision for pupils with SEN rests with both schools, and the five ELBs which are responsible under legislation for identifying, assessing and, in appropriate cases, making provision for children with SEN in their areas.

This legislation does not give the Department of Education any role in the identification and assessment of children's SEN or any power to intervene in the process, which is intended to be conducted between parents, schools and ELBs. However, where concern about the SEN provision for a particular pupil is raised with the Department through correspondence from, for example, a parent or carer, DE will communicate with the relevant ELB to establish the position and to determine whether the pupil's needs are being met in line with the SEN Framework.

Under the Education (NI) Order 1996, an ELB shall, among other things, determine and keep under review its policy in relation to SEN provision and the arrangements made by it for such provision. Under this legislation, ELBs are responsible for formally assessing and statementing, where appropriate, children with SEN.

Under the 1996 Education Order, a school's Board of Governors shall, among other things, use its best endeavours to secure that if any pupil attending the school has SEN, the special education provision which his or her learning difficulty calls for is made.

In determining the provision needed for each child, ELBs utilise the SEN Code of Practice, which is a five-stage approach for the identification of children having learning difficulties, the assessment of their special educational needs and the special educational provision necessary to meet those needs. Stages 1-3 are based in the school. At Stage 2, the school will draw up an Individualised Education Plan setting out a child's needs, what strategies should be put in place in the classroom and what support could be provided by parents at home, to help the child. At Stage 3 the school's Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator (SENCO) will work with the class teacher, outside agencies (the ELBs) and parents in drawing up and regularly reviewing the Individualised Education Plan.

At Stage 3, referrals are made to the Educational Psychology Service within the ELBs for school age children by the schools themselves and/or other support services within the ELBs, for example, Education Welfare and Speech and Language Therapy. For pre-school children, referrals are made by the local Health and Social Services Trust. Stage 4 is the formal assessment process and Stage 5 is the issue of a Statement of SEN, where appropriate.

The ELBs have developed a comprehensive range of services and provision to support pupils with learning difficulties, their parents/carers and schools. Examples of support include:

## Early Years

- early years teaching support for children and parents in the home setting; this is organised on the basis of referral from either educational psychologists, community paediatricians, or multi-disciplinary teams;
- advice, support and training to nurseries and some playgroups to support the child's effective inclusion in mainstream pre-school settings; and
- in some cases, children have statements of SEN in the early years. If this is the case, the child may access placement in a nursery with adult assistance, where appropriate, placement in a diagnostic setting, or placement in nursery class that is attached to a special school.

## Primary Years

The core areas of support are:

- advice and support from learning support staff who can advise schools on individual education plans as well as strategies that may be appropriate for specific children;
- outreach support and teaching from staff that are attached to special schools for children at stages 3,4 and 5 of the Code of Practice;
- adult assistants, where appropriate, in mainstream schools for children who have statements of SEN;
- access to placement in learning support classes that are attached to mainstream schools; this provides teaching in a small group placement with inclusion in mainstream classes, as appropriate; and
- placement in special schools that meet the needs of children and young people with SEN.

## Post-Primary Years

The core areas of support include all of the services offered at primary level and in addition:

- access to transition services to support the planning of young people's needs as they transition from school to adult learning programmes;
- access to counselling services as part of post-primary support; and
- participation in a range of course options through the Entitlement Framework.

The ELBs also provide specialist support services such as the inter-Board Autism Advisory Service; Social, Emotional and Behaviour Difficulties (SEBD) Support Teams; and Transitions Service.

The inter-Board Autism Group, which is funded by DE, was established in 2003 to promote consistency and commonality in autism services across the five ELBs. It has developed an extensive range of training including autism awareness; promoting communication; promoting positive behaviour; sensory issues; transition planning; encouraging social skills; designing Education Plans, working in partnership with a classroom assistant; and "The Structured Classroom". The Group also links with the Middletown Centre for Autism in planning for the provision of specialist training to mainstream schools and in the delivery of training. In addition to this provision, each

ELB has an autism advisory service which delivers more specialised training in response to local needs and demands.

The Chief Inspector's Report 2008-2010 noted that the inter-Board Autism Advisory Service had grown in confidence and expertise, and had developed good practice standards in much of its work.

The ELBs' SEBD Support Teams aim to provide advice and support on request from schools in the management of social, emotional and behavioural difficulties in nursery, primary, post-primary and special schools. They provide staff development training at both out-centres and within schools to build the capacity of staff in the area of SEBD. Courses offered reflect the needs expressed by schools and current priorities identified by DE.

The Teams support schools in developing and reviewing positive behaviour management policies including safe handling and risk assessment/management. They work collaboratively with other Board services and other relevant agencies, including Health and Social Services personnel on the development and implementation of programmes of support for pupils with SEBD. The Teams promote a coordinated multi-disciplinary approach in relation to addressing the needs of children with SEBD.

The ELBs' Transitions Service helps young people and their parents/carers access appropriate information, guidance and support to allow them to make informed choices for the future. This service is funded by DE and supported through the permanent appointment of Education Transition Coordinators in each of the ELBs. The Transitions Service works closely with DEL's Careers Service.

The ETI report, "Transition Arrangements from the Special School Sector to Further Education, Adult and Working Life" (Feb 2008) found that the Transition arrangements and provision for school leavers in almost all the schools were of a good and sometimes excellent standard. The ETI reported that significant progress had been made by ELBs in sharing information on statemented pupils with other agencies to support effective transition planning.

Yours sincerely

**VERONICA BINTLEY**  
**Departmental Assembly Liaison Officer**



## Education and Training Inspectorate

An Evaluation of the

# *T*ransition Arrangements from the Special School Sector to Further Education, Adult and Working Life

February 2008



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## 1. Introduction

- 1.1 Transition from special school and preparation for adulthood has been widely recognised as a challenging time for pupils and their parents as they prepare for the uncertainties of post-school life. The transition planning process, as set out in the Code of Practice, and described in the Report of the Transitions Inter-Departmental Working Group (IDG) (2006) establishes a methodology for schools to support pupils and their families through the process. The IDG identified a range of issues that make this critical process for young people a time of heightened anxiety for all concerned and introduced a number of remedial actions<sup>1</sup>.
- 1.2 The Department of Education (DE) funded the Education and Library Boards (ELBs) to appoint Transition Co-ordinators to support the transition arrangements for all statemented pupils, including those in the special schools and to promote collaborative practice across DE, the Department for Employment and Learning (DEL) and the Department of Health and Social Services and Public Safety (DHSSPS).
- 1.3 This review provides an overview of the current provision and an evaluation of the work of the Transition Co-ordinators. The overview draws evidence from nine special school inspections and district visits over the 2007–08 period. In addition, an associate assessor and a principal of a special school, collated information relating to the transition practice in a further nine special schools. The review also takes account of the baseline information of two Education and Training Inspectorate (Inspectorate) reports on provision for leavers in special schools and further education<sup>2</sup>.

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1 For summary of actions see Report of the Transitions Inter-Departmental Working Group (DE 2006)

2 Survey of Provision for School Leavers in Special Schools for Pupils with Moderate Learning Difficulties (2004) and Survey of Provision for Students with Learning Difficulties and/or Disabilities in Colleges of Further Education in Northern Ireland (2008)

## PART 1 : THE TRANSITION ARRANGEMENTS

### 2. Summary of Main Findings: STRENGTHS

- 2.1 This review finds that the transition arrangements and provision for school leavers in almost all the schools are of a good and sometimes excellent standard. The work of the Transition Co-ordinators, though at an early stage of development, is progressing well; a positive work ethic and approach is evident, and good links have been established with the key stakeholders.
- 2.2 All of the special schools have well-established classrooms or units for leavers, and have appropriate policies and detailed leavers' programmes. A minority of the schools review and update their individual education plans in the year preceding the young person leaving school: in these instances, provision is more accurately matched to the pupils' changing needs and available post-school placement.
- 2.3 Most of the schools have taken steps to ensure that the young people and their families receive regular and easy-to-read information on the transition process, detailing locally-based, post-school opportunities. Nearly all of the final year pupils, interviewed during inspections, had a clear idea of what post-school route they wished to pursue. This was an important strength of the transition process.
- 2.4 Parents and pupils in all of the schools have access to careers 'events', where service providers, parents and pupils can meet to discuss post-school opportunities. These events are usually planned collaboratively by the schools, the ELB officers and the Department for Education and Learning Careers Service, with the Transition Co-ordinators taking an increasing role. Parents find this support helpful and reassuring at a time of significant change.

- 2.5 The leavers' curriculum varies across the schools but a number of common features are evident. These include key subject areas, personal and social education, careers, occupational studies and work experience. In all of the schools, there is a clear and appropriate focus on social and vocational independence throughout the curriculum.
- 2.6 A minority of the schools demonstrated good practice in developing the self-advocacy skills of pupils. Of particular note, is the development by three schools of regular staff-pupil meetings to assist the pupils to express their views on their school experience. Another school enabled the pupils to contribute to the planning of the transition programme and to agree the content to suit their needs and interests.
- 2.7 A number of the schools for pupils with moderate learning difficulties (MLD) are providing post-16 provision for some pupils. This has been greatly welcomed by the parents and the majority of the ELBs are considering the extension of this provision. This extension should be considered only when it is clear that the pupil will benefit from remaining in school and be helped to secure an appropriate post-school placement.
- 2.8 All of the schools surveyed provide a range of accredited courses, with the greater range of these being pursued by MLD schools. The schools take a flexible approach, pursuing a range of appropriate accreditation schemes, and regularly reviewing and adapting the suitability of the courses. Nearly all of the MLD schools provide access to up to five General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) courses and almost all access a comprehensive range of occupational studies across 14 different occupational areas. The emphasis on vocational and practical courses is appropriate.
- 2.9 All of the schools incorporate work experience into their leavers' programmes. In the MLD schools, the pupils have annual work experience placements extending from one to two weeks as they progress through key stage 4. In the severe learning difficulties (SLD) schools, the pupils, for whom work experience has been identified as suitable, participate in a range of in-house and community-based

placements as they progress through post-16 provision. The schools monitor this aspect of provision to inform discussion about post-school placements, the young person's capacity to work independently and to develop the social skills necessary for life beyond school.

- 2.10 Most of the schools have identified a member of staff to co-ordinate the work placements and in a majority of the schools, pupils get worthwhile and helpful experiences from this element of the careers programme. Sourcing, administering, monitoring and evaluating work placements present a considerable challenge to the staff involved, particularly in schools where the pupils come from a number of ELBs. Very few of the schools surveyed make appropriate provision for training in independent travel. Such training was considered by a majority of work providers to be an important missing element when the work and post-school placements were unsuccessful. The Transition Co-ordinators should work closely with schools to ensure that appropriate life skills training for independent living continues to be developed in the special schools.
- 2.11 All of the schools surveyed have established links with the regional colleges of further education which provide a wide range of occupational courses. The quality of collaboration between the schools and the colleges varies; a significant minority of schools are concerned about the need for more flexibility by the colleges and for further discussion about the type of courses and course requirements. For their part, the colleges are concerned about the quality of information which accompanies the pupils during the transition period. Some schools have piloted e-portfolios which use multi-media to record the pupils' achievements and inform parents and other stakeholders. It is recommended that the Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment (CCEA) considers extending the use of the e-portfolio to enhance the transition process. Transition Co-ordinators should also facilitate the sharing of good practice across schools and colleges.
- 2.12 All of the special schools take a leading role in ensuring that relevant participants and agencies are invited to the post-14 review and to all subsequent meetings. However, access to agencies was determined



more by the proximity of the agencies' location than need. Good working relations and benefits were noted between the schools and the careers service.

- 2.13 Parents are routinely involved in all transition meetings, although most staff reported concern over the high numbers of professionals and the daunting experience this created for some parents. The attendance of pupils at the post-14 and annual review meetings is not yet established practice in most schools and some concerns were identified about the pressure on those pupils who attended. The Inspectorate considers that the pupils, with appropriate counselling, could participate further at transition meetings.
- 2.14 The involvement of most of the schools in local learning communities has extended the range of options and resources available to pupils in the special schools. One other positive outcome of this development is the increasing number of pupils from both MLD and SLD schools, participating with their mainstream peers, in courses at neighbouring post-primary schools. In a number of instances, mainstream schools are using the resources of special schools and pursuing accreditation schemes that the special schools have expertise in delivering.
- 2.15 The review also found many examples of collaborative partnerships to support pupils in transition. In particular, the majority of schools have good links with locally-based business/education partnerships which have improved the information communicated on training and employment opportunities for the pupils. In addition, the majority of the special schools are actively involved in the Team Enterprise Scheme, which provides an excellent cross curricular activity for schools and promotes valuable community links.
- 2.16 Most parents referred to a range of community-based organisations that play an important role in the lives of young people after they leave school, for example, the Boys' Brigade, Gateway Clubs and Youth Clubs. Schools and Transition Co-ordinators can play an important role in highlighting the benefits for young people in participating in these organisations.

### **3. Summary of Main Findings: AREAS FOR DEVELOPMENT**

- 3.1 The schools surveyed strongly emphasised that the primary difficulty in the transition process relates specifically to the lack of post-school options. Parents, whilst emphasising their satisfaction with the schools' planning and provision while their child is in school, clearly stated that their greatest anxiety arises from the availability, quality and sustainability of suitable post-school placements. There is the need to review the range of post-school placements, to ensure that all pupils are suitably placed and supported after school, and for the relevant agencies in the health, careers and education services to collaborate in order to monitor the suitability and quality of the placements .
- 3.2 In MLD schools, some parents and staff report concerns over the lack of readiness of pupils at the lower end of the ability range to leave school. Special education legislation through the continuation of the statement of need, allows pupils to remain in school beyond the compulsory school age, until their nineteenth birthday. The ELBs should review their current provision and decide collectively on a course of action on how best to address this issue consistently.
- 3.3 Schools and colleges should plan more effectively and strategically to ensure that the pupils participate in appropriate courses matched to their ability. The Transition Co ordinators should develop their capacity to support these school/college links.
- 3.4 Significant geographical differences exist in the availability of community sector support services to schools. Often support services are restricted to specific conditions or disabilities. Schools, which engage with the voluntary sector, value the links and appreciate the benefits for the pupils and their parents.
- 3.5 Very few of the schools surveyed made provision for training in independent travel. This gap was considered by a majority of stakeholders to be an important factor in ensuring that work and post-school placements were successful. Service providers need to take greater account of the need for training in independent travel to support pupils in transition.

## PART 2 : THE TRANSITION SERVICE

### 4. Summary of Main Findings: STRENGTHS

- 4.1 The findings, since the recent appointment of the Transitions Co-ordinators are summarised below:
- ❑ Transition Co-ordinators, in the relatively short time they have been in post, have successfully delivered a range of relevant information materials, including posters, leaflets, websites and support materials, that advertise the range of support available to pupils, parents and schools. They are now taking a leading and collaborative role in careers events and are planning to develop a Transitions Service road show.
  - ❑ Most of the Transition Co-ordinators liaise with the regional multi-agency transition forums and are developing a clear view on how the transition process can be improved.
  - ❑ Significant progress has been made by ELBs in sharing information on statemented pupils with other agencies to support effective transition planning. Further good practice is evident in this area, with Transition Co-ordinators developing transition packs that guide the pupils through the transition process. The ELBs' officers and Transition Co-ordinators are successfully overcoming the previous reluctance to share information between government departments and service agencies.
  - ❑ Nearly all those involved in the Transition Service noted that special schools have developed highly effective transition planning processes and require ongoing specific support. A clear view emerged that support is strongly needed for pupils with special educational needs in mainstream schools and units.

- ❑ In most ELBs, Transition Co-ordinators have developed effective links with course co-ordinators within the regional colleges of further education.
- ❑ Most of the ELBs' Transition Services have begun to compile databases to enable co-ordinators to identify gaps in provision for the wide range of statemented pupils.

## **5. Summary of Main Findings: AREAS FOR DEVELOPMENT**

- 5.1 The main areas for development in the work of the Transition Co-ordinators relates to the need to:
- ❑ consolidate the work begun to support pupils to transition successfully and ensure parental confidence;
  - ❑ work as a team across the ELBs, to share practices and agree best standards;
  - ❑ facilitate schools to work better with adult services and colleges of further education; and
  - ❑ work with the wider Transition Service, to enable common issues to be addressed, and to inform the strategic development and management of the service.

## 6. Overall Conclusion

- 6.1 The Transition Service is developing well and has established a positive working ethic and approach, which is supporting the well-established transitions provision in the special schools. The Transition Service should provide an annual report that provides an evaluation of progress and informs the overseeing management in determining appropriate levels of funding. In addition, the Transition Co-ordinators should develop further their leadership capacity and progress the work of the multi-transitions forum to promote a common regional approach to transition.
- 6.2 Recommendations are identified below for attention by the schools, the ELBs and DE. Special schools should:
- ❑ develop further their links with local learning communities, and voluntary and statutory groups, to promote further the social inclusion of their pupils;
  - ❑ consider, in consultation with the Transition Co-ordinators, more effective ways of sharing information and disseminating good practice;
  - ❑ take forward the issue of course planning with colleges of further education; and
  - ❑ focus on the strategies which might help to prepare the leavers to use transport and gain greater access to the facilities in the wider community.
- 6.3 The Transition Co-ordinators should:
- ❑ develop further their capacity to work as a unitary service across the ELBs to promote consistency of practice, identify benchmarks of good practice, and ensure stronger collaborative working across the health and education sectors.

6.4 The DE and the ELBs should, in collaboration with health and careers services:

- ❑ develop a common system to track pupils from transition into their post-school placements; and
- ❑ agree a means to address the lack of cohesion across health and education providers through building on local forums.

6.5 This review finds that the transition arrangements and provision for school leavers across the special schools are of a good standard. It is commendable that the schools have done much to achieve an appropriate curriculum to give the pupils the skills and knowledge to face their post-school environment with confidence and to contribute to its development. With continued support and the further development of the Transition Service, and additional strategic development to facilitate improved liaison with the further education and training sectors, the provision for special school leavers can continue to improve.





## LIST OF PARTICIPATING SCHOOLS

Castle Tower School, Ballymena  
Ceara School, Lurgan  
Clifton Special School, Bangor  
Donard Special School, Banbridge  
Killard House Special School, Newtownards  
Park School, Belfast  
Rosstulla School, Newtownabbey  
Sperrinview Special School, Dungannon  
Thornfield House School and Outreach Services, Newtownabbey







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