



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Research and Information Service Briefing Paper

30 July 2014

NIAR 384-2014

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Transition Planning in Northern Ireland

1 Introduction

This paper has been written for the Committee for Employment and Learning as part of its inquiry into post Special Educational Need provision in education, employment and training for those with Learning Disabilities (LD).

It forms part of a series of research papers on transition planning. It is intended as a companion piece to NIAR 359-2014 on transition planning in Great Britain and NIAR 385-2014 on transition planning in the Republic of Ireland.

The paper provides an overview of transition planning services provided to young people with learning disabilities as they move from children's services to adult services in Northern Ireland (NI). It outlines the relevant legislation and strategies and examines current policy developments that may impact the transition planning process in NI. It also highlights a number of transition planning projects operated by local voluntary organisations.

2 Overview of Legislative and Policy Context

There has been much development in policy and provision over the past decade with the introduction of a number of initiatives aimed at improving transition outcomes for disabled young people in the education and health and social services sector.

It is important to state at the outset that the age at which young people with learning disabilities make the transition to adult services in Northern Ireland varies according to the service. Essentially, this means that young people may have to go through two (or more) separate transition processes.

A key transition for young people with learning disabilities is the transition from post-primary school. While many pupils tend to leave school at the age of sixteen when compulsory education ends, some disabled children who have a statement of SEN may remain in formal education until the age of nineteen.¹

However, those young people who have significant health and social care needs will also experience a transition from child to adult services. Transition to adult social services usually takes place at eighteen, although the age at which young people are no longer eligible for a service may vary from service to service.²

The age for transition within health services also varies which may add a further degree of complexity to the transition process. There is no agreed standard upper age limit that young people can access children's services before moving into adult services. In 2005, a Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety (DHSSPS) report highlighted ambiguities about the age at which young people should access adult services and expressed concern about the lack of clear transitional arrangements within hospitals.³ For example children may transfer to adult wards in acute hospitals at fourteen; they may transfer from community children's nursing between sixteen and eighteen years and they may no longer qualify for children's respite services at sixteen years of age.⁴

The potential complexity caused by the fact that children and young people with disabilities may have to navigate dual transitions from school to further education, training or employment and from child to adult health and social care services was

¹ OFMDFM *Report of the Promoting Social Inclusion Working Group on Disability* (2009) p.65

http://www.ofmdfmi.gov.uk/report_of_the_promoting_social_inclusion_working_group_on_disability_pdf_1.38mb_.pdf

Education and Library Boards (ELBs) remain responsible for pupils with a statement of SEN until the end of the term during which they reach nineteen. Leaving at the age of nineteen is not unusual in special schools for pupils with severe learning difficulties, while in other special schools pupils tend to leave at the age of sixteen when compulsory education ends.

² Lundy, Laura; Byrne, Bronagh and McKeown, Paschal *Review of Transitions to Adult Services for Young People with Learning Disabilities* (2012) p.20 http://www.niccy.org/uploaded_docs/2012/Publications/NICCY%20Transitions%20Report%20-%20final%20Sept%202012.pdf

³ DHSSPS *Care at its Best: Overview Report of the Multidisciplinary Regional Inspection of the Service for Disabled Children in Hospital* (2005) p.44 <http://www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/care-main-report.pdf>

⁴ Lundy, Laura; Byrne, Bronagh and McKeown, Paschal *Review of Transitions to Adult Services for Young People with Learning Disabilities* (2012) p.48 http://www.niccy.org/uploaded_docs/2012/Publications/NICCY%20Transitions%20Report%20-%20final%20Sept%202012.pdf

recently articulated in a report to the Northern Ireland Commissioner for Children and Young People:⁵

There is a need for an integrated planning service between education and health and social care. While there have been efforts to improve communication and co-operation between education and health and social care, there are, in effect, two separate planning and delivery processes for transition which often occur at different points in time in a young person's life.

In her 2013 study, Dr Berni Kelly concluded that both of these transitions need to be simultaneously addressed to support a coherent and co-ordinated transition experience for young learning disabled people and their families.⁶

2.1 Education

It should be noted that the current statutory requirements in relation to educational transitions for children with learning disabilities in Northern Ireland depend largely on whether the child has a statement of special educational need (SEN).⁷ The statutory duty to plan for transition is currently only available to young people who have a statement of SEN. Therefore, if a child does not have a statement, there is no statutory obligation to prepare a transition plan.⁸

Some concern has been expressed about this lack of statutory provision for children with a learning disability who do not have a statement of SEN. In a report to the Northern Ireland Commissioner for Children and Young People, the authors noted that:⁹

A key gap from a legal perspective is the fact that the statutory duty to plan for transition is currently only available to young people who have statements of special educational need.

They recommended that the statutory obligation to provide assistance with transition planning should be extended to all young people with learning disabilities and not just

⁵ Lundy, Laura; Byrne, Bronagh and McKeown, Paschal *Review of Transitions to Adult Services for Young People with Learning Disabilities* (2012) p.7 http://www.niccy.org/uploaded_docs/2012/Publications/NICCY%20Transitions%20Report%20-%20final%20Sept%202012.pdf

⁶ Kelly, Berni *Don't Box Me In: Disability, Identity and Transitions to Young Adult Life: Executive Summary* (2013) p.6 http://www.gub.ac.uk/schools/media/Media_413500_en.pdf

⁷ Lundy, Laura; Byrne, Bronagh and McKeown, Paschal *Review of Transitions to Adult Services for Young People with Learning Disabilities* (2012) p.24 http://www.niccy.org/uploaded_docs/2012/Publications/NICCY%20Transitions%20Report%20-%20final%20Sept%202012.pdf

⁸ The Promoting Social Inclusion (PSI) Working Group on Disability have suggested that young people with a learning disability who fall outside the statementing process and therefore do not have access to the services of a Transition Officer have to rely on the support of the Careers Service to provide them with appropriate advice and guidance on their post-school options. OFMDFM *Report of the Promoting Social Inclusion Working Group on Disability* (2009) p.69 http://www.ofmdfm.gov.uk/report_of_the_promoting_social_inclusion_working_group_on_disability_pdf_1.38mb.pdf

⁹ Lundy, Laura; Byrne, Bronagh and McKeown, Paschal *Review of Transitions to Adult Services for Young People with Learning Disabilities* (2012) p.63 http://www.niccy.org/uploaded_docs/2012/Publications/NICCY%20Transitions%20Report%20-%20final%20Sept%202012.pdf

those with statements.¹⁰ The Promoting Social Inclusion (PSI) Work Group on Disability have also called for information about transition procedures, services and opportunities to be made available to all young people with disabilities, including those who fall outside the statementing process.¹¹

In Northern Ireland, the transition planning process is guided by the Education (Northern Ireland) Order 1996¹² (as amended by the Special Educational Needs and Disability (Northern Ireland) Order 2005¹³) and the Education (Special Educational Needs) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2005¹⁴.

Statutory guidance about the transition process for statemented children is contained in the *Code of Practice on the Identification and Assessment of Special Educational Needs* and a supplement to the Code of Practice issued in 2005.¹⁵ The Code of Practice provides practical guidance on the annual review of the SEN statement and the preparation of a transition plan.

Schools and Education and Library Boards (ELBs) have a key role in managing this transition process and their duties are detailed in paragraph six of the Code of Practice.¹⁶ In accordance with the Code of Practice, the school is required to prepare a formal transition plan at the first (and every subsequent) annual review of the statement of SEN after the pupil has attained the age of fourteen. The Code states that:¹⁷

The first annual review after the young person's 14th birthday should involve the agencies who will play a major role during the post-school years.

These include representatives of the health and social services authority, the Careers Service, in addition to the child's parents, a relevant teacher and a representative of the ELB who are required to attend all annual review meetings.

The Code of Practice also addresses the issue of pupils who may have special educational needs, but do not have a statement of SEN. It suggests that ELBs and schools should seek to provide appropriate help and guidance to these pupils and may

¹⁰ Lundy, Laura; Byrne, Bronagh and McKeown, Paschal *Review of Transitions to Adult Services for Young People with Learning Disabilities* (2012) p.8

http://www.niccy.org/uploaded_docs/2012/Publications/NICCY%20Transitions%20Report%20-%20final%20Sept%202012.pdf

¹¹ OFMDFM *Report of the Promoting Social Inclusion Working Group on Disability* (2009) p.71

http://www.ofmdfmi.gov.uk/report_of_the_promoting_social_inclusion_working_group_on_disability_pdf_1.38mb_.pdf

¹² <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/nisi/1996/274/contents/made>

¹³ <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/nisi/2005/1117/contents>

¹⁴ <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/nisr/2005/384/contents/made>

¹⁵ DE *Code of Practice on the Identification and Assessment of Special Educational Needs* (1998)

http://www.deni.gov.uk/the_code_of_practice.pdf

DE *Supplement to the Code of Practice on the Identification and Assessment of Special Educational Needs* (2005)

<http://www.deni.gov.uk/supplement.pdf>

¹⁶ It is the responsibility of the ELB to initiate the annual review meeting by formally requesting the principal in writing to convene a review meeting and prepare a review report. DE *Code of Practice on the Identification and Assessment of Special Educational Needs* (1998) p.58 http://www.deni.gov.uk/the_code_of_practice.pdf

¹⁷ DE *Code of Practice on the Identification and Assessment of Special Educational Needs* (1998) p.63

http://www.deni.gov.uk/the_code_of_practice.pdf

wish to prepare their own transition plans for non-statemented students with special educational needs.¹⁸ However, there is no legal obligation on the ELB or school to do so.

Notes of Guidance on the Annual Review for Children with SEN issued by the 5 Board Working Group (amended in 2009 to include more detailed information on transition planning and the role of the Education Transitions Co-ordinators) provides further information and sample documentation to schools and principals on the annual review of the statement of SEN and the transition planning process.¹⁹

Acting on a recommendation from the Transitions Inter-Departmental Working Group, the Department of Education provided funding for the appointment of two Transitions Co-ordinators in each ELB to provide an effective transition service for pupils with statements of SEN.²⁰

The role of the Education Transition Co-ordinator is to support parents and children throughout the transition process and facilitate a co-ordinated approach with other statutory agencies to transition planning. The Transition Co-ordinator works closely with colleagues in the Careers Service, health and social services, colleges, training providers and community-based organisations to assist the ongoing education and social inclusion of young people and to pursue appropriate post-school opportunities.²¹

The ELBs' Transition Service, funded by the Department of Education, also serves to help young people with SEN to access the appropriate information, guidance and support to allow them to make informed choices for the future.

The stated aims of the Transition Service include:²²

- To strengthen the mechanism of the transition planning process in schools;
- To work closely with young people with statements of SEN from the age of fourteen to ensure a smooth transition from school to post school destinations;
- To work in partnership with Northern Ireland Careers Service and Health and Social Services Transition Officers; and
- To work in partnership with voluntary agencies.

¹⁸ DE *Code of Practice on the Identification and Assessment of Special Educational Needs* (1998) pp.67-68
http://www.deni.gov.uk/the_code_of_practice.pdf

¹⁹ 5 Board *Annual Review Notes of Guidance for Children with Special Educational Needs* (2009)
<http://www.selb.org/specialeducation/Documents/ARNotesGuidanceSep2009.doc>

The 5 Board Working Group was set up in February 2004. It included personnel from the special education section of each ELB; a Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator; representatives from the Department of Education, and a number of principals of special schools across the five ELBs.

²⁰ Since 2005, the Department of Education had provided the ELBs with almost £5m to improve the transition planning process through the appointment of ten Education Transitions Co-ordinators and for appropriate life skills training for independent living. DEL *Transitions paper* (Presented to the Inter-Departmental Ministerial Group on Mental Health and Learning Disability November 2013).

²¹ 5 Board *Annual Review Notes of Guidance for Children with Special Educational Needs* (2009) p.10
<http://www.selb.org/specialeducation/Documents/ARNotesGuidanceSep2009.doc>

²² 5 Board *Newsletter for Education Transition Service* (Issue 4, 2011) <http://www.education-support.org.uk/EasysiteWeb/getresource.axd?AssetID=7593&type=full&servicetype=Attachment>

The Transition Service provides practical support to pupils by:²³

- Offering assistance with the completion of student finance applications;
- Organising transition visits to day opportunity and training facilities;
- Running information events throughout the academic year for parents and students; and
- Providing training to Special Educational Needs Co-ordinators, teachers and classroom assistants.

2.2 Health

Young people with a learning disability who have health care needs may also experience significant changes as they make the transition from paediatric to adult services. The issue of health transitions for young people with learning disabilities was considered by the Bamford Review of Mental Health and Learning Disability.²⁴ The development of multi-disciplinary, multi-agency approaches to transition was a priority for action in both the 2009-2011 and 2012-2015 Bamford action plans.²⁵

In the *Equal Lives* review of policy and services for people with a learning disability the authors stated that:²⁶

Transitions planning should begin at 14 years of age and if required appropriate transitions support available until 25 years.

The transition planning obligations of the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety (DHSSPS), as set out in Standard 14 of the *Service Framework for Learning Disability*, established a narrower timeframe than that recommended in *Equal Lives*.²⁷

²³ Response from the Southern Education and Library Board (SELB) and Western Education and Library Board (WELB) to the Committee of Inquiry into Post Special Educational Need Provision in Education, Employment and Training for those with Learning Disabilities in Northern Ireland (2014) p.1 <http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/Documents/Employment-and-Learning/inquiries/post-sen/written-submissions/SELB-and-WELB.pdf>

²⁴ This was a wide-ranging, independent review of the law, policy and service provision affecting people with a mental health problem or a learning disability. <http://www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/bamford.htm>

²⁵ The 2009-2011 action plan called on the Department of Education, the Education and Library Boards, the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety and the Health and Social Care Board to develop "a shared Transitions Plan between education and health and social care sectors. Multi agency planning to facilitate improved planning and delivery at local level". DHSSPS *Delivering the Bamford Vision: the Response of Northern Ireland Executive to the Bamford Review of Mental Health and Learning Disability Action Plan 2009-2011* (2009) p.131 http://www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/bamford_action_plan_2009-2011.pdf

The 2012-2015 plan also committed the departments and their agencies to the development of "a Transitions plan tailored to meet the needs of the young person. Collaborative working and multi-agency planning to facilitate improved planning and delivery at local level". DHSSPS *Delivering the Bamford Vision: the Response of Northern Ireland Executive to the Bamford Review of Mental Health and Learning Disability Action Plan 2012-2015* (2012) p.55 <http://www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/2012-2015-bamford-action-plan.pdf>

²⁶ DHSSPS *Equal Lives: Review of Policy and Services for People with a Learning Disability in Northern Ireland* (2005) p.53 <http://www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/equallivesreport.pdf>

²⁷ The standards set out in the *Service Framework for Learning Disability* apply to children, young people and adults with a learning disability, and are not confined to those who have a statement of SEN. DHSSPS *Service Framework for Learning Disability* (2013) p.10 http://www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/learning_disability_service_framework_june_2013.pdf

Young people with a learning disability should have a transition plan in place before their 15th birthday and arrangements made for their transition to adulthood by their 18th birthday.

The Framework went on to state that:²⁸

These arrangements should be made in partnership with the young person, their family/carers and adult learning disability services for transition to appropriate adult services in accordance with agreed transition protocols.

In a recent written submission to Committee 'Inquiry into post Special Educational Need Provision in education, employment and training for those with Learning Disabilities in Northern Ireland', the Minister for Health, Social Services and Public Safety further outlined the current transition arrangements that exist in the health and social care sector:²⁹

To assist young people with learning disabilities during transition from childhood to adult services, each of the Health and Social Care Trusts has designated individuals/teams. As part of their role, these teams or individual co-ordinators collaborate with other Departments and Agencies, allied health professionals and the voluntary and community sector, to provide transition plans for young disabled people who are making the move from children's services into adult services and transitioning from full-time education...In the HSC transitions planning commences from age 14.

However, the transition into adult services can often be fragmented due to a lack of continuity in the move between these different services within the health and social care sector. In an effort to institute a more effective transition process, a Regional Interagency Transitions Group was established under the auspices of the Health and Social Care Board, to address the transition issues for young people with complex health care needs (including learning disabilities). The Group was assembled to coordinate the management of transition to adult services with a view to ensuring that services are provided in line with the following overarching standard:³⁰

Every child and family should have an agreed transfer plan to adult services in both acute hospital and community services, and no loss of needed service should be experienced as a result of the transfer.

²⁸ DHSSPS *Service Framework for Learning Disability* (2013) p.79

http://www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/learning_disability_service_framework_june_2013.pdf

²⁹ DHSSPS *DHSSPS Written Response to the Committee for Employment and Learning's Inquiry into Post Special Educational Need Provision in education, employment and training for those with Learning Disabilities in Northern Ireland* (2014) p.4
<http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/Documents/Employment-and-Learning/inquiries/post-sen/written-submissions/Minister-for-HSPSS.pdf>

³⁰ DHSSPS *Physical and Sensory Disability Strategy and Action Plan 2012-2015* (2012) pp.63-64
http://www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/disability_strategy_and_action_plan_-_2012-2015.pdf

Some of the key activities of the Regional Interagency Transitions Group included:³¹

- Commissioning and implementing a Regional Integrated Care Pathway for Transition to overcome many of the inefficiencies, duplication and communication failures in existing provision;
- Encouraging formation of multi-agency transition groups at Health and Social Care Trust level and ensuring meaningful participation from professionals and young people/families; and
- Developing an education/training module for professionals working with young people (especially managing complex technical equipment etc.).

In a report by Dr Berni Kelly, it found that the four Health and Social Care Trusts (HSCTs) involved in the study had developed their own transition arrangements.³² In addition, despite the recommendations of the Inter-Departmental Working Group on Transitions, the study found that not all the HSCTs had appointed a designated Transition Co-ordinator.³³ However, even for those HSCTs with Transition Co-ordinators, the report questioned the value of their contribution:³⁴

Their roles varied and, although they often undertook person-centred transition planning, their involvement did not extend into young adult life or have a direct impact on the provision of adult services.

2.3 Inter-Departmental Transition Planning Initiatives

A widely acknowledged and recurring issue in transition planning in Northern Ireland is the need for an integrated planning approach between education and health and social services. The recent report to the Northern Ireland Commissioner for Children and Young People acknowledged that efforts had been made to improve communication and joint-working between education and health and social care authorities. However, given that there are, in effect, two separate planning and delivery processes for transition which often occur at different points in time in a young person's life, significant problems in coordinating the two systems remain.

³¹ DHSSPS *Physical and Sensory Disability Strategy and Action Plan 2012-2015* (2012) pp.63-64
http://www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/disability_strategy_and_action_plan_-_2012-2015.pdf

³² Kelly, Berni *Don't Box Me In: Disability, Identity and Transitions to Young Adult Life: Executive Summary* (2013) p.6
http://www.gub.ac.uk/schools/media/Media_413500.en.pdf

³³ DEL, DE & DHSSPS *Report of the Transitions Inter-Departmental Working Group* (2006) p.11
<http://www.deni.gov.uk/transitions.pdf>

In the 2012 NICCY report, the authors noted that, while it was not possible to confirm actual numbers, it appeared that at least two HSCTs did not have a dedicated Transition Officer. They also called for equality of access to Transition Officers across the five HSCTs. Lundy, Laura; Byrne, Bronagh and McKeown, Paschal *Review of Transitions to Adult Services for Young People with Learning Disabilities* (2012) p.26

http://www.niccy.org/uploaded_docs/2012/Publications/NICCY%20Transitions%20Report%20-%20final%20Sept%202012.pdf

³⁴ Kelly, Berni *Don't Box Me In: Disability, Identity and Transitions to Young Adult Life: Executive Summary* (2013) p.6
http://www.gub.ac.uk/schools/media/Media_413500.en.pdf

At a strategic and operational level, efforts have been made to ensure that a more collaborative, consistent and joined-up approach to transition planning is adopted throughout Northern Ireland. A number of these inter-departmental initiatives are outlined below.

2.3.1 Bamford Inter-Departmental Ministerial Group on Mental Health and Learning Disability

The topic of transition planning for young people with severe learning disabilities was recently raised at the Inter-Departmental Ministerial Group on Mental Health and Learning Disability.

At the November 2013 meeting of the group, the Minister for Employment and Learning presented a paper outlining the key roles of the Department for Employment and Learning (DEL), together with other departments, in delivering support for young people with severe learning disabilities.³⁵ After this meeting, it was confirmed that Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister would facilitate a discussion across departments to further examine the topic of transitions and post 19 provision for people with a learning disability.³⁶

A subsequent meeting, chaired by the DEL, took place on 27 February 2014. At the meeting DEL advised that it would, with the assistance of the other departments, draft a second paper on the topic of transitions which would clarify roles and identify current gaps in provision and opportunities.³⁷

In his written submission to the Committee Inquiry, the Minister for Employment and Learning revealed that further meetings of this transitions group were due to take place to discuss and finalise the paper before it was presented at the next Ministerial Group meeting planned in May 2014.³⁸ In correspondence received from the DEL, it was confirmed that a progress paper was presented to the Inter-Departmental Ministerial Group on Mental Health and Learning Disability in May 2014.³⁹ The response further reveals that a group of officials from the relevant government departments, tasked with clarifying the roles of all key departments, identifying gaps in provision and opportunities for improvement, intend to present a paper on its findings to the Ministerial Group in advance of its next scheduled meeting in November 2014.⁴⁰

³⁵ Correspondence received from the Department for Employment and Learning (29 July 2014).

³⁶ OFMdfM submission to the Committee for Employment and Learning's Inquiry into Post Special Educational Need Provision in Education, Employment and Training for People with Learning Disabilities in Northern Ireland (2014) p.4 <http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/Documents/Employment-and-Learning/inquiries/post-sen/written-submissions/OFMDFM.pdf>

³⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁸ Minister for Employment and Learning submission to the Committee for Employment and Learning's Inquiry into Post Special Educational Need Provision in Education, Employment and Training for People with Learning Disabilities in Northern Ireland (2014) <http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/Documents/Employment-and-Learning/inquiries/post-sen/written-submissions/Minister-for-Employment-and-Learning.pdf>

³⁹ Correspondence received from the Department for Employment and Learning (29 July 2014).

⁴⁰ Correspondence received from the Department for Employment and Learning (29 July 2014).

2.3.2 CYPSP Transition to Adulthood for Young People with Disabilities Sub Group

The Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership (CYPSP) was established in January 2011. It is a cross-sectoral, strategic partnership, which consists of representatives of many of the key agencies who deliver services for and have responsibility for improving outcomes for all children and young people in Northern Ireland. It brings these key statutory bodies together with voluntary and community organisations which aim to improve the lives of children and young people in Northern Ireland.

The CYPSP oversees a number of subgroups established to take forward integrated planning on a Northern Ireland wide basis, including the Transition to Adulthood for Young People with Disabilities Sub Group (commonly referred to as the Transition Sub Group).⁴¹ The CYPSP Transition Sub Group is responsible for drawing up a plan for integrated commissioning of supports and services for young people with disabilities to improve their outcomes as they transition into adulthood.⁴² In 2012, the Sub Group published a draft action plan for 2011-2014 which outlines the priorities that need to be taken forward to deliver the six high level outcomes for young people with disabilities as they transition into adulthood.⁴³ The six outcomes identified by the Sub Group are:⁴⁴

- Healthy;
- Enjoying, Learning and Achieving;
- Living in Safety and with Stability;
- Experiencing Economic and Environmental Wellbeing;
- Contributing Positively to Community and Society; and
- Living in a Society which Respects their Rights.

The action plan highlighted the importance of early transition planning and the need for continued access to services as children move into adult services.⁴⁵ It also recommended the development of passports in order to improve the experience of transition to adult services for disabled young people and their families.⁴⁶

⁴¹ Membership of the sub group includes Department for Employment and Learning, the Education and Library Boards, the Health and Social Care Trusts, the PSNI, the Public Health Agency, voluntary organisations and the Disabled Children and Young People's Participation Project (Barnardos).

⁴² The focus of the Sub Group is children and young people who have a physical, sensory or learning disability or prolonged illness or condition. DHSSPS *DHSSPS Written Response to the Committee for Employment and Learning's Inquiry into Post Special Educational Need Provision in education, employment and training for those with Learning Disabilities in Northern Ireland* (2014) p.4 <http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/Documents/Employment-and-Learning/inquiries/post-sen/written-submissions/Minister-for-HSPSS.pdf>

⁴³ CYPSP Regional Sub Group Transition to Adulthood of Young People with Disabilities *Northern Ireland Children and Young People's Plan 2011-2014* (2013) http://www.cypsp.org/publications/subgroups/transition/CYPSP_Transition_Action_Plan_2011-2014.pdf

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴⁵ The action plan stresses the importance of early intervention, and reiterates the importance of young people having access to a transition worker from as early as fourteen years if age. CYPSP Regional Sub Group Transition to Adulthood of Young People with Disabilities *Northern Ireland Children and Young People's Plan 2011-2014* (2013) p.6 http://www.cypsp.org/publications/subgroups/transition/CYPSP_Transition_Action_Plan_2011-2014.pdf

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

These will be comprehensive, not a medical record, involve all relevant organisations, and follow the young person throughout their lives. They will be closely linked to their integrated plan to ensure continuity, accuracy, safety and efficiency when accessing supports and services based on their needs. These will help reduce the need for retelling of information at the transitions stage.

The Sub Group also called for an integrated cross-departmental commissioning statement in order to standardise the transition process across Northern Ireland and ensure that all young people receive equal and consistent standards of support during this period.⁴⁷

2.3.3 Special Educational Needs Sub Group of the Ministerial Sub Committee on Children and Young People

An inter-departmental action plan on transition was to be ‘considered and developed’ under the auspices of the Special Educational Needs Sub Group of the Ministerial Sub Committee on Children and Young People by May 2009. The Committee had identified six key priorities on which to focus and established cross departmental sub groups to take these forward, one of which directly related to transition planning:⁴⁸

Provision for children with special educational needs in mainstream and special schools, including transitions to adulthood and the provision of appropriate health and social care interventions.

The Special Educational Needs Sub Group was chaired by the Department of Education and included representatives from the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety and the Department for Employment and Learning as well as the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister, the Department for Social Development, the Department of Justice and the Youth Justice Agency. In his response to an Assembly Question in 2011, the Minister of Education referred to an action plan produced by the Sub Group which had been approved by the Ministerial Sub Committee on Children and Young People.⁴⁹ However, this action plan has not been published to date.⁵⁰

2.3.4 Promoting Social Inclusion (PSI) Working Group on Disability

Another inter-departmental and cross-sector initiative, the Promoting Social Inclusion (PSI) Working Group on Disability, commissioned a survey of disabled people in order

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

⁴⁸ OFMDFM *Report of the Promoting Social Inclusion Working Group on Disability* (2009) p.22

http://www.ofmdfmi.gov.uk/report_of_the_promoting_social_inclusion_working_group_on_disability_pdf_1.38mb_.pdf

⁴⁹ Oral Assembly Question AQO 640/11-15 (13 October 2011)

⁵⁰ Lundy, Laura; Byrne, Bronagh and McKeown, Paschal *Review of Transitions to Adult Services for Young People with Learning Disabilities* (2012) pp.62-63

http://www.niccy.org/uploaded_docs/2012/Publications/NICCY%20Transitions%20Report%20-%20final%20Sept%202012.pdf

to identify core priorities for future policy development in Northern Ireland.⁵¹ One of the stated goals of the PSI Working Group on Disability was:⁵²

...that every disabled young person should lead a confident, enriched life and be given the appropriate supports to make a seamless transition to a fulfilled adult life in which they can participate socially, politically, culturally and economically.

In its report, published in 2009, the Working Group commented on the breadth of changes that a young person experiences during the period of transition:⁵³

For disabled young people, these changes are exacerbated by difficulties in making the transition between differing benefit entitlements, changing from paediatric to adult health services, experiencing greater susceptibility to social exclusion and difficulties in acquiring a package of services tailored to their individual needs.

They also made a number of recommendations for young people with disabilities, including the development of co-ordinated educational, social and recreational services at transition to adult life.⁵⁴ In their recommendations they called for the development of a strategic plan on transitions, which sets out:⁵⁵

A comprehensive, person-centred transitions process for all young people with disabilities, which has a focus on early intervention and employability.

They also recommended the development of measures for monitoring transitions to ensure the equity, quality and consistency of services across Northern Ireland.⁵⁶

2.3.5 Inter-Departmental Working (IDG) Group on Transitions

In 2002, a government inter-departmental group comprising of the Department of Education, the Department for Employment and Learning and the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety was set up to take forward strategic developments in the transition process for young people with SEN as they moved from school to college and from school or college to employment, training or social care settings.

⁵¹ In 2003, the PSI Working Group on Disability was established by the Office of the First and deputy First Minister. They were tasked with identifying the main barriers to participation experienced by people with disabilities and making recommendations on how these could be removed. The PSI Working Group on Disability was made up of representatives from various disability organisations, the Equality, Children's and Human Rights Commissions as well as officials from Government Departments.

⁵² OFMDFM *Report of the Promoting Social Inclusion Working Group on Disability* (2009) p.11

http://www.ofmdfmi.gov.uk/report_of_the_promoting_social_inclusion_working_group_on_disability_pdf_1.38mb_.pdf

⁵³ OFMDFM *Report of the Promoting Social Inclusion Working Group on Disability* (2009) p.64

http://www.ofmdfmi.gov.uk/report_of_the_promoting_social_inclusion_working_group_on_disability_pdf_1.38mb_.pdf

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

The group published their report in 2006.⁵⁷ The report highlighted deficits in transition planning and provided an action plan to make improvements across the spectrum of service provision. The IDG outlined some key actions required to improve liaison and inter-agency working:⁵⁸

- A co-ordinated monitoring system for the Education and Library Boards transitions service;
- A clear referral and liaison process between DEL's Careers Service and the Disablement Advisory Service; and
- The ELBs should develop an information leaflet for both pupils to ensure that they are aware of the support available from the Education Transitions Co-ordinators and how this links with advice and support from other statutory agencies, voluntary groups and Health and Social Services Trusts.

2.4 Current Policy Developments

2.4.1 Review of Special Educational Needs and Inclusion (Department of Education)

As part of the new SEN Framework being developed by the Department of Education in the course of this review, a revised statutory SEN Code of Practice will be published for public consultation. The Minister of Education has stated that the forthcoming Code of Practice:⁵⁹

...will aim to enhance further the existing arrangements for transition planning for all children with SEN, and ensure that all school leavers and their parents understand the opportunities available and the pathways to these.

Much of the existing statutory provision for transition planning is dependent on the child having a statement of SEN. However, under the proposed reforms of special education, the Department has indicated that statements of need will be set out in the form of Co-ordinated Support Plans (CSPs) and that there will be fewer of these. While the Minister has stated that the current statutory transition arrangements for statemented children will not be weakened or removed⁶⁰, there is some concern that there will be a reduction in provision and in statutory protection for children who, as defined under the new proposals, would no longer have statements of SEN.

⁵⁷ DEL, DE & DHSSPS *Report of the Transitions Inter-Departmental Working Group* (2006) <http://www.deni.gov.uk/transitions.pdf>

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

⁵⁹ DE Letter to the Committee for Employment and Learning in relation to the Inquiry into Post-School Special Educational Needs Provision in Education, Employment and Training for those with Learning Disabilities COR 50/2014 (17 February 2014) <http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/Documents/Employment-and-Learning/inquiries/post-sen/written-submissions/Minister-of-Education.pdf>

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

In the consultation paper, it was proposed that access to the Transition Support Services would be extended to all pupils with SEN, and not just those with a statement of SEN.⁶¹ While the majority of respondents to the consultation supported this extension of transition arrangements, the Department of Education has decided to retain the same non-statutory arrangements for transition planning for non-statemented SEN pupils. The reason given for this decision was a concern about:⁶²

... an increased bureaucratic burden on schools with limited, if any, additional benefits to the pupils.

It is not yet clear how the Review of Special Educational Needs and Inclusion proposals, which are still in development, will ultimately impact on the transitions process for young people with learning disabilities in Northern Ireland.

2.4.2 Review of Current Statutory Transition Arrangements (Education and Training Inspectorate)

The Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) is currently carrying out an evaluation of the current statutory transition arrangements, including post-primary to adult services, in both mainstream and special schools, with a view to identifying what is working well and what requires improvement.⁶³ In his answer to a written Assembly Question in December 2013, the Minister stated that this review would take place in early 2014.⁶⁴ No more information about this review is available currently.

2.4.3 Service Framework for the Health and Wellbeing of Children and Young People (Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety)

In 2010, the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety (DHSSPS) issued Terms of Reference for the development of a *Service Framework for the Health and Wellbeing of Children and Young People*. This Framework would set standards to improve the health and wellbeing of children and young people in Northern Ireland; promote social inclusion; reduce inequalities in health and improve HSC quality of care; and thereby improving population health outcomes across the life course.

The Service Framework was to address six overarching themes, one of which is 'Managing transitions and related care', which included 'Transitions to adult services for

⁶¹ DE *Policy Proposals Consultation Document: Every School a Good School: the Way Forward for Special Educational Needs and Inclusion* (2009) p.66
http://www.deni.gov.uk/every_school_a_good_school_the_way_forward_for_special_educational_needs_sen_and_inclusion_8211_consultation_document_english_pdf_434kb.pdf

⁶² DE *Review of Special Educational Needs (SEN) and Inclusion: Summary of Policy Proposals* (2012)
http://www.deni.gov.uk/summary_of_key_proposals_july_2012.pdf

⁶³ DE *Letter to the Committee for Employment and Learning in relation to the Inquiry into Post-School Special Educational Needs Provision in Education, Employment and Training for those with Learning Disabilities* COR 50/2014 (17 February 2014) <http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/Documents/Employment-and-Learning/inquiries/post-sen/written-submissions/Minister-of-Education.pdf>

⁶⁴ Assembly Question AQW 29021/11-15 (03 December 2013)

disabled children'.⁶⁵ However, no document has yet been forthcoming for public consultation.

2.5 Later Transitions

Much of the policy regarding young people with disabilities and adult life focuses on the post-school transition period to adulthood or adult services in general, with little consideration given to the transitions that may occur at other points in their life.

In their recent submission to the Committee for Employment and Learning, the Association for Real Change (NI) expressed this concern:⁶⁶

Currently there is a statutory process for planning the transition from school for young people with a statement of special educational need, however, there is a misconception that people only "transition" once in their lifetime and in regards to people with learning disability this is considered to be completed upon leaving school. As mentioned above, there are many moments in life when we change jobs, activities, social circumstances etc. and therefore, this current framework is failing to meet continual transitional needs.

Currently, there are no specific statutory obligations to support young people with learning disabilities as they transition from further education into employment. In their report to Northern Ireland Commissioner for Children and Young, the authors recommended that such a statutory obligation be introduced.⁶⁷ Their study found that, in the absence of statutory transition support at the end of further education, young people tended to remain in further education settings for overly long periods of time or fall back into day care services rather than pursuing employment options.⁶⁸ This view is reiterated in the concerns voiced by the voluntary and support organisations working with people with disabilities. In their written submission to the Committee for Employment and Learning, Mencap raised the issue of lack of support for adults with a learning disability making transitions later in life.⁶⁹

⁶⁵ DHSSPS *Service Framework for the Health and Wellbeing of Children and Young People: Terms of Reference* (2010) http://www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/service_framework_for_children_and_young_people_s_health_and_wellbeing_-_terms_of_reference_-_final_version.pdf

⁶⁶ Association for Real Change (Northern Ireland) *Committee for Employment and Learning Inquiry into post Special Educational Need Provision in Education, Employment and Training for those with Learning Disabilities: submission by the Association for Real Change (NI)* (2014) <http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/Documents/Employment-and-Learning/inquiries/post-sen/written-submissions/Association-for-Real-Change-Response.pdf>

⁶⁷ Lundy, Laura; Byrne, Bronagh and McKeown, Paschal *Review of Transitions to Adult Services for Young People with Learning Disabilities* (2012) p.8 http://www.niccy.org/uploaded_docs/2012/Publications/NICCY%20Transitions%20Report%20-%20final%20Sept%202012.pdf

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

⁶⁹ Mencap *Committee for Employment and Learning Inquiry into post Special Educational Need Provision in Education, Employment and Training for those with Learning Disabilities: Mencap in Northern Ireland's submission of evidence* (2014) <http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/Documents/Employment-and-Learning/inquiries/post-sen/written-submissions/Mencap.pdf>

Whilst there is a statutory process for planning the transition from school for young people with a statement of special educational need, there is no parallel duty in relation to leaving college and yet this may be as problematic a transition for young people with a learning disability and the time when they are also vulnerable to being NEET.

Acknowledging that transition is not a one-off event when young adults leave school, Dr Berni Kelly also noted that it is important that policies and transition services should aim to respond to ongoing and changing transitional needs in early adult life of young people with disabilities rather than focusing most transition support services on the point of leaving school.⁷⁰

3 Experiences of Transition Planning

Despite the current statutory provisions and the evolving policy context across the disability, health and social care and education sectors, concerns about services for disabled young people in transition continue to persist. Inspection reports, government reviews, surveys of young people and their families/carers and feedback from voluntary and community organisations provide evidence of gaps, weaknesses and inconsistencies in the current transition arrangements. These reports inevitably lead to concerns about the effectiveness of arrangements to address transitions for young people with learning disabilities.

Issues have been raised about the adequacy and appropriateness of transition planning services for young people with learning disabilities in all areas, including education, social care, health and employment. The quality and availability of transition planning also appears to vary considerably across services and across regions.

In the course of their work, a number of the inter-departmental bodies discussed in Section 2.3 surveyed young people and their families and found that the experiences of young people who had been through the transition process were not entirely positive.

In their 2006 report, the Transitions Inter-Departmental Working Group highlighted a number of issues raised by parents and voluntary bodies in the course of their review. These included:⁷¹

- Uncoordinated approach from statutory agencies or other professionals in providing advice, support, training or care for young adults;
- Lack of advice and information during the transition planning process accompanied by a general unawareness of opportunities and options; and

⁷⁰ Kelly, Berni *Don't Box Me In: Disability, Identity and Transitions to Young Adult Life: Executive Summary* (2013) p.6
<http://www.gub.ac.uk/schools/media/Media,413500,en.pdf>

⁷¹ DE, DEL, DHSSPS *Report of the Transitions Inter-Departmental Working Group* (2006) p.4
<http://www.deni.gov.uk/transitions.pdf>

- Gaps in ‘transition training’ for independent living, i.e. use of public transport, social and life skills.

In the report of the PSI Working Group on Disability, published three years later, they concluded that:⁷²

It is alarming to note that despite effective transition planning being a mandatory requirement, so many young people have unsatisfactory experiences during the move from school towards adulthood.

The Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) has published a number of inspection reports which make reference to the transition planning process in Northern Ireland:

- *A Survey of Provision for School Leavers in Special Schools for Pupils with Moderate Learning Difficulties* (2004)⁷³;
- *Survey of Provision for Students with Learning Difficulties and/or Disabilities (SLDD) in Colleges of Further Education in Northern Ireland* (2004)⁷⁴;
- *An Evaluation of the Transition Arrangements from the Special School Sector to Further Education, Adult and Working Life* (2008)⁷⁵; and
- *An Evaluation of Provision for Learners with Special Educational Needs or Disabilities in Further Education and Training for Success: Report of an Inspection in December 2008-January 2009* (2009)⁷⁶.

The two surveys conducted by the ETI in 2004 highlighted the strengths and weaknesses of the transition planning process for school leavers in special schools and students with learning disabilities in colleges of further education.

This was followed by a third ETI report, published in February 2008, which provided an overview of existing school-based transition arrangements and an evaluation of the work of Transition Co-ordinators.⁷⁷

The report found that:⁷⁸

...the transition arrangements and provision for school leavers in almost all the schools are of good and sometimes excellent standard. The work of the

⁷² OFMDFM *Report of the Promoting Social Inclusion Working Group on Disability* (2009) p.53

http://www.ofmdfmi.gov.uk/report_of_the_promoting_social_inclusion_working_group_on_disability_pdf_1.38mb_.pdf

⁷³ <http://www.etini.gov.uk/a-survey-of-provision-for-school-leavers-in-special-schools-for-pupils-with-moderate-learning-difficulties.pdf>

⁷⁴ <http://www.etini.gov.uk/report-of-a-survey-of-provision-for-students-with-learning-difficulties-and-or-disabilities-in-colleges-of-further-education-in-northern-ireland.pdf>

⁷⁵ <http://www.etini.gov.uk/index/surveys-evaluations/surveys-evaluations-special-education/surveys-evaluations-special-education-2009/an-evaluation-of-the-transition-arrangements-from-the-special-school-sector-to-further-education-adult-and-working-life.pdf>

⁷⁶ <http://dera.ioe.ac.uk/11208/1/an-evaluation-of-provision-for-learners-with-special-educational-needs-or-disabilities-in-further-education-and-training-for-success.pdf>

⁷⁷ Education and Training Inspectorate *An Evaluation of the Transition Arrangements from the Special School Sector to Further Education, Adult and Working Life* (2008) <http://www.etini.gov.uk/index/surveys-evaluations/surveys-evaluations-special-education/surveys-evaluations-special-education-2009/an-evaluation-of-the-transition-arrangements-from-the-special-school-sector-to-further-education-adult-and-working-life.pdf>

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

Transitions 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.

The ETI noted optimistically that:⁷⁹

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.

In January 2009, the ETI carried out another investigation to identify the extent to which learners with a range of special and educational needs are supported during the period of transition and transfer to further education or the Training for Success programme.⁸⁰

On this occasion, the findings were less positive.⁸¹

Most of the organisations visited expressed concerns about the lack of planned, co-ordinated transition arrangements in their localities and the lack of consistency in practice in the role of transition officers.

In addition to identifying the need for improved communication between the transition officers from both health and social care and education services in leading and managing the transition process, the ETI also found geographical inconsistencies in the availability and value of services provided across Northern Ireland.⁸²

However, the ETI did acknowledge that one ELB (unnamed in the report) had undertaken a strategic overview of transition planning in their area. A multi-agency steering group had been established to improve the flow of information between the various agencies in the interests of enabling learners to make the transition most effectively.⁸³

In 2012, the Northern Ireland Commissioner for Children and Young People (NICCY), concerned at the volume of cases relating to transition arrangements for young people with learning disabilities, commissioned a *Review of Transitions to Adult Services for Young People with Learning Disabilities in Northern Ireland*.⁸⁴ The study provided a critical analysis of the transition planning process in the areas of education, training, employment, health and social care.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

⁸⁰ Education and Training Inspectorate *An Evaluation of Provision for Learners with Special Educational Needs or Disabilities in Further Education and Training for Success: Report of an Inspection in December 2008-January 2009* (2009) <http://dera.ioe.ac.uk/11208/1/an-evaluation-of-provision-for-learners-with-special-educational-needs-or-disabilities-in-further-education-and-training-for-success.pdf>

⁸¹ *Ibid.*

⁸² *Ibid.*

⁸³ *Ibid.*

⁸⁴ Lundy, Laura; Byrne, Bronagh and McKeown, Paschal *Review of Transitions to Adult Services for Young People with Learning Disabilities* (2012) p.1 http://www.niccy.org/uploaded_docs/2012/Publications/NICCY%20Transitions%20Report%20-%20final%20Sept%202012.pdf

In her forward to the report, the Northern Ireland Commissioner for Children and Young People was moved to state that:⁸⁵

...the enduring nature of barriers to the full realisation of children's rights in this area requires a fundamental reconsideration of current transition arrangements.

Reflecting the situation observed by other commentators, the NICCY report found evidence of inconsistencies in the availability and adequacy of transition planning, support and post-school options across Education and Library Boards and Health and Social Care Trusts.⁸⁶

...practice varies widely from area to area. While all ELBs have Transition Officers, not all HSCTs do and there continues to be variation in the age at which young people have to leave MLD schools. Moreover, the opportunities available to young people in terms of FE, day care, and health and social care provision vary considerably from area to area, with access difficulties compounded by the lack of suitable transport arrangements, particularly for young people living in rural areas. There is a need for a mapping of existing services across Northern Ireland to identify key gaps in provision and to ensure equality of access to appropriate services.

The report also criticised the lack of person-centred planning and multi-agency cooperation:⁸⁷

Nor is there a statutory obligation on a public body to take young people's views into account in decision making processes. This is compounded by the inadequacy of joint/interagency working between staff in education and health and social care services and between the public and voluntary sectors.

Recent written submissions to the Committee's 'Inquiry into post Special Educational Need provision in education, employment and training for those with Learning Disabilities' have also provided insight into the practical realities of transition planning in Northern Ireland. In the Mencap submission, they highlighted the anxiety felt by young people with a learning disability as they prepare for transition.⁸⁸

Young people with a learning disability and their families continue to tell us about the significant difficulties they experience when they transition from

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

⁸⁶ Lundy, Laura; Byrne, Bronagh and McKeown, Paschal *Review of Transitions to Adult Services for Young People with Learning Disabilities* (2012) p.6
http://www.niccy.org/uploaded_docs/2012/Publications/NICCY%20Transitions%20Report%20-%20final%20Sept%202012.pdf

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸⁸ Mencap Committee for Employment and Learning Inquiry into post Special Educational Need Provision in Education, Employment and Training for those with Learning Disabilities: Mencap in Northern Ireland's submission of evidence (2014) <http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/Documents/Employment-and-Learning/inquiries/post-sen/written-submissions/Mencap.pdf>

school into further education, employment or day opportunities and from children's services to adult services within health and social care services.

Association for Real Change (NI) cited a local school survey carried out in 2012 which revealed that:⁸⁹

...the majority of parents described experiencing a significant level of ambiguity in regards to their rights within the transition planning process.

The Children with Disabilities Strategic Alliance also addressed the perceived shortcomings of existing transition arrangements, calling for:⁹⁰

...an interdepartmental approach to transitional planning, with the development of a commonly agreed operating model of delivery with shared values and principles across all sectors for all disabled children providing a clear and consistent pathway for all.

4 Examples of Transition Planning Projects

There are a variety of small-scale transition support programmes available to young people with disabilities throughout Northern Ireland, largely delivered by voluntary and community organisations. While these projects provide positive support, including work placements and one to one mentoring, they can only serve a small number of the more able students due to limited resources. A recent report reflected this, noting that the uptake of these schemes appears to vary significantly from school to school, college to college and area to area.⁹¹ A number of these projects and initiatives are outlined below.

The work of the Transitions Group in the Southern Regional College, as described in their written submission to the Committee Inquiry, is also highlighted.⁹²

⁸⁹ Association for Real Change (Northern Ireland) *Committee for Employment and Learning Inquiry into post Special Educational Need Provision in Education, Employment and Training for those with Learning Disabilities: submission by the Association for Real Change (NI)* (2014) <http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/Documents/Employment-and-Learning/inquiries/post-sen/written-submissions/Association-for-Real-Change-Response.pdf>

⁹⁰ Children in Northern Ireland (CiNI) and Disability Action (DA) *Children with Disabilities Strategic Alliance: Manifesto* (2012) p.31 <http://www.ci-ni.org.uk/docs/CDSA%20Manifesto%20No%20Cropld.pdf>

⁹¹ Lundy, Laura; Byrne, Bronagh and McKeown, Paschal *Review of Transitions to Adult Services for Young People with Learning Disabilities* (2012) p.34

http://www.niccy.org/uploaded_docs/2012/Publications/NICCY%20Transitions%20Report%20-%20final%20Sept%202012.pdf

In their report, the PSI Working Group on Disability also accepted that, though these partnerships provided examples of good practice, there was no consistent access to such initiatives across Northern Ireland. OFMDFM *Report of the Promoting Social Inclusion Working Group on Disability* (2009) p.46

http://www.ofmdfmi.gov.uk/report_of_the_promoting_social_inclusion_working_group_on_disability_pdf_1.38mb.pdf

⁹² Southern Regional College *Submission to the Committee Inquiry into post Special Educational Need provision in education, employment and training for those with Learning Disabilities* (2014)

<http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/Documents/Employment-and-Learning/inquiries/post-sen/written-submissions/Southern-Regional-College.pdf>

4.1 MENCAP

▪ **Transitions Project**⁹³

Mencap's Transition Project is run by the organisation's regional employment service and is funded by the European Social Fund, the Western Health and Social Care Trust and the Department for Employment and Learning.⁹⁴

Mencap staff work with young people with a learning disability and their families in preparation for leaving school. The young people, who are aged sixteen to nineteen and in their final year of school, are supported to make informed choices and gain information about further education, training and employment options. Each young person is provided with a specifically tailored and individualised programme that helps to identify their own particular skills and abilities alongside any specific training needs.

▪ **Helping Young People enter Education or Employment (HYPE)**⁹⁵

The HYPE project is run by Mencap and funded by Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership (CYPSP) and the North Eastern Education and Library Board (NEELB).

The programme supports fifteen and sixteen year olds with a learning disability who are preparing to leave school. It works within learning support centres in seven mainstream schools in the NEELB region, supporting five young people in each school.⁹⁶

The aim of the project is to better prepare young people with a learning disability to transition into adulthood and progress to employment.

4.2 Cedar Foundation

▪ **Transitions Service**⁹⁷

Cedar's Transitions Service is an early intervention service that assists young people as they move from school to further or higher education, training or employment. The service supports the young person and also provides accurate information to parents and the key professionals involved in order to ensure a smooth transition.

The Cedar Foundation works in partnership with the local Health and Social Care Trusts, and the service is delivered through a dedicated team of Transitions Officers. It

⁹³ <http://www.mencap.org.uk/northern-ireland/what-we-do/employment-services/training-and-employment-services-ni/transitions-services>

⁹⁴ Mencap *Committee for Employment and Learning Inquiry into post Special Educational Need Provision in Education, Employment and Training for those with Learning Disabilities: Mencap in Northern Ireland's submission of evidence* (2014) p.6 <http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/Documents/Employment-and-Learning/inquiries/post-sen/written-submissions/Mencap.pdf>

⁹⁵ Mencap *Committee for Employment and Learning Inquiry into post Special Educational Need Provision in Education, Employment and Training for those with Learning Disabilities: Mencap in Northern Ireland's submission of evidence* (2014) pp.3-4 <http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/Documents/Employment-and-Learning/inquiries/post-sen/written-submissions/Mencap.pdf>

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

⁹⁷ <http://www.cedar-foundation.org/find-a-service/kids-and-teens/professionals/transitions-service/>

is offered as a two year programme, guided by the principles of person-centred and multi-agency planning.⁹⁸

▪ **Building Prospects on Employment (August 2011-July 2013)**⁹⁹

The Cedar Foundation was one of three European partners in a two-year Leonardo da Vinci partnership project called 'Building Prospects on Employment'.

The aim of the 'Building Prospects on Employment' project was to improve the quality of the transition process from school to work in order to provide young people with a learning disability better opportunities of finding and keeping a job.

The main objective of the project was to develop a manual, based on shared best practice and expertise, to enhance the transition process from school to work for young people with a learning disability. The final version of this manual is available at:

<http://www.cedar-foundation.org/fs/doc/publications/building-prospects-on-employment-manual-final-version-09-2013.pdf>

4.3 NOW Project

▪ **Transitions Service**¹⁰⁰

NOW provides an person-centred service to young people aged fourteen to nineteen with a learning disability. The Transition team works with students in their final years of school, supporting them to explore future options and gain independence through training, mentoring and sampling work placements.

▪ **Project Workforce**¹⁰¹

NOW was the lead partner, together with Stepping Stones NI, in a three-year supported employment, training and transition project, known as 'Project Workforce'. It was funded by the European Social Fund (ESF) and by the Belfast Health and Social Care Trust and the Disablement Advisory Service (part of the Department for Employment and Learning). It focused on people with learning disabilities in the north and west Belfast and Lisburn areas.¹⁰²

Project Workforce offered people with learning disabilities, aged fourteen to sixty-five, a progression route from school to training, and, ultimately, onto employment or voluntary work. The transition service element of the project was designed to provide young

⁹⁸ 5 Board Newsletter for Education Transition Service (Issue 4, 2011) p.2 <http://www.education-support.org.uk/EasysiteWeb/getresource.axd?AssetID=7593&type=full&servicetype=Attachment>

⁹⁹ <http://www.cedar-foundation.org/about-us/european-partnerships/building-prospects-on-employment/>

¹⁰⁰ NOW Project Transition Service (2013)

<http://www.nowproject.co.uk/sites/default/files/NOW%20SERVICES%202013%20%28Page%2004%29%20TRANSITION.pdf>

¹⁰¹ NOW Project Workforce 2008-2011(2012)

http://www.nowproject.co.uk/sites/default/files/publications/WORKFORCE_SROI_REPORT_2012.pdf

¹⁰² DEL Northern Ireland Social Fund Programme 2007-2013: Making a Difference in Life: Participant Stories and Project Directory (2009) pp.48-49 http://www.delni.gov.uk/making_a_difference_in_life_pdf.pdf

school leavers with the information and support they require to make the move from school into further education, training or employment.

4.4 Stepping Stones Transitions Service¹⁰³

Launched in June 2009, the Stepping Stones Transition Service offers assistance to young people with learning disabilities in preparing for life after school. Working closely with schools in the Lisburn and greater Lisburn area, in both mainstream and special education, the Transitions Service provides pupils with the opportunity to access work experience and training courses. These courses teach skills that are transferable into work and home life as well as accreditation in recognised qualifications.

4.5 Southern Regional College Transition Group

The Transition Group in the Southern Regional College (SRC) aims to ensure students and prospective learners are offered appropriate opportunities and support for transition to and from further education. In their submission to the Committee Inquiry, the SRC highlighted the fact that their work on transition procedures, which have been in development for six years, has been shared as best practice with the further education sector in Northern Ireland.¹⁰⁴

The SRC Transition Group is composed of representatives from:¹⁰⁵

- Disability Action;
- SELB Transport;
- Transition Officers (Southern Health and Social Care Trust);
- Transition Officers (Southern Education and Library Board);
- Catchment schools;
- Community and voluntary sector;
- Department for Employment and Learning Careers Service;
- SRC Learning Support; and
- SRC SEN curriculum staff.

The group plays an active role in the review and development of curriculum design and support provision. Meetings are held every term and act as a forum for discussion and dissemination of information at both a local and regional level. In their written submission, the SRC expressed the belief that:¹⁰⁶

¹⁰³ <http://www.stepping-stones.org.uk/transitions.html>

¹⁰⁴ Southern Regional College *Submission to the Committee Inquiry into post Special Educational Need provision in education, employment and training for those with Learning Disabilities* (2014)

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*

...the Transition Group is absolutely vital to ensuring that the complex and interrelated needs of SEN learners are addressed when moving from secondary education to further education.