

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.

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Transition Services in the SELB and WELB provide support to pupils who are at Stage 5 of the Code of Practice from the age of 14+ (Year 10) through to the age of 18 in mainstream schools and 19 in Special schools. Transition Co-ordinators attend all Transition Annual Reviews for students in Year 10 to meet with young people and their parents to identify an appropriate career pathway. Transition Co-ordinators ascertain if there are going to be any issues or barriers preventing a smooth transition and consider appropriate support that may need to be implemented when the young person is making their transition to adulthood. A Transition Co-ordinator will then attend the Annual Reviews of all students at Years 12, 13, 14, or 15 to assist with the implementation of identified support. Transition Co-ordinators may also attend any reviews in Year 11 where it is felt that there are sufficient issues to warrant it.
- 1.2 Whilst not all students require a high level of support, up to 80% of the students with whom the Transition Service comes into contact will avail of some form of support. This ranges from signposting and advice through to more direct intervention and support where meetings are facilitated with Learning Support Departments in colleges and universities. The Transition Service helps with the completion of student finance applications, transition visits to day opportunity and training facilities and referrals to voluntary agencies who offer disability specific support. The Transition Service also runs information events throughout the academic year for parents and students. These events are for groups of mainstream schools, special schools and those transitioning to Further and Higher Education. Training is also provided by the Transition Service to Special Educational Needs Co-ordinators, teachers and Classroom Assistants. This is performed either solely by the Transition Service or in conjunction with other Board Services.

2. Range of post school opportunities for students with Learning Disabilities across the SELB and WELB

2.1 Education (SELB)

- Life and Living Skills (OCR) is a 3 year discrete course provided in the Banbridge and Armagh Campuses of The Southern Regional College. The aim of the course is to promote independent living skills as well as employability for students. The College focuses on Maths, English, ICT (with progression from level attained at post primary school) and 2 -3

vocational areas and work placement. These courses have proved very popular amongst young people moving from Special Education settings as well as Learning Support Centres and Mainstream education. Over the years these course have increasingly oversubscribed. A model of this discrete course also runs on a part time basis in Cookstown Campus of the South West College.

- Range of Level 1 courses at local Further Education Colleges: There are a number of Level One courses available to young people through the Southern Regional College. The level one courses are usually completed in a “combination model” focusing on more than one vocational area. Other courses are available at Levels 2 & 3 and entry to these depends on the level the young person is at when he or she leaves education. All mainstream college courses in the Southern Regional College carry support from the Learning Support Co-ordinator within the college. The college relies on the sharing of information from school to college in order to put a package of support in place for a young person before they begin their course.

2.2 Education (WELB)

- The Transition course at North West Regional College is a 2 year discrete course within the college focusing on Maths, English, ICT (with progression from level attained at post primary school) and 2 -3 vocational areas and work placement.
- Range of Level 1 courses at local Further Education Colleges.

2.3 Training (SELB)

- Training for Success (TFS) programmes are run through the Department for Employment and Learning (DEL) in a wide range of vocational areas in local Further Education Colleges and Training organisations such as People First (Banbridge), Clanrye Training (Newry) and Wade Training (Lurgan/Portadown) and include Skills for Work Level 1, Level 2, Level 3 and Skills for Life as well as training in specific vocational areas such as Hairdressing, Car Mechanics, Joinery etc. Young people who have had a Statement of Special Educational Needs are given up to 156 weeks to complete their training and can enter training up to their 22nd birthday. These courses also carry the opportunity for young people who have had a Statement to access 10 hours support through Disability Action or other voluntary organisations. These courses carry a £40 per week training allowance.
- NI Apprentice Scheme: This is an opportunity for young people to enter an apprenticeship with an employer through the DEL.

2.4 Training (WELB)

- Training for Success (TFS) programmes are run through the Department for Employment and Learning in a wide range of vocational areas in local Further Education Colleges and include Skills for Work Level 1, Level 2,

Level 3 and Skills for life. Students are placed depending on their ability level.

Training for Success programmes are also run through various training agencies e.g. CRAFT, Rutledge, Derry Youth and Community Workshop.

2.5 Day Opportunity Programmes (Voluntary Sector) SELB Area

- Mencap, Pathways to Work 16+ work preparation and personal Development, Supported Employment Programme (workability Programme)
- Disability Action (SELB wide)
- Appleby "Print It" (Armagh): 2 year programme (Employability Skills & Work Experience)
- Prospects (Newry)
- Alternative Angles (Cookstown) Social Enterprise Firm
- Cookstown Adult Centre (Cookstown)

2.6 Day Opportunity Programmes (Voluntary Sector) WELB Area

HOPE Project

Horticultural based programme with emphasis on practical gardening skills and independent life skills. This involves a commitment of two days per week with one day in the classroom and one day in various locations for practical classes. All courses within this project carry accreditation through OCN and ASDAN.

Tuned In Project

Offers two music production and performance based programmes in Disc Jockey skills (DJ) and Event Management. Programmes also focus on independent life skills. Both courses are accredited to OCN Level 3 and run over two days per week with one day practical and one day in class.

SOLVE (Supported Opportunities and Local Volunteering towards Equality)

SOLVE is a programme developed in partnership with the North West Volunteer Centre and Liberty Consortium. It is funded by the Department of Social Development. The project is based on the vision that "everyone has the opportunity to have a meaningful, enjoyable volunteering experience" It covers the following core areas:

- Skills analysis
- OCN Training
- Volunteer matching
- Support to develop independence skills
- Support to develop independent travel skills

2.7 Day Opportunity/Care Programmes (offered by the Southern Health & Social Care Trust)

- Windsor Day Centre (Newry)

- Oakridge Day Centre (Dungannon)
- The Laurels Day Centre (Newry)
- Banvale Day Centre (Banbridge)
- Appleby Social Education Centre (Armagh)
- Edenvilla Park Horticulture Programme (Portadown)
- Benburb Horticulture & Restoration Programme (Dungannon)
- The Arc Horticulture Bessbrook (Newry)
- Willowbank Horticulture (Dungannon)

2.8 Day Opportunity/Care Programmes (offered by the Western Health & Social Care Trust)

- Oak Tree Day Centre (Derry)
- Valley Centre (Derry)
- Maybrook Day Centre (Derry)
- Evergreen Centre (Derry)
- Benbradagh Centre (Limavady)
- Glenside Adult Day Care Centre (Strabane)
- Omagh Day Centre
- Stage Beyond
- Lilliput Theatre Programme

2.9 Supported Employment Options (offered by the Health & Social Care Trusts)

- Sow & Grow Horticulture, Derry
- Berries Café, Derry
- New Horizons Strabane supported employment in Alley Café, Old School House Café, NWRC Strabane Campus Canteen and Garden Centre.

3. Barriers/possible barriers to participation for key stakeholders

- Fear of parents/carers losing financial benefits
- Lack of 5 day places for students with Profound and Multiple Learning Difficulties
- Lack of independent living skills
- Lack of independent travel skills
- Transport provision and funding issues (particularly given the rural nature of SELB/WELB area)
- Community Transport Schemes are in place but these are heavily over subscribed
- Changeover of personnel from Children's Services to Adult Services within the Health and Social Care Trusts. Services change at 18 whereas education continues to 19 for a proportion of students.
- Lack of understanding of parents/carers - who may also have a learning disability.
- Movement of personnel within posts both in Health and Education.
- Some students do not have an active Social Worker where need has lapsed.
- Social Worker needed for referral to Trust facilities.
- Lack of supported employment opportunities.
- Lack of Entry Level/Level 1 courses.

4. Suggestions / recommendations for improvement

- Develop multi-agency fora/groups with decision-makers as part of their composition.
- Better collaboration province-wide between Regional Colleges on curriculum and range of courses.
- Better collaboration between schools and colleges on building a prospectus that caters for all ability levels.
- Forward planning on exit strategies within day care facilities to allow better provision for school leavers with Profound and Multiple Learning Difficulties.