Special educational needs transition from school to further learning

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Special educational needs transition from school to further learning

A report to identify what works and what improvements could be made to transition arrangements from school to post-16 further and higher education and training for young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

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Mae'r ddogfen yma hefyd ar gael yn Gymraeg.
This document is also available in Welsh.

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1. Introduction

Transitions for young people with special educational needs, learning difficulties and/or disabilities

1.1. The transition from school to further and higher education is a potentially difficult time for any young person but for those with special educational needs (SEN) or learning difficulties and/or disabilities (LDD)[1] there are often additional challenges related, for example, to challenges in coping with multiple changes in the services they rely on and in the people supporting and teaching them (NAFW, 2007, 2009; WG, 2010, 2013c).

The aim and objectives of the study

1.2. The aim of this study is to provide information on current arrangements across Wales for the transition of young people with LDD from school to further education (FE), higher education (HE) and work-based learning (WBL), in order to identify what works and where improvements can be made.

1.3. The **objectives** of the study are to:
- consider how transition works in practice in each local authority (LA) in Wales;
- consider the extent to which agencies, including education, social services and health, engage early in the transition process;
- review background literature, including other countries' experiences, National Assembly for Wales Committee findings and outcomes from previous related initiatives, projects and task groups;
- identify case studies of good practice from across Wales which are consistent with proposals for SEN reform;
- identify barriers, weaknesses or gaps in the way local arrangements for transition are made and propose cost-effective solutions which are consistent with proposals for SEN reform; and
- identify quantitative and qualitative measures which LAs and post-16 providers could use to benchmark their LDD transition arrangements.

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[1] The statutory definitions of SEN and LDD are similar and focus upon a child's or young person's learning difficulties or disabilities and the resultant need for special provision to support their learning. Full details are included in Appendix 1.

Policy context

1.4.   The Special Educational Needs Code of Practice for Wales (WAG, 2004a) covers transition planning for young people with SEN and is discussed further in section three. The Welsh Government is in the process of reforming the legislative framework for SEN. Proposals, which include the introduction of an integrated, collaborative process of assessment, planning and monitoring are outlined in the Draft Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal (Bill). This sets out the ambition of Welsh Government to secure improved long term outcomes for children and young people with SEN and ensure they realise their full potential.

2.   Methodology

2.1.   This was primarily a qualitative study, focused upon exploring and understanding how, why, for whom, and under what circumstances, transition arrangements "worked"[2] – or did not 'work' (see e.g. HM Treasury, 2011; Pawson and Tilly, 1997). This approach was complemented by research to provide context (drawing principally upon secondary data) to enable broader judgments to be made about how widespread effective practice is. This section summarises the sources and methods used to collect data for the study and then discusses the strengths and limitations of the study.

Desk-based review of data

Review of administrative data

2.2.   A desk-based review of young people's transitions from school and their experiences of FE was undertaken using data collected through the Careers Wales destination survey[3]; the Pupil Level Annual School Census (PLASC)[4]; the Lifelong Learning Wales Record (LLWR)[5]; the Learner Voice Survey (in further education)[6]; and the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA)[7].

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[2] E.g. were effective, creating positive outcomes for young people and meaning stakeholders' experiences were positive.

[3] This was used to provide data on the destination of school leavers who have a statement and those who do not have a statement in years 12, 13 and 14.

[4] This was used to provide data on the numbers of young people with SEN, and the type of SEN in schools.

[5] This was used to provide data on completion rates for students with a LDD and without a LDD (self-declared) in FE institutions.

[6] This was used to provide data on how young people who made the transition to FE rated their learning experience (Ipsos Mori, n.d.).

[7] This was used to provide completion rates for young people with a disability and without a disability who had made the transition to HE.

Literature reviews

2.3.   A literature review on effective practice in transition planning in the UK and selected OECD countries was undertaken. It searched eight online databases and, following a sift of studies for relevance and quality, identified 28 articles relevant to the study, which were reviewed.

2.4.   This literature review was complemented by a purposive review of recent studies in Wales, including:

- reviews conducted by the Education and Lifelong Learning and Skills Committee (ELLS) (NAFW, 2007); the Education and Learning Committee (NAFW, 2009); and the Post-16 Additional Learning Needs Funding Task and Finish Group (WG, 2010); and
- research into Post-19 Education Provision for Young People with Complex Learning Difficulties (WG, 2013a); the Youth Engagement and Progression Framework (YEPF) (WG, 2014b); Additional Learning Needs (ALN) Pilots (WG, 2013b); and Transition Key Worker Pilots (WG, 2013c[8]).

Review of transition policies

2.5.   A desk-based review of transition policies of all 22 LAs[9] and of 12 FE colleges in Wales was undertaken.

Fieldwork (interviews with stakeholders)

2.6.   Most of the stakeholders who contributed to the study were identified through research with 14 LA transition services and nine area-based case studies, in south east, south west, mid and north Wales. These provided a focus for interviews with:
- learning settings including mainstream and special schools, FE colleges, WBL providers and universities;
- services involved in transition planning, such as Careers Wales, social services, health and education services and voluntary organisations; and
- young people and their parents and carers who were preparing for, or who had made, transitions from school to college.

2.7.   In total, 91 stakeholders (including interviews with six young people with LDD and five parents or carers) were undertaken using a mix of face-to-face and

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[8] http://gov.wales/docs/caecd/research/130125-costs-benefits-transition-key-working-en.pdf
[9] Blaenau Gwent, Monmouthshire, Newport and Torfaen share a pan-Gwent policy. Conwy and Denbighshire also share a policy.

telephone interviews. Table 1 summarises the profile of those who participated in the study. The transition services and schools where stakeholders were interviewed were drawn from 17 of the 22 LAs[10] in Wales.

Table 1: Number of stakeholders interviewed in each sector, service and learning setting

Sector	No.
Welsh Government	6
Voluntary	5
Services	**No.**
Transition services*	23
Careers Wales	6
Local Health Boards	2
Learning settings	**No.**
FE colleges	12
HE institutions (universities)	5
Special schools**	9
Secondary schools**	8
Work Based Learning providers	5
Total (sectors, services and learning settings)	**80**

*The service locations for these vary; for example, some were located in social services, others in education or health. In some services more than one stakeholder was interviewed.
**Head teachers, teachers, teaching assistants and Careers Advisors or SENCos (secondary schools only).*

Interviews with young people with an LDD and their parents or carers

2.8.   The study planned to interview five parents or carers and 20 young people with an LDD. The team worked with intermediary bodies to identify young people who wished to contribute, including through schools, colleges, local support and voluntary sector groups and SNAP Cymru. Despite this, however, only six young people with an LDD contributed to the study.[11]

2.9.   The young people interviewed came from three LA areas and were between 14 and 16 years old[12]. The five parents interviewed came from three LAs[13] and all had children who had completed post-school transition. Their children were aged between 17 and 20 years old[14].

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[10] Excluding Denbighshire, Flintshire, Pembrokeshire, Neath Port Talbot and Blaenau Gwent.
[11] The study needed to work through intermediaries (in contact with parents and carers) and it is not known why so few parents or carers chose to participate. For example, a request for contributions on SNAP Cymru's website brought one response from a parent and one from a parent support group with nearly 400 members but no young people
[12] Three were 16 (transition to university or college), two were 14 and one was 15 years old (transition to college).
[13] Blaenau Gwent, Caerphilly and Swansea.
[14] The needs of these 11 young people (the six who contributed directly and the five whose parents contributed) were varied. Seven had an autistic spectrum disorder and six of these also had an

2.10. The study also drew on evidence provided by parents and carers and young people with SEN or LDD, gathered from the outcome evaluation of the Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD) Strategic Action Plan for Wales (WG, forthcoming) and the programme of action research to support the ALN pilots (WG, 2013b).

Data analysis and reporting

2.11. The primary data (generated by interviews) and secondary data (such as that generated by the desk-based reviews of literature) were analysed to identify key themes about what is good (or effective) and poor (or ineffectious or damaging) practice. These themes were used to:
- identify the characteristics of effective practice;
- identify issues that those working in this field may need to consider (such as potential challenges);
- explore and to help explain the differing experiences of young people and parents and carers; and
- inform the identification of areas for improvement, consistent with the proposed ALN/SEN reforms (WG, 2014c).

Strengths and limitations of the study

2.12. The study had important strengths:
- the desk-based literature review provided evidence of the strengths and weaknesses of practice in Wales and of good practice in Wales and other OECD countries;
- the study drew on direct experiences and testimony from those experiencing (or with recent experience of) transitions, or organising young people's transitions, drawing upon evidence gathered for this study and other studies (see paragraph 2.10); and
- the scope to compare the experiences of those interviewed with data from other sources, such as surveys of young people in FE, enabled some judgments to be made about how representative stakeholders' experiences were.

2.13. The study had some limitations. It could not attempt to provide a comprehensive picture of practice across Wales[15]. Instead, the focus of the

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additional learning difficulty, one had cerebral palsy and one had multiple conditions affecting learning and social communication. The young people's learning difficulties varied from profound and severe to mild.

[15] This reflected the diversity in policy and, to a greater degree, practice in LAs, settings and services, which make it very difficult to develop a representative sample from which conclusions could be drawn.

study was upon exploring practice in depth to identify what was, and what was not, working and why. In addition:

- the number of young people with a LDD (six) and parents or carers of young people with a LDD (five) making transitions, directly involved in this study, was small;
- the desk-based review of transition policies and interviews with LA transition services did not yield as much data as expected about transition policies in each LA area[16]; and
- the desk-based review of quantitative data illustrated the difficulties of reconciling different data sets covering schools, FE and HE (an issue discussed further in section seven).

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[16] The depth and quality of information provided by the policies varied considerably. Each LA in Wales has a published policy (sometimes jointly with a neighbouring county) but some were rather old. The policies outline the transition process and who may be involved. Some specify what should be in a transition plan.

3.   The transition planning process

The principles of transition planning: The Special Educational Needs Code of Practice for Wales

3.1.   The transition planning process for young people with a statement of SEN is governed by the Special Educational Needs Code of Practice for Wales[17]. The Code outlines that :

- a transition plan is drawn up in a learner's year 9 annual review[18] and is revisited in subsequent annual reviews;
- learners are supported to "fully participate" and their views are included;[19]
- information on post 16 options is presented to young people and their families[20];
- the process involves, and the plan draws together information from, a range of individuals within and beyond school (including Careers Wales and, where appropriate, health and social services)[21];
- the transition plan is holistic[22];
- information about the learner is transferred from school to post 16 settings (subject to agreement from learners and parents), "in sufficient time for appropriate support to be put in place"; and
- that where needed, the support young people need to make a successful transition (such as bridging or link activities) is put in place [23] (pp. 130-132, WAG, 2004c).

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[17] "The Code sets out guidance on policies and procedures aimed at enabling pupils with special educational needs (SEN) [which for the purpose of this study are treated as synonymous with LDD] to reach their full potential, to be included fully in their school communities and make a successful transition to adulthood" (p. 1, WAG, 2004).

[18] All statements of SEN for young people must be reviewed at least annually (i.e. an "annual review").

[19] "The views of young people themselves should be sought and recorded" (p. 130, WAG, 2004a).

[20] "Careers Wales should include information on further education and training courses and take fully into account the wishes and feelings of the young person concerned. Careers Wales should assist the young person and their parents to identify the most appropriate post-16 provision, provide counselling and support, and have continuing oversight of, and information on, the young person's choice of provision" (p. 131, WAG, 2004a).

[21] Transition planning meetings from year nine onwards should usually include the young person, parents or carers and professionals such as SENCos, teachers and/or support staff, and Careers Wales advisors. Where appropriate, staff from post-16 settings, LA inclusion and/or educational psychology services, social services and health services should also be involved. (WAG, 2004a).

[22] "Transition planning should address the comprehensive needs of the child." (p. 130, WAG, 2004a)

[23] For example as the code outlines: "... a student approaching the age of 16 may have special educational needs .... which are likely to require some support if they go on to further education or training. To ensure that these students are able to make decisions, and to facilitate their successful transition, it is important that they have appropriate help and guidance. This might include the provision of school/college link courses or work placements and should involve the different local agencies concerned." (p. 132, WAG, 2004a)

3.2.   For young people with SEN, but who do not have a statement of SEN, the Code of Practice outlines that:

- young people should have "appropriate help and guidance" to enable them to make successful transitions;
- Careers Wales should provide "advice and guidance" to the young person and "provide schools with information which will help these students make successful transitions to post-school education, training or work";
- information about the learner should be transferred from school to post 16 settings (subject to agreement from learners), in sufficient time to put appropriate provision in place; and
- schools "may wish to draw up Transition Plans to support this process" (pp. 132-133, ibid.).

3.3.   The SEN Code of Practice only covers transition from school and does not cover transitions from further to higher education, or the transition from education into, for example, employment.

3.4.   For young people with statements of SEN who are expected to be going on to post-16 education and training at the end of their schooling, a section 140 assessment is undertaken in their last year in school. The assessment is carried out on behalf of Welsh Ministers by Careers Wales and sets out the learner's post-16 education and training needs and the provision required in order to meet those needs, in the form of a Learning and Skills Plan (LSP).

Transition planning in practice

3.5.   On the face of it, the SEN Code of Practice ensures good transition planning. For example, Estyn's recent review of Learners' Support Services in FE colleges for learners aged 16-19 years (Estyn, 2015) concluded that:

> Most colleges and schools manage transition arrangements effectively for those learners with additional learning needs and who may need specialist support. In general, staff in schools, colleges and Careers Wales' advisors work in partnership to ensure that these learners' progression is well planned from an early stage. They make sure that necessary adaptations or learning aids are in place in good time for the learners to settle into the institution quickly and make good progress in their learning (p.6, ibid.).

3.6.   Nevertheless, weaknesses remain. For example as Estyn's last annual report (2013-2014) identified:

> While transitions for learners between settings and primary schools, primary and secondary schools, and secondary schools and post-16 providers have been a focus of many reviews, reports and policy initiatives, there are still obstacles to sharing information about children and young people and very few examples of systematic joint planning between providers across the transition points (p.16, Estyn, 2015b).

> and

> Transition between schools and post-16 providers is often a difficult time for SEN learners. In a few examples, transition plans help students to transfer easily from school to further education. However, the statement of special needs and the individual education plan rarely transfer from the school to the further education institution (p. 42, ibid).

3.7.   Other recent reviews have also identified weakness in transition planning for some groups of learners, such as learners with ASD (NAfW, 2010) or with complex learning difficulties (Townsley et al, 2013).

3.8.   This study indicates that, in part, the problems some learners experience[24] reflect weakness in implementation of the SEN Code of Practice, where for example, key stakeholders ("individuals") are not involved in transition planning or information is not transferred in a timely way from schools to post 16 providers. However, as sections four to six of this report illustrate, differences in effectiveness also reflect issues not directly addressed by the Code, such as how to reconcile conflicting interests, and the constraints

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[24] As outlined above, Estyn did not find that all learners were well supported – only that "most" schools and colleges had good arrangements.

imposed upon transition planning by the range of post 16 options available to young people with an LDD.

3.9.   Moreover, this study illustrates that although it is possible to define the key features of effective practice, in terms of principles (what should happen – as the current SEN Code of Practice seeks to do), the detail of how it is to be done in practice may need to change from one individual to another (or one process to another). This requirement for flexibility and responsiveness needs professionals to "use their best judgment" rather than following rigid rules (Chambers, 1997) and is a critical of feature of the person centred approach that is at the heart of effective practice in transition planning. However, it also increases the risk of inconsistency (and, by extension, poor practice and experiences for learners and their families).

Transition planning as a process

3.10.   The SEN Code of Practice focuses primarily upon the transition plan, developed through meetings[25]. However, both the literature reviewed and the interviews conducted for this study emphasise the importance of treating transition planning as a process, rather than an event or series of events focused around, for example, annual reviews.

3.11.   If planning is treated as a process rather than an event, it can be thought of as a sequence with a number of stages (or steps), illustrated by figure 1, each leading to actions which inform the next stage. Because young people will often make multiple transitions, the processes can be linked and stages repeated many times.

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[25] The SEN Code of Practice for Wales (WAG, 2004a) does not only focus upon the transition plan. As outlined in this section, it also emphasises, for example, the support young people may need to make a transition, and upon the transfer of information. Nevertheless, the focus (in the Code) is primarily upon the plan and planning meetings.

Figure 1: Transition planning as a process – elements of effective practice

Action planning   (translating choices and decisions into actions); focusing upon the long term (not just the next step); co-ordination; flexibility and responsiveness (e.g. as needs or circumstances change); monitoring and evaluating the process

Step 1. Develop an **inclusive, person centred, transition planning process** (See section 4 for details)

Step 2. Enable young people and parents / carers to make **informed choices** about transitions (see section 4)

Step 3. Prepare learners, parents and carers and education settings for the chosen transition

Step 4. Support learners' progression following transition (including planning for subsequent transitions: Step 1

Key elements
- start early and use your best judgment: there is no one "right" way to structure transition planning;
- identify who needs to be involved, when and how to involve them; and
- build trust.

Key Resources
> The Person Centred Reviews toolkit
> The SEN Code of Practice for Wales

Key elements
- Put the learner first, focus on their abilities and aspirations whilst considering others' interests;
- ensure information, advice and guidance is accessible, accurate and relevant;
- consider providing independent advice and support; and
- Identify and negotiate between competing interests.

Key Resources
> The Person Centred Reviews toolkit

Key elements
- Share information and knowledge about the young person;
- ensure young people, parents and carers and settings are prepared (including identifying and addressing potential barriers to transition);
- adapt provision and support as required to meet young people's needs; and
- collaborate and exercise systems leadership .

Key elements
- Ensure that assessments are holistic and focused upon the learner's academic, personal and social needs;
- ensure that assessment is an ongoing process - not an event;
- identify those 'at risk' of disengagement (and act); and
- ensure effective planning for learners' progression.

Key Resources
> The Youth Engagement and Progression Framework

4. Developing an inclusive transition planning process that enables informed decision making

4.1. The basic template for transition planning is outlined in the <u>SEN Code of Practice for Wales</u> (WAG, 2004a). As outlined in section three, it describes the range of stakeholders who need to be involved and highlights the need to provide information and advice.

4.2. However, the SEN Code of Practice does not outline how the participation of stakeholders is to be enabled and encouraged (other than through participation in review meetings), nor does it describe how decisions should be made. This section therefore describes approaches that have been effective and highlights key issues that need to be considered by those involved in developing transition planning processes.

4.3. Moreover, although there may be common features (many of which are outlined in the SEN Code of Practice for Wales), there is no single process or template for transition planning that will be appropriate for all stakeholders[26]. The first step in transition planning is therefore developing an inclusive process that enables all key stakeholders to participate in the planning process and make informed decisions. The key elements of effective practice, issues to consider, and examples of effective practice are outlined in this section and are summarised in <u>Table 3</u> in the appendix.

Putting young people at the centre of the process: person-centred planning

Effective practice

4.4. The most important stakeholder in the process is the young person. Young people's involvement is a key area where practice has evolved since the SEN Code of Practice was written over ten years ago[27], and this study found that person-centred planning (PCP) was seen by all professionals as important (and a key feature of effective practice)[28]. The Welsh Government has issued

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[26] As the Person-Centred Reviews Toolkit (WG, 2015e) puts it: "one size does not fit all".

[27] The SEN Code of Practice for Wales highlights the importance of student involvement in decision making, outlining that "the views of young people themselves should be sought and recorded wherever possible in any assessment, reassessment or review from year 9 onwards. Representatives from Careers Wales, student counsellors, advocates or advisors, teachers and other school staff, social workers or peer support may be needed to support the young person in this process." (p. 130, WAG, 2004a). It therefore emphasises student involvement, but could not be described as putting the young person's views at the centre of the process.

[28] In contrast, Kaehne and Beyer (2013) explored the use of formal protocols within the 22 LA areas of Wales and identified that of 21 protocols collected and analysed, only nine made mention of a person-centred approach, and only two outlined protocols for embedding this in transition meetings.

guidance and resources to support person-centred planning. These are available online at http://learning.gov.wales/resources/browse-all/person-centred-reviews-toolkit/?lang=en.

4.5.   Professionals interviewed for the study agreed that PCP meant starting with what the learner wants and needs, although the emphasis they placed upon different aspects of PCP and how it impacted on their practice varied, so that no single approach to using PCP emerged. In part this reflects differences in young people's needs and interests (one size does not fit all) and the case study, below, illustrates one example of person centred planning in practice. However it also reflects differing views of what PCP means and requires.

PCP in a special school

The school has a PCP worker who has the role of leading transition planning and annual reviews with young people. There is also a dedicated room within the school with whiteboards on the wall set out in the sequence of a transition plan / learning pathway. The people present at review or planning sessions fill in these boards and also have space to fill in what is, and what is not, working. This provides the context for an in-depth process which results in an agreed action plan.

The room is welcoming. The PCP worker prepares for the session to make sure the group has access to information from the last review or planning session, the young person's profile, the contents of the young person's statement, the last three IEPs and/or transition plan and any subsequent monitoring information. This ensures that everyone has the same information to work from, that time is not wasted going back over old ground, that people (especially the young person and his/her family) do not have to repeat their stories and needs and that the session makes progress. The session allows individual as well as group views, so that participants can put post-it notes on the wall to make comments on what they feel is important. The plan is owned by the young person and, once it is developed and agreed, it is distributed to all parties, but even at this stage it is a work in progress, being constantly updated as the young person's needs and interests evolve, as new opportunities arise and as others change.

Identifying and involving the key stakeholders

Effective practice

4.6.   Effective practice involves identifying and involving the key stakeholders (or key people) who need to contribute. For example, as the Welsh Government's

Person-Centred Reviews Toolkit (WG, 2015b)[29] puts it: "the process and the meeting must include the learner, people they would like to be there and any key people who have to be there" (ibid., p.4). This is effective practice because, as outlined in this section, key stakeholders can have differing interests and aspirations that must be reconciled and because key stakeholders need to collaborate to realise young people's interests and aspirations.

Issues to consider

4.7. Although as outlined in section three, a number of key stakeholders are expected to contribute to transition planning[30], the full range of stakeholders who need to be included for an individual young person will differ according to the young person's needs and circumstances. Moreover, the ways in which they contribute may also differ (and are unlikely to be limited to planning meetings). Effective practice can therefore change from individual to individual.

Young people's involvement in the process: Issues to consider and examples of effective practice

4.8. Person-centred practice requires that young people's aspirations, and what is important to and for them, are at the centre of transition planning (WG, 2015b). Young people's capacity and willingness to contribute (some may choose not to) depend to a large degree upon the ways in which their participation in the process is encouraged and enabled. This can range from direct participation, such as their involvement in and contribution to planning meetings, to indirect participation where, for example, informal advocates act on their behalf and/or young people are supported to present their aspirations and interests using a variety of media (such as film or illustrated booklets).

4.9. Young people will often require support to participate. Involving people that the young person knows and trusts in the planning process, and who have, or are able to build, a rapport with the young person is essential for building an understanding of what is important to and for them. This could include working with the young person to help them think through their interests and aspirations - what is important to and for them - in advance of meetings. As Bryn's story illustrates below, the process of identifying young people's

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[29] http://learning.gov.wales/docs/learningwales/publications/150909-reviews-toolkit-en.pdf
[30] For example, as outlined in the SEN Code of Practice for Wales, transition planning meetings from year nine onwards should usually include the young person, parents or carers and professionals such as SENCos, teachers and/or support staff, and Careers Wales advisors. Where appropriate, staff from post-16 settings, LA inclusion and/or educational psychology services, social services and health services should also be involved. (WAG, 2004a).

interests and aspirations takes time and often involves consideration of both what young people say they want and need and what is known, or inferred, about the young person and their interests and aspirations.

PCP in practice: Bryn's transition plan

Bryn has complex needs, learning difficulties and a low tolerance for things that do not interest him. However, he is really interested in transport systems and journeys – and his favourite activities are train, bus and car excursions. The staff in his school knew about his interests and were able to build on these through PCP.

When developing his transition plan, using a PCP approach, the model of a journey was adopted, with the process being literally mapped out, plotting out where he was starting from and could go, how long it would take to get there and where he could go next, setting out timetables and, sometimes, the need for diversions or timetable revisions. This approach captured Bryn's interest, worked to his strengths and understanding, and enabled him to take an active role in developing his own plan. The work was done outside the meeting. Bryn did not always want attend review meetings but when he did he was happy to present the journey map. He felt he owned the plan, and as a result was much more interested in seeing how it would work.

4.10. Where young people are not able to directly articulate their interests and aspirations, it is important for those who know the young person to work to identify them (e.g. through observation of their preferences and behaviour).

Parents' and carers' involvement in the process: issues to consider

4.11. Person-centred practice also includes identifying the aspirations of a young person's parents or carers (WG, 2015b). Their interests and aspirations are important (for both intrinsic and instrumental reasons)[31] and need to be considered. Like young people, parents' and carers' capacity and willingness to contribute will depend upon the ways in which their participation in the process is encouraged and enabled. They need to know about the process, including what will happen at meetings, and be given time and support to contribute (ibid.; see also Beyer, et al, 2014).

Professionals' involvement in the process: issues to consider

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[31] Parents and carers interests and aspirations are important in their own right (so they have intrinsic value) and are important as they can effect the realisation of young people's interest and aspirations (so they have instrumental value). For example, parents' and carers' support may be necessary to enable a young person to realise their interests and aspirations and this support may be withheld if parents' and carers' interests and aspirations are not considered or respected in the process.

4.12. Professionals, such as teachers, SENCos, school support staff and Careers Wales advisors have a vital role to play in transition planning. They can contribute to a better understanding of a young person's interests, needs and aspirations and are crucial in action planning (working out, for example, how young people's aspirations can be realised) (WG, 2015b). Parents and carers are particularly concerned about decisions being made by people who did not really know their child and/or without their involvement.

4.13. Many professionals reported that meetings were time consuming and the participation of some groups, such as health and social service professionals, in meetings was often patchy. However, most professionals interviewed for this study felt that while they needed to contribute to the process (e.g. through written reports) it was not necessary for every stakeholder to attend every planning or review meeting; for example, it was felt that the participation of health professionals in the planning process could be targeted and defined, focused upon particular meetings or decisions[32]. Similarly, the involvement of social services might be necessary only if decisions about eligibility for specialist provision needed to be made.

4.14. However, it was agreed by professionals interviewed for this study, that it was very important that the right people were actively involved when needed. Settings' success in securing the involvement of some professionals in the process and, in particular, attendance at planning meetings, was felt to be influenced by a number of factors including:

- the status of the planning process in the setting; for example, if a school takes the planning process seriously and invests in the process, other professionals are more likely to do so;
- existing collaborative practice (that is, the extent to which staff were used to working together) and the relationships between the setting and other professionals (which were generally stronger for specialist provision, such as special schools, than for mainstream schools or colleges); and
- the practical steps taken to facilitate professionals' involvement (such as scheduling planning sessions in a routine way and timetabling a number of transition planning sessions on the same day).

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[32] It was suggested that where it was important that health staff were involved (for example, where there were issues around the provision of speech and language therapy or medication linked to transition options) the input might be confined to one meeting, or someone could be delegated from the planning session to find out what was available and bring it to the next session.

Providing information advice and guidance

Effective practice

4.15. The SEN Code of Practice, interviewees and the literature reviewed for this study (e.g. Beyer, et al, 2014; Sloper et al., 2010, Milsom et al., 2004) all highlight the importance of information, advice and guidance in the transition process. Effective information, advice and guidance should ensure that key stakeholders, including young people, know what the options (or choices) are, and should provide a foundation for making informed decisions about a young person's transition.

Issues to consider

4.16. Both the content of, and the ways in which information, advice and guidance are communicated are important. Information, advice and guidance needs to be accurate, timely and relevant. Unless it is communicated in ways that are "appropriate" to meeting young people's and/or their parents' or carers' needs and interests it can be misunderstood, ignored or rejected. This often means using multiple means of communication including face-to-face, written and audio-visual information (WG, 2015b)[33].

Building trust

Effective practice

4.17. Interviews for this study and some of the literature reviewed (e.g. Welsh Government 2013c) highlighted the importance of trust. Building trust between key stakeholders, and especially between professionals and parents or carers, is a key element, because discussion and negotiation has to be a two way process (so each side needs to trust and have a relationship with the other). Trust can also improve parents and carers experiences (e.g. by reducing conflict and anxiety).

Issues to consider and examples of effective practice

4.18. Open and transparent information sharing and decision making were seen as crucial elements in building trust. Transitions can be difficult, and parents and carers and some young people interviewed for the study particularly valued having continuity of contact with someone they could talk to when they had a

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[33] http://learning.gov.wales/docs/learningwales/publications/150909-reviews-toolkit-en.pdf

concern[34]. Building trust is particularly important if parents and carers had experienced poor decision making processes in the past, because they were less likely to trust the decision making process now.

4.19. The involvement of someone independent of specific learning settings, such as a key worker or Careers Wales advisor, was reported to help the transition process and ensure that needs and aspirations are communicated effectively. It can also help build trust between parents, carers, young people and professionals and offer the scope for social and emotional support (see also WG, 2013c). However, it can be harder to sustain that relationship and parents consulted in this study were not aware, for example, that Careers Wales advisors could be contacted after transition.

Making decisions about a young person's transition

Effective practice

4.20. Transitions involve choices. The interviews with education professionals and parents for this study emphasise that developing processes that enable decisions to be discussed and made (or agreed) by different key stakeholders is a key feature of effective practice.

4.21. Effective practice involves starting with the learner's expressed interests and aspirations, then considering the interests and aspirations of other stakeholders (in line with PCP). Where interests or aspirations conflict, for example over the most suitable post-16 provision for a young person[35], a process of reconciling them is needed (an example of this is given below). In some cases support workers helped mediate between different stakeholders, helping resolve conflicts[36]. As outlined below, effective practice also involves identifying the factors that limit choice, discussing this openly and honestly, and thinking creatively about how young people's interests and aspirations can be best realised.

Identifying and negotiating between competing interests: Issues to consider and examples of effective practice:

4.22. As noted above, some interviewees stressed the value of having independent transition advisors who can take the role of "honest broker", and who are

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[34] In the case of young people, this role could be likened to that of "trusted adult" (ODPM, 2005).
[35] For example, Kaehne and Beyer's (2009) survey of SEN practitioners and other partners involved in transition from secondary education in England, Scotland and Wales, suggests that practitioners diverged widely in their recognition of the desired outcomes of transition planning. Similarly, Franklin (2013) highlights the potential mismatch between what young people and their families identify as priorities and the priorities identified by services.
[36] See for example, WG, 2013c on the value of transition key workers.

"non-aligned" to any one learning setting. As the example below illustrates, such an advisor can spend time talking to parents, carers and young people in order to understand underlying problems and conflicts, and provide independent advice before and during transitions.

Sarah's and Karen's story

A Careers Wales advisor explained that Sarah was absolutely convinced that her daughter, Karen, had to go to a residential college. By spending time with Sarah and listening to her concerns, he was able to identify that the real problem was that she was afraid that she could not manage her daughter's behaviour at home any more.

Because the advisor's role was not confined to what a particular setting could offer he was able to respond in a holistic way, getting supported housing services involved in the transition planning process, and arranging visits for Sarah and her daughter to the local college. In the end Karen went into supported housing, with transport arranged to college and she joined a course in her local college. Sarah is happy that a permanent solution has been found and that her daughter is near and is being supported to live independently.

4.23. Looked after children were felt by some respondents to the study to be disadvantaged in making transitions[37]. Concerns were raised in particular about the potential conflict of interest where the corporate parent (the LA) would have to decide on whether to fund costly provision for the learner, and the consequent importance of involving other agencies who could challenge decisions in the planning process. Examples were given of how looked after young people may have experienced multiple moves during critical periods with a consequent disruption of learning that can make their transitions much more complex and difficult. As Carl's experience (discussed below) illustrates, independent advocacy can be important here in ensuring that looked after children's interests are championed in the transition planning process.

Carl's story: acting in the best interests of a looked after child

Carl is looked after by the LA and in a review meeting it was felt that his interests at transition would be best served by a specialist college. For the social worker involved this created a conflict since, although the need may be recognised, he was concerned that his department would query the cost involved. Therefore it was very important for Carl and the social worker that the planning process involved people from other agencies who could advocate on Carl's behalf and who were able to be independent of the financial decision making process. The fact that there was a group, multi-

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[37] The proportion of looked after children (with or without a learning disability or difficulty) known to be 'NEET' at 19 years (40%) is much higher than the proportion of all young people aged 19 years (Source Stats Wales: Care leavers on their 19th birthday during year ending 31 March by local authority and activity, 2015).

> agency decision making process also ensured that the transition plan developed was treated seriously and acted upon.

The limits of choice: Issues to consider and example of effective practice

4.24. Choices are shaped by a range of factors including young people's needs, their interests and aspirations and the learning opportunities available to them. Where choices are few, parents may think that opportunities are being "rationed" or hidden. For example, although there are a small number of programmes, such as the Welsh Government's Traineeship programme, that offer fully flexible provision for young people with multiple or complex barriers, there were reported to be particular weaknesses with the availability of WBL options for young people with LDD (see also e.g. Beyer, et al, 2014). This meant there was a reliance on FE colleges to meet nearly all needs. As one transition advisor put it: *"if not college, what can [young] people do?".* Going to college was described by many stakeholders as a default option because of the lack of alternatives and, although beyond the scope of this study, developing alternatives to FE provision appears to be an area for development (see e.g. Beyer, et al, 2014).

4.25. The inflexibility of some provision also places limitations on transition. Examples were given of young people leaving special school earlier than they would have otherwise chosen to in order to access WBL while they were still 18 years old, because they would not be able to access the provision if they were older.

4.26. Choices for some groups of learners may be, or may appear to be, more limited than those for other groups; for example, Estyn's recent review of barriers to apprenticeships (Estyn, 2014a) identified a range of barriers that prevent learners with disabilities (and also those from black and minority ethnic (BME) communities) engaging in apprenticeship programmes; they include:

- "lack of awareness of apprenticeships by parents, employers and learners themselves;
- few apprenticeship role models from the BME communities or from disabled groups;
- difficulties in finding suitable work placements, especially where employers believe there will be a need to provide additional support for learners;
- real or perceived discrimination;
- available support for learners not being accessed or fully utilised;
- parental anxiety that the young people may not be able to cope; and

- insufficient co-ordination between schools, employers, WBL providers and local community organisations to promote apprenticeships" (Estyn, 2014a, p.3).

4.27. Although options may be limited, educational transitions will always involve some degree of choice (including the choice not to continue in education). Creative thinking about how best to realise young people's interests and aspirations, and action at a strategic level to increase choice (discussed below in relation to systems leadership), are also both important.

Action Planning

Effective practice

4.28. Once decisions about a young person's preferred transition have been made, the next step is action planning and the SEN Code of Practice, interviewees and literature reviewed for this study (e.g. Sloper et al, 2010) all highlight its importance. Action planning a key feature of effective practice because it enables and ensures that decisions can be implemented and progress reviewed.

4.29. Action planning that links goals with actions to realise them; identifies barriers and risks and plans how to minimise or manage them; and incorporates a process of review (for example, to monitor progress and if necessary, revise the plan), are all features of effective practice.

Issues to consider and examples of effective practice

4.30. The goals and actions necessary to realise young people's aspirations and protect and respect stakeholders' interests need to be agreed by the key stakeholders, and are typically recorded in a transition plan. As Dwynwen's story (below) illustrates, young people's interests and aspirations, and the options open to them, can change. Therefore, a transition plan should be a living document that both informs and guides actions and which is regularly reviewed and, if necessary, revised.

> **Dwynwen's story**
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> Dwynwen, who is studying A levels in school reflects positively on her transition plan, describing it as *"detailed, comprehensive and supportive"*. She felt she was fully involved in the process and was actively encouraged by the school to speak her mind. It was important to her that the plan was seen as something that could be changed and developed over time, because she had decided to pursue a different career path (hence different subject

> choices) than she had originally decided. She was also happy that her parents were pleased by the choices she had made. Dwynwen commented on how the support from the key staff in the school (in this case, the Careers Advisor, SENCo and Head teacher) had made the plan worthwhile; for example, interview skills were outlined as a key area for her development and she was provided with mock interviews to help with this.

4.31. Action planning needs to take account of funding systems and the structure of opportunities available. Factors for consideration include:

- the range of post-16 options available locally and their fit with a learner's interests, needs and age;
- the availability and flexibility of funding, which can be complex where joint funding for personal care or specialist residential provision is required[38];
- the extent to which settings and processes are service, rather than person-centred; and/or
- the effectiveness of collaborative working between stakeholders.

Co-ordination

Effective practice

4.32. The Code of Practice[39], interviews and literature reviewed for this study (e.g. Welsh Government 2013c; Sloper et al, 2010) all highlight the importance of co-ordination (or management) of the transition planning process. This is a key feature of effective practice because of the range of stakeholders involved in the process and the need to coordinate and monitor their contribution to planning and actions. Effective co-ordination can also help ensure that there is shared vision that all those involved understand and are working toward, and that there is a focus upon both the long term goal and the intermediate steps needed to reach it[40].

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[38] For example, a recent study of provision in Wales for young people with complex needs identified "complexity, uncertainty and fragility of the funding arrangements for personal support of students attending FE provision" (Townsley et al., 2013, p.152) and the 2010 review of funding for young people with ALN in school and further education, identified that: "young people ... do not always receive a timely decision in relation to their future options due to the complexity of the existing process" (WG, 2010, p.2).

[39] Under the SEN Code of Practice for Wales, responsibility for co-ordination is split: "The head teacher is responsible for overseeing and co-ordinating the delivery of the transition plan. Careers Wales will have the lead role in ensuring the delivery of the elements of the Transition Plan that relate to the young person's transition into further learning or employment" (p 130, WAG, 2004a).

[40] For example, professionals, young people and parents may have a different time-line perspective. Professionals often have an outcome perspective – where does the young person go next. In contrast, parents and young people are more likely to have an impact perspective – i.e. what difference will that outcome make and where will the young person end up.

Issues to consider and examples of effective practice

4.33. A number of people can co-ordinate the process. The person most appropriate to take on the role should be someone who puts the interest of the young person first, who has the skill, authority and time needed to co-ordinate the process, and who has the support of the key stakeholders in the process. The role can be likened to that of a "lead professional" (ODPM, 2005)[41] and, as the example below illustrates, transition key workers can play a key role here.

The Transition key Worker Pilot Projects

In June 2008, local authorities were invited to apply to the Welsh Government for funding to become transition key working pilot sites. Five pilots were set up. Four of the sites established a designated key worker service, consisting of professionals specifically employed to undertake the role of transition key working. The other pilot developed a non-designated key worker model. This involved either (a) professionals providing a key working service to some families while also undertaking the role for which they are primarily employed, such as that of community nurse, or (b) parents or carers providing a key working service for their child.

A report on the costs and benefits of five pilot transition key worker projects in Wales (WG, 2012) showed that young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and their families generally felt that their experience of transition was improved through the key worker role. They had better information and appreciated the emotional and practical support offered. There was less evidence of an impact on the outcomes of transition from the key working pilots, in part because few of the young people involved in the pilot had left education or training, but also because the choices open to young people were often limited.

4.34. In some cases, a parent or carer may be best placed to co-ordinate the transition process. However, some parents interviewed by this study reported that they were forced to take on the role because no one else was doing it. Parents may not necessarily have the skills, knowledge and/or time to co-ordinate the process. It was also noted that there can be value in having someone independent coordinating given the potential that the interests and aspirations of young person and parent/carer may conflict.

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[41] The lead professional role focuses upon ensuring that services are co-ordinated, information is shared, and helps: "to keep the service "landscape" simple for the young person" (p. 76, ODPM, 2005; SEU, 1999, p.85)

5. Preparing young people, their parents/carers and settings for transition

5.1.   Once decisions about a young person's transition have been made (e.g. to which provider and to which course) it is important to prepare young people, parents and carers and post-16 settings for the chosen transition. The key elements of effective practice, issues to consider, and examples of effective practice are outlined in this section and are summarised in Table 4 in the appendix.

Preparing and empowering young people and parents and carers

Effective practice

5.2.   The Code of Practice, interviewees and literature reviewed for this study (e.g. Sloper, et al, 2010) all highlight the importance of preparing young people and parents and carers for transition. This is a key feature of effective practice because transition necessarily involves change. It is important to identify the potential impact of changes (including potential barriers to transition) and prepare young people and parents and carers for these. As outlined later in this section, it can also be important to minimise the disruption learners experience at transition by, for example, effective preparation, including making changes to provision and support, in order to meet learners' needs.[42]

5.3.   Empowering learners is an important feature of preparation because learners themselves play the key role in sustaining transitions and progressing in education. Although not a strong feature of the Code of Practice and rarely highlighted by interviewees for this study, learners' social and emotional skills, such as self-efficacy, have been identified by other research as particularly important (Milsom et al., 2004; Cummings, Maddux and Casey, 2000).

Issues to consider and examples of effective practice

5.4.   Young people with LDD and their parents or carers can find the prospect of leaving school very unsettling. As Arwenna's story (below) illustrates, transition from special school, or special needs unit, to mainstream college can be particularly challenging for some learners.

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[42] This can be considered a "person" rather than "service" centred approach, which changes provision and support to meet the needs of young people, rather than expecting young people to adapt to services (or provision),

Arwenna's story

For the last five years Arwenna had been in a class with the same five other pupils. They knew each other extremely well and there was a very supportive team working with them. Although in a mainstream school, Arwenna spent all her time in the small and self-contained special needs unit. She was looking forward to transition and visited two colleges. She chose the college that most pupils from the school go to and the course they usually follow. However, when she started she was completely overwhelmed with the numbers in the class, and the boisterous behaviour of some of the other students. She could not cope and nearly dropped out, but her mother was able to intervene and she moved onto a different course, with a smaller, quieter student group with dedicated classroom support.

5.5. The problems learners can experience during transition are often rooted in barriers such as:
- attitudinal or dispositional issues related to learners' thinking and feelings, such as fear and anxiety about change;
- social and emotional issues, related to having to adjust to new people and relate to other students;
- institutional issues, related to the way the setting is organised, such as the support available; and
- situational issues, related to learners' needs and circumstances, such as the need to travel and a young person's ability to travel independently.

5.6. Once identified and understood, as the college case study (below) illustrates, these barriers can be addressed by, for example:
- providing information and advice to learners and their parents or carers;
- working with learners to empower them by building their skills (such as self-efficacy) and resilience, meaning they are better able to overcome barriers themselves; and/or
- working with learning settings, providers and services to improve their practices (addressing institutional barriers and improving the support offered to learners).

Involving parents in preparing for college transitions

One college described the range of steps taken to ensure that the young person and parents/carers are well informed and have a good relationship with the college. These steps included:
- sending college staff to the learner's school to see how the learner works in the school environment (up to five working days);
- summer term visits to the campus by the carers/parents and young person to become acquainted with buildings and the general environment;
- providing a support worker who has similar interests to the young

> person (e.g. hobbies such as art); these support workers also have mobile phone numbers of parents/carers so can easily contact them, which they often do in the first few months;
> - parents visiting the college for two periods on their own and viewing their child at college in order to provide feedback on any improvements the college could make; and
> - encouraging parents to meet, talk and support each other.
>
> A transition advisor described how she worked with another college to hold informal parent sessions following a year when transitions had been badly handled. She knew that parents may hear bad stories from the previous year, so worked with the college to ensure that the same mistakes were not repeated, and to reassure parents that their experiences would be very different.

5.7.   Many barriers to transition can be overcome by settings working together. Partnerships between settings, such as schools and colleges, were seen by all stakeholders as important. Collaboration and systems leadership (which both underpin effective partnership working) are discussed further later in this section.

Bridging and link activities: issues to consider and examples of effective practice

5.8.   The most commonly identified examples of how barriers to transition were being addressed were bridging and link activities (illustrated by the examples below), which were seen as providing opportunities for learners and, in some cases, their parents or carers, to get used to the new environment and build their confidence within it.

> **Examples of link and transition activities**
>
> A college described how they arrange college visits for learners with LDD in order to give learners more advice, to let them meet other prospective students and get a real feel for what it is like to be at college. They can provide six or seven sessions in college before learners start their new course to help them adjust to college life. Some schools send a support worker who is well known by the learner to ensure they have a familiar face with them for the first few visits. They also encourage parents to bring learners into college to use the canteen and other facilities, so they can get used to the whole college environment.
>
> Young people from one school start visiting the local college in year ten. They take part in taster sessions and college activities, such as using their kitchen for cooking lessons. At a later stage in the year the learners will participate in two college induction days which will include being picked up at school by the college minibus and meeting staff and other learners applying for the course. Crucially, they also have the opportunity to meet and talk with previous pupils who now attend the college, about their experiences. The college has a

specialist teaching facility and supported studies team, about which learners and their parents/carers are informed, which helps to further ease concerns regarding transition.

Another school runs social events to bring together learners from a number of different special schools who are planning to attend the same college so they can get to know each other before making the transition.

In a third school, staff support learners to attend interviews and taster sessions at colleges and universities. They see the importance for a successful transition of having a good relationship with key staff within these institutions as it facilitates the process of arranging transition activities. Informal contact with key staff is encouraged, which continues whilst the young person is still settling within the institution. Where feasible, the school adapts its level of support according to need; for example, one young person with particular needs had 20 visits to the college before transition, going from initially just standing outside the college, to progressing on to a taster course.

5.9.   As well as setting-focused bridging activities, which help learners prepare for moving, there are activities that focus on the type of barrier that particular LDDs present; for example, Cardiff University has a programme for learners with autistic spectrum disorders to help prepare them for HE and student life, including attending a summer school[43] which focuses on the social and self management aspects of university life.

Transport for learners: Issues to consider and examples of effective practice

5.10.   Transport and travel was seen as an important factor in transition planning; for example, as one college reported: "*transport is a major barrier, if [learners] cannot use public transport or parents do not want them to*". The size of some colleges, which often recruit from several LAs with differing policies on access to transport, was also reported to cause problems for some learners.

5.11.   In 2011 the Welsh Government commissioned research to investigate the provision of transport for young people aged 19-25 with additional needs (Thornthwaite, 2011). The research, as reported in Townsley et al. (2013) identified that:
- "transport to and from college is difficult to source and fund for young people aged 19 and over;
- local authorities have different rules about providing and/or funding transport;
- local authorities often do not fully understand young people's needs when making decisions about whether or not to fund transport;
- decisions by local authorities about eligibility for transport to college can be made very late and sometimes days before the new term starts;

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[43] http://www.cardiff.ac.uk/news/view/33005-summer-school

- some colleges provide transport and sometimes this is free of charge. However this is not the case for all colleges;
- there is a lack of information to clarify the local offer made by colleges and local authorities; and
- in the absence of funding for transport, the task falls to family carers. Sometimes this means that learners may not be able to take up places they have been offered at college".

5.12. In addition to these barriers, learners may struggle to have the confidence or skill to use transport services. The value of projects like *Real Opportunities* that provided travel training, helping learners develop the confidence and skills to use public transport, was emphasised both by parents and professionals.

Preparing settings for transition

Effective practice:

5.13. The SEN Code of Practice, interviewees and literature reviewed for this study (Milson, Akos & Thompson 2010, Sloper et al. 2010) all highlight the importance of post 16 learning settings preparing for learners' transitions. This is a key feature of effective practice because colleges, WBL providers and universities may have to prepare for learners with LDD in a variety of ways including:

- physical adaptations (for example, ensuring wheel chair access);
- changes in working practices (for example responding to the needs of some learners for quieter learning spaces); and
- changes in workforces (such as recruitment and training to ensure that there is adequate support and staff have the knowledge required).

5.14. Preparation requires a thorough understanding of learners' needs (e.g. through an exchange of information with schools) and time to implement changes, which we discuss further below. Funding is available from the Welsh Government to assist colleges and WBL providers in making their provision accessible to learners with LDD.

Exchange of information: Issues to consider and examples of effective practice

5.15. The most commonly identified ways in which colleges prepared for transition was by finding out about the young person's aspirations and needs. As the example below illustrates, this was done through attendance at review meetings, the sharing of plans and documents, such as individual plans,

Learning and Skills Plans (LSPs)[44], personal communication passports and statements of SEN, and discussion with SENCos. For example, as a Careers Wales advisor explained the LSP *"will contain information on any support they [the young person] need going forward to college"* and as one college explained: "*the meetings with schools have greatly improved transition"*. In a small number of cases, professionals also identified examples of where they had spent time with a young person, planning to come to their setting and/or talking to parents or carers and other professionals, in preparation for the learner's transition.

5.16. This exchange of information was reported as sometimes continuing after transition; for example one school explained: "*links continue beyond the transition phase and informal contact continues for a few months whilst the young person settles down. The SENCo has visited the college on occasions to address specific issues with a learner"*.

Identifying and preparing for learners transitions

One college explained that if an applicant puts their LDD on their application then the college goes back to the school for more information. They try to attend as many reviews as possible and aim to meet with the ALNCo in all schools in their region (roughly 30 in total) and will also email schools to find out more information.

They discuss all their learners with LDD with schools and what their requirements are. This includes finding out their exam access support needs, what support the school thinks the student will need, and identifying if there is anything additional the school could tell them that would assist in helping them meet the learner's needs. They focus primarily on the support the learner has been given in the last two years, to ensure that their approach is relevant and up to date.

Another college explained that they go out to the schools in year nine when they get information from ALN annual reviews. In year ten they are involved in more depth and detail. Personal tutors and the transition support team visit schools to gather as much information as they can. They collect information from the schools, child and adolescent mental health services (CAMHS) and any other agencies involved with the young person. They reported that they have an excellent network with their partners but attending all the meetings can be challenging.

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[44] As outlined in section three, a section 140 assessment is undertaken by Careers Wales on behalf of Welsh Ministers, for young people with a statement of SEN, expected to make a transition to post-16 education and training. The quality of assessments depends to a large degree upon the quality of information put forward by, for example, a school, and as one teacher described it, they worked closely with Careers Wales "to make sure the learning skills plan is right".

5.17. The types of information that were particularly valued by professionals included a young person's preferences as well as their needs (such as "I like.. I don't like....") and knowledge about what works for them (such as teaching styles and approaches).

5.18. Universities reported greater difficulties in securing the information needed to plan learner support. If a prospective student does not detail their needs in the application, the university may have no information until after they have started their course. It was explained that the processes involved in identification of needs at a university can be very slow and there is a distinct advantage to students coming with appropriately documented evidence of needs.

The time needed to prepare: issues to consider and examples of effective practice

5.19. Parents and carers described how learning and skills development may not be a smooth process, with learners sometimes changing radically in a short time following a long period of static development, so that their needs and aspirations may need to be revised. This means that there is a tension between the need to maintain a flexible approach throughout the transition planning process that allows learners to change their aspirations, and leaving enough time to ensure settings, learners and their parents and carers are ready for the chosen transition.

5.20. Problems can also arise when there are delays in, for example, securing funding for the preferred transition, which limits the time available for preparation (see e.g. Townsley et al., 2013). Similarly, the competitive nature of student applications to college or university can make it hard to plan ahead. Universities, for example, raised the difficulties that can arise when a young person is accepted through clearing but all the suitable accommodation for someone with his or her needs has been allocated.

Collaboration between schools, post 16 learning settings and services

Effective practice

5.21. As outlined in section four, transitions necessarily involve change, and collaboration between schools, post-16 learning settings and other service providers is therefore a key feature of effective practice (Kaehne and Beyer, 2009; Sloper et al., 2010). Collaboration enables the preparatory work necessary to plan for, facilitate and then sustain a young person's transition and their progression in learning (the subject of the next section).

Issues to consider and examples of effective practice

5.22. There are good examples (including those outlined in this section) of schools and FE or HE institutions working together to share information and prepare for transitions (see also Estyn, 2015a). Nevertheless there are dangers, where collaboration between two institutions means learners are channelled from one to the other without adequate consideration being given to alternatives. Effective collaboration also requires active partners, and systems leadership, discussed below, may be necessary where one partner is not actively engaged and fails to fulfil their responsibilities.

Systems Leadership

Effective practice

5.23. The research and analysis for this study emphasises the importance of "systems leadership": leadership that goes beyond the boundaries of individual institutions (such as schools, colleges or transition services) (Hopkins, 2007; The Innovation Unit, et al, 2007). System leadership is a key feature of effective practice because:

- transitions necessarily involve moves between institutions and require collaboration between them, in order ensure that learners' transitions are smooth and successful;
- practice across the system is variable (and system leaders have a potentially key role in driving up standards within and across institutions); and
- the structure of transition opportunities open to learners is not fixed and "system leaders" have a key role in improving opportunities and extending young people's choices.

5.24. Similarly, as Estyn identify in their 2013-2014 annual report:
    ...the ability of leaders to think beyond their own institution is a key feature of what continues to be required to improve education and training in Wales....
    (Estyn, 2015a, p.16).

Issues to consider and examples of effective practice

5.25. A range of people can act as system leaders. They could include school and college leaders, SENCOs, 14-19 Network Coordinators, local authority educational advisory or inclusion officers and key workers.

5.26.　At the level of an individual learner, PCP encourages system leadership. It can focus attention on both the young person (rather than their setting/service) and the "big picture", and enable contributors to look beyond their individual role and the next step, to long term outcomes.

5.27.　Where one partner in the transition process is not fulfilling their responsibilities it is important that other partners exercise "system leadership" and take responsibility for trying to improve the situation (rather than accepting it). For example this could include colleges taking a lead in improving transition planning in schools where this is weak. Nevertheless, there are often limits to the extent to which individuals involved in transition planning can exercise system leadership. They may, for example, lack the formal or informal authority needed to lead change. Strategic initiatives like Real Opportunities, discussed below, can be critical in fostering the shared vision, creating the opportunities for collaboration and building the capacity, needed to enable systems leadership.

Real Opportunities
The *Real Opportunities Project* (2010-2014) provided a model of systems leadership with transition key workers providing a co-ordinating role that included: "managing communication between staff involved with the family; direct work on person-centred planning development and in transition reviews; action planning and sign-posting to other services; supporting visits to post-school options such as colleges; and travel training" (Beyer and Kaehne, 2013a). (Beyer et al., 2014, p.11).   Transition key workers co-ordinated services and took responsibility for following up to ensure that people did what they had promised. Their focus was the family and the learner.   *https://www.realopportunities.org.uk*

5.28.　Targets, which are important in driving up standards and providing accountability, can also be a barrier to systems thinking when they create (perverse) incentives to focus solely on post-school transition, or attainment in particular settings, at the expense of outcomes for young people over the long term and across the system as a whole. We discuss this further in section seven.

6. Supporting learners' progression following transition

6.1.   As outlined in the previous section, the exchange of knowledge about a young person's needs and preferences is important. This contributes to assessments of a young person's needs (which may require learning, practical and/or pastoral support) and the identification of potential barriers to learners' progression in further or higher education, which this section focuses upon. The key elements of effective practice, issues to consider, and examples of effective practice are outlined in this section and are summarised in Table 5 in the appendix.

Identifying, assessing and meeting learners' needs (following transition)

Effective practice

6.2.   Young people's needs can change (e.g. as a consequence of transition) and an ongoing, regularly updated and holistic assessment of need, focused upon the whole young person (including both learning and personal needs[45]) was identified by both parents and providers as a key feature of effective practice. It is a key feature of effective practice as unless a young person's academic and pastoral needs are identified, and planned for, their prospects for progression are diminished, their risk of disengagement from learning increases and their experiences of further and higher education are much more likely to be negative.

Holistic assessments of need: issues to consider and examples of effective practice

6.3.   Research into the ALN pilots[46] indicates that the Individual Development Plans (IDPs) that were piloted can make an important contribution to holistic assessments (WG, 2013b). The IDPs developed by the pilots included a one page profile which summarises what is important to and for the learner. This was valued as it can provide a quick overview for new teaching and support staff. Where individual plans, modelled upon the IDPs[47] developed by the pilot, were being used by settings in this study, they were reported by interviewees to be valuable, because they focused on all aspects of a young person's needs and allowed them to clearly identify the support they wanted.

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[45] Young people with learning difficulties or disabilities making transitions can have a range of other needs, such as social and emotional needs, associated with coping with transitions, and practical needs, associated with, for example, the transition toward independent living.
[46] The research has been published at http://gov.wales/statistics-and-research/programme-action-research-additional-learning-needs-pilot/?lang=en
[47] The content and purpose of IDPs has not yet been agreed and they are not yet officially recognised documents.

6.4. Similarly, one college explained how it develops social and academic profiles of the young people in order to get an understanding of what they like and what they do not, and review them for the college environment.

6.5. Section 140 Assessments are particularly important where post-16 learning settings lack expertise, and/or links to specialist SEN services are able to identify and assess more complex learning difficulties or disabilities. Careers Wales advisors, who draw up the assessments, are very reliant upon the quality of information provided by schools. There can be problems when assessments are, for example, based upon statements of SEN, which are out of date, or which do not provide sufficient detail on the type of provision required to meet the young person's needs. Some parents expressed particular concerns where the person writing the assessment does not even meet the young person involved.

Adjusting provision to meet needs: examples of effective practice

6.6. In order to meet needs, settings adopt a range of strategies including:
- using Section 140 Assessments and the Learning and Skills Plan (LSP) to ensure that the right support is in place and, where necessary, additional funding is sought;
- sharing knowledge within the institution (to ensure that all those working with learners understand their needs and preferences), for example, by using a college database that details each learner's needs and effective teaching strategies to meet them;
- developing specialist skills and knowledge (where needed), for example, some colleges have a network of specialist lecturers who work with specific LDDs and/or draw in specialist services where needed; and
- through adaptations (making "reasonable adjustments") and using technology[48].

Identifying and supporting young people at risk of disengagement

Effective practice

6.7. In some cases learners' needs are either not identified before they make a transition or change following a transition, increasing their risk of disengagement from learning[49]. For example, needs that may be adequately

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[48] For example, The Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama uses JAWS Screen Reader, Zoom Text Magnification, Sibelius Music Notation and Sonar sequencing and recording as part of "an Introduction to Music Technology for Visually Impaired Musicians": through First Campus.
[49] For example, the loss of structure when young people make a transition from school may mean they struggle to cope, and new needs emerge.

met in school, may not emerge as an issue to be addressed, until changes in support and provision following transition, mean they become apparent. Failures to identify and meet needs is likely to increase the risk of disengagement, can impede progression and is likely to impact negatively upon learners' experiences. Identifying and supporting learners needs, and in particular, identifying those at risk of disengagement, is therefore another key feature of effective practice.

Examples of effective practice

6.8.   Initiatives such as <u>The Youth Engagement and Progression Framework</u> (YEPF) (Welsh Government, 2013d) which aims to identify and then support young people who are at risk of disengaging, or who have already disengaged, from education or training have a key role to play here. Guidance from the Welsh Government in effective practice in lead working will be published soon.

Supporting learners' progression

Effective practice

6.9.   Most parents and carers and professionals interviewed for this study stressed that transitions should enable and support learners' progression in learning (i.e. enable learners to continue and extend prior learning, rather than repeating it). Some argued that consolidation of learning and skills by, for example, continuing at the same academic level, was also legitimate and could be considered a form of progression where skills were becoming embedded and functional in different settings[50]. Progression is a key feature of effective practice because without it the value of continuing in education is questionable and, in some cases, it will be appropriate to stop, because a learner is no longer making progress.

Issues to consider and examples of effective practice

6.10. Progression can be understood as the outcome of three factors:
   - the curriculum 'offer' (e.g. the level and type of courses open to a learner and the links or pathways between and across courses);

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[50] Similarly Kaehne & Bayer (2009a, p139) report that: "One criticism of the strong push to further education after leaving school for this group is that skills acquired during school years are not being developed further in further education institutions. Indeed there is a widespread concern amongst teachers that skill levels of young people leaving special school actually decrease in further education ... This is significant as acquired skills require continuous reinforcement for many young people with learning disabilities in order to be readily available in employment contexts."

- the choices learners – and their parents or carers – make about progression (e.g. the settings and courses they choose); and
- learners' capacity (e.g. their ability to meet the academic and social demands of a course and to progress to the next level).

6.11. The factors are interlinked (e.g. learner capacity and the curriculum offer can influence learner choices) and a 'weakness' in any one of these three factors, can block or impede progression.

6.12. Learning settings, and where applicable other services such as Careers Wales, have a key role in ensuring that:
- the curriculum offer enables and supports progression, in line with both the young person's needs and aspirations and the demands of the labour market;
- Information and guidance enables and supports informed choices; and
- Learners' needs are identified, assessed and addressed, in order to maximise learners' capacity to progress, and learners' aspirations are understood.

6.13. Stakeholders interviewed for this study, including representatives of FEIs and parents and carers differed in the value they placed on vertical progression (i.e. learners progressing from a lower level to higher level course). Some felt that this was important and that if learners were not progressing vertically, it was not appropriate for them to continue. However, others felt that continuing at the same level (e.g. by repeating a course) could provide horizontal (or lateral) 'progression' and be appropriate where for example a learner was consolidating skills and knowledge and/or building confidence. It was reported though that it was difficult to secure funding for horizontal progression.

6.14. Some parents and carers raised concerns about learners' apparent lack of progression. In part, this reflects a long standing concern that progression within FE provision is: "often perceived to be lateral with a sense of "marking time" rather than genuine preparation for independent living" (NAfW, 2007). It also reflects broader weakness in progression planning (and support) in FE, which means too few learners progress from entry and level 1 courses (Estyn, 2015a).

6.15. More positively, research for this study identified examples of provision that were developing and extending learners' skills and knowledge. As the examples below illustrate, in most cases this depended upon settings working together through, for example, *Learning Pathways 14-19* or other projects.

> **ALN partnerships**
>
> The special school is in an ALN partnership group along with other schools and the local college. The partnership was established to increase the number of young people that successfully transferred to the college and this aim has proved successful with many more young people with LDD now accessing mainstream courses within the college. Key factors which enabled this included :
> - funding through the 14-19 Learning Pathway[51] has been accessed to enable students to become accustomed to the local college environment by visiting the college on a weekly basis before they decide whether or not to attend.
> - the college established a "bridging the gap" course especially for young people with LDD and the school has changed its curriculum to fit in with the course, for example, placing a greater emphasis on improving students' basic skills.
> - regular communication with the college to update on what steps the school and college can take to support successful transition.

Barriers to young people's progression

6.16. The study identified a number of barriers that could mean young people's aspirations and/or needs were not met and they struggled to progress (these were drawn from both the fieldwork and literature reviewed). It is important that these are considered and, where likely to occur, planning how to overcome or minimise the barriers is undertaken. Barriers included:
- a limited curriculum offer and, in particular, the often limited range of post-16 options for young people with learning difficulties or disabilities, including:
  - a narrow range of entry and level 1 qualifications from which it was often difficult to progress;
  - the lack of alternative provision, such as WBL (discussed further below) and social development programmes;
  - the shortage of specialist provision for some types of LDD, such as provision for young people with severe or mild learning difficulties (Townsley et al., 2014; WG, 2010) or those with some physical disabilities;
- weaknesses in the identification and assessment of learners needs (which constrained learners' capacity to progress), including a lack of collaboration between settings, so that learner needs were not fully understood and/or prior learning was not taken into account;
- weaknesses in the support offered to learners (which also constrained learners' capacity to progress), including:

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[51] WG (2004b).

- low or limited expectations of young people with disabilities on the part of professionals, including tutors in mainstream provision who may lack confidence in their ability to support young people;
- young people's access to therapies such as speech and language therapy being cut following their transitions from special school to college (Townsley et al., 2013; NAfW, 2007); and
- providers who were struggling to adapt old buildings to meet the needs of young people, and who had difficulties accessing funding for this (Townsley et al., 2013).

- the choices learners and their families made, including in particular, low or limited aspirations on the part of young people and/or families, sometimes linked to the lack of role models and poor information, advice and guidance, but also to factors such as families' fears about the impact of choices upon the family as a whole.[52]

Access to funding: issues to consider

6.17. In relation to support, it was also reported that some providers and/or young people had not taken up the support /funding that is available, such as Disabled Students' Allowance (DSA)[53], or funding for personal and social care, to help meet needs. The main reasons given were that learners or their families were either unaware of the support/funding or because the requirements linked to the funding (such as the cost of a diagnostic assessment[54]) discouraged them from applying for it[55].

6.18. The issues related to DSA are complicated[56]. Diagnostic evidence has always been required for DSA eligibility purposes (i.e. this has not changed) although responsibility for assessments has been transferred from local authorities to the Student Loans Company (which may have led to changes in the way assessments are undertaken). It was also reported that there seems to be little understanding that a post 16 assessment is required for DSA and so by the time some learners find out, it is too late to get the support in place for the start of the course. An FEI or HEI can consider putting the required support in place, while a learner makes an application (they should consider their duty of

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[52] For example, it was reported that some families were fearful that progression could limit a young person's and in some cases the family's eligibility for disability related benefits.

[53] There were also reported to be problems associated with funding for personal and social care (see also e.g. Townsley et al., 2013) which led some providers to refuse to take on young people.

[54] A post 16 SpLD (review) diagnostic assessment

[55] For example, it was reported that DSA is becoming less flexible, and is only available once a learner is diagnosed and the diagnosis can take up to a year, so young people and providers cannot access support from the beginning when they need it. The cost of assessments (£300-500) is also a concern, particularly for learners from lower income families.

[56] The DSA policy in Wales is under review and a full public consultation is expected early in 2016.

care and reasonable adjustment requirements under the Equality Act), but practice is variable.

6.19. More broadly, funding cuts (despite efforts to protect LDD provision), and changing priorities towards a greater emphasis upon learner progression[57], especially in FE, were reported to have limited the options open to young people. Moreover, cuts in specialist services such as speech and language therapy, adult day services and voluntary sector provision, were all also reported to have made it more difficult to meet young people's non-academic needs (see also NEF 2012 on the impact of cuts).

Work Based Learning: issues to consider

6.20. In relation to the curriculum offer, the potential for WBL provision to support young people's transitions to employment, when coupled with enhanced support, has been identified (see e.g. Beyer, et al, 2014; Kaehne and Beyer, 2013b). However interviewees, particularly from Careers Wales, identified that their knowledge of WBL provision was more limited than their knowledge of other types of college based FE provision. The range of provision offered was also felt to be limited in some areas and some WBL providers acknowledged that they lacked expertise and experience of working with young people with LDD.

The transition from post-16 education and training

6.21. Much of the literature reviewed for this study stresses that transition from one educational setting to another should be a means to achieving or realising a learner's long term aspirations, highlighting in particular employment and, to a lesser degree, independence (Dyke et al., 2013; Dunn et al., 2012; Kaehne and Beyer, 2009b; EASNIE, 2012; Gebhardt et al., 2011; Williams, 2008; Blalock and Patton, 1996). However, the lack of statutory support for these post education transitions has been identified as a cause for concern (Kaehne & Beyer, 2009b) and it was reported that the limited options for post-FE transitions could undermine the work done in FE.

6.22. A number of interviewees also reported that planning for young people who were not going on to education or employment (for example, those going to adult day services) was often weak. The quality of provision was also a concern. For example, for some young people, the transition from education to day services could be perceived as a "step backwards" (Martin et al., 2011).

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[57] For example, a number of interviewees reported that college provision had changed so that young people who could stay on courses for years previously, can now only go for one year unless they can demonstrate progress to a higher level.

As one interviewee put it: *"it breaks our hearts that they get all these skills and then end up in 'day care'"*.

6.23. Failures to make successful transitions from post 16 education and training can mean young people lose the skills they have acquired and consequently become more disabled. This was a serious concern of some parents. For example, although beyond the scope of this study, both this research and other studies (Beyer et al., 2014; Gebhardt et al., 2011; Dunn et al., 2012) indicate that employment outcomes for young people with LDD leaving education are poor. [58]

6.24. Nevertheless, some parents interviewed for this study were more focused on social and communication development than vocational skills, since most consulted for this study did not expect their child ever to work. College was valued therefore for the social skills it was supporting, even if it was not expected to lead to employment. One interviewee also stressed that young people with LDD have as much of right to further education, as young people without LDD (implying that entry to employment, is not the only outcome from FE that needs to be considered when assessing whether it is the best option for a young person).

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[58] Some research indicates that FE therefore appears to have a limited impact on entry to the labour market for young people with LDD (Kaehne and Beyer, 2009b).

7. Data: monitoring, evaluation and benchmarking

7.1.   The collection and use of data on young people's experiences and outcomes of transition should be central to efforts to improve experiences and outcomes. This section outlines the data currently collected and proposals for strengthening data collection and/or use.

Data on young people with LDD

7.2.   A range of data is currently collected on the participation, experiences of and outcomes for, young people with SEN/LDD in school, FE and HE; this includes:

- data on the numbers of young people with SEN, and the type of SEN in schools[59];
- data on the participation of young people with LDD in FE (including WBL, their satisfaction with courses, completion rates and destinations)[60];
- data on the participation of young people with a disability in HE[61]; and
- survey data on the proportion of young people aged 16-24 known to be NEET, who have a disability[62].

7.3.   There are reported to be significant improvements in tracking young people's progress within settings, as a result of initiatives such as the YEPF (discussed in section five) but there has been little improvement in tracking young people's progression as they move from one setting to another (Welsh Government 2014b). Data collection systems and databases differ for schools and FE, meaning it is therefore difficult to track the progress of individual young people with LDD as they move from school to FE and HE[63]. There are two principle reasons for this:

- differences in the definitions of SEN and LDD, and the way in which data on young people's SEN or LDD is recorded (which make it difficult to compare data on young people with SEN or LDD in different types of setting[64]); and

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[59] PLASC. Available at: https://statswales.wales.gov.uk/Catalogue/Education-and-Skills/Schools-and-Teachers/Schools-Census/Pupil-Level-Annual-School-Census/Special-Educational-Needs

[60] Careers Wales destination survey, PLASC, Lifelong Learning Wales Record, Learner Voice Survey (in FE).

[61] HESA data.

[62] Annual population survey. Results available at: http://gov.wales/statistics-and-research/young-people-not-education-employment-training/?lang=en

[63] Sloper et al (2010) recognise that in many instances FE providers do not undertake the same assessment processes as health or social care services, and transition workers have not always been involved in assessment and planning for FE. .

[64] This means, for example, that it is not possible to directly compare data on the proportions of learners with SEN and LDD in schools and FE (in order to estimate the proportions of young people with SEN, making transitions to FE).

- weaknesses in the data that is collected, including inconsistencies in the recording of SEN or LDD and incomplete data (e.g. on learner destinations, or where young people are required to disclose their disability, and may choose not to) (Estyn, 2007; NAW, 2013; WG, 2012[65]).

7.4.   There are also problems identifying (or tracking) what happens to learners after they leave further education. Although Careers Wales destination surveys provide a reasonable picture of destination after year 11, they "only capture leavers' immediate destinations and do not provide any sense of their longer term progression" (p. 9, ibid.). Data on older age groups is even weaker. For example, destinations data compiled by FE colleges "are not thought to be particularly reliable" (p. 10, ibid; see also Estyn, 2015a).

7.5.   In addition, some limited data on transition planning processes is collected and published through Estyn inspections of settings and LA education services for children and young people. However, data on transition arrangements is not systematically collected by Estyn. Although Estyn inspect both schools and post 16 providers, inspection of and reporting on transition arrangements is not an explicit feature of the Common Inspection Framework (although it can feature under areas such as ALN provision and partnership working). Moreover, the data that is available (on transition arrangements) from Estyn inspections, is fragmented across multiple reports, making it difficult to use for benchmarking. The recent Estyn Review of learner support services in further education colleges for learners aged 16-19 (Estyn, 2015a), is therefore very welcome.

Monitoring and benchmarking data

7.6.   As outlined in section five, monitoring individual young people's experiences and progression is important (and is a key feature of effective practice). It helps ensure that problems, which may impede a young person's progression and may even lead to their disengagement from learning, are swiftly identified and addressed. Monitoring of individual young people's progression has improved although, as outlined above, monitoring of their progression as they move from one setting to another remains much weaker.

7.7.   Monitoring groups of young people's experiences and progression is important (and is also a key feature of effective practice). It helps ensure that systemic weaknesses which affect groups of young people can be swiftly identified and addressed.

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[65] http://gov.wales/statistics-and-research/scoping-study-collection-further-education-destinations-data/?lang=en

7.8.   Monitoring and evaluating provision is also important (and is also a key feature of effective practice) and should complement monitoring of outcomes. It can, for example, help identify weakness before they have a negative impact upon young people's experiences and outcomes. For example, a literature review conducted by the European Agency for Special Needs and Education found that the use of defined measurements of progress for learners and collection of data in line with this was the factor most closely associated with good provision by professionals (EASNIE, 2012).

7.9.   Benchmarking should help highlight how practice and outcomes compare with the best (and is also a key feature of effective practice). This is particularly important because the study illustrated a concern amongst parents and some professionals about a "post-code lottery" effect in relation to provision for, and experiences of, transition.

7.10.   Despite its importance, very little monitoring and benchmarking related specifically to LDD transition arrangements (other than that gathered by Estyn and CSSIW), or to the outcomes and experience of groups of young people were identified by this study, although it was an area that settings and services were interested in developing. Areas in which data collection and its use might be improved are identified below and in Table 6 in the appendix.

What can the existing data tell us?

7.11.   The existing data provides information about the experiences of those young people with LDD who progress to FE, and also some information about the numbers of young people who make different types of transitions, including those who become NEET.

Young people's experiences of further education

7.12.   Evidence from the Learner Voice Wales Survey (2013) indicates that for those who make a transition to FE the experiences of around two thirds of young people with LDD are either good or very good in relation to the selected measures, covering areas such as information, advice and guidance and support. The proportion reporting poor or very poor experiences is typically small, at around 5 percent of young people. This is consistent with Estyn's findings that "Nearly all learners with additional learning needs receive good, well-planned support as they progress from school to a further education institution. " (p. 3, Estyn, 2015a).

7.13.   The Learner Voice Wales Survey results 2013, covering students with LDD in their first and second year of college, show a similar response to each

question and greatest satisfaction with the help they had to settle in (around 85 percent rated "very good" or "good") and least satisfaction with the information and guidance on offer about options after course completion (around 70 percent rated "very good" or "good"). In addition, the majority (around 85 percent) of students in both year groups thought the course or training was either what they expected or roughly what they expected.

7.14. The completion rates amongst pupils with a LDD are similar to all other students (they are high). More detailed analyses of completion rates in terms of subject show a similar pattern; for example "Agriculture, Horticulture and Animal Care" has amongst the highest completion rates (around 95 percent) for students with LDD and other students, whilst "Science and Maths" has the lowest (around 89 percent). Overall, there is little variation in completion rates according to subject area.

Table 2: Completion rates for students with a LDD enrolled at FE institutions compared with other students

Students	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13
LDD	92%	91%	93%
Others	90%	91%	92%

Source: LLWR 2014

Young people who fail to make a successful transition from school

7.15. Anecdotal evidence (from for example Careers Wales advisors, YEPF Engagement and Progression Coordinators (EPCs) and YEPF lead workers) suggests that the proportion of young people with LDD who are NEET is disproportionately high. Although data on the number of young people with LDD who are NEET is not systematically collected, an estimate of young people with a disability (a broader category than LDD), who are NEET[66] is available through survey data. This highlights the much higher proportion of young people with disabilities who are NEET (and is consistent with the anecdotal evidence of the relative proportion of young people with LDD who are NEET):

- the proportion of young people aged 16-18 years with a disability[67], who are NEET (18%), is nine percentage points higher than the proportion of young people, aged 16-18 who do not have a disability, who are NEET (9%); and

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[66] Specific data on young people with a learning difficulty or disability who are known to be NEET is not available. http://gov.wales/statistics-and-research/young-people-not-education-employment-training/?lang=en

[67] Specific data on young people with a learning difficulty or disability who are known to be NEET is not available.

- the proportion of young people aged 19-24 years with a disability[68], who are NEET (43%), is 26 percentage points higher that the proportion of young people, aged 16-18 who do not have a disability, who are NEET (16%).

Improving data collection and use

7.16.   As outlined in <u>Table 6</u> in the appendix, in order to strengthen monitoring and evaluation (including benchmarking), there should be a focus upon:
- standards and processes (such as compliance with the SEN Code of Practice and the elements of good practice outlined in <u>Table 3</u>, <u>Table 4</u> and <u>Table 5</u>);
- outcomes or results (such as young people's achievements); and
- stakeholders' experiences (what it felt like, perceptions) (DoH, 2010).

7.17.   As <u>Table 6</u> in the appendix, illustrates, there is considerable scope to make better use of existing data on outcomes (despite weaknesses and gaps). Improvements in, for example, the accuracy of recording and reporting of learners SEN/LDD, and in the collection of data on destinations after further education, could enhance the value of this data further. Nevertheless, there are gaps in the data. These relate, in particular, to:
- standards and processes, which could potentially be addressed by developing the way Estyn inspects transition arrangements; and
- stakeholders' experiences, which could potentially be addressed by settings collecting data on stakeholders' experiences (see <u>Table 6</u> in the appendix for details).

Developing population accountability

7.18.   A key challenge for evaluation and benchmarking is the range of organisations and stakeholders which contribute to outcomes (and also stakeholders' experiences). Models such as results-based accountability, which distinguish between "performance" and "population" accountability can be important here, but risk making no-one accountable for population outcomes. Without clear accountability structures, data can be collected without being effectively used. LAs (or Local Service Boards) could take on a key role here, and be held accountable for recording outcomes of young people with LDD. Accountability structures developed by LAs for reporting on outcomes for looked after children (e.g. where officers report to elected members) and young people who are, or who are at risk of becoming, NEET

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[68] Specific data on young people with a learning difficulty or disability who are known to be NEET is not available.

(e.g. where results are reported to "NEET Boards"), may be relevant as models that could be emulated or developed.

7.19. A focus upon population, as well as performance accountability, would help support proposals around 'market' shaping and developing post-16 options, to ensure the learning offer meets the interests and aspirations of young people with LDD. It would also support efforts to ensure that college is not the default option in the absence of alternatives, but is a positive choice.

8. Conclusions

Practice across Wales

8.1. The evidence collected for this study and other research suggests that transition arrangements for learners with LDD are generally good and are improving, but there is scope for improvement and practice remains inconsistent, contributing to good and bad experiences (Estyn 2015a, 2015b).

8.2. This study makes it clear that there is no panacea; the weaknesses of transition planning are well understood, long-standing and multiple in nature. Equally, the examples of good practice are also well understood and multiple in nature. In broad terms, positive transitions are associated with:
- starting early and the development of inclusive, person-centred planning processes;
- a focus upon the long term, with effective action planning and preparation for transitions as part of this; and
- mainstream and targeted services adapting their "offer" to meet young people's needs and aspirations .

8.3. Conversely, negative transitions are associated with the absence of one or more of these; for example, the limitations of provision means that some young people with LDD, particularly those with some physical disabilities, autism, severe learning difficulties and/or behavioural, emotional and social difficulties, can find it hard to access provision that meets their needs and can cater for their aspirations.

Differing experiences of transitions

8.4. Because practice is variable, the experiences of learners with LDD, and their families, depend in part upon the settings they are making transitions from and to and the support services they can access (i.e. some settings and services are more effective than others). This creates what has been described as a "post-code lottery" for learners with SEN/LDD (NAfW, 2007).

8.5. Experiences also differ for different groups of young people. Those whose experiences were seen as being worse than those of others included:
- young people whose multiple needs could not easily be met by existing services, such as some young people with autism (see e.g. NAfW, 2010), severe learning difficulties (Townsley et al., 2013) and/or behavioural, emotional and social difficulties;
- young people with mild to moderate difficulties whose needs may not be severe enough to enable them to access specialist support, but who struggle to cope in mainstream provision; and

- looked after children (with LDD), with examples of how looked after young people may have experienced multiple moves during critical periods, and of concerns about the potential conflict of interest where the corporate parent (the LA) would have to decide on whether to fund costly provision for the learner.

8.6.   In addition, the evidence gathered by this study[69] suggests that overall, parents' and carers' experiences appear to be worse than those of young people who make a successful transition to FE[70], because, for example, of parents and carers greater involvement in the often complex, lengthy and challenging bureaucracy of transition planning. This means even if the outcome is positive, the process of getting there has often been difficult. Much transition planning happens 'behind the scenes' and parents and carers often seek to shield young people from the problems and uncertainties they experience, meaning that young people may not be exposed to the problems in transition planning parents and carers are. However, there is not sufficient data from learners and from parents and carers to robustly compare their experiences. It is, for example, possible that parents and carers with the most negative experiences are more likely to contribute to research and reviews.

8.7.   The examples of effective practice outlined in sections three to six, if implemented, should contribute to improvements for all young people (and their parents and carers), including the groups with generally worse experiences. Nevertheless, they may need to be complemented by specific action to, for example, improve post 16 options for young people with LDD and reduce the number of moves for looked after children (with LDD).

8.8.   Negative experiences can also be found where other aspects of a young person's transition, such as the transition from children's to adult services, which often run in parallel to educational transitions, are poor, "clouding" their experiences of educational transitions. Reforms such as the Social Service and Well-Being Act (Wales) should help here.

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[69] This includes evidence from parents and carers interviewed, from SNAP Cymru and from earlier studies and reviews, which have consistently identified the negative experiences of parents and carers (see e.g. WG, 2013c; Sloper, et al, 2010; NAfW, 2010, 2007).
[70] Reflected, for example, in their positive feedback in Learner Voice Surveys, discussed in section seven. In contrast, the experiences of those young people who do not make a successful transition to FE are likely to be poor.

Challenges and opportunities

Implementation of good practice

8.9.   Although, as this study has illustrated, the principle of good practice are well understood, implementation has been patchy across Wales. Understanding why existing policy and guidance (such as The SEN Code of Practice), which covers most areas of effective practice documented by this study, is not being implemented, is therefore important in improving practice. For example, SENCOs in learning settings could assess compliance with the Code, identify barriers, and work with other school leaders to address them. Understanding why existing policy and guidance has not been implemented will also be important in ensuring that the key elements of the proposed SEN reforms, such as person centred practice (discussed below) are implemented.

Person centred practice (discussed below) is central to effective practice, but also creates particular challenges in relation to the implementation of good practice. It means that the principles of good practice (outlined in the report) need to be applied to individuals (whose needs and interests can differ) and implemented in differing contexts. Therefore, effective practice can (and should) differ, depending upon individual stakeholders' interests and aspirations and the context (meaning the principles of the effective practice cannot be 'mechanically' implemented).

Person centred practice

8.10.   Key elements of the SEN reforms, such as PCP and the development of IDPs are expected to help address weaknesses related to poor planning and preparation. This study found that where PCP and plans based upon the IDPs developed by the ALN pilots, were being used (or had been used) their impact on transition planning was positive. Over the next two years, the Welsh Government is funding LAs and FEIs to roll out PCP training and has produced online resources to support PCP. Continuing efforts to promote good practice in relation to person centred transition planning through training and materials (such as good practice guides) is likely to be important. Examples are given in Table 3.

8.11.   Nevertheless, this and other studies illustrate that while PCP is a key feature of effective practice, it is challenging to implement. For example:
   - there remain concerns about the time person-centred processes demand;
   - targets and funding can make it hard for settings and services to respond in person-centred ways; and

- the requirements for flexibility increase the risk of inconsistency and poor practice (which are seen as key weakness of existing arrangements) (WG, 2014a).

8.12. Moreover, it may be easier to implement PCP where practice is already effective. Where there is confidence to empower professionals to take responsibility and use their "best judgment", PCP is likely to be easier to implement and to be more effective. In contrast where there is less confidence in professionals (because for example where existing practice is poor) there may be a case for greater prescription of what should be done, limiting professionals' flexibility, in order to try to improve standards.[71] Workforce development (discussed below), is also likely to be important here.

Systems leadership and systems thinking

8.13. As outlined in section five, transitions necessarily involve collaboration between settings and services, and transitions are more difficult and can end in failure when one or more of the settings and services involved fails. Systems leadership (leadership that goes beyond the boundaries of individual institutions), is therefore vital in improving the transitions of young people with LDD (see Table 4). For example, this could involve schools being more pro-active in identifying issues that further education institutions (FEIs) need to consider and FEIs more proactively engaging with schools to plan for and prepare for young people's transitions.

8.14. Many of the challenges and weakness identified by this report are likely to be difficult to address solely through actions by individual settings/services to improve transition planning. The experience of SEN pathfinders in England (CfDC, 2011) emphasises the importance of reform at a strategic level (including workforce development, joint commissioning, developing a shared vision and developing post-16 options) in order to make transition planning effective at the level of an individual.

8.15. Systems thinking (thinking about all elements that influence a learners' transition and the way they relate to each other) is therefore also important. This means, taking a systems wide approach to improving transition arrangements. For example:
- person-centred processes demand flexibility, which reduces the scope for

   standardisation and consistency (and for example the use of guidance to

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[71] There are parallels here to the school effectiveness literature which suggests there may be an inverse relationship between school effectiveness and the degree of prescription required: as effectiveness declines, the level off prescription required increases (Hopkins, 2007).

prescribe what should be done). Actions such as workforce development and improvements in data collection and use are consequently likely to grow in importance in improving practice across Wales;

- actions to improve transition planning processes for individual young people (such as training in PCP and sharing of good practice) may need to be complemented by actions at a strategic level, to for example extend learners' post-16 options (see below) and address issues related to the funding of specialist post-16 provision; and

- Although not a prominent feature in the literature reviewed for this study, evidence from related fields, such as research into young people's disengagement from education and training, highlights how weaknesses in young people's social and emotional skills (which may be linked to LDD), and a lack of support, can hamper transitions (ODPM, 2005). Therefore, outcomes, provision and support for young people with LDD should be integrated into the development of the YEPF at both a national and local level (see for example Table 5).[72]

8.16. Consideration should also be given to the recommendations made by other (earlier) studies into areas such as post 16 funding[73] and post 19 educational provision for young people with complex needs[74], which were not the main focus of this study, but which can also shape learners' and their parents' and carers' experiences of transition, and the outcomes of transition planning.

8.17. In assessing the scope for reforms, it is important to consider the very challenging context facing learning settings, providers and services, given cuts in FE funding and increases in demand (Commission on Public Service Governance and Delivery, 2014). This study found examples of where increasing numbers of young people with LDD, combined with constrained resources, need to operate as a spur to innovation (see also NEF, 2012) to help address structural barriers, such as steps to develop local provision to replace costly "out of county" placements. However, there are also many examples of where changes, such as the end of the *Real Opportunities*

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[72] For example, this could identifying and evaluating the experiences of and outcomes for young people with SEN/LDD as a specific group who are at risk of disengagement; and developing the role of EPCs in identifying structural barriers to transitions which cannot easily be addressed through individualised planning processes, and which need to be addressed at a strategic level.
[73] See for example, the Adult Task and Finish Group on Future Arrangements for Funding Post-16 Additional Learning Needs in Schools and Further Education (WG, 2010)
[74] See for example, the study to identify Post-19 Education Provision for Young People with Complex Learning Difficulties Living in Wales (Townsley et al., 2013).

Project or changes to the accessibility of FE provision, have made it more difficult to address barriers (see also NEF, 2012). This study also illustrates that forcing individual services to retrench can result in their focusing upon their own service or setting priorities and targets in such a way that hinders systems thinking and leadership.

Monitoring, evaluation and accountability

8.18. As outlined in section seven, the collection and use of data on young people's experiences and outcomes of transition should be central to efforts to improve experiences and outcomes. This could include:

- improving the use of existing data on outcomes and considering how gaps in current data collection might be addressed in terms of standards, outcomes and stakeholders' experiences (see Table 6 for details); and
- developing clearer accountability structures in relation to the outcomes and experiences of learners with LDD (see Table 6). For example, LAs could take responsibility for outcomes for young people with LDD, in a similar way to which some LAs have taken "corporate" responsibility for reducing the numbers of young people who are, or who are at risk of, becoming NEET. This could include benchmarking provision across consortia.

Extending post school opportunities for young people with LDD

8.19. Some young people do not easily "fit" into existing provision (and therefore struggle with transitions). They may be, for example, channelled towards provision that is available but ineffective (an essentially service-centred, rather than person-centred response). Improving their transitions may mean developing FE provision. However, as outlined in section four, there is evidence that some learners choose to make a transition to further education, because they, or their parents/carers, feel they have few other options (rather than because they actively want to continue their learning in further education). Therefore, although beyond the scope of this study, the findings suggest the need to review and, where needed, develop more non-college provision for young people with LDD (including non college based WBL provision). This could include developing community based volunteering and social, sporting and leisure activities that enable young people with LDD to consolidate and potentially extend the skills acquired through school and which offer meaningful, purposeful activities (see e.g. Beyer, et al, 2014).

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Appendix 1: Definitions

Definition of special educational needs

Section 312(1) of the Education Act 1996 states that children have special educational needs (SEN) if:
[they] have a learning difficulty which calls for special educational provision to be made for [them]. A learning difficulty is defined by section 312(2) as:

a) having a significantly greater difficulty in learning than the majority of children of the same age;
b) having a disability which either prevents or hinders them from making use of educational facilities of a kind generally provided for children of their age in schools within the area of the local authority; or
c) if they are under compulsory school age and fall within the definition at a) or b) or would do so if special educational provision was not made for them.

Section 312(4) states that special educational provision means:
a) for children aged two or over, educational provision that is additional to, or otherwise different from, the educational provision made generally for children of their age in maintained schools, other than special schools, in the area;
b) for children aged under two, educational provision of any kind.

Definition of learning difficulty

The Learning and Skills Act 2000 defines a person as having a learning difficulty if:
   (a) (s)he has significantly greater difficulty in learning than the majority of persons of his/her age; or

   (b) (s)he has a disability which either prevents or hinders him/her from making use of facilities of a kind generally provided by institutions providing post-16 education or training.

The Act goes on to state that a person is not deemed to have a learning difficulty only because the language in which (s)he is or will be taught is different from a language which has at any time been spoken in his/her home.

Appendix 2: Key features of effective practice

Table 3: Key elements involved in developing person-centred transition planning processes[75]

Key elements of effective Practice	Examples of how to do it	Issues to consider
Start early and sustain the process for the long term	➢ Begin identifying the young person's needs and aspirations from age 14 (or earlier) by engaging young people and those who know them. ➢ Ensure that transition planning is an integral part of annual reviews from year nine onward. Start talking about the future and provide information about options, including visits, where appropriate. ➢ Plan for the long term (and not just the next step in a learner's journey) ➢ Recognise that while your role may be time limited, young people and parents/carers must live with the outcomes.	➢ Aspirations, needs and circumstances can all change over time.
Put young people at the centre of the process: person-centred planning (PCP)	➢ Consider different ways of involving young people (e.g. ranging from direct participation, such as their involvement in and contribution to planning meetings, to indirect participation, where, for example, informal advocates act on their behalf, and/or young people are supported to present their aspirations and interests using other media (such as film or illustrated booklets). ➢ Involve people that the young person knows and trusts in the planning process, and who are able to build a rapport with the young person, in order to build a better understanding of what is important to/for a young person.	➢ PCP is a contested concept, and interpretations of what it means differ. ➢ PCP requires practitioners to use their 'best judgment'. ➢ Young people's capacity and willingness to contribute (some may choose not to) depend (to a large degree) upon the ways in which their participation in the process is encouraged and enabled ➢ Young people will often require support to participate.

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[75] See also Person-Centred Reviews Toolkit (WG, 2015e). http://learning.gov.wales/docs/learningwales/publications/150909-reviews-toolkit-en.pdf

Identify and involve the key stakeholders (the key people who need to be involved)	➢ Take positive steps to get to know stakeholders (if there is not a pre-existing relationship) before the process starts. ➢ Use best judgment: there is no one "right" way to structure transition planning. Be pragmatic (and realistic) about who needs to contribute and how they can/should contribute. ➢ Ensure that stakeholders are prepared (e.g. they know about the process, including what will happen at meetings, and are given time and support to contribute). ➢ Identify and respond to potential barriers to stakeholders' participation (e.g. take the process seriously, invest in it, to demonstrate its importance to others; think about the needs of stakeholders when scheduling meeting times/dates). ➢ Accept that effective transition planning takes time (with consequent costs, e.g. in terms of staff time).	➢ Young peoples', parents' and carers' capacity and willingness to contribute will depend upon the ways in which their participation in the process is encouraged and enabled. ➢ Many professionals reported that meetings were time consuming and the participation of some groups, such as health and social service professionals in meetings was often patchy.
Provide impartial information advice and guidance (IAG**)**	➢ Ensure that information, advice and guidance is timely, accurate, and relevant[76]. ➢ Ensure that information, advice and guidance is accessible (e.g. communicated in ways that meet the needs and interests of stakeholders).	➢ There can be potential conflicts of interest (e.g. in relation to provision for LAC, or when a young person is considering study either in a school 6th form or a local college)
Build stakeholders trust in the process	➢ Minimise changes of staff, to help provide continuity and to help foster a relationship of trust. ➢ Be open and transparent, discussing options and follow up actions. ➢ Demonstrate reliability (doing what you said you'd do).	➢ Parents and carers past experiences can influence their expectations and trust.
Make decisions about a young person's transition	➢ Encourage stakeholders to be open and honest about their interests and aspirations, identify those that may conflict. ➢ Facilitate agreement on the goals and actions required, including searching for mutually beneficial outcomes	➢ Do not assume that the interests and aspirations of all stakeholders will be the same or aligned. ➢ Choices are often limited. ➢ WBL may be appropriate, but

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[76] For example, information and advice about a transition from school to college will differ to that about a transition from school to university or to a training placement.

	(where appropriate), suggesting alternatives and compromises, while ensuring the focus is upon realising the aspirations and interests of the learner. ➢ Consider involving independent transition advisors who can take the role of "honest broker". ➢ Encourage creative thinking about how best to realise young people's interests and aspirations, and identify actions needed at a strategic level, to increase choice (discussed below in relation to systems leadership).	education and Careers Wales staff's knowledge of WBL provision is often more limited than their knowledge of other types of FE provision. ➢ Although young people have an entitlement to FE and HE, it may not always be the best choice.
Action planning	➢ Focus first upon the intended outcome and then identify the actions needed to realise this and protect young people's interests. ➢ Identify and plan for potential barriers and risks (e.g. plan B and C). ➢ Identify and agree the responsibilities of different stakeholders for implementing different actions. ➢ Identify and agree when the plan will next be reviewed.	➢ Action planning needs to take account of funding systems and the structure of opportunities available. ➢ Plans may need to change (e.g. a young person's aspirations and/or needs change).
Co-ordination (or management) of the transition planning process	➢ Identify the most appropriate person to co-ordinate the role. It should be someone who puts the interests of the young person first, who has the skill, authority and time needed to co-ordinate the process, and who has the support of the key stakeholders in the process.	➢ A parent or carer may be the most appropriate person, but this should be their choice (i.e. it should not be forced upon them because no one else is) and to be effective, they need skill, authority and time.
Potential means of verification (monitoring and evaluation)	Evaluation of the effectiveness of person-centred transition planning processes needs to focus primarily upon stakeholders experiences and their subjective judgments about the process and its outputs (such as the action plan). It could draw upon feedback from participants, after, for example transition planning/review meetings, on questions on areas like: ➢ stakeholder involvement (e.g. who should have been there and who was there?); ➢ decision making processes (e.g. what should have been discussed and what was discussed?); ➢ overall satisfaction with the process (e.g. was there enough time? was information accurate, timely and relevant? did stakeholders do what this said they would?) and its outputs (such as the action plan); and	

	➢ areas for improvement (e.g. what they would like to change?). If appropriate, quantitative data could also be generated e.g. the number and percentage of parent or carers reporting satisfaction with the process.

Table 4: Key elements involved in preparing young people, parents/carers and learning settings, providers and services for transition

Key elements of effective Practice	Examples of how to do it	Issues to consider
Preparing young people and parents carers	➢ Encourage young people and their parents or carers to think about (and talk about) the transition they will make, including both their hopes and fears. ➢ Identify potential barriers and appropriate responses to address them such as: providing information and advice to young people and their parents or carers; working with young people to empower them by building their skills and resilience (e.g. travel training, confidence building work); and/or the institution/other services making 'reasonable adjustments'. ➢ Bridging and link activities are often used and can help improve the exchange of information, and give young people and their parents/carers opportunities to experience new settings, and talk to those who have already made transitions.	➢ Young people with LDD and their parents or carers can find the prospect of leaving school very unsettling and may value or need support and reassurance. . ➢ Even with effective planning and preparation, transitions can still be difficult for young people and/or their parents or carers.
Preparing learning settings, providers and services	➢ Identify how best to exchange information with the receiving setting (e.g. through an individual's plan, telephone discussion and/or meeting). ➢ Identify the information that the receiving setting is asking for and/or might find valuable. Ensure it is exchanged in a timely way. ➢ Make preparations, where possible, in advance of a learners' arrival. These could include: • physical adaptations; • changes in working practices (e.g. providing quieter learning spaces); and/or	➢ Preparation requires a thorough understanding of young people's needs. ➢ In some cases (e.g. where a young person chooses not to disclose information) this may not be possible. ➢ Effective planning and preparation takes time and delays in for example agreeing funding or a securing a college or university place can complicate this.

	• changes in workforces (such as recruitment and training).	➢ Learners' needs can change, so plans (and settings' preparations) may also need to change.
Collaboration between schools, post 16 learning settings and services	➢ Ensure someone has responsibility for co-ordinating a transition plan (or IDP) at each stage of the process. ➢ Create networks and partnerships (e.g. with receiving settings and support services). ➢ Be pro-active, reach out to other settings and services.	➢ There are risks (e.g. where collaboration channels young people from school to college, crowding out alternatives). ➢ In some cases, settings and/or support services may struggle/be reluctant to engage.
Systems leadership	➢ Effective collaboration requires two active partners, and system leadership, may be necessary where one partner is not actively engaged and fails to fulfil their responsibilities. ➢ Cultivate high expectations, benchmark and evaluate performance. ➢ Strategic initiatives can help foster the shared vision and opportunities for collaboration, needed to enable systems leadership.	➢ A range of people can act as systems leaders. They could include for example, school and college leaders, SENCOs, 14-19 Network Coordinators, local authority educational advisory or inclusion officers and key workers. ➢ Targets, which are important in driving up standards and providing accountability, can also be a barrier to systems thinking when, for example, they focus attention upon institutions', rather than learners' interests.
Potential means of verification (monitoring and evaluation)	Evaluation of the effectiveness of preparation for transitions needs to focus primarily upon stakeholders' experiences and their subjective judgments about the process and the changes that flowed from the process (e.g. travel training and/or staff training). Ideally this would be collected before and after the transition. Collection of data, on, for example, stakeholders feelings about the forthcoming transition, could inform further preparatory work, and collection of data after the transition, would give stakeholders the benefit of hindsight, and help lessons for future transitions to be identified. Stakeholders could be asked questions about for example: ➢ Their confidence about forthcoming transitions; ➢ The extent to which potential barriers to transition were identified and then addressed;	

	➢ Their feelings about or satisfaction with preparations for the transitions; ➢ Their experience of or satisfaction with the transition; and ➢ Areas for improvement (e.g. what they would like to change). If appropriate, quantitative data could also be generated e.g. the number and percentage of parent or carers reporting satisfaction with the preparations.

Table 5: Key elements involved in ensuring young people's progression and achievement following transition

Key elements of effective Practice	Examples of how to do it	Issues to consider
Identifying, assessing and meeting young people's needs (following transition)	➢ Integrate information transferred from the previous setting (e.g. in a transition or Learning and Skills Plan) with information generated enriched by the receiving setting's own assessments. ➢ Ensure that assessments are holistic and focused upon the learner's academic, personal and social needs. ➢ Ensure that assessment is an ongoing process - not an event – so that as needs change or are identified, support is responsive. ➢ Ensure that identification of young people with LDD at risk of disengagement is integrated into arrangements to identify learners at risk of disengagement (as part of the YEPF). ➢ Some settings have found Individual Development Plans (IDPs) and one page profiles useful in summarising the outcome of assessments and in sharing the conclusions (of assessment) with teaching and support staff.	➢ Post 16 learning settings may lack the expertise and/or access to specialist SEN services need to identify and asses more complex LDD (and are consequently very dependent upon information provided by schools and outlined in Section 140 Assessments).
Meeting young people's needs	➢ Sharing knowledge within the institution (to ensure that all those working with young people understand their needs and preferences). ➢ Empowering young people to tackle barriers themselves (they should not be seen as just passive recipients of support). This could include, for example, pastoral staff working directly with young people to build their skills and confidence and for example, enable them to travel	➢ Some providers and/or young people do not taken up the support /funding that is available, such as Disabled Students' Allowance (DSA)[77] ➢ Some WBL providers lack expertise and experience of working with young people with LDD. ➢ Funding cuts have put pressure

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[77] There were also reported to be problems associated with funding for personal and social care (see also e.g. Townsley et al., 2013) which led some providers to refuse to take on young people.

		upon learner support services within and outside learning settings (e.g. SEN specialist services)
Supporting progression	➤ Ensure that assessments of need consider past learning and achievement, so that learners that at the right level, following transition. ➤ Ensure that there are clear (and well understood) progression routes (or pathways) from lower level to higher level courses. ➤ Ensure that all staff have high expectations of learners. ➤ Ensure that, as far as possible, learning can be personalised to the needs and aspirations of young people.	➤ In some cases horizontal (or lateral) 'progression' may be appropriate (e.g. where a learner is consolidating skills and knowledge).
Potential means of verification (monitoring and evaluation)	Settings should have processes in place to evaluate the identification and assessment for learner needs and of the provision put in place to meet identified needs (see e.g. Estyn 2014b, 2014c, WG, 2009). These should focus upon both processes (e.g. are learners completing basic skills tests, are they able to access support) and outcomes, in terms of learner attainment and progression. This can be complemented by feedback from external agencies such as Estyn and YEPF EPCs.	

Table 6: Improving data

Stage	Potential use of existing data (with type of measure: standards/processes; outcomes; or experiences, given in brackets)	Examples of how gaps in current data collection might be addressed (with the type of measure: standards/processes; outcomes; or experiences given in brackets)
Developing transition planning processes and action planning	➢ Settings' self evaluation (e.g. Estyn, 2014b and 2014c) or self assessment data (WG, 2015c) (standards/processes).	➢ Systemising the collection and publication of Estyn inspection data on transition arrangements (standards/processes). ➢ Collecting data on timescales for applications for additional funding (such as the date of submission and the date of decision (standards/processes). ➢ Collecting subjective data on learner and parent or carer satisfaction with transition planning (experiences).
Preparing young people, parents and carers and providers for transitions	➢ Settings' self evaluation (e.g. Estyn, 2014b) or self assessment data (WG, 2015c) (standards/processes). ➢ The satisfaction of LDD young people with FE (using Learner Voice Survey data) on, for example, the help to settle into college provided and information given about options (experiences). ➢ The estimated percentage of young people with a SEN progressing to FE, employment or who are NEET in each LA area (using Careers Wales data) (outcome).	➢ Systemising the collection and publication of Estyn inspection data on transition arrangements (standards/processes). ➢ Collecting subjective data on parent or carer satisfaction with transition preparations (experiences).
Learning and progression following transition	➢ Settings' self evaluation (e.g. Estyn, 2014b) or self assessment data (WG, 2015c) (standards/processes). ➢ Estyn inspections of the quality of post-16 education and training for young people with ALN. (standards/processes).	➢ Ensuring that outcomes for young people with LDD (as a specific group of young people) are considered as part of the YEPF.

	- The satisfaction of LDD young people with FE (using Learner Voice survey data) on access to and information about personal and learner support services and about information and advice on options following course completion (experiences). - The percentage of young people with an LDD completing FE and HE courses (using LLWR and HESA data) (outcomes). - The destinations of young people with an LDD completing FE and HE courses (e.g. the numbers known to have progressed to employment or FE and training) (outcomes).	