



“Breakdown at transitions occurs when there is no link person to offer support; insufficient time for explanation or demonstration; and the need for emotional support is not recognised.”

[Association of Directors of Education]

“It would be advisable for the young person to have a single contact remaining with them through the whole process. This would allow a relationship to be built up and go some way towards preventing the young person from feeling that they were continually being passed on.”

[Linking Education and Disability Scotland (LEAD)]

“There should be personal mentoring for disabled young people .....the mentor should be an ally.”

[Scottish Human Services].

“It seems like we have to follow the system around. It should follow us around”.

[Parent of 20 year old with learning difficulties]

## 5 Improving Transition

### Key Workers and Mentors

#### The Issue

5.1 In the previous chapter, we set out our proposals to address the problem of the lack of communication between agencies. There is a second strand to this issue: the lack of a single point of contact, either an individual or an agency, who has both the knowledge and the responsibility for making sure that the young person has access to all the required learning and support provision. The great majority of vulnerable young people (and their parents/carers) will not be able to negotiate their way through the range of learning opportunities and other kinds of support. Within the proposed area networks, we believe that there must be a specific group of people whose function is to bridge the gap between the providers of services and the young people who need those services. **The issue is how to ensure that young people and their parents/carers are able to get to the right person at the right time without being passed around a number of different agencies and individual professionals. In our view, this would be a major step towards creating an Inclusiveness approach.**

#### The Committee's View

5.2 The Committee had identified the importance of this issue in our earliest discussions. It was also one of the main themes emerging from our consultation exercise. Many of our respondents proposed that there should be a dedicated source of support, information and guidance for young people and their parents. Some saw the need to appoint an individual as a key worker. Others suggested that there should be a "broker" to negotiate the appropriate package of learning and support. There was also recognition that personal support should be an essential element of the overall support arrangements for many vulnerable young people and their families.

### Roles and Responsibilities

5.3 The most common terms used to describe a person who should provide guidance and support to the young person were "key worker" and "mentor". We explored the various roles and responsibilities in our consultation workshops. These included:

- identifying the barriers likely to prevent the young person from making a successful transition (low basic skills, low levels of social skills, lack of equipment, difficulties in getting access to personal care or support);
- providing a single point of contact for the young person in dealing with agencies and to act as a link or "broker" for the young person with all the relevant agencies; and to help the young person, over time, to interact with other agencies independently;
- participating in assessment, and possibly to take a leading role;
- acting as a supporter to the young person and his/her family/carers;
- giving up to date and accurate information about post-school learning opportunities and support arrangements;
- acting as an independent and/or impartial adviser and supporter;
- acting as a "befriender" or mentor;
- acting as an advocate if the need arose;
- offering a constant figure, possibly from the age of 14 if problems have been identified at school and up to the early 20s.

5.4 This description of responsibilities, and indeed characteristics, covers 2 distinct, and potentially different, areas of expertise. The first is the requirement for a key worker to have the knowledge, ability and influence to act as "broker" on behalf of the young person and negotiate the appropriate package of funding. The second area is the ability to offer personal and emotional support and a "listening ear" possibly with a view to acting as an advocate. In the Committee's view, these are 2 distinct, but complementary roles:

- a key worker who operates within the statutory network; and
- a volunteer mentor or "befriender" to offer informal support and encouragement.

The key worker should have the ability to form a positive relationship with the young person and the powers to act formally on his/her behalf to arrange appropriate learning and support provision. The mentor, on the other hand, should have no responsibility for organising provision

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but should concentrate on offering the more informal personal support and encouragement which can help young people (and their parents/carers) to build up self-esteem and confidence.

5.5 There are some aspects of the 2 roles where the responsibilities of the key worker and the mentor would have to be clearly defined. Information-giving, assessment and advocacy are 3 aspects where the key worker and mentor might both become involved. There should be clear guidelines which clarify the respective roles, particularly about participation in important areas such as assessment. Even more importantly, there should be well-understood links between the 2 roles to ensure that there is no conflict between the advice and information given to the young person.

5.6 There is one other very important factor. Young people will often make their own decision about the person whom they want to go to for advice and support. There may be more flexibility of choice within a volunteer mentor network. It also has implications for the way in which mentors might be recruited and assigned. Some young people may find it helpful to have a mentor from among their peer group; others may prefer an older person. There may also be scope for recruiting mentors from the education and training sectors. Community education and youth workers have considerable experience of establishing relationships with vulnerable young people.

## Two Roles: Key Worker and Mentor

5.7 We concluded that there are 2 roles: a key worker and a mentor; and we set out below our views on their respective roles and responsibilities; and ideas for organising and managing their activities.

5.8 It is important to emphasise that, although the key worker would be a formal part of organisational structures, we do not see him/her taking over the functions of other agencies – careers service companies, FE colleges, training, and social work. The professionals in these agencies have a body of knowledge and expertise to offer the young person. The key worker's main function would be to act as a single point of contact and:

- to guide and support the young person through the network of other agencies;
- to act on his/her behalf in negotiating and agreeing the most appropriate package of provision to meet the identified learning and support needs; and
- to be the first point of contact for education and training providers, or other agencies if problems arise.

5.9 The role of the key worker would have to be formally agreed and acknowledged by other agencies to enable him/her to have sufficient influence to negotiate an appropriate package of provision. There could be tensions between the key worker and other agencies if a keyworker had

the power to advocate a course of action without any responsibility for funding or managing the implementation. This was referred to as "power without responsibility".

### Assignment of Key Worker

5.10    Not all young people will necessarily have a key worker. One of the ideas discussed during the consultation, and which we looked at with great interest, was the Kurator model in Denmark which allocates every young person to a Kurator before they leave school. We concluded, however, that the greatest benefit would be gained from targeting key worker support towards the young people with the greatest level of assessed learning and support needs and helping them to get the maximum benefit from the expertise of professionals in the field.

5.11    This raises the question of how and when young people might be referred to a key worker. The first contact could come while the young person is still at school. The Committee has noted with considerable interest the strong view expressed by a number of agencies and individuals about the need to recognise and address the problems of 14 and 15 year olds (and even younger pupils) who are at risk of becoming disengaged from the education system. Guidance and support for learning staff in schools are well placed to identify problems which are likely to hinder the transition to further education or training, or into employment. The careers service companies also have an important role in identifying difficulties among young people while in school and are now giving particular attention to those who are at risk of becoming disaffected or excluded. The school, careers service company or the Social Work Department should all be able to refer young people to a key worker. It should also be open to parents to ask for referral to a key worker. When a young person has left school, the referral to a key worker could come from a number of sources. The assessment process, as described later in the report, could lead to a referral; one of the agencies could recommend that a key worker is needed; the family/carer or the young person might seek a referral. It would be essential to have clear guidelines for referrals available to all the agencies and to young people and their parents/carers.

### Organisation of Key Worker Support

5.12    In the Committee's view, the introduction of key worker support has the potential to bring about major improvements in the way agencies communicate and to create a much clearer focus on the young person and his/her needs. It could be one of the most powerful instruments in taking forward the development of an Inclusiveness approach not only within agencies but also across agencies.

5.13    The Committee has considered a number of ideas for the organisation of key worker support for young people and their parents. There was a substantial body of opinion among agencies, which offered views on the role of the key worker, that the introduction of a new "worker" or team was unnecessary. They suggested that the solution was to improve the practices of existing agencies and to develop a key worker role among the staff of those agencies.

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The key worker could be drawn from the agency best able to meet the greatest need of the young person at that time. If, and when, another area of need becomes more pressing, the relevant agency should take on the role.

5.14 We believe that for the majority of young people who require key worker support, this will be the right approach. It will build on the knowledge and expertise of professionals in the agencies and, by extending and enhancing their role, not only benefit the young person but also improve communication between agencies. In order to meet possible concerns among young people and their parents/carers, the new arrangements should pay particular attention to the need for a single point of contact and a consistent approach as a link to the wider range of agencies.

5.15 There are implications here for staff training and development. As the focal point of contact, it would be essential for a key worker to have a good working knowledge of the statutory framework which governs education, training and other forms of support for 16–24 year olds; and of the range of learning opportunities and support provision. There would be additional costs associated both with training and with the additional requirement to spend time liaising with other agencies.

## An Extra Level of Support

5.16 The Committee believes that an enhanced role for staff in the relevant agencies would offer effective key worker support for the majority of young people. We have also considered, however, the position of young people who have the most difficult and intractable problems and may require a more intensive level of support, perhaps over a long period of time. These are young people who may have experienced social deprivation, homelessness and mental health problems leading to chaotic and disordered lifestyles as well as young people who may have multiple disabilities. Such young people are likely to experience a prolonged period of transition, and need a range of different types of learning and support over time. There is a case for an extra level of key worker support to be available for such young people so that they have a consistent, single point of contact no matter how many times they drop out of learning or other forms of support.

5.17 We have considered 2 approaches to offering an extra level of key worker support:

- expanding the role of one of the existing agencies;
- establishing a separate team directly managed and funded through the Area Strategy Groups.

It is important to emphasise that it would be for the Area Strategy Groups to decide the extent to which an extra level of key worker support would be necessary in their area and how it should be organised.

### Expand Role of Existing Agency

5.18    The responsibilities and duties of the careers service companies and Social Work Departments suggest that they might be well placed to offer extra support for the 16–24 age group. Not all young people, however, who encounter barriers in the transition from school to further education or training or employment, are, or will be, clients of the Social Work Department. Careers service companies already have a responsibility for working with young people before and after they leave school to advise them on learning and employment opportunities. They have now been asked to target their work more specifically towards disaffected young people. Both the careers service and Social Work would offer a body of knowledge and expertise but careers service companies would offer a more detailed understanding of post-school learning opportunities.

5.19    The new direction being given to Community Learning following SOEID Circular 4/99 “Communities – Change through Learning” emphasises engagement with young people to help them experience positive development, whether they are at school or beyond. This applies particularly to young people making the transition from school who are at risk of social exclusion because of dissatisfaction with their educational experience or because of their lifestyle. It also includes young people with disabilities and their families/carers. These new developments in community learning give community education workers a more prominent role and they may be well placed to offer key worker support.

### A Separate Team

5.20    The establishment of a separate team, operating alongside the existing agencies, could allow the key worker to provide an extra level of support over a long period of time if necessary. The Area Strategy Group could appoint a manager to work directly either to the Strategy Group or to the Implementing Inclusiveness Team. The manager could recruit 2 or 3 key workers depending on the size of the area and the potential client group. One of the most important aspects of setting up the team would be to agree clear protocols for the liaison mechanisms between the team and the other agencies. The team of key workers could be drawn from careers service, social work or education or training backgrounds, including community education, either by direct recruitment or secondment.

### Caseload

5.21    One of the most important issues to be addressed in setting up arrangements for key worker support is the caseload. Our view of the key worker's role is that it should not replace the role of the existing professionals in the field. This has implications for the caseload since the key worker should have a clearly defined set of tasks. We have not, however, attempted to put a figure on the potential caseload. We believe that it will depend on the preferred arrangements for the key worker role and on the size of the eligible population, geographical nature of the area

and the patterns of learning and support provision. As a first step, the area networks should undertake an analysis of these factors to inform the decision on the most effective approach to offering key worker support in their area.

## Multi-agency Practitioner Teams

5.22 There should also be a structure for reviewing the cases of young people who would benefit from key worker support. One approach would be for local multi-agency practitioner teams to review cases. The team could decide whether a key worker was appropriate. This multi-agency team could also be responsible for overseeing the assessment process as described later in the report. This would be an important connection.

5.23 There will be some additional costs involved in providing key worker support although, in our view, the main thrust of the proposal is to assist agencies to improve delivery of services rather than adding new burdens. The cost of dedicated support may be greater. Given the potential variations in developing this support, we have not attempted to offer definitive estimates of costs. However, we have estimated that a dedicated key worker support team comprising a manager and 2 or 3 workers might cost in the region of £80,000 per annum. Over 17 areas this could amount to £1.5 million, allowing for set-up costs.

5.24 Having considered these options very carefully, there were still a range of views within the Committee. We were particularly aware that the arrangements for key worker support will have to suit the range and diversity of needs among young people within a local area. We concluded that it would be more valuable and productive for the Area Strategy Groups to decide on the arrangements for key worker support within their area. We have recommended that the first 3 years of the area networks should be treated as pilots to allow scope for testing different structures. The National Action Group should also encourage the area networks to pilot different models of key worker support with a view to developing good practice.

5.25 The Area Strategy Group would have to agree protocols and standards to ensure that all the relevant agencies formally recognised and agreed the role and responsibilities of the key worker in negotiating the appropriate package of learning and support. There should also be clear protocols for referral to a key worker agreed by all the agencies and guidelines available to young people and their parents/carers. The Area Strategy Group should have the responsibility for ensuring that such protocols and guidelines are in place for monitoring implementation. The monitoring should include the views of young people and their parents/carers on how this arrangement meets their needs for a single point of contact with the range of agencies and co-ordinated delivery of provision.

5.26 We believe that the responsibility for establishing arrangements for key worker support should lie with the Area Strategy Group. **We, therefore, recommend that the Area Strategy Group should work with the relevant agencies to set up key worker support arrangements in their area which best meet local needs and circumstances. The arrangements should**

include clearly defined roles and responsibilities for the relevant agencies; protocols and guidelines for referral; and monitoring arrangements.

5.27 We also recommend that the National Action Group should promote the piloting of different models for the key worker support arrangements within the three-year period of setting up and piloting of the area networks.

### A Volunteer Mentor Network

5.28 We have made a distinction between the role of a key worker and the role of a mentor. The key worker would have to build up a relationship with the young person but would operate as part of the formal network of agencies who provide guidance, education, training, access to employment and other kinds of support. A mentor would offer personal support to the young person and his/her family/carers. The mentor could help the young person to express concerns and anxieties; seek out information; build confidence and make choices. But the mentor should not duplicate the more formal role of the key worker in negotiating with other agencies on the young person's behalf. There may be occasions when it is appropriate for the mentor to take on the role of advocate but this would be an informal arrangement agreed with the young person.

5.29 There are now a number of examples of mentoring activities designed to support disadvantaged and disaffected young people. The Youthstart projects, funded through the ESF EMPLOYMENT initiative, have offered mentoring in a number of areas, including projects in Scotland. The projects have mainly provided one to one personal support but there are also examples of work place mentoring and peer group mentoring.

5.30 In all cases, mentoring was seen as a tool to give disadvantaged young people an "added extra". A review of mentoring within Youthstart identified a range of roles and activities undertaken by mentors. These included:

- befriending and encouraging;
- listening;
- motivating and facilitating;
- guiding;
- being a positive role model;
- sharing experiences;
- building confidence and self-esteem;
- challenging young peoples ideas and beliefs;

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- allowing young people to take ownership of their own decisions.

5.31 This is a challenging and demanding role. Where a mentor has built up a trusting relationship with a young person, there is likely to be a heavy demand on the mentor's time and resources, at least for a period. It will be important to ensure that people who come forward to act as mentors have access to training to prepare themselves for the role; and that there is a system in place to support them in dealing with the emotional impact of working with young people's problems. Mentors may come from a variety of backgrounds and may have different characteristics. Mentors in the Youthstart projects were drawn from:

- people working with young people;
- volunteers;
- employers and employees;
- other young people.

5.32 The role of mentor is a sensitive one and requires some particular qualities. These include:

- ability to value, respect and be genuinely interested in the lives of young people;
- empathy;
- a non-judgemental approach;
- a sense of realism and honesty;
- self-awareness.

5.33 The Youthstart projects are only one example of mentoring. The Institute of Career Guidance Mentoring Action Project (MAP), now called Stepping Stones, has also developed mentoring approaches for disengaged and disadvantaged young people. Mentoring is also now being developed in the New Deal. There will be lessons to be learned from these and other mentoring projects.

5.34 We believe that there would be great advantages for young people who are experiencing barriers or problems in making transitions from school to post-school learning, or in subsequent transitions, to have access to a mentor. **We, therefore, recommend that there should be a network of volunteer mentors with close links to the Area Strategy Groups and Implementing Inclusiveness Teams.** The setting up of a network of volunteer mentors could have 2 main strands:

- a national programme for the initial and ongoing training, and support and information systems;

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- a local provider to organise and manage the local registration, funding and allocation of mentors.

5.35 There would have to be a structured programme for the recruitment, selection and training of mentors/supporters delivered according to well developed criteria. One of the most important aspects of the arrangements would be appropriate checks on the backgrounds of volunteer mentors who will be working with vulnerable young people. A support network for the mentors/supporters either through a self-help network or through some supporting organisation would also be essential. **We propose that the Scottish Executive should offer a start up fund to one of the national voluntary organisations to develop a training programme for mentors.** This should be done through a bidding process.

5.36 We have developed a proposal, following discussions with the voluntary sector, for a national programme for initial and ongoing training, and support and information systems; and local organisation and management of registration, funding and allocation of mentors. The key elements of the proposal are:

- The Scottish Executive should commission a national voluntary organisation or set up a new unit located in an existing agency to support the area networks by:
  - developing guidelines and standards;
  - developing training programmes and resources;
  - contracting with local providers;
  - supporting and monitoring contract delivery;
  - evaluating and reporting on implementation and effectiveness.
- The national unit might have 4 full time staff with an annual budget of £175k pa plus start-up costs in the first year.
- The local provider, which may be a voluntary sector organisation, should be selected by a bidding process and
  - promote the service in the area;
  - recruit, select, train and manage a team of mentors;
  - network with other service areas and with wider mentoring networks;
  - provide monitoring information.
- The local provider could employ a co-ordinator (possibly an assistant if the area or client

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base is large). This might cost £15-30,000 pa and over 17 areas that might average out at around £400,000. This does not allow for expenses for mentors or any element of payment.

5.37 The local provider would have to work within the area strategic and operational framework for Implementing Inclusiveness within each area. The Area Strategy Group should set out clear arrangements for the allocation, referral and monitoring of the activities of mentors.

## Summary of Recommendations

The Committee recommends that:

The Area Strategy Group should work with the relevant agencies to set up key worker support arrangements in their area which best meet local needs and circumstances. The arrangements should include clearly defined roles and responsibilities for the relevant agencies; protocols and guidelines for referral; and monitoring arrangements.

[Paragraph 5.26]

The National Action Group should promote the piloting of different models for the key worker support arrangements within the three-year period of setting up and piloting of the area networks. [Paragraph 5.27]

There should be a network of volunteer mentors with close links to the Area Strategy Groups and the Implementing Inclusiveness Teams. [Paragraph 5.34]

The Scottish Executive should offer a start up fund to one of the national voluntary organisations to develop a training programme for mentors. [Paragraph 5.35]

