

my transition

I'm 18 years old and have been in the Social Service's transition process since I was 14.

It's just a pity nobody told Me!!

In fact, until I became a member of Equality 2025 I was unfamiliar with the term and hadn't realised that I was within a prescribed process that has such important implications for me.

Here, of course, lies the problem:

The present transitional model is characterised by:

- Lack of consensus on what is the criterion for successful transition.
- And, scandalously, failed to incorporate young people into the debate in an informed way.

There is a lot at stake, such as, Adult Identity, Employment, Independence, Relationships, Education and Quality of Life, and it so important to get it right as we only get one chance at it.

I've highlighted just three issues, which I believe contributes to Transition Process failure:-

1. Poor Transition Planning and Coordination
2. Lack of power/information about options and choices
3. Lack of experience of Independent social life for many young disabled people.

Well, what is to be done!

One of the ways we can improve the process and outcomes of transition is to explore ways whereby we can move towards an "effective youth led approach".

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I propose to expand on some of these issues by outlining my own transition process. I hope it is useful.

For me the two major failures have been the lack of planning and information.

I feel let down by the services as there has been little or no communication between the involved departments; its very fragmented, decisions made last minute ... and no real focus on what my needs are. The approach seemed nothing more than a narrow bureaucratic process, when it should be holistic, embracing all the wider transition issues I mentioned earlier. On reflection it felt like merely being "thrown over the fence" from Children's Services to Adult Services.

However, it is the lack of information where the service really fails - for young people to be in a process and not be aware of it - is surely a major failure. I, like many young people and their families, thought that the early transition meetings were part of my yearly Statementing Review. Thus I was a passive observer on what I thought was an assessment.

I recently asked 25 disabled teenagers ranging from 15 to 21 years of age if they have heard or know what the concept of "Transition to Adulthood" is. Only 2 replied positively.

Adulthood is defined in terms of identity, choice and control. However, the concept of Adult Identity is rarely addressed within the transition process. In the last six months I have been battling with Social Services to recognize my need for a Personal Assistant model defined in my terms, instead of accepting what they give me. My PA model is so key to how my adult identity evolves and yet there is complete ignorance from Social Services about what I'm talking about.

It is only now, as an 18 year old, that I fully understand what is going on in my own transition process. Any real inroads I have made, has been down to "self help" rather than the "process" itself.

Let me give you some actual detail, of what I regard as failure of my Transition Process.

In September this year I started University. In May I had a Transition Meeting. There was no documentation or reportage of agreed actions. And since that time there has been no written communication from Social Services. Social Services delayed my application to the Independent Living Fund & consequently I started University with no PA in place and no funds to pay for personal care. As I mentioned earlier, I had a PA model that I had outlined at my May Transition Meeting; Social Services referred me in September to an agency that specialised in Geriatric Care (Although there was no agreed mechanism to pay for it). I am now in my third month at University and still haven't had my ILF processed. It won't be processed until 2008. Currently, I am using my Student Loan to fund my PA care package.

No one in Social Services gave me any information about my responsibilities regarding employing a PA, such as:-

Time Sheets, Tax & National Insurance, PAYE Records, Bank Statements, Receipts, & PA Insurance etc.

They referred a Payroll Agency to me, without discussion, and incorrectly assumed the agency would give me information. However, Social Services had withdrawn the Agencies "information remit" a year earlier and therefore no information was forthcoming.

I still have 6 months left on a NHS commissioned package and therefore was not entitled to information from Direct Payment Services. They told me I wasn't on their books and they were under no obligation to provide me with DP guidance. My first meeting with DP services is scheduled next week, some three months late. I have been reluctantly drip fed information from various sources. Only now, through self help, am I close to having a near complete picture of my PA responsibilities.

Not only have Social Services reduced my Transition Process to, merely, a bureaucratic function; stripped down & reduced to its minimum, but they have failed even to carry this out effectively. In short they have hindered the process.

I'm a power wheelchair user with a muscle weakness from the neck down and, as such, I require high usage of PA services. Despite having an ILF assessment to meet my PA needs, I find I'm minimising my use of PA hours in order to keep my costs down until my funding comes through.

Social Services have applied the narrowest application of Transition, and this reinforces my view that SS define my identity in terms of service provision only.

Going to University should be a new and exciting experience not one of anxiety and worry about PA provisions. I'm sure many disabled

young students might find these barriers too difficult to navigate and just pack in the course.

Thanks for listening