



Department
for Education

Special educational needs and disability pathfinder programme evaluation

Thematic report: provision for older young people, aged 19-25

Research report

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Key learning points

This report was produced as part of SQW's evaluation of the SEN and Disability Pathfinder Programme for the Department for Education. It focuses on the approach being taken to support a particular sub-group of the pathfinder cohort, young people aged 19 plus, based on evidence gathered from five case study areas (four pathfinder areas and one non-pathfinder area). The key learning points from the five case studies were that:

- The older age group (of 19-25) has generally not been high priority in terms of mapping out services, the development of local provision (other than education) and engaging services towards joined and integrated commissioning. All areas feel that their work with children services and post-16 providers have formed a sound basis on which they can build their work for developing processes and provision for those aged 19 and over
- However, they recognised that more needed to be done, and done quickly. In particular they were still developing plans and criteria to agree which young people would be eligible for a plan. There is no expectation that all young people with SEN will have an automatic right to continued support beyond 19 or that those with an LDA or EHC plan will all remain in education until age 25. They recognised that plans need to be drawn up with care to avoid creating the false expectations
- A series of workforce issues have been identified in relation to older young people. These relate to the skills and resources required to work with this group
- All areas have now a much wider recognition that for the older young people the focus must be on preparation for adulthood, including employment and independent living
- In order to be able to offer local provision in preparing the young people for adult life, areas are now looking to identify the aspirations of the young people from year 9 at school (age 14) and develop pathways to ensure appropriate and timely provision is put in place to help young people achieve their intended outcomes. At present there is concern that provision is not as well developed as it should be and that more work is required
- Areas recognise the importance of engaging with young people and their families, to ensure they are fully aware of the reforms, understand how the changes are going to affect them and are able to participate and contribute to the assessment process. Engaging families is of particular importance for this age group, as there are issues around who can make the final decision about services and provision (whether young person, parents or local authority)
- Areas have appointed designated teams of co-ordinators to work with families, focusing on managing expectations at as early stage as possible in the process about whether and what support will be available. These teams of co-ordinators have been perceived by services as a key element for ensuring a successful transition for the young people, both to an EHC plan or not.

1. Introduction

Evaluation of the Special Educational Needs and Disability Pathfinder Programme

SQW was commissioned by the Department for Education (DfE) to lead a consortium of organisations to undertake the evaluation of the Special Educational Needs (SEN) and Disability Pathfinder Programme. During the course of the research, a number of key issues were identified as requiring more in-depth review. This report focuses on one of these issues – *provision for older young people, aged 19-25*.

A series of reports from the study are available on the government publications website. Of particular relevance is an earlier report on post-16 provision¹, which considered in detail the transition process from school. While also very relevant to this group, for the sake of brevity we have not repeated the earlier findings here.

Rationale for the research

A key change signalled in the original Support and Aspiration Green Paper² and included in the Children and Families Act (2014) legislation (hereafter referred to as *the Act*) was the bringing together of a coherent system of support for children and young people from 0-25. Although there is not automatic entitlement to support from age 19, the 0-25 SEND Code of Practice recognises that some young people with EHC plans may need longer in education or training in order to achieve their outcomes and make an effective transition into adulthood. However, SQW's previous research, during the course of the first 18 months of the evaluation, identified considerable uncertainties about how best to support young people aged over 18, including what was expected and how this would be resourced. It was therefore appropriate to investigate the issue further towards the end of the evaluation, to understand what progress had been made and to provide insight for other local authority areas.

Research focus

This thematic report provides further insight into two broad areas, summarised in the diagram below and covering: the criteria and guidance which will inform support to this client group; and the nature of provision that will be offered to them.

¹https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/342295/RR356F_-_Transition_and_the_Engagement_of_Post_16_Providers_.pdf

²<http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20130401151715/https://www.education.gov.uk/publications/standard/publicationdetail/page1/cm%208027>

The report is structured around these two themes, and where possible aims to draw out key learning based on experience to date and expectations of changes that are planned going forward. It highlights important enabling factors and challenges to consider.

Figure 1 Research questions

Criteria for support	Have local authorities and their partners developed clear guidelines for identifying young people aged (or approaching) 19+ who may be eligible to continue with their EHC plan? What criteria have been developed to guide the reviews of this group of young people and to assess the need or not for on-going support? Have local authorities and their partners developed clear eligibility criteria and processes to respond to young people aged 19-25 who might approach them seeking an EHC Plan? Have they had any instances of this occurring so far?
Provision	What criteria have been developed to guide the reviews of this group of young people and to assess the need or not for on-going support? How will these criteria be implemented – who does the assessment, planning etc Where a young person is about to leave school / college, what arrangements have been put in place to support this transition? How do these arrangements differ to what may have happened before – support offered, partners involved, resources? Where a young person is likely to continue to need on-going support to complete their education, what additional provision and resource is involved? Which partners are involved in the decision making and delivery?

Source SQW

Our approach

Evidence was gathered from four pathfinder areas – Bromley, Hertfordshire, Manchester, Nottinghamshire – and one non-pathfinder – Rotherham - via in-depth face-to-face and telephone interviews with pathfinder/SEN and disability reform leads and providers engaged in the programme in each area (see Annex B for more detail on the research methods used). The areas were selected based on feedback from the evaluation team about the number of older young people identified as working with the pathfinder, and drawing on the views on DfE about progress being made in this area. In total, 34 people were consulted.

Intended audience

This report is intended to support those responsible for engaging with older young people and post-16 providers as part of the roll out of the SEN and disability reforms from September 2014.

2. Support for young people aged 19-25

Expectations of the reforms

The SEN and disability Code of Practice³ (hereafter referred to as *the Code*) is clear that “a local authority must take into account whether the education or training outcomes specified in the Education Health and Care (EHC) plan have been achieved. Local authorities must not cease an EHC plan simply because a young person is aged 19 or over” (p190). However, **there is no automatic entitlement to continued support at age 19 for special education provision**, or an expectation that those with an EHC plan should all remain in education until age 25. The Code makes clear that the decision to continue support or not should reflect:

- Whether the young person no longer requires the special educational provision specified in their EHC plan. In making this decision the local authority must have regard to whether the educational or training outcomes specified in the plan have been achieved
- Consideration by the local authority as to whether remaining in education or training would enable the young person to progress and achieve those outcomes
- Whether access to education or training provision will help them prepare for adulthood.

It is also possible that young people who do not currently have an SEN statement / S139a assessment may request an EHC plan. This is perhaps most likely where young people have been supported when they were younger, but provision lapsed in the last few years, following which they seek to re-enter the education system.

As a result, the expectation from local authorities and providers was that overall there will be an additional number of young people seeking and receiving support due the changes in the legislation. **It is therefore important that local authorities consider the basis on which they will make decisions about which young people aged 19 and above will / will not receive support.**

Young people who no longer need to remain in formal education or training will not require special educational provision to be made for them through an EHC plan. In these cases the responsibility on local authorities is to ensure a smooth transition to other services which will support the young person (e.g. Jobcentre Plus, adult social care).

The focus on this age group also brings a changing dynamic within the family. After compulsory school age (the end of the academic year in which they turn 16), the right to

³https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/342440/SEND_Code_of_Practice_approved_by_Parliament_29.07.14.pdf

make decisions under the Children and Families Act 2014 applies to them directly, rather than to their parents. It is expected that parents will continue to be involved, but that the decisions will rest with the young person.

Funding arrangements

The Code (referring to paragraphs 8.53 - 8.55) explains how funding for education should work for older young people:

- 19- to 25-year-olds with EHC plans should have free access to further education in the same way as 16- to 18-year-olds. There is a core funding formula which funds provision to a certain level and then where young people need further support this is expected to be paid by the local authority
- Apprentices aged 19 to 25 with EHC plans are fully funded on the same terms and funding rates as 16- to 18-year-old apprentices
- 19- to 25-year-olds with SEN but without EHC plans can choose to remain in further education. Local authorities are not responsible for securing or funding education and training opportunities for these young people
- Colleges' core funding from the Education Funding Agency (EFA) is for all 16-18 year olds and for those aged 19-25 who have EHC plans, and it is only for these groups that colleges cannot charge tuition fees.

3. Deciding who receives support

The new expectations embodied in the Act require local authorities to develop an approach to meet the needs of 19-25 year olds in their area. This section considers the progress made by local authorities in deciding who in this group will be eligible for support.

Across the local authorities consulted this age group had not been a high priority in the early stages of their development. Rather they had usually chosen to start with a focus on new entrants or school-aged children. The attention given to older young people, usually 16+ more than 19+, had most often focused on the transition from secondary school and on preparation for adulthood (especially employment).

“We are less well developed in this area than we would like to be...”

Pathfinder lead

Less thought had gone in to how to support older young people who may need longer in education or training in order to achieve their outcomes and make an effective transition into adulthood. This lack of attention reflected that the areas:

- Had a lot of other issues to address and develop in relation to the reforms
- Were at the time, awaiting the final Code of Practice from DfE before proceeding too far
- Had assumed (often implicitly) that the new systems that were being developed and piloted around younger age groups would copy over to others.

This latter assumption is still being held to, with areas intending to use the same pathways for assessments and reviews, plan templates etc across the age range. However, as we describe below there are a range of issues to be considered to make this work in the context of 19-25 years olds.

The challenge of newcomers to the system

Some areas recognised the possibility of new entrants aged 19-25. The main sources suggested whereby there could be newcomers were:

- Young people who were involved in an accident
- Those whose S139a assessment related support had finished in the last couple of years and who had not achieved their outcomes and had not made further progress towards them since (people who in future might continue to be supported due to the changes in the legislation). In effect this group is a function of the transition to a new system and so any demand should emerge and pass quite quickly
- Young people entering college where needs are identified after they have started on their programme. This was thought quite likely in most areas, reflecting a disconnect of information in the past between different providers. It was hoped that the new approaches would improve this over time.

Across these three groups there was no firm sense of likely demand, but the areas **did not expect many new cases**.

Some providers were particularly worried about the information that they would, or would not, have about young people. They feared that in the time it took them to identify needs the local authority may have allocated its budget and so may not be able to support young people as needed due to the timing of their request. **Some providers are therefore putting in place a more rigorous initial assessment to help them identify needs at as early a stage as possible.**

Where newcomers are identified areas intend to use their existing pathways and plan documents. However, they have identified a series of issues that would need to be considered to ensure their delivery mechanisms were fit for purpose, which are set out in Figure 2. These issues are also relevant when considering how to effectively work with young people that will undergo a translation of their S139a assessment-related support to the new approach, to which we now turn.

Figure 2 Issues around assessment and review

Who should lead the assessment	<p>This would usually fall to the college staff, but this brings issues of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resources to undertake the work in addition to their current duties • Expertise - they will need training to understand the workings of the new system and the approach intended for this age group
The expertise of the Educational Psychologist (EP)	<p>As explained in SQW Comparative Cost Evaluation Report⁴ EPs will often be involved in assessments. However, for the majority of EPs, this will be a new group for them to work with; implying additional training is likely to be required. In one area they have begun to deliver this through short (1-5) day courses.</p> <p>Working with the older group of young people will also place additional resource requirements on EP services, which will need to be considered in relation to capacity to deliver.</p>
Uncertainty around the input from the NHS	<p>The areas had become more confident in their engagement with the NHS. However, they were concerned that for this group they would need to forge new links. The young people will no longer be looked after by a paediatrician and so the first contact is likely to be with GP. It was expected that the GP would know less about the case and so be less able to provide good information; and in some instances were known to charge for assessments – again adding to the costs of the new system. In other cases there was concern that in the past the transfer of information from children’s to adult health had been poor, meaning that parents had had to tell their story again and reducing their confidence in the continuity of the service. This issue may grow given the additional responsibilities now given to young people vis a vis their parents.</p>

Source SQW

⁴ https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/342285/RR356B_-_Comparative_Costs_Evaluation.pdf

Supporting those already in the system

The case study areas had given more thought to those already in the system. This was driven by them appearing a more immediate priority as they were already the local authority's responsibility and so readily identifiable (and also most likely much larger in number). There was a desire to do well for this group and ensure that they received good support in line with the broad expectations of the reforms. This included action around preparing for adulthood and finding work.

At the same time, there was also a concern that a good number of parents and possibly young people would read the reforms as a signal that many young people could stay in education up to the age of 25. This could be seen as attractive as it offered the comfort of staying with what they knew and not facing up to what can be a difficult transition, for example in trying to find work and / or appropriate adult care services, and for many moving from a position where health services are delivered in the education setting to one where they would have to travel to health services.

The areas were clear that they didn't want the latter situation, with staying on in education becoming the automatic norm.

This was a recognition of: funding – there was no additional money to support this group; and doing what was thought best for the young person – who was expected to want to progress beyond education. In both cases there was a desire to stop education becoming in effect a recreational / care service.

‘We need to be clear ... education up to 25 is not an entitlement. It's a recognition that some young people need longer to learn and that they need more time to reconcile that learning’

16-25 Commissioning Manager

It was therefore seen as **important to manage the expectations of parents and young people**. This needs to be done from as early a stage as possible, ideally the year 9 (age 14) review stage to ensure they are developing a plan that seeks proper and timely progression to adulthood and not an unnecessarily prolonged period of education.

The areas were still at an early stage in developing their criteria and process to decide who would or would not be eligible for an on-going EHC plan post-19. For now the key question was ‘**do they need / would they benefit from more education?**’ which was far from straightforward:

- For some young people progression to employment will be attractive and possible, but may not happen due to limited job opportunities. In these cases additional education may not be helpful, but could be attractive until they found work
- For others with very complex needs it was thought that the key issue was identifying appropriate care arrangements. Again, this may not be straightforward but it was unclear what added value would come from continued education

- Due to the way old plans have been written it is not always clear if the intended outcomes have been met or not. In time this will work its way out of the system but does signal the importance of developing good long term outcomes focussed plans for young people.

It was envisaged that many young people will fall between the examples set out above and it was accepted that the current position was not sufficient. **More robust criteria would need to be developed in the very near term to provide guidance locally to young people and their families, and protection to local authorities in the event that they are taken to tribunal.**

Experiences to date

Having recognised the changes required by the reforms areas have to date adopted an approach which could be described as well intentioned, pragmatic but is generally not systematic or what they hope to operate in the longer term. Local authorities are planning to undertake reviews (and in some cases had started this process) with young people with a Learning Difficulty Assessment (LDA) finishing college, to help them to form a view about their next steps, aspirations and eligibility for an EHC plan.

In one area, for example, the local authority has been closely involved in the reviews, which have taken place in the colleges. Their approach has been to understand the aspirations of the young people and if possible match these to suitable provision. So, where they want to find education or need transferring to adult care they have sought to arrange this. However, where this transition has not been possible this local authority has tended to allow the person to stay on in education, where a choice had been given to either develop an EHC plan or continue their S139a assessment-related support.

The local authority recognised that in acting this way it could be providing greater support than envisaged in the legislation and that this had resource implications and so was unlikely to be sustainable in future years. However, they saw this as an acceptable holding position which had been developed prior to publication of the final Code of Practice.

The areas have also thought hard about what to do when they decide a person is not eligible for support. To date, they had tended to invest quite a lot of work in communicating this nature of decision to families and had offered other pathways available to them through the local offer. This process was being delivered via:

- Detailed letters from the local authority explaining the reasons for the decision they have taken and explaining the benefits of alternatives pathways that are available for the young person
- Teams of trained advisors who work with the families and young people in a 'key worker' system. In some areas the teams are commissioned from external services (such as Connexions) and in others they are internal to the local authority.

4. Provision for older young people

Being clear about the end outcome

Through the reforms there is now a much wider recognition that for older young people the focus must be on preparing them for fulfilling adult life, including employment and independent living.

The previous system was characterised by many consultees as paying more attention to keeping young people engaged and safe, but too often this meant retaining them in education for too long. The hope going forward is that greater numbers will enter employment and live independently, and that their pathway will be defined and supported through their EHC plan. We return below to how this is beginning to happen.

‘We need to be very careful that there is no expectation that we go back to the bad old days of FE provision for post 16 year olds lasting for 7-8 years... it is not genuine and meaningful education.’

Statutory assessment and placement
manager

The consultees thought that for young people with the most complex needs, employment may be much more challenging. While the DfE’s supported internship programme has achieved employment rates of over one in three, this still leaves a long way to go. In the most difficult cases the focus was on ensuring a smooth transition to adult social care, which in some cases was reported to be difficult due to recent changes in provision including the closure of day centres.

This has led to a number of issues arising. Following on from the previous chapter, **for some in this group there will be little apparent advantage from on-going education and so no need for an EHC plan.** However, the nervousness parents may feel around any change could be increased by weak adult care provision and changes in the way that they would need to access health services (going to them rather than having them provided at an education setting).

None of the areas had a ready answer to these issues (indeed there may not be a ready answer). However, it does highlight the risk faced that education will be faced with further requests for support going forward, and so the need for clear criteria and mechanisms to define eligibility (as discussed above) along with a need for a good transition process and provision, to which we now turn.

Managing transition

There are three other transition issues which were expected to impact this age group. Firstly there is the uncertainty about whether young people will be eligible for other services and **the fit between the different transition processes for each service.** For more complex cases this should be more straightforward. However, even here there can be issues about changes in service provision and timing. If the transition in other services takes place before (at an earlier age) the education element there is a risk that provision

is agreed and then takes more effort to change at the time of review of the EHC plan. For example, in one case employment and social care support has been combined to support increased time in work, but it was thought this would have been difficult had social care transition been agreed before the employment need arose. Undertaking transitions and reviews together would help to minimise this risk.

Secondly, there was recognition of the **increased responsibility given to older young people. In the Act**, young people are legally defined as those over aged 16, and have the right to make decisions about their own futures. There has been some concern that tensions may arise between young people and their parents over what provision they would want. For example, one case had involved a young person expressing a desire to move back to the family home from an out of area placement, which conflicted with the views of the parents. It will therefore be important to have in place some form of mediation to resolve issues when they arise.

There was some uncertainty about the position when a young person lacked the mental capacity to take decision. This probably reflects timing. The Code provides guidance on this (including that parents should continue to be engaged and will take over responsibility if a young person is not able), which professionals and parents will likely better understand in time.

Thirdly, there was some **thought that young people would stay in education for longer and receive better support**. An example was given where previously young people had been moved too quickly from a training provider to a college, in part to comply with funding arrangements. This had meant they had to repeat some elements of their learning on reaching the college. In future it was hoped that they would be given longer to complete each stage, if required, and so their transition to another provider should be smoother.

Progression to employment and independent living

The choice of services including support to access employment can require considerable support. In one area additional plan co-ordinators have been appointed to work with this group. Their challenge is increased by the limited progress made in defining the appropriate section of the local offer (there was general concern across our case study areas that this section of the local offer lagged behind others).

There has been **recognition of the need to improve the support offered to young people to help them find work, and some progress made albeit with some distance to go**. The key developments to date are summarised in Figure 3.

“The biggest gap we have is in supported employment... this is an area we know we need to concentrate on as we move forward”

Integrated youth and support manager

Figure 3 Examples of actions taken to support progression

Provider actively engaging employers

- Having providers who will engage with employers on a one-to-one basis to make them aware of the types of skills and attributes young people have, and the support that can be offered to the employers and the young person to make employment possible.
- Having providers who take time to engage and understand the skills that young people have, and can link these directly to employers in the local area. For example, one provider noted that some young people at a college were very good at undertaking systematic tasks and had good hand skills, and so identified employers who needed these very practical skills in folding and packing clothes.

Effective preparation for young people

- Making sure that education is preparing young people for living and working in the local community by including independent travel training and accessing community facilities in the area they will live in. This involves “knitting them back into the community so it is not a cliff-edge [when they finish education]” (16-25 Commissioning Manager).

Inclusion of work experience

- Including in the transition process, as part of the 5-day offer (as explained in the previous post-16 report⁵), a tailored period of work experience and for others supported internships. This could also include travel to and from the employer alongside the work experience.

Development of personalised education pathways

- A college describing how it has moved from offering courses for learners, to now focussing on SEN pathways. This includes an evaluation and assessment process where the college speaks with the young person, their family, their schools and teachers and other service providers who have been involved with the young person, to develop a personalised timetable for the young person. The timetable includes relevant courses (could be a combination of accredited and not accredited), activities and services (such as health, respite, day centres, etc.) which will help and support the young person towards achieving their long term outcomes and aspirations.

Offering support services

- A provider offering a range of related services to disabled young people including training for employment, advocacy, benefit advice, telephone helpline, a buddy system, and inclusive events. In addition, the provider operates as the independent support agent for families taking them through the process of the reforms and EHC plans. This included the appointment of two independent support workers and 10 volunteers, who are parents of young people with disabilities and a young person with disabilities, to offer peer support.

5. Remaining issues

Areas face a great challenge in introducing the new reforms and constructing a new approach to service provision. Alongside this there are also a number of issues relating specifically to the older age group (of 19-25 year olds) which remain to be fully addressed:

- **Approach to implementing the reforms.** In working towards implementing the new reforms, all areas interviewed have taken an approach of integrated commissioning of children's services. As areas are now shifting their focus to prioritising the older age group in converting SEN statements and S139a's in to EHC plans, significant work still needs to be done in developing the Local Offer and mapping and integrating commissioning for adult services as well. Areas recognise that this area is not as developed as it should be, especially compared to where they are with children's services, and work is underway. However this means that there is a gap in the process for the older age group, which areas will need to address in the meantime, until a long term process is developed.
- **Criteria for identifying and assessing young people.** The majority of the local authority officers interviewed recognised there still work to be done in developing a set of criteria for identifying and assessing whether a young person is eligible for an EHC plan. Some areas plan to base their processes on the new guidance and code of practice published by the DfE, while other areas have developed a form of assessment based on the section 139a assessment. These routes still need to be piloted and tested to be fully developed. Areas then also need to draft the criteria for carrying out the assessments and in turn communicate these effectively to providers. This is important for ensuring providers are aware of the processes and able to advise families who express interest in their services, and especially for colleges who in many cases are expected to lead on the assessments process in the future.
- **Approach for implementing the conversion process.** There still seemed to be some uncertainty around how the process of the conversion of existing SEN statements and section 139a assessment forms into the EHC plans will work. Areas have a strong preference to adopt a rigorous process involving input from all services working with the young person. In some areas the conversion will be led by local authority personnel and in others it is suggested that colleges will lead on the process for the young people they enrol. This raises challenges in two key areas:
 - **Resources:** the assessment and review process is time consuming and puts a considerable burden on services and providers. While all agree it is important to continue with the rigorous process, there are concerns around the ability of areas to sustain this with the resources they currently have and in particular bearing in mind the requirement for mandatory annual reviews stated in the new Code of Practice. It is to be hoped that changing attitudes to the importance of this activity will help ensure it is delivered in future

- **Skills:** the majority of the professional staff who carried out assessments in the past are trained in working with a younger age group, and many do not have the specific skills and knowledge for working with the older age group. Areas will therefore need to invest in the workforce in the different services and providers to ensure that they have the appropriate skills. Plan co-ordinators will also need to be familiar and proficient in local adult services, which many are not at present and to date they have been focussing on children's services
- **Employment for young people with SEN and disabilities.** In all areas there still seems to be limited employment provision for young people with SEN and disabilities. In addition there are many challenges the areas and services face in the provision around this area including:
 - **Limited employer awareness.** Providers require time and resource to engage local employers and formulate joint provision which offers young people enrolled in the colleges supported employment opportunities. This is very time consuming work, requiring detailed one to one discussion for example about adaptations to employer premises or training to deal with particular issues
 - **Issues of sustainability.** There was concern that while short term support may be available to help people travel to work, this often ended after one year. However, travel costs for this group can be significant and there was concern that ending the support could lead people to view employment as not sustainable
 - Similarly, there was concern that while people may be helped in to work, and the employer given support as well, things could be complicated if things changed. For some young people a change in work colleagues or premises would be very challenging. Therefore, the **support offered may not simply be about entry to employment but also about sustaining employment.**

Annex A: Glossary of terms

DfE	Department for Education
EFA	Education Funding Agency
EHC	Education, Health and Care
EHC plan	Education, Health and Care plan
EP	Educational Psychologist
GP	General Practitioner
S139a	Post-16 Learning Difficulty Assessment
SEN	Special Educational Needs
VCS	Voluntary Community Sector

Annex B: Research methods

Research was undertaken in four pathfinder areas, and one non-pathfinder area selected in discussion with the DfE and Pathfinder Support Team. The basis for the selection of the areas included: areas that had been working strategically and/or operationally with colleges and other post 19 providers during the reform process; areas that had engaged with the appropriate age group (19 years and over); a mix from across the regions; a mix of rural/urban and large/small areas; and at least one pathfinder champion. .

Once the five areas had agreed to participate, a scoping consultation was held with the pathfinder/SEN and disability reform lead in each area to discuss the research focus and objectives, gain an overview of the transition system and the engagement of colleges and other providers in the reform process, and identify providers to participate in fieldwork.

Fieldwork

Fieldwork was conducted between July and August 2014, and consisted of two key elements:

- Area-based consultations with the pathfinder/SEN and disability reform lead or manager in each area, and with other professionals in the local authority involved in engaging with colleges, services and the young people where relevant (including different local authority services and VCS organisations) – 18 in total across all areas
- Face-to-face or telephone interviews in each area with the service manager or transition lead in the colleges or other providers/services – 16 in total across all areas. These were designed to ensure a mix of education, training and employment, and community services, reflecting the focus of each pathfinder. Face-to-face interviews were also carried out with four parents.

The interviews followed two topic guides designed by the research team (one topic guide for the local authority representatives; and the second for the providers), covering the five broad research questions outlined in the introduction of the report. Participants were asked to set aside approximately one hour for the consultations, and all interviews were recorded

Analysis and reporting

The analysis took place in two stages. Firstly, each area 'case study' was written up in alignment with the five research questions. Secondly, the research team looked across the five write-ups to explore commonalities and differences in responses across areas and the themes covered by the research questions.

The report was drafted based on these findings, with an emphasis placed on developing a 'readable' and pragmatic report, which drew on a range of experiences and would be useful to both those involved in engaging with post 19 providers, and those responsible for developing the reforms within post 19 services.



Department
for Education

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