

# Learning from practice: Transitions to post-16 destinations from alternative provision

The Alternative Provision Innovation Fund (APIF) supported nine projects to test new approaches to improve outcomes for young people (YP) (YP hereafter used to refer to young people or young person as relevant) in alternative provision (AP). Three focused on the transition into education, employment or training (EET) after Year 11.

This paper provides practical insights into how young people can be supported in making sustained post-16 transitions from AP based on learning from the APIF projects. This learning is particularly important in the context of the impact of Covid-19 on risk of becoming NEET.

This paper will be of particular interest to those working in AP and post-16 education and training settings, as well as local authorities, employers and third sector organisations e.g. as a checklist for discussion when reviewing their provision/role in the transition of young people in AP.

## The three projects were organised around multi-agency approaches characterised by:

- **Tailored support** delivered by specific transition mentors or coaches;
- **Collaborative** approaches to **governance**, including engagement of local stakeholders;
- Close **coordination with local employers and training providers**; and
- **Flexible, innovative** approaches to post-16 **curricula** and **programmes**.

## The projects were designed to:

- Grow long **lasting and trusting relationships** between young people YP, their families/carers, and staff working in transition roles;
- Ensure that YP are able to make **well informed decisions** about post-16 trajectories;
- Raise **awareness** of the **specific needs** of YP leaving AP amongst post-16 providers and employers;
- Expand the range and availability of suitable post-16 destinations; and
- Extend transition **support over the summer** and into Year 12, beginning for some in Year 10.

## Key outcomes

**66%**

APIF projects

VS

**59%**

AP national average

Young people achieving a sustained transition to EET at age 16<sup>1</sup>



## Stronger

partnership working between AP providers, mainstream schools and post-16 providers.



## Clearer

Clearer communication, tracking and needs assessment following post-16 transition for YP

<sup>1</sup>) Sustained transition refers to transitions sustained for at least 2 terms. The three transitions-focused APIF projects reported that 66% (n=261) of the Year 11+ pupils participating in their provision (n=395) achieved this outcome on before September 2019. National figure based on most recent available data (2017-18 academic year)

# Steps towards successful transitions

## Step 1: Getting foundations right in the AP setting

Ensuring strong foundations at the start of the transition journey included:

- Developing a **holistic understanding** of a YP's **individual needs** and circumstances;
- Establishing **quick and easy ways** for professionals to **share information** about the YP and their progress;
- Putting staff with the right **skills, knowledge and disposition** in transition support roles;
- Beginning **work with YP as early as possible** in order to prepare them for transition as a reality; and
- **Developing relationships with parents/carers** and ensuring that they have information about the help available, distinguishing transition support from that provided by other services.



“Our transition mentor has ... helped us to change the way we work and increase our focus - not just on the educational experience, but how that can help the future prospects of our pupils.”

[AP provider]

“[Transition mentor] has been fantastic... She speaks to him [YP] like an adult... with respect, and he likes that. She's just trying to get him on the right path... She speaks to me a lot about what I think is best for him.”

[Parent]



## Step 2: Holistic, bridging support

APIF projects provided on-going support to YP throughout their transition journeys by:

- Providing continuing access to adults with whom they had built **trusting relationships** (e.g. through phone calls, texts and face to face meetings) both before and after transition;
- Developing the YP's capacity to manage change by **working on the coping strategies** needed to deal with new people, different expectations, and circumstances;
- Scaffolding YP's exploration of their post-16 options and offering **activities and experiences** that enable them to make **informed decisions**;
- Providing support with **course applications**, and interview role-play sessions;
- Maintaining relationships with parents/carers and keeping them informed via **flexible and accessible forms of communication** (e.g. meeting them face to face in familiar spaces); and
- **Building familiarity with new settings**, including by making visits to local training providers and FE colleges outside of open days as these can be overwhelming.

## Step 3: Supportive and connected post-16 destinations

APIF projects highlighted the need for:

- Post-16 providers to **adapt** in order to **accommodate** the particular needs of AP leavers;
- A physical **space or base** for transition workers **in destination settings**, making them more accessible and 'on hand' for YP while settling in;
- Continuing **attention to** be given to the information provided about YP, **their needs** and how to address and support them;
- Facilitating access to college **bursaries, equipment and suitable clothing**; and
- Contributing to transition support by offering a programme of **activities during the summer** and keeping the relationship with the YP 'warm'.

“[the college] has really put their hand up to acknowledging their responsibility to support vulnerable young people. In the past they didn't do that...we've worked very closely with them to support the young people...they are recognising that need to do more nurture-type stuff.”

[APIF project lead]



## Step 4: Sustaining successful transitions

Successful transitions are sustained through:

- Developing a regular and **systematic approach to monitoring** YP's progress in collaboration with the different stakeholders who can enable access to the relevant data;
- **Maintaining relationships** – with YP, stakeholders in AP and post-16 settings and transition workers – **well into Year 12**;
- Ensuring that **support continues to be targeted** where needed and appropriately;
- Developing mechanisms to **ensure destinations are tracked** and known; and
- Learning from the data and from experience how to **continue to develop the AP offer** for future cohorts by understanding where gaps and weaknesses lie.



# Focus on practice examples

## What did staff in key transition roles do?

### Typically, transition support roles included:

- 1-1, wrap-around mentoring support including tailored Information, Advice and Guidance on post-16 choices;
- Exploring barriers to learning;
- Coordinating approaches to transition;
- Advocating for the YP and providing practical help to for YP to attend meetings with education and support providers;
- Supporting parents and carers;
- Making referrals to other services and working with professionals like social workers, schools, colleges/training providers and health professionals;
- Helping to access bursaries or funding to cover costs of equipment; and
- Maintaining contact after transition.

**All three projects saw benefits including sustained engagement with projects and improved progression to post-16. During the Covid-19 lockdown, transition workers have been vital for maintaining contact with YP. Projects reported better communication with YP who had transition workers than those who did not.**

## Adapting an FE offer for AP leavers

One APIF project has worked with a local college to design programmes bridging the move to FE by mirroring an AP approach in the college. Individual needs are shared before the course starts, allowing staff to find the best route for the YP and feed them gradually into it. The courses have:

smaller groups

one lead member of staff

a holistic approach to YP's needs.

### There have been a number of benefits arising from this approach.

- Working closely with the college has increased awareness of the needs of YP coming from an AP setting.
- Retention in FE has been improved by pairing better information sharing with continued support from a transition mentor.
- YP can return to the introductory course if the transition to a standard course falters, which has also supported retention.

## The APIF transitions projects

**Cognus Ltd** worked alongside five partners to offer a wide package of support for YP, including transition coaches, readiness activities, contacts and workshops over the summer holidays, resilience training, support for parents, and training for post-16 providers to support how they engage and retain YP.

**Futures Advice, Skills and Employment Ltd** worked with local authorities, AP providers and employers to provide careers advice and engagement to YP. The programme included employability and careers related activities such as supported work placements, workplace visits and individual coaching.

**Salford City Council**, working with partners including the Build Salford Consortium, offered provision to improve YP skills and prepare them for post-16 destinations. Activities included support from a transition mentor, access to work and industry-led experiences, and close liaison with FE destinations to improve transition.