**Alternative Provision Innovation Fund: Build Salford Project**

**Personal reflections on key learning relating to AP Transition Covid Funding**

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**Introduction**

This paper covers learning from the above project which has a direct benefit to those who are deciding how to use the new year 11 transition funding from DfE.

* **Bullet points such as this show how examples quoted have relevance to AP transition funding.**

**Salford Transition mentor role: What is it?**

Following a DfE Innovation Fund to support young people who are in pre-16 Alternative Provision into their next post 16 destinations, a Transition Mentor was appointed to provide direct 1-1 support to a cohort of approximately 30 young people who were currently in yr 11. The key duties of this role were to:

* Provide 1-1 mentoring support including Information, Advice and Guidance on post-16 choices
* Explore any barriers to their current learning and how these may impact on their post choices and beyond
* Provide practical support to attend appointments/meetings
* Work alongside parents and carers to support their child’s post 16 transition
* Work with the AP providers to provide a coordinated approach to transition including advocacy for the young person
* Work alongside other professionals including social workers, health professionals, schools, colleges/training providers
* Make referrals into support services, including social care, mental health support and CEIAG.
* Role profile can be supplied

**Salford Transition mentor role: Impact quotes**

*Lorraine, our transition mentor, has made a really positive impact on the life chances of the students. She 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.*

Lee MacDonald Centre Manager For Housing Construction workshop.

*Lorraine in the transition mentor role has been a real bonus to us this year, thanks to her all our pupils have a positive post 16 plans with realistic back up options*

Kirsty McLaughlin, Centre Manager, Salford Open Learning

*Lorraine has brought another dimension to our Alternative Provision offer. It would be crazy to not continue this as she is literally changing people’s lives for the better*

Sheila Arnott, Salford Local Authority Lead for Alternative Provision

**Feedback from young people & parents**

*Young Person: “The mentoring is very helpful because it gives me other options”*

*Parent: “Thank you for all the support and help. I don’t know what my son and the family would have done without you believing in us.”*

*Parent: It is good to know someone cares about us as we are stuck in isolation, but I now know that the plans we have made will go ahead still, we just don’t know when things will get back up and running.*

* **Work with Parents and carers as well as young people, they are very concerned about their sons and daughters at this time.**
* **Work with key partners**

**Outcome of Transition Mentor Role**

At the end of the project the post has been funded to continue for a further 2+ years until the end of 2022. It is an equally funded model across Salford City College, LA Inclusion team and Participation team. There is an aim over this period to embed this role and further strengthen the resource to ensure all AP young people have transition support mentor roles

* **A transition mentor isn’t just for Covid! think about the future whilst you are delivering this work**

**APIF Project Year 11 Destinations information**

The sample of Alternative Provision students that we took from the school leavers the year before the project, showed a concerning level of youth unemployment (NEET). This has been significantly reduced by the work of the transition mentor. These are a strong set of figures, but it should be remembered these are young people’s lives and those of their families that the transition mentor is changing for the better.

**Post 16 Destinations of project year 11 school leavers Vs AP control group from the previous year**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Comparison of Percentage of a control group school leavers from AP progressing into Education Employment or training (EET) the year before the project (control group) and year 1 of the project. | | | |
|  | November | January | April |
| Control group  2018 school leavers | 80% | 50% | 64% |
| Project Year 1 school leavers group 2019 | 95% | 77% | 83% |

The project group EET figures across the three measurements demonstrate that in the project year there was a consistent increase in EET compared to the previous year’s control group with 15% more in November, 27% more in January, and 19% more in April. The control group was taken from the previous years AP students in independent AP settings contracted through LA AP Coordinator.

The Government’s own report of 2018 in a response to the Education Select Committee quoted the comparative figure for the whole year school leaver cohort in November is 94% nationally. This is far higher than the comparative figures far higher than all of the January and April figures for AP. The same report found that compared to only 57% of school leavers were in EET 6 months after leaving school, this is similar to our January measurement point. So, the control group findings whilst shocking are close to the national position for young people from Alternative Provision

* **Measure your impact by destinations, track these to show if they sustain them, it will help build a case to sustain activity into the future and show you if you are having an impact, advocate for provision developments, write up case studies as you go along**

**What is making the difference?**

Whilst it is impossible to tell statistically what has made the difference. We believe there are two key components that have improved the outcomes. To be at the most powerful both these outcomes need to work in tandem:

1. **Transition Mentor:**
2. Impact of the transition mentor in helping to **improve the pupils transition preparation** and **appropriate choice of destination** where possible and **sustaining that destination**
3. The transition mentor **supported 30% of the young people after they had left one destination and helped them progress back into another**. This support included help when things go wrong including arranging transfer to a new destination or support during a period of NEET enabling progression back into EET at a point when the young person is ready.
4. **Consistency of the Transition Mentor** in the young people’s lives. Young people and parents often reported that having an impartial professional there when things go wrong was critical to the trust in the role and that she had got to know the young person and their family throughout the whole of year 11.

* **Consider use of someone who will be experienced in building rapport and trust quickly if the young people don’t already know them.**
* **Keep the person working along side them as long as possible. For most until December and for a few beyond this**
* **Have managed handovers to other services when you stop working with them**

**Aspirations:**

Whilst working with the pupils during the whole of year 11 this year has improved the appropriateness of aspirations and plans for most of the participants there are still a minority who still have aspirations that are not yet formed or are still inappropriate and will need intensive support when these do not work out. We anticipate with the continued transition support now in place beyond this project that we stand a good chance of matching or improving of the positive reduction in NEET achieved with last year’s school leavers.

* **A Transition Mentor is for life, not just for COVID! Try and use this opportunity to build a transition support system running through year 11 and over the summer seeing them settled in year 12**

**Responding to YP issues/pandemics:**

The project has regularly shifted in emphasis to address emerging issues or capitalise on learning or changing circumstances. For instance:

* The advocacy / development of a broader range of AP style post 16 provision was not expected to have the importance or impact on outcomes we believe it has had
* Transition Mentor role switched to welfare / safeguarding with creation of a log shared securely shared between professionals

**Further detail**

During COVID-19 the transition mentor’s role switched to welfare and safeguarding with an increased connection to parents as well as the young people. A weekly exchange of information was agreed between the TM, ESF NEET adviser and the Head of the AP Centre. This enabled timely exchange of information and the ability to identify warning signs across all partners. Obviously if there was an immediate concern this was escalated in line with normal safeguarding procedure

1. **Suitable Post 16 Provision:**

Introduction of additional post 16 AP style provision such as the Passport to Construction, the Build Salford Traineeship or other traineeship or summer programmes which 50% of the project trainees accessed either as a first destination or a second when a mainstream programme did not work out and they were supported into another destination. Two thirds of these ‘AP style’ provisions were set up through the influence of the project, such as the Passport to Construction.

* **Gather evidence of what works and what doesn’t for these young people in terms of post 16 provision**

1. **Readiness for Post-16:**

We believe that the approaches common in alternative provision of nurturing, individual attention, informal and small settings, combined perhaps with higher tolerance threshold of poor behaviour due to a higher level of why they are behaving in a certain way comes into stark contrast when these young people move into mainstream post 16 education and training. The approaches here more closely mirror the mainstream high school culture and approaches these pupils have either rejected themselves or been rejected from. In blunt terms we are potentially setting some of them up to fail again.

* **attention needs paying to transition support, suitability of post 16 provision related to their behaviours/attitudes and supporting providers to think differently and understand these pupils (reference adverse childhood experiences training).**

1. **Post 16 provision developments: AP style bridging programmes post 16**

**Passport to College/Construction:**

We have developed a number of Post 16 introductory or feeder programmes (4). Salford City College, with project support, developed a tailored introductory programme for those AP students who would otherwise have gone straight onto mainstream full-time construction courses named ‘Passport to…’.

The introductory programme has smaller group numbers, one lead member of staff and a holistic approach to the needs of young people. These are identified before starting and this history allows the college to explore what is the best route for the young person and feed them gradually onto that course, if it doesn’t work, they can return to the introductory programme. They are trying to mirror an AP approach in FE with the aim of supporting them ‘back into mainstream’. The potential students from this project have been identified and are supported through the enrolment and first term through the Transition Mentor, who works alongside the lead college staff.

* **If this is a need at pre-16 (AP) then what makes anyone think that this need disappears over the end of year 11 summer holidays?**
* **Passport to Construction programme is definitely smoothing transition for AP students**

**Expanded college provision for AP students:**

We are providing project advocacy for an additional college site to broaden their foundation programme for students with EHCPs to include ex AP students. This appears to be paying off with interest to run a trial in Sept 2020. Two young people applied for mainstream courses at Eccles College independently. Last year both project students struggled to maintain their positions in these courses as the jump from Alternative Provision to these mainstream diploma courses at this site was too challenging. We discussed with Connexions colleagues whether this was a common theme and they agreed. College are now looking to broaden the eligibility to ex-AP pupils and they are discussing with us a pilot course. We discussed the risks and options with the young people and their parents and they are happy to discuss the Foundation entry route with the college in partnership with the TM once colleges reopen after the pandemic restrictions.

* **Consider the current provision and how it could be further extended/expanded to meet a wider group of young people (ex AP students not just EHCP students) this could involve a ‘re-brand’ of existing provision and broadening eligibility instead of new.**

**Supported apprenticeship programme (in development)**

New supported apprenticeship programme being developed by our project and ForHousing. Plans to further spread and mainstream.

The supported apprenticeship programme is a newly designed support programme for young people who are not ready to move straight onto a mainstream apprenticeship for instance some young people who come from alternative provision would be suit suited to this. This programme is being developed as part of this project with ForHousing, Salford Council and Salford City College working in partnership and will be piloted by ForHousing in 2020. It will have the following four key elements

1) Flexible preparation recruitment and induction utilising work placements as a working interview.

2) Employer training and support package. This will include improved understanding of the needs of the client group. Practical advice and support in addressing challenges and crisis's that commonly occur with this group.

1. Transition and pastoral support. This will be provided in kind by the joint College Local Authority funded transition mentor
2. Flexible employment and training model. This will include flexible college delivery focused on the needs of the young person more than is usual in a mainstream apprenticeship. It will also include an initial part time employment model which would which will allow the apprentice to gradually adjust into the full time 40 hours a week model. Many of the young people will be used to shorter days in an alternative provision setting.

**Other Project Partnerships:**

1. **Partners**

* ESF NEET Contract: New partnership formed with ForHousing ESF NEET project. They will run a construction summer school. This is vital this year if it can still run as the young people have missed almost half of the year by then and have been out of the routine of education for 6 months by September when most post 16 provision starts.
* AP Settings: Salford Open Learning have agreed to virtual meeting through Microsoft teams with Transition Mentor and pupils through lockdown. The Construction workshop remains open during the summer period and therefore can continue to offer support whereas most schools, AP settings and careers advisers linked to schools are all term time only. Summer just when transition support is needed there is none!
* College: Working with AP has increased awareness of Colleges of AP and some of the features and needs of ex-AP students. They have broadened their thinking as to how to deliver suitable provision to meet the needs of the students from AP.
* **Getting Pre-16 AP settings and Post 16 to work together is crucial for smooth transition, information sharing and to influence provision and support.**

1. **Parents/families:**

Working with parents/ guardians was introduced as a key element during the project based on early learning. This became one of the main ways of staying in touch with the young people over the summer 2019 and working as a family to make sure the young people had the best chance of progressing into post 16 education employment or training and sustaining this.

Note key contacts are often grandparents for these yp.

* Improved parental engagement introduced at induction enabled improved relationships to be built up, proving vital during lockdown.
* A new process of introducing the project to parents implemented with planned follow up.
* Working with family support networks.

A new innovation of the Transition Mentor is being present at the Construction Workshop inductions, this has promoted increased contact with parents and families earlier in the year.

In Year 1 Parental engagement started in the second half of the summer term and took off from there. This year as the project bedded in from the start of the year, we are pleased to say that a significant majority of parents have engaged with the TM for support and advice about post 16 opportunities. The TM has been able to support communication between schools and parents. Once the pandemic and restrictions came into place, the TM advised the parents on the governments communication and reassured them about the opportunities forthcoming e.g. Summer programme and college starts will still go ahead but may experience delays depending when restrictions are lifted. The contacts with parents have increased since lockdown happened, and parents have been very grateful for the TMs reassurances regarding transition as they were y starting to be very concerned about this.

* **Get to know the parents and grandparents as soon as possible and understand their concerns about their young person, wider family issues and other related worries. They can be the key to the young people over the summer (or during a pandemic!).**

1. **Careers Education Information, Advice and Guidance (CEIAG) Policy**

**Responsibility:**

Statutory responsibility for CEIAG is with schools, however most AP pupils are physically or mentally at least in part disengaged from their high school. It appears after a brief review that there are very few requirements on AP providers to provide CEIAG or a smooth transition to post 16. Ofsted guidance barely gives this issue a mention it appears at an initial examination. This group are, as we know, far more likely to become NEET at the end of 11 years education than their mainstream equivalents. Transition for this group from a small nurturing group setting to large class group, mainstream FE often in large scale campuses, similar settings to the high school ones where they have struggled / failed to thrive is obviously not going to be simple or smooth for the young person.

Because they are not in school for at least some of the time if not all, then are they going under the radar of the schools CEIAG provision? Or at least getting less of the support available? Especially if they are not in any of the risk factor group such as Young offenders, EHCP, care etc.

What is the amount and quality of CEAIG and transition support that this group get from APs? We suggest it is patchy. We are not aware of the CEIAG quality ‘Gatsby’ standard being commonly used in AP setting. It is likely some may get less than the norm, or be missed, when it is obvious from the above that this group need more than the norm to reduce their disproportionate likelihood of becoming NEET.

*50% of our small sample group of AP leavers in the year prior to the project were NEET in November following their leaving school, the high school norm was in the region of 95%.*

* **Speak with your schools and AP settings about their responsibilities to the AP cohort for Careers Education. Consider do they receive the same opportunities as their peers in school?**

**Careers Guidance and Decision Making:**

The widespread provision of Careers Guidance and transition support is not yet secured throughout all AP provision for a set of learners who arguably have the biggest transition of all year 11 pupils, as they will have to progress into post 16 mainstream provision. When they have failed to thrive in the pre-16 equivalent version and hence been referred to Alternative Provision. Whilst good practice has been spread and in patches embedded, more work to achieve this on a wider and long-term sustainment plan. Another reason for the discussions to extend the Coordinators contract on a part-time short-term basis.

However even where the Mentor has facilitated young people receiving Careers Guidance from the professional careers advisers linked to schools, we have evidence that many of them say what they think is the right thing to an adviser they have only just met and then report to myself or school staff that they have applied for college etc. but don't really want to do that.

Many of AP yp on the project do not respond well or honestly to new professional such as CG advisers and later tell the TM they told them what they thought they wanted to hear. This area is still a work in progress.

* **It takes time to build up a rapport and trust from these young people, so one off interventions from professionals often result in the young people saying what they think the professional wants to hear. It is only after this they tell the mentor something different**

**Transition support:**

Most Schools Careers Guidance Advisers are commissioned to work term time only. Therefore, the school finishes its responsibility at the end of year 11 leaving them even less support at the crucial summer period. Previously local Connexions service have only picked up school leavers who are NEET in September. This has been changed this year through a change to the local authority’s commission, so they are picking young people who are at risk of NEET that have been identified and supporting them throughout the summer and into the next destination, including NEET. However, the capacity to do this for all those who need it is not possible.

* **Find out where the school support ends and where locally commissioned NEET services start and who is responsible and/or who will take responsibility?**
* **We have seen that some project participants only make an actual decision about their next steps when they are faced with the reality that they are, in fact leaving school however much help you give them during the year. In July don’t take their word that they are ‘going to college’ in September…**

1. **New and improved referral processes pre to post 16**

The process of transition from Primary School to Secondary has changed massively, there are now multiple visits to secondary schools, transfer of information, taster days and a whole lot more. Arguably a bigger change takes place with the transition into post 16 provision. If the young person has been in alternative provision the transition is more marked as they are normally transferring from specialist support to mainstream provision in addition to the differences between pre and post 16 mainstream provisions. The College and other providers state they only begin to find out the information about young people’s backgrounds when things go wrong often in the period November – January and the young person is at risk of dropping out or has already stopped attending.

In Salford we are attempting to change this and implement a transition referral process backed by an operational transition referral form which has all the key elements of information that the College has said would be useful up front before the young person starts. The APIF project trialled the use of this in Summer 19 using informed consent of young people. We are also trialling taster days, visits, meeting tutors and pastoral support staff, which is much more regular than the universal offer

We negotiated with College early enrolments for these pupils, so they left College with specific confirmation of an actual college course. This was piloted as an approach for the project participants and some other young people identified as ant risk of NEET with a view to learning from this and potentially adopting it as an approach next year across the College for young people identified as at risk of NEET. This is part of the Council’s NEET Reduction Strategy that the project is piloting.

* **Consider how you can work closer between AP providers and Post 16 providers to pass on critical transition information, especially in the absence of EHCPs/PEPs etc LAs can do this under some of their legal obligations related to Participation, but there are other processes you can implement. This is important for a broader group than just AP young people.**

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