Defining Transition

The transition process is not well defined, although it is a challenging time for all young people and their families. It is important that support is available from a variety of other sources (such as mental health services, social services, and educational services). This supports young people to manage their own destiny and in some cases, it may even occur in the family. If young people are able to develop a range of skills and strategies to ensure they can maintain their own wellbeing, they are more likely to successfully navigate the transition process. The report is about how best to support young people and their families through the transition process, and to help them to achieve their full potential.

The report describes the process of transition in terms of the challenges involved, the support that is required, and the potential outcomes for young people and their families. It also highlights the importance of involving parents and young people in the transition process.

Are we “Getting It Right”?

The report is based on the principle that young people and their families should be involved in the transition process. It is important that young people are able to make informed choices about their future and that they are able to participate in the planning process. This will help to ensure that young people are able to achieve their full potential.

Methods

The research for the report involved interviews with young people and their families, as well as interviews with practitioners and other key stakeholders. The data was collected through a variety of methods, including focus groups, interviews, and the use of questionnaires.

1. Variable Transition Plans and Experiences

Transition plans are developed by different agencies and the plans are not always consistent. This can lead to young people feeling that they are not being supported adequately. Young people need to have a clear understanding of what their transition plans involve and how they will be implemented.

2. Still “Lost in Transition”

The Cheshire and Mersey Experience

The research team conducted a case study in Cheshire and Mersey and a number of families were interviewed. Many of the families interviewed indicated that transition experiences may be chaotic or stressful, and that the transition process can be a difficult time for young people.

3. Families and Gains

Several of the families indicated that they had lost valuable services as a result of the transition. Some families described how they were able to access new services and support that were not available during the transition process. These services included access to a Counsellor; a Mental Health Practitioner who is supporting a young person; and a Lead Professional or Transition Coordinator is available.

Conclusions

The Cheshire and Mersey Experience

The Cheshire and Mersey Experience includes a number of good practices and developments as well as examples of developing transition and services to meet the needs of young people who have complex needs, disabilities, or both. These good practices include:

- The Council for Disabled Children (2011) highlight five key areas in addressing the transition of young people with learning disabilities.
- Transition teams are working with stakeholders and other Clinical Strategic Networks to identify the needs of young people with complex needs.
- Parents Forums can help promote family awareness of the transition process and enable them to participate in a positive way.
- Young people need to be involved in the transition process and to be able to make informed choices about their future.
- The transition process is not well defined, although it is a challenging time for all young people and their families.

Recommendations

The Cheshire and Mersey Experience

The Cheshire and Mersey Experience recommends that transition teams should:

- Establish a Young Person and Family Reference Group to develop services which are young person and family friendly.
- Work with key stakeholder groups to develop Transition Plans and Pathways which are based on the needs of young people and their families.
- Develop an informed parent or professional available who can advocate on their behalf.
- Consider how services could be re-designed and re-modelled.

Impact

The Cheshire and Mersey Experience

The Cheshire and Mersey Experience has had a significant impact on the transition process. The research team has been able to identify a number of good practices and developments that can be used to improve the transition process for young people and their families.

References

The Cheshire and Mersey Experience

The Cheshire and Mersey Experience includes a number of references to other research and reports that have been conducted in this area.

Emerging Themes

The research team has identified a number of emerging themes that are important to understand when considering the transition process. These themes include:

- Transition as a single and unconsolidated entity.
- Transition and the impact of the transition process.
- The Cheshire and Mersey Experience includes a number of good practices and developments as well as examples of developing transition and services to meet the needs of young people who have complex needs, disabilities, or both.

In three different hospitals in a single and unconsolidated entity and poorly consolidated.

4. Establish a Young Person and Family Reference Group to develop services which are young person and family friendly.

5. Develop an informed parent or professional available who can advocate on their behalf.

6. Consider how services could be re-designed and re-modelled.

7. The hardest thing for parents of young people with complex needs is reversing your perspective; up till this point people have only talked about your problems, which you have had to focus on to access services – now people are talking about future plans and opportunities and what the young person can do (which can “make your heart sing”) but also be a shock or be disconcerting.

8. Concerns from young peoples’ perspective include having to get to know new professionals; fears around safety and competence; still needing parents there to explain and reassure.

What is the most important?

- The most important person is the young person - they should be involved throughout.
- People need to feel secure that they will receive a service that is at least as effective in meeting their needs post transition as they were receiving during their transition.
- The next most important is the parent or carer - often they are exhausted and feel they have had to organise everything where no Lead Professional or Transition Coordinator is available.
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