



Action for Children

Person Centred Planning Pilot Evaluation Report

September 2008

This report was produced by:

SDS
SDS Project Management Consultancy Ltd.

in partnership with
in  **Control**TM

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The Project Team



Alister Brown – Action for Children Project Lead



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Summary

- The initial purpose of this project was to gather, quickly, the views of young people in Transition and to use those views to inform service development.
- Monksfield Respite Resource, Northumberland, was identified as having a representative group of such young people.
- Elements of the Person Centred Plan (PCP) model were adopted along with one element from the Dynamite Project model (£200 budget).
- At an early stage it was identified that offering the young people and their families a full Person Centred Plan was an opportunity not to be missed.
- The project was affected by the initial planning not reflecting the scale of the eventual project.
- The process put the young person at the centre and everyone responded positively to this.
- There was some concern about post Transition provision for young people.
- The project evaluation demonstrates that all aims were achieved and all families involved had a good experience.
- All young people involved had a Person Centred Plan by the end of the project.
- All participating families recommended ACTION FOR CHILDREN adopt PCP and "keep it going".

Key Outcomes

- The project achieved all of its aims, with the enthusiasm of all involved clearly contributing to its success.
- Every young person was involved in producing his/her person centred plan, and families felt both plans and process were of demonstrable value.
- Person Centred Planning positively addresses a need for young people to be at the centre of plans for their futures.
- The £200 budget did not add anything to the project, nor was it an incentive for families to become involved.
- Staff training resulted in improved practice.
- Families are concerned about the nature, range and quality of services available to young adults.
- Families hold the Monksfield respite service in high esteem and would like to see it extended beyond its current age limit.
- ACTION FOR CHILDREN experienced valuable organisational learning in the operational, strategic and service development areas.
- Comprehensive and thought through planning, at both national and local level, is essential before starting a project, along with consultation, sufficient resources and an adequate timescale.
- ACTION FOR CHILDREN has the potential to deliver Person Centred Planning well.

Background

As part of a national review of services ACTION FOR CHILDREN seconded Alister Brown, Assistant Director Children's Services, part time to focus on development and modernisation of its day and respite services for young people who live with disability. He, as Lead Officer, initiated this project to gather the views of young

people between children's and adult services (Transition), about the services they want and need now and for their futures as young adults.

Monksfield was chosen for this project because there is a commitment from local strategic stakeholders to work to identify alternative models of respite support for young people in and immediately after Transition. Some young people have left Monksfield and gone on to post 18 services that have not met their expectations; some have gone on to services that those supporting them viewed as inappropriate. This is typical of experiences nationally and is recognised in key government policy documents as an area needing improvement.

Approach adopted

At the outset PCP was identified as the project tool. In addition it was agreed that participants would be offered a £200 budget for a 'person centred event' of his/her choice to use at the end of the project. This was included to measure if such an addition would encourage participation.

Person Centred Planning (PCP) is a method of engaging a person who has support needs in sharing his/her views and aspirations for the future and making sure those views are central to plans developed for him/her. PCPs are usually undertaken with people who may previously have had decisions made for them. It provides an opportunity for the person to make choices and to be heard.

The key feature of the model is the production of the Person Centred Plan, which is all about the person, his/her views, preferences, wishes, aspirations and intentions for the future. This plan can form a basis for all services and support provided to the person. It is a collaborative process with the person choosing who will be involved – as many people as he/she wishes. This can include those who support the person; from family and friends to staff from all services involved in the person's life.

Project Aims

The project aims, set by ACTION FOR CHILDREN were:

- *To better understand the aspirations of young people and their families who use our services.*
- *To develop the skills of the staff team (at Monksfield) and develop organisational learning.*
- *To enable young people using the service (at Monksfield) to better participate in review processes.*
- *To identify if young people using our services have needs in transition that ACTION FOR CHILDREN could meet.*

Implementation Plan

Two experienced PCP facilitators (Dennis Gibson and Libby Morrison) were engaged for the project. Their role would be twofold:

- To provide PCP training for staff from Monksfield who work with the young people involved in the project.
- To use PCP skills to gather the views of young people, with Monksfield staff supporting the process.

The agreed project structure became:

1. A number of families using Monksfield services and in the Transition process agree to take part in the project.
2. A trained PCP Facilitator is assigned to the young person and his/her family.
3. The PCP Facilitator works with the young person and his/her family to arrange a PCP meeting, identifying who is to be invited, where and when it should be held.
4. The PCP meeting takes place and the young person's plan is produced. A plan for the £200 budget is produced during the day.
5. An evaluation of the project to be completed and recommendations presented at its conclusion.
6. This process to be completed with in 3 months.
7. Young people receive their £200 budgets and use them, providing feedback to the Lead Officer afterwards.

Delivery

At the earliest stages of the project it became clear that providing a full PCP for each young person would take more time than simply gathering his/her views using PCP skills. As the project attracted sufficient interested and committed families, however, the Project Lead felt it was an opportunity not to be missed. As a result the project's growth was organic and expectations of it, and of those involved, changed gradually.

Staff at Monksfield received training. However, once completed, it became clear that staff involvement would not be possible, as staff did not feel confident about co-facilitating.

A number of factors contributed to this:

- The project was initially expected to be very short and small scale, and a proportionate amount of planning was undertaken. This was not sufficient for the 'organically grown' project.
- Advance communication from senior management about the project and its aims and objectives, had not been clear. There had been no consultation.
- Monksfield staff and management did not have enough information about their expected involvement in the project prior to training.
- Not enough consideration had been given to the challenges of involving staff who work shifts in training sessions.

This may appear to be a significant shortfall; however it was in reality simply due to a combination of:

- The number of initiatives/projects being developed at the same time at Monksfield.

- A lack of written information before and during the initial stage.
- Monksfield's manager not having a central role in the project.
- The pressure on the team of temporary staff shortage at the time.

With hindsight the following steps could have averted this:

- Monksfield Manager being a member of the project leadership team from the outset.
- A project planning stage, scoping the time and resources needed, which included consultation and a pre training launch by Action for Children for staff at Monksfield and others to be involved.

The two PCP facilitators worked with the families providing:

- PCP awareness sessions for each family.
- Pre PCP meetings to plan the event and identify who was to be invited.
- Facilitation of the PCP meeting, producing of each young person's plan, along with a 'mini plan' for the £200 budget.

Timescale

Initially this was 3 months to allow the project to inform other development work underway at the same time. For the following reasons this was not achievable:

- The project that was delivered was different and more expansive than the one first envisaged.
- Organizing a number of meetings with a number of families at their convenience is time consuming, especially when those families have ongoing high demands on their time.

The project took nine months including evaluation and the end of project Celebration Event.

Evaluation Methodology

It was agreed that the following would be evaluated:

- Expectations of training, awareness raising and experience of training.
- Quality of training and materials (including trainers' views).
- Clarity of remit and causes of any variations to the programme.
- Views of participants: were they initially willing/reluctant/reasons for either, would they recommend it?
- How participants experienced the programme.
- Impact on perceptions/views/expectations for the young person's future.
- Impact, if any, on practice.
- Impact on outcomes for the young person, based on initial expectations.
- Did the £200 fund work as a test tool?
- Views on what could be improved/amended.

Method

- Pre project confidential questionnaire.
- Post project timed and structured interviews.
- Evaluation report.
- Presentation at Celebration Event.

Pre and post project evaluation was undertaken with:

- ACTION FOR CHILDREN Lead Officer.
- PCP Trainers/Facilitators.
- Families involved.

Because Monksfield staff did not remain involved as facilitators they were not asked to complete the second stage of staff evaluation. Monksfield's Manager contributed views after the training was completed and the project plan had been amended.

Post project comments and views were sought from other participants in the process:

- Disabled Children's Team (Northumberland Families and Children's Trust).
- Connexions Northumberland.
- Schools involved.

Nine young people and their families took part in the project, all contributed to the pre project evaluation, all were willing to contribute to the post project evaluation however circumstances meant one family was unable to.

Evaluation Outcomes

1. Training

Monksfield staff seemed to have a generally good experience of training with ACTION FOR CHILDREN: 80% thought it excellent or good, with 20% rating it as average.

With regard to training for this particular project, 40% felt that the point of the training had been explained thoroughly, while 60% felt it had not been explained thoroughly enough. In terms of training resources and materials provided 80% rated them as good and 20% as ok. Comments included "handouts informative" and "very visual". 80% of staff rated the trainers' performance as good, 20% rated it as excellent. Trainers were described as "approachable and enthusiastic".

4 out of the 5 staff trained thought the purpose and intended outcome of the training was made clear, 1 staff member did not, as they weren't aware "that facilitation would be done in their own time".

4 out of 5 staff thought the training achieved its intention.

All staff felt too little time had been made available for the training sessions.

All staff said they would recommend this training to others. They expected positive consequences from the training for themselves, in terms of more knowledge and involvement and therefore for the service and better outcomes for young people using the service.

Monksfield's Manager said staff had enjoyed the training and had found the trainers to be very good; however she also reported that some staff felt they had not been consulted and "just had to do it", some felt forced into doing it and some that the training was "pie in the sky".

The Manager confirmed the training had had a positive influence on staff practice with those involved using a more imaginative approach to their work with young people. Overall it was viewed as a good experience for Monksfield.

As explained earlier in this report, Monksfield staff did not go on to facilitate PCPs for this project.

Families

90% of the families involved stated that, at the start of the project, relevant information was given to them in a helpful way ("good information in a kind manner"). 1 family felt that it had given them the wrong impression of PCP and could have been explained better.

5 families had no previous knowledge of PCP; 1 family had heard of PCP; 1 family had some knowledge of PCP but had not used it; 1 family had used PCP before. All eight families however felt PCP was worth pursuing

Trainers/Facilitators

(Trainers delivered training to staff and awareness raising sessions with families at the beginning of the project)

Both trainers felt ACTION FOR CHILDREN had given them a clear remit, had consulted them on the design of the training and had provided them with good quality resources.

They felt that small group work with staff and individual visits to families worked well. They had concerns after training, however, about the number of staff able to undertake the role of PCP Facilitator. If the trainers had had the opportunity to change anything about this stage of the project they would have preferred:

- a. a more in depth training course for staff, over two days.
- b. Families to have the opportunity to meet together as a group and to meet with staff as a group.
- c. Families to have been provided with more information before committing their involvement.

Both felt they were fully consulted and involved in changes that followed immediately training was concluded, i.e. undertaking the role of PCP Facilitator.

2. The Project Experience

Families and young people

Everyone who started the project completed and contributed, in some way, to the evaluation.

All families reported that they were happy with the venues for the meetings that the meetings were held at times to suit them and sufficient time was given to the process.

Example comment:

"The fact that the times were agreed well in advance and around [the young person] was very helpful".

The overwhelming majority rated their PCP Facilitator as excellent:
"Brilliant", "Helpful", "Explained things thoroughly", "Easy to talk to".

All of the young people attended their own person centred planning meeting and some attended their preparation meetings. The majority of young people were able to contribute in some way to the meetings they attended.

The overwhelming majority of families described the experience for their young person as excellent.

"As good as it could be", "a great benefit", "thoroughly enjoyed herself"

When families were asked **"what was done well?"** the following key points emerged:

- The process was well explained and easy to understand.
- Ample consideration was given to timings and venues for meetings.
- The right people were involved and were all able to contribute.

When families were asked **"what could have been done better?"** the following key point was made:

- Nothing!

When families were asked **"what worked for you as a family?"** responses were:

- Getting everybody together.
- Increasing awareness and understanding.
- [Young person] was at the centre and had his say.
- [Young person] can relate to it very easily.
- Concentrated the mind.
- Being able to consider the future.

Facilitators

Both facilitators felt they received good quality management support throughout the project, although they did not feel that they had enough information at the outset about the families. This did not prove to be a problem, however, as they met with the families a number of times before the PCP meeting took place.

Both facilitators found the role of an independent facilitator to be a positive one: "working for the family was liberating".

When asked **"what benefit, if any, do you think the process had for families?"** responses included:

- It was a different opportunity for families to talk and express fears and worries and have them recorded.
- For some it was therapeutic, very emotional.
- Seeing professionals and teachers happy to come to the meeting.
- It was very much an event, a new way.
- Families learnt about their sons/daughters in a different environment.
- The Person Centred Planning meeting was a real event.

When asked if they felt families perceptions had changed towards PCP during the project, both facilitators said yes in that families wanted the facilitators to remain involved to keep it alive/keep it going.

Other partners

Northumberland's Disabled Children's Team members found the process was well planned. Comments included:

- Difficult to see how it could be improved.
- One family thought it was an ideal forum to include [young person], he felt it was really his review and not a meeting where people talked about him and only included him occasionally.
- Owing to limited space in one instance, participation for everyone was difficult.

Although the Lead Officer had informed Connexions Northumberland and Priory School about the project before it began, there appears to have been a gap in communication leading to some confusion during the project. Priory School sought additional information from one of the Facilitators. Connexions Northumberland staff felt they were not given any advance information about the project and learnt about it "by chance". This confusion could well be due to the changes in the size and range of the project from that initially planned.

While the importance of the involvement of key organisations was not disputed, there was a debate about who determines who attends such meetings. Facilitators, in keeping with the PCP ethos, advised it is the young person and his/her family who decides. Facilitators, from the outset, had actively advised families to involve all of those who provide support to their young person, and Connexions, teaching staff and the Disabled Children's Team were invited to and attended all meetings – including those held during evenings and at weekends.

The original information gap however caused some partners to have concern that their specialist knowledge and expertise, such as funding routes and college course criteria, may be excluded or overlooked. It also caused some friction at one stage in the process

3. Expectations for the young person's future

The facilitators each found the vast majority of plans produced were "*realistic with an appropriate level of challenge and achievable aims*". Each felt one of the plans was "*too limited in its expectations and challenges to affect the young person's future*".

Families reported that they found the experience and outcome of PCP to be positive. They liked the presentation and content of the final plans. The overwhelming comment shared, however, was a concern about whether the plan would be used in adult services to inform how and what is provided for their sons and daughters.

Families were asked "**has the plan been put into action?**" Six said yes and two said no. Those who said yes indicated it was very early on in the process but "*it has got people motivated and thinking*".

When asked if they expect adult services to use the plan as a basis for future provision seven said yes and one said no. Everybody had concerns:

- The apparent lack of appropriate provision for adults in general and young people in particular.
- Yes we expect it to be used in future, but there is no evidence.
- Not confident about it being used because adult services have problems with respite and problems identifying services for the future.
- Concern that transition and adult services care managers have not as yet been identified for us.

Facilitators had some confidence that the plans would be used by adult services, based on some early contacts from care managers. There was concern, however, that the block contracting of adult services would adversely affect potential for PCPs to be implemented.

4. The £200 budget

Monksfield's Manager reported that some staff from external agencies thought the £200 was 'a reward for getting involved in the project' and this had caused some disquiet. This was supported by anecdotal evidence provided to the evaluators.

It was originally envisaged that the £200 budget would be the subject of a 'mini' plan, produced before the full PCP and at an earlier session. Owing to changes to the original plan and subsequent time constraints this was not possible and the planning therefore took place during the main PCP meetings.

Facilitators - One facilitator felt the £200 budget was a good idea and an incentive for young people. The other facilitator felt it was an incentive for some but also found it to be a distraction in some cases due to the time it took up during the PCP session.

Both facilitators found the administration of the £200 budget could have been better managed, as it was not clear to families, at the outset at least, how the budget was to be provided.

Families - When asked if the £200 budget had encouraged families to get involved with the project only one family said yes and seven said no. Of those who said no, one family felt it was a discouragement as it left them feeling "a bit of a fraud". However when asked if including the budget was a good idea seven families said yes with comments such as "a nice surprise" and "a nice touch". The eighth said no as it "had no influence at all".

Where the budgets had been spent by the time the evaluation took place, all were used for outings/holiday experiences. When asked if this would have happened without the £200 budget, of those who replied, five said yes and two said no.

5. Participants views on what could have been done better

The problems experienced at the beginning of the project and later concerns experience by partner agencies could have been avoided if early consultation had been undertaken.

ACTION FOR CHILDREN's Lead Officer grasped the opportunity to allow the project to grow and flourish beyond original expectations. The project took much longer than expected with more management time required than predicted. While the organic growth of the project had many benefits, more planning and information sharing would have improved the project.

Monksfield's Manager felt that if the project was running again it would be good to:

- Provide a pre-training launch by Action for Children with managers, staff and other stakeholders (e.g. schools), to provide a clear explanation of the model, the project timescale and its aims and objectives.
- Involve management at Monksfield more directly.
- Involve as many professionals/families as possible at the outset.
- Provide written updates for all joining the project.
- Make sure staff understand the range of the roles they are to undertake and to have a choice about it.
- Try to engage schools so meetings can take place at schools with young people there.

Families felt that there was nothing needed to improve the process.

6. "One message for ACTION FOR CHILDREN"

ACTION FOR CHILDREN Lead Officer – this is an opportunity for ACTION FOR CHILDREN to develop this model, which could then be commissioned from ACTION FOR CHILDREN by local authorities.

Facilitators – keep it going but get the communications right.
Press on, do more, think about ACTION FOR CHILDREN role, be a trailblazer.

Families - good opportunity for families to participate in planning.
Great to get it all on paper.
Involvement gives parents the impetus to try and get things sorted out.
Carry on with the idea.
Keep PCP going and involve as many young people as possible.
Keep going: it's on the right track.
Keep the personal touch.
Build on to Monksfield for a service for young people up to mid 20s.
Ending respite provision at 18 is a problem, should continue to 21 or 19 (using gap year to find an alternative).

Conclusions

The evaluation shows the project to have been a success and something which people enjoyed.

It should be noted that it is exceptional for a project of any size to end with all participants who started still involved, and for each participant to have achieved the outcomes predicted at the outset.

The project achieved all of its aims:

- ***To better understand the aspirations of young people and their families who use our services.***

This is demonstrated in the person centred plans produced and the value young people and their families placed on both the final plans and the process.

- ***To develop the skills of the staff team (at Monksfield) and develop organisational learning.***

This aim was not achieved as intended at the start of the project, however it was achieved in that staff did receive training and the perception of management is that staff practice was improved as a result.

ACTION FOR CHILDREN has experienced organisational learning throughout the project:

Operational – the impact of introducing projects to a service for both staff and managers.

Strategic - the importance of providing sufficient time to prepare for a project.

the importance and value of thorough project planning and project management.

Service Development – the project clearly demonstrated the value of the PCP model to young people, families, partner organisations and ACTION FOR CHILDREN.

- ***To enable young people using the service (at Monksfield) to participate better in review processes.***

Every young person involved in the project had, and participated in, a person centred planning meeting and received a person centred plan.

- ***To identify if young people using our services have needs in transition that ACTION FOR CHILDREN could meet.***

The evaluation amply demonstrates that there is a need for young people to be at the centre of plans for their futures, and that PCP positively addresses this need. The success of the project indicates that ACTION FOR CHILDREN has potential to deliver PCP well.

It is clear from the evaluation that Monksfield respite service is held in high esteem by families who use it, and that they would very much like to see it extended beyond its current limit of age 18 years.

The £200 budget was initially intended as an incentive to encourage young people and their families to take part in and complete the project. Feedback from families clearly shows that the £200 budget, administered in this way, did not add anything to the project, nor was it an incentive to becoming involved.

The evaluation manifestly shows the fundamental need for comprehensive and thought through planning, at both national and local level, before a project begins. It also demonstrates that appropriate consultation, sufficient resources and an adequate timescale are essential to its success.

It is evident that PCP has raised expectations of families and young people about what is achievable and what is reasonable to expect. There is also however a high level of genuine concern among families about the nature, range and quality of services available to young adults.

One final factor which clearly contributed to the success of the project was the enthusiasm of those involved; from the ACTION FOR CHILDREN Lead Officer, to families and young people, to facilitators and external partner agencies.

Recommendations

That ACTION FOR CHILDREN:

1. Considers rolling out a programme of Person Centred Planning across the wider organisation.
2. Develops the skill set needed to support this roll out.
3. Considers developing Person Centred Planning as a core service and offers this to external commissioners.
4. Considers the recommendation of families that it consults widely about the type of respite services young people and their families need and want during transition from childhood to adulthood.
5. Recognises the raised expectations that arise from Person Centred Planning, and considers how ACTION FOR CHILDREN can support young people to implement their Person Centred Plans long term.
6. Recognises the need for project planning and project management in development work.
7. Whenever undertaking project work directly with families and young people, consults and involves them throughout in an appropriate and timely way.

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September 2008