

# Additional information about Transforming Transitions

This informal document provides some additional information for people considering referring families to the Transforming Transitions project. It tries to answer some common questions. More fundamental information about Transforming Transitions is available on our website ( [www.equityineducation.org/transformingtransitions](http://www.equityineducation.org/transformingtransitions) ).

The information below is organised as answers to a set of commonly asked questions.

## ***In what situations would it most make sense to refer a family/child/young person to Transforming Transitions for person-centred planning?***

### **It may make sense to refer people to Transforming Transitions when...**

- **a child/young person, and indeed their family, are lonely or isolated;**

Person-centred planning works well to build a team of people (often of professionals, friends, and family) around the young person and their family and to recruit and engage new allies for them. It strengthens friendships and ordinary relationships.

- **a child/young person is (or is going to be) physically present in a mainstream school, but is not (risks not being) actually 'included' in other senses (perhaps lacking friendships or simply not being welcomed by the school itself);**

The process can help to connect the young person with other young people, can help build relationships between the young person, the family, and teaching staff, and can build relationships in the wider community.

- **a young person is leaving school;**

This is almost always a time of uncertainty. Person-centred planning helps to focus and motivate everyone and it may strengthen links between the young person and members of the ordinary community.

- **a young person is feeling bad about themselves; a child/young person is behaving badly because of feeling bad about themselves;**

Person-centred planning usually improves how people think about themselves. It asks people to talk about what is good about the young person. Facilitators take the time to listen intently to the young person. It gives people the chance to imagine a positive future in detail and invites them to believe that such a future may be possible.

- **everyone is stuck and seems unable to find a way forwards;**

Person-centred planning includes plenty of opportunity and encouragement for the use of imagination, it reminds people of what's really most important, it encourages people to take some first steps in solving problems, it reminds people of how far they have come already, and it motivates people.

- **there's a risk that people are ignoring the wishes of the child/young person, or when there is a risk of the person's life being defined by the availability of services and service support;**

Person-centred planning encourages everyone to work out ways to recognise and properly take account of the person as an individual, however awkward or inconvenient this is.

- **everyone is focused on a child/young person's perceived deficiencies, on what they can't do, or on problems, rather than on the young person as an individual with potential, and on what might be possible;**

Person-centred planning is inherently a positive approach. It focuses on a person's capacities, positive attributes, and potential, and it looks for solutions rather than getting stuck on problems.

- **they meet our basic criteria;**

The child/young person should clearly have ongoing additional support needs, this should be part of planning for a transition (joining primary school, moving to high school, leaving school, choosing subjects, or moving into inclusive education), and they should live somewhere we can reach them (see below).

### ***When might person-centred planning not represent a useful intervention?***

Person-centred planning is of little help when a young person or their family only lack information, advice and expertise. The facilitators in person-centred planning are not (generally) experts on the education system. Facilitators provide support to enable young people and their families to find a way forward themselves. Of course one result of person-centred planning can be that a family works out how they will tackle the lack of information, and sometimes the family can specifically invite people with expertise to the planning session.

Person-centred planning may not be the best choice of intervention (at least initially) when what is needed is a more formal process (for instance in cases where a child is at risk from family members).

Sometimes when a child or young person feels bad about themselves an intervention like counselling or mentoring may be of more lasting value. Person-centred planning can be very powerful in making sure a young person is listened to, but the process itself is undertaken either rarely or perhaps only once. Of course person-centred planning can take place alongside other interventions.

Person-centred planning does not try to sort out issues of inter-agency cooperation, and if this is the issue more conventional meetings may be more useful. However, one of the results of person-centred planning may be to support better cooperation between individual representatives of different agencies, encouraging them to concentrate on what's important.

### ***Does the effectiveness of person-centred planning depend on available resources? Does it set up unreasonable expectations?***

Generally no. These are common misunderstandings. Much of what person-centred planning seeks to do does not depend on resources, for instance in helping people to feel good about themselves or strengthening relationships. Of course the availability of resources may influence whether the goals that a family is striving for are reached. Person centred planning does not promise that these goals will be reached, but it does help a family to work out how to work towards them - and it can help to improve the understanding of these goals by the professionals surrounding a family. Person-centred planning also helps those involved to look beyond service support in striving for the future that they envisage for themselves or a member of their family.

Some misunderstandings about resources and expectations arise from the use of questions about a person's 'dreams' for their future in person-centred planning. To be clear, these questions are asked in order to help those involved in the planning to focus on what is important, and to motivate and encourage participants. Conversations about the person's dreams are usually limited to the group involved with the planning session, and take place as part of this session. They are not usually recorded to be passed on to others. It is not the expectation of person-centred planning that a person's dreams for their life will simply be fulfilled by support services because they have been written down.

### ***What does 'central and southern Scotland' mean?***

The geographical boundaries of the Transforming Transitions project are flexible, based on the physical locations of facilitators rather than anything else. Currently (May 2009) Transforming Transitions should fairly easily be able to reach families in:

- **Inverclyde**
- **Renfrewshire & East Renfrewshire**
- **West & East Dunbartonshire**
- **Glasgow**
- **North & South Lanarkshire**
- **Edinburgh**
- **West Lothian, Midlothian**
- **The Scottish Borders** (except perhaps the far South and East)
- **Fife**

We **may** also be able to reach families in

- **North, South & East Ayrshire**
- **Dumfries and Galloway (particularly further north and east)**
- **Falkirk**
- **Clackmannanshire**
- **East Lothian (except perhaps the extreme East)**
- **Dundee**
- **The immediate parts of Argyll and Bute, Stirling (including the city), and Perth and Kinross which border the central belt**

It is currently (May 2009) unlikely that we will be able to support families in:

- **almost all of Argyll and Bute,**
- **most of Stirling,**
- **most of Perth and Kinross,**
- **Angus**
- **Highland**
- **Aberdeen & Aberdeenshire**
- **Moray**
- **the islands (Orkney, Shetland, Western Isles, and islands in Argyll and Bute).**

The project may extend or change its area of operation depending on whether new facilitators are brought on board, or when existing facilitators are unable to take on work.

These final and more specific questions are often asked about individual situations:

***This particular child cannot talk or use sign language. How would the process work for them?***

Person-centred planning is designed to work with people whatever their abilities. In this case the facilitator will help the child or young person's family and allies to make their best guesses about what the person would want to be said about them, their life, and their future.

***Who pays for this?***

Transforming Transitions pays the facilitators through grant funding. No charge is made for their services. The only likely additional costs are if a room is hired for the event or food and drink is provided for those attending (Transforming Transitions does not cover these costs).

***This particular family is almost completely isolated, who would they invite?***

One of our jobs is to help families to think this through. Sometimes one of the most important effects of person-centred planning is to give other people the opportunity to offer to help a family which is very isolated.

***This child has already left school and the transition process was a disaster which has left them in a bad place. Can you still help?***

Sorry, no (although we'd like to). Transforming Transitions is funded to focus on improving the way that transitions are handled and therefore we are concentrating on the many children and young people currently undergoing transitions rather than those for whom the process has already failed.

***How do we refer someone?***

Either you, or the family, should talk to Robert Weetman directly. Contact details are on the website ([www.equityineducation.org/transformingtransitions](http://www.equityineducation.org/transformingtransitions) ). Robert's role is to talk to the family about whether they would find the person-centred planning process helpful. He then puts them in touch with a local facilitator who takes the process forward.