Children's Services Reform Research Study:

Improving transitions for young people with care experience

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20th February 2025

Third in a series of webinars to take a further look at what the Children's Services Reform Research findings mean if Scotland is to achieve impactful, meaningful change and how these themes have been developing.

Children's Services Reform Research

Aim: To gather evidence to inform decision-making about the delivery of children's services in light of the proposed introduction of the National Care Service
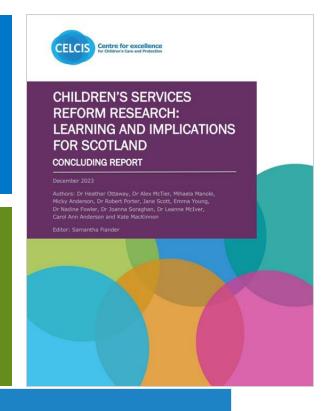
Research question: What is needed to ensure that children, young people and families get the help they need, when they need it?

Strand 1:
Rapid evidence review

Strand 2:
Case studies of transformational reform programmes

Strand 3:
Mapping integration and outcomes in Scotland: A statistical analysis

Strand 4:
Scotland's children's services landscape: The views and experiences of the children's services workforce

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CHILDREN'S SERVICES REFORM RESEARCH: LEARNING AND IMPLICATIONS FOR SCOTLAND

CONCLUDING REPORT

December 2023

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Why focus on transitions?

- A point where there is opportunity to lose touch
  - Points of connection/separation between services/structures
  - Intra/inter- organisational complexities
- Young people may require particular support
  - May require different, or more acute, supports (housing, mental health)
  - The transition itself may introduce additional stresses and challenges
- Variations in experiences, expectations, & desires (Munro, 2022)

Why focus on young people with care experience?

- All the above at a younger age, with lower levels of practical, emotional, and financial support (Stein, 2006)
- Many experience multiple transitions simultaneously
- Extensive literature that care leavers can be poorly supported in this transition (Stein, 2021)

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How respondents viewed transitions…

- Children's services workforce's ratings of transitions services highlighted:
  - Experiences of transitions were rated lowest overall compared to questions on other topics within Stand 4
  - None of the transitions asked about received 50% of responses as 'very good' or 'good'
  - The highest rated was transitions for young people leaving care with mean of 2.93/5
  - 35% of respondents felt services were improving pre-COVID
  - Only 25% felt services were improving since COVID - 36% felt they were getting worse

What is a transition?

- Respondents were keen to highlight that transitions occur at many different times and circumstances:
  - Transitions in legal status (e.g. 'Looked after')
  - Transitions in where you live
  - Transitions in life events/role (e.g. becoming a parent)
  - Transitions within other systems/structures (e.g. changing schools)
- While all young people with care experience will experience a transition away from children's social care, they will also experience other transitions that need to be attended to.
- These transitions will often co-occur

Issues Identified: Processes & Procedures

- Lack of clear pathways for young people to transition into adulthood and interdependence
- Gaps in referral pathways preventing seamless support being provided

> *"There is not always a clear process of where they are to be transferred to and a lot of mixed communication."* (Community and Family-Based Care and Support Services: Survey)

- Lack of advanced planning for transitions

> *"We don't focus enough on planning effectively for transition, and it is just this void that is then a big gap."* (Health: Interview)

Issues Identified: Perceived inconsistency between children's & adult services

- Children's services workforce reported:
  - A difference in approach between children's and adult services
    - Holistic children's services vs. 'fractured' adult services
    - Adult services felt to focus on elderly care and delayed discharge from hospital
  - Wide and extensive availability of support within children's services not replicated within adult services.
    - Especially in relation to neurodiversity, education, and health
  - Adult services may not take account of trauma that young people may have experienced, and the impacts of this
  - The 'gap' between children's and adult services can be experienced as a 'cliff edge' for children, young people, and families

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Issues Identified: Gap in provision for 16/17 year olds

- This age group were frequently reported as falling into a gap between children's and adult services
  - Children's services focused on younger children and adolescents
  - Not eligible for adult services until 18, and services still often aimed at older adults.
- Variety of situations which disrupt support for young people
  - Some services not accepting referrals after the age 16
  - 16 year olds not being admitted to children's wards – missing out on support such as play specialists
- Change in perception and expectations of young people aged 16/17 due to being seen as an 'adult'

Issues Identified: Mental Health Support

- Challenging to secure for young people in transition into adulthood
- Reports of diagnoses & conditions which receive support within children's services not resulting in eligibility for adult support
  - Autism
  - Neurodiversity

    "If a young person has autism but no learning disability, the only team they can be referred to is AMHT [adult Community Mental Health Team] however their threshold is severe and enduring mental illness that affects their daily life - many young people with autism do not meet this threshold but would still really benefit from support from adult services." (Social Work: Survey)

- Where CAMHS is available, may have an upper age limit of 15

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Issues Identified: Existing Good Practice

- Supportive policy context – e.g. Continuing Care
- 'No wrong door' approaches to service provision
- Support hubs & access to advocacy
- Joint working in meetings & groups between practitioners from children's & adult services to carry out transition planning
- Specific practices which may provide examples to be built upon:
  - 'transitions co-ordinators' based in schools
  - Specific 'transitions to adulthood team'
  - 'transitions passports' to share personal information and needs
  - Links between services for transitions: Education – employment; adult social work – education

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CSRR: Components of Integration

- Treats integration as an outcome – not a process/activity

- Provides guidance on what is needed – but no hierarchy

- Can be used to identify areas for attention/success

- Needs to be applied to individual situations & circumstances

The Components of Integration applied to Transitions

- Improving transitions is inherently one of 'integration'

- The findings of this research in relation to transitions would support a focus on many areas, but developing a shared culture, holistic support, and committed leadership are suggested as key areas for development

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Wider CSR implications and application to transitions

- Of the implications for Scotland highlighted by the Children's Services Reform research considering and acting on the following is most likely to improve experiences of transitions
  - The importance of relationships between young people and the practitioners who support them
  - Timely access to services and seamless transitions
  - Local, high-quality, long-term funded support
  - Focus on realising rights and improving participation
  - Investment in the workforce
  - Support for effective multi-agency working
  - Collaborative working

Thank you

You can find all five reports at:

https://www.celcis.org/our-work/research/childrens-services-reform-research-reports

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References

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