Dynamite 2005–2007

Self-directed support for disabled young people

Summary Report

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All names, photographs and quotes are used with the expressed permission of those concerned. Some names have been changed to protect identities.

Abdul, Joe and Tom have all given their permission for their photographs to be used.
Introduction

This summary highlights the key learning from the evaluation and then goes on to make a series of recommendations for local authorities and young people and families about introducing self-directed support as a young person grows into adulthood.

The Dynamite project is a two year piece of work carried out by Paradigm with a local authority and their partners. The work focuses on developing self-directed support for 8 young people and their families or carers as they go through the transition into the adult world. This report documents the learning from the first phase of Dynamite; seven local authorities began the project in the autumn 2005 and the formal project ceased in July 2007.

Dynamite draws heavily on the bank of work developed by the in control project which is currently working with 106 local authorities across the country to introduce self-directed support for adults across all care groups.

The learning is presented under the headings used in the evaluation exercise. For a full copy of the report, with detailed explanations of the project, self-directed support, and a view of how transition should be structured in the future please download the full report from www.paradigm-uk.org.

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1 www.in-control.org.uk
Making an ‘informed’ choice

Using ‘practice’ budgets to give young people and their families and carers a chance to experience self-directed support in an achievable and person centred way.

Learning
- Learning experiences such as practice budgets are essential elements of supporting a diverse population of families understanding individual budgets and self-directed support.
- Using practice budgets encouraged more families to take the next step to exploring the use of an individual budget and self-directed support for their son or daughter.
- The outcome became the measure of success; emphasis was not on the process but on the outcome for the young person.

Assessing Individual Support Needs

Completing the Self Assessment Questionnaire

Learning
- Families are able to complete the form, on Dynamite they appreciated support in doing this from their care manager and/or facilitator.
- As a pilot project the results should be treated as such, i.e. a first go at developing a way of linking resources to an individual’s support needs. Expectations should reflect the pilot nature of the project and not expect it to work first time or deliver allocations which are immediately accurate.
A Resource Allocation System

Using the in Control Resource Allocation System to inform the development of a local allocation system linking support needs with an entitlement to resources to fund support.

Learning
- View the introduction of Resource Allocation Systems (RAS) as a first step to developing an informed, transparent approach to the allocation of funds based on an individual support needs.
- Ensure that current costs and use of the social care budget are up to date and available to inform the RAS.
- When working with families and young people be clear about what they are committing to and honour the commitments being made.

Making Plans

Developing a support plan using the individual allocation to deliver support and opportunities for the young person.

Learning
- A good support plan is based upon person centred planning principles.
- Families really appreciate input from others.
- Local authorities need to focus on the outcomes of a support plan and less on the way that funding is being used to provide the support the young person needs.
Supporting families - facilitating and brokering plans and support

Young People and Families are supported by a facilitator

Learning

- Access to a local ‘Centre for Independent Living’ or similar independent support contributes greatly to the development of a good support plan.
- Families greatly appreciated the input of their facilitator.
- The provision of support brokerage is key to the self-directed support agenda and long term plans to provide this support whether from one organisation or a number will be central to a local authority introducing self-directed support and individual budgets.

Money

Using an individual budget creatively and in a person centred way

Learning

- Families will choose a variety of different ways of managing the individual budget, from managing it themselves, setting up an Independent Living Trust, asking an agency to manage it on their behalf, sharing management with the local authority or asking the local authority to manage it for them.
- Strong and well-informed leadership is essential to this whole process and avoiding letting families down.
Making it happen

Using an individual budget to deliver a young person’s support plan

Learning

- Creativity and flexibility on the part of everyone are central to making the support plan a reality.
- Support for a person can come from all sorts of different places; family, siblings, friends, community networks, provider services and in-house provision.
- Provider services are challenged by self-directed support. Many are willing to begin working through the changes they need to make by getting involved in pilot projects such as Dynamite.

Learning and recommendations for the future

_Dynamite was a great way to test out self directed support_

_Local Authority Lead_

...some really good spin off projects have got of the ground e.g. positive transition website, transition toolkit, - we have had some fab interagency working going on that will continue and children’s service are interested in using the model

_Local Authority Lead_

_Everyone in the organisation from finance to care managers now recognize and use the language of self directed support, it’s in the vocabulary now!_

_Local Authority Lead_
These three quotes indicate that Dynamite has achieved three of its key outcomes:

- Offering local authorities a ‘first try’ at self-directed support.
- A chance to get to grips with many of the linked difficulties and issues in supporting a smooth transition from children’s services in to adult services.
- The development of a wide and well-informed knowledge base within the local authority.

**Recommendations for Local Authorities and their partners**

- Local authorities will need to grasp the complexity and enduring nature of support planning for people with learning difficulties. This will be time consuming and costly for any support organisation if offered to more people.
- Approach resource allocation with ‘common sense’ and resist the temptation to become consumed by technicalities and process.
- Recognise that finding a way to allocate resources is difficult and requires resources and expertise.
- Don’t engage families if you are not prepared to follow the process through to the point of releasing the money.
- Remember this is about people’s lives and not a social experiment.
- Trust families.
- Senior management leadership, ownership and support are essential from the beginning of the project.
Recommendations for young people and families

- Use other families for support - this has proved to be invaluable.
- Don’t try and do it on your own.
- Speak to families who have done it and then make your mind up.
- Use your local support mechanisms to help work out solutions.

Finally the feedback on how the project worked and what helped highlighted two factors:

- Accessing the wider national network of those involved in developing self-directed support including support from other local authorities, the In Control support team and Paradigm.
- The extra ‘expertise’ that could be brought in e.g. housing or benefits advice was much valued by families and trainee brokers.

Looking to the Future

The Dynamite, as a first concerted project focused on self-directed support for young people growing in to adulthood has resulted in the shaping of a pathway beginning at the age of 14 and offering young people and their families/carers the chance to take control of their adult futures. This graphic offers a way of understanding how the funding can fit together, how different services offer support to young people and their families centred around the school, and how the young person and their family remain at the centre of the process.
Conclusion

... this is an exciting initiative which brings alive the concept of individual budgets and being in control of the means of support. Professionals have overcome concerns about losing authority over processes by recognising the changes brought about in the young people and their families and developing their relationship as a partnership (DWP, DCSF, DH 20073)

The Dynamite project has delivered an evidence base upon which the future wider introduction of self-directed support for young people can be based. At least two sites have decided to use individual budgets and self-directed support as the ‘default’ approach to transition for all young people entering the world of support from adult services. Clearly there have been a range of experiences including some negative; viewing

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2 A Self-Directed Approach to Transition, Duffy, S. and Crosby, N. June 2007
3 Progression through Partnership, DWP, DH, DCSF 2007
progress across all seven sites highlights the initial premise of Dynamite: self-directed support offers young people the chance to ‘shape their future’ and ‘make their own way in life’.

This summary report has set out to offer an overview of the full evaluation of the first two years of work on the Dynamite project; drawing on the feedback and input of a variety of people, the experiences of many over the two years and the growing body of evidence of the much improved lives of many who are now managing their own individual budget. Thirty three young people now have an individual budget and ‘agreed’ support plan, a further number of young people have plans in place for when they finish school or move on from college in the near future. This fact coupled with the feedback, quotes and comments documented in the full report set out a radical agenda for future support for young people; the outcomes of this approach far outweigh the challenges to existing support and services, it simply a question of rising to the challenge and ensuring that young people and their families are in control of their own future.

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