

Transition services for socially excluded 18-25 year olds

What are the main issues?

Poverty and social exclusion are experienced by many of the boroughs residents. Brent is ranked 81st in the Index of Multiple Deprivation and 14.9% of its population are living in the most deprived wards in the country. The borough also has high levels of unemployment with 24.2% of unemployed people classed as long term unemployed compared with 15.4% in London.

A report on social exclusion produced in 2005 entitled Young Adults with complex needs highlights that ...*Many of the issues that are thought of as the problems of teenagers are in fact as bad (or worse) for those in their early twenties, on whom much less policy has been focused – the phenomenon of ‘the invisible early twenties’*¹

Some disadvantaged young people also have complex needs;

Over 90 per cent of imprisoned young offenders have at least one, or combination of, the following: personality disorder, psychosis, neurotic disorder, or substance misuse.

- Substance misuse affects around a third to a half of people with severe mental health problems.
- Homelessness is frequently associated with substance misuse problems; and being homeless almost trebles a young person’s chance of developing a mental illness

In 2004 just over 32,000 young adult offenders aged 18 – 24 across the UK were sentenced to imprisonment. Over two thirds of those will re-offend within two years of release, with over 40% being returned to prison. With male adolescents the reconviction rate rises to 82%.

The Council has developed services to provide early intervention to tackle and try to avert social exclusion among young people. The Every Child Matters agenda incorporated into the Children’s Act 2004 placed a requirement on all local authorities and their partners to cooperate and deliver integrated frontline services, in order to improve outcomes for all children and young people in their area.

Council initiatives such as the integrated services project developed within the Children and Families Department provides a multi-agency approach to supporting young people who are at risk of social exclusion.

¹ Transitions Young Adults with Complex Needs, A Social Exclusion Unit Report, 2005

The challenge for many young people is that these services often end abruptly at nineteen and their entitlement to youth provision ends. The young people then need to move from services provided for children to services provided for adults. During this process it is essential that an effective transition service is in place. This involves a holistic, person centred approach to assess the individual's needs and to look at the services and support the individual will need.

When transition services are not in place the young person can face great difficulty in accessing adult services as there can be varying arrangements and assessment criteria in place between adults and children services. For example Adult Mental Health Services (AMHS) tend to focus on people who have severe and enduring disorders, while specialist Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) have a different perspective, with the result that young people who been receiving CAMHS find that they are not eligible for AMHS²

Why are we looking at this area?

In Brent we have relatively few services offering bespoke approaches for this age group and no strategic body overseeing the services. The council needs to ensure that transition services are managed and co-ordinated across departments providing a multi agency approach and a seamless package of support to the service user.

What should the review cover?

How transitions support could be developed or improved across a small area of council services and recommendations could then be shared across the council

Look at good practice from other authorities on how they provide transition services

Speak with service users on the support they need to make the transition from young peoples to adults services

What will the review achieve?

A project to develop integrated transition services for young people aged 18-25 has been proposed for the LAA under the safer and stronger communities theme, findings from this review can feed into and inform their work.

Make recommendations to the council and local partners on how service provision can be improved for socially excluded 18-25 year olds.

² Transition of adolescents to adult mental health services , Research in Practice, January 2006