

Response to Interim Disability Report from **Transition Information Network**

Transition Information Network is a new organisation designed to ensure that disabled young people, their families and professionals have the information they require. Our aim is that disabled young people are able to achieve their hopes and dreams, and make informed choices. Transition Information Network has membership of many disability organisations – both large and small, as well as many family members. We provide information via our magazine: ‘**my future choices**’, seminars, and soon via a web site.

We welcome the opportunity to respond to the interim report. The strategies that government adopts to improve the lives of disabled people, will define the futures of many of today’s disabled young people. As the report so succinctly points out, with barriers removed and suitable personal support, the young people we encourage might not be regarded as ‘disabled’ in the future. Of course they will continue to have impairments. However, with good personal support, and many barriers removed, they could have the same rights and opportunities as other citizens.

For many disabled young people and their family carers this is scarcely imaginable at the moment. Through our meetings with families and through member organisations we know there are many families are desperate for a good future for their disabled son or daughter, especially as they approach school leaving. This desperation is often greater where the daughter or son has autism, Asperger Syndrome or more complex disabilities. In 2004 we still meet some families that are being asked to send their school leaving son or daughter to a day service for adults. For these families (and their sons and daughters) there is an amazing gap between the future that you envisage and their present circumstances.

We have been impressed with the rigour of your analysis of the barriers and causes of disability discrimination. It seems to use that a similar rigour is now required in considering options for developing a robust and integrated set of services that offer real choices to disabled young people. Methods like Person Centred Planning can be powerful drivers of change locally. However, Person Centred Planning is designed so that an individual can access key services and opportunities, and generate new options for their life. Ambitious changes are needed to integrate services offering an ambitious range of vocational and educational opportunities.

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Without this infrastructure, it seems to us that progress on with Person Centred Planning for disabled young people will be somewhat constrained.

Nothing less is required than a transformation of services for disabled young people in transition from school to adulthood. Funding frustrations make things more difficult. The real the real concern is to get these services synchronised to offer a flexible menu of opportunities that has the capacity to support individual Person Centred Planning. This visible transformation must provide more than the sum of the parts. It will be an inspiration to disabled young people and their family carers. They will know what is available, how it can be accessed. They will have reassurance that services will work collaboratively, to ensure that things like personal care needs can be met in colleges and work experience.

We welcome very much the emphasis on vocational training for future employment. It will be vital to re-assure those disabled young people that are unable/or unlikely to work, that there are other valued social roles for them. You have already noted the 'benefits traps' and other obstacles to paid employment. For a small but significant minority of young people with considerable disabilities employment is unlikely to be a viable option. This would be the case even if the benefits system could become drastically more compassionate! Many of these young people could become involved in community activities including adult education, advocacy, volunteering and arts and sports. It is important to consider the inclusion and self respect needs these young people have. It is crucial to promote the inclusion of all disabled young people, not just the 'more-able'.

We make these points as enthusiasts for the analysis and strategy that is evolving from your report. Your aim of including disabled people in society on equal terms and with the access and support they need is right on target. Many disabled young people long for the same opportunities as other young people. However, it will not be easy to get services that currently have 'silo' funding to collaborate and you will need to produce a detail schedule of how this can be achieved. Whist the emphasis on education for employment is very welcome, the active inclusion of young people that may never be 'work ready' also requires attention.

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