

Transition to Adulthood

Working with young adults with multiple needs

A good practice guide

Compiled using the views of young adults and practitioners



www.revolving-doors.org.uk

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Revolving Doors Agency

The Turnmill
Units 28 and 29
63 Clerkenwell Road
London
EC1M 5NP

T: 020 7253 4038

F: 020 7553 6079

www.revolving-doors.org.uk

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Executive Summary

This document is aimed at practitioners working with young adults with multiple needs and sets out a series of good practice principles for the delivery of services to these young people. These principles are derived from the observations of young adults and practitioners whilst visiting services that work with 16-24 year olds.

Young adults with multiple needs are 16-24 year olds who experience a number of the following: mental health problems, drug and/or alcohol use, homelessness, lack of legitimate income, family breakdown, contact with the criminal justice system and legal problems. When these needs remain unmet, the interrelation between them often results in a cycle of crisis and crime.

During the visits, young adults taking part in the work consistently identified **positive relationships with key practitioners** as an essential element of an effective service. It seems fitting therefore that this guide is aimed at practitioners across all sectors.

The good practice principles identified during the visits will not be surprising to practitioners working in the field. For example, we heard of the importance of **meeting basic needs** such as accommodation, food and physical safety, of the difference a package of **tailored personalised support** can make and of the importance of providing **accurate information** and **challenging stigma** about services. Principles such as giving young adults the opportunity to **get involved** in services and having **high aspirations** for them are well established in work with young adults. We echo them here as they featured prominently in the views of both young people and practitioners as part of what constitutes good practice.

The work of the Transition to Adulthood alliance has shown that transitions can be complicated for young adults in contact with the criminal justice system. For young adults with multiple problems, there are often transitions across a range of services.

In the light of these multiple transitions, our participants were unequivocal - **continuity** is an essential principle of work with young adults in transition.

The guide outlines seven good practice principles in working with young adults with multiple needs. Alongside each theme are sections on lessons from research and relevant policy messages. We hope these will provide suggestions for further reading and evidence for each principle.

Introduction

About Revolving Doors Agency

Revolving Doors Agency is an independent voluntary sector organisation whose vision is:

'To end the revolving door of crisis and crime, when anyone facing multiple problems and poor mental health is supported to reach their potential, and there are fewer victims of crime and safer communities.'

Strategically this is achieved by a four-pronged approach:

- **Winning political commitment**
- **Involving people with direct experience**
- **Improving frontline services**
- **Supporting local leadership**

Involving service users and valuing their experience and contributions is at the core of the work of Revolving Doors Agency. Their experiences and contributions are an important way to inform future policy and practice developments. This project aims to make young adults with multiple needs the central focus in order

to harness, document and disseminate what they feel should constitute good practice in service delivery.

Young adults with multiple needs are 16-24 year olds who experience a number of the following: mental health problems, drug and/or alcohol use, homelessness, lack of legitimate income, family breakdown, contact with the criminal justice system and legal problems. When these needs remain unmet, the interrelation between them often results in a cycle of crisis and crime.

Transition to Adulthood (T2A) Alliance

This project was funded by the Barrow Cadbury Trust and forms part of a wider portfolio of projects run by the Transition to Adulthood (T2A) Alliance. The Alliance is a broad coalition of organisations and individuals working to improve the opportunities and life chances of young people who are at risk of committing crime and falling into the criminal justice system in their transition to adulthood. The T2A Alliance aims to raise awareness of the problems this group face and to secure policy change and improve their lives.

In 2009 the T2A Alliance published a Manifesto for change – setting out 10 key recommendations for improving the lives of young adults with multiple needs. More information on the work of the T2A Alliance can be obtained at www.t2a.org.uk/alliance.

What is transition to adulthood?

There is a growing recognition that the years between the ages of 16 and 24 are a distinct time of young people's lives, when they are expected to make a number of transitions including from education to work, and from living as a dependant in a home environment to independent living in an environment created by themselves.

For those with multiple needs, these transitions may be complicated by mental health problems, becoming a parent, substance misuse or involvement in the criminal justice system. They also make transitions across a range of services and may be 'transferred' from children's health, social care and/or criminal justice services to adult equivalents. These transitions are complex and inconsistent.

At this age, young people are no longer children, but have not yet reached adult maturity in terms of independence, experience and ability to live without support and guidance, and brain development and emotional functioning. Without specialist support, young people making these transitions between services often 'fall between' children's and adult services, with neither being appropriate or accessible.

The absence of such support increases vulnerability and heightens the risk of involvement with the criminal justice system, homelessness or unstable housing and mental health problems. Alongside this the personal costs to individuals of unfulfilled potential and the financial costs to society are also increased.

There is therefore a need for to develop services which provide coherent, seamless support to young adults with multiple needs and support them to make the transition to adulthood smoothly and constructively.

Methodology

This guide has been compiled using the observations and views of a group of young adults and practitioners gathered during visits to services working with 16 to 24 year olds.

A total of 43 young adults participated in the project, were residents of Ealing, Wimbledon and Northampton YMCAs. Practitioners working with these young adults also attended. Our visits typically involved small groups of 4-5 young adults and one practitioner.

The participants

The young adults who participated in the project represented a broad range of experiences and needs. Their participation ebbed and flowed throughout the project's lifetime, as their lives often changed making it difficult to sustain their engagement. These changes were sometimes been positive – moving on with their housing, work or college places, and sometimes not so positive – going to prison and facing eviction.

We are grateful to the practitioners who were supportive throughout the project in facilitating our engagement with young adult participants.

The visits

In total we visited fifteen projects. These offered a range of services, some with a practical focus, some providing therapeutic input and others focusing on information and advice. Some were statutory services for example run by Probation. Others were run by voluntary organisations. A full list of services visited is provided in Appendix.

Steering Group

In addition, the project had a Steering Group which provided it with guidance and direction. This comprised of practitioners and policy professionals in the, as yet, emerging field of services for young adults.

Literature reviews

Developing services that are based on evidence derived from research is critical. In order to ensure that any recommendations we are making are grounded in evidence, we conducted two literature reviews to underpin the project's fieldwork and to ensure that our findings could be supported by research evidence. The first of these literature reviews looked at social interventions, the second looked at therapeutic interventions. Both focused specifically on the transition age group of 16-24 year olds. Key parts of research are cited as examples in the next sections. The complete reviews can be accessed on the Revolving Doors Agency website at www.revolving-doors.org.uk.

Commissioning Guide

This document complements the Transition to Adulthood commissioning guide, the sister report which has also emerged from this project. Together the two aim to support and guide organisations and individuals who set out to establish or improve services for young adults.

What constitutes good practice?

Whilst undertaking service visits, the young adults and practitioners who participated in the project ('participants') made observations about what they considered to be good practice. A number of clear themes emerged from discussions during and after visits.

1. Quality of relationships
2. Continuity
3. Personalised support
4. Meeting basic needs
5. Information, misinformation and challenging stigma
6. Getting involved
7. Aiming higher

These themes are outlined [below](#) with reference to the services visited. Each theme is supported by sections on lessons from research and relevant policy messages.

QUALITY OF RELATIONSHIPS



“[My key worker] is the only reason I’m still at the YMCA. I can have a wicked conversation with her for two hours and not think ‘I have to get out of here’. My support meetings can go on for hours.”

Young adult participant

The importance of consistent positive relationships based on respect, honesty and openness was a common theme in the project visits.

Many young adults with multiple needs do not have a history of stable family relationships. They may also have had contact with a range of agencies and different professionals and are likely to have been frequently assessed. All this may well have been experienced without the support of a significant adult to guide them through various systems or an advocate to enable them to articulate their views and needs.

During the project visits, participants frequently commented on the optimistic and committed approach of project staff. They identified consistent, positive and realistic staff who can act as good role models as a central tenet which should underpin all other elements of service provision. They noted that without positive relationships, little progress can be made in other areas.

Honesty and openness between staff and service users were identified as important elements of quality relationships. Participants spoke positively of staff – both in services visited and in services they used – who were honest in their expectations with them.

‘Commitment, consistency, honesty and a non judgemental attitude is all you need to create and maintain a relationship with a young person.’

YMCA keyworker

Sometimes it is small gestures which indicate to young adults that staff are supportive and caring. When we visited Women in Prison one participant observed that ‘even if it is just the little things that you do for someone, it makes a huge difference. For example, just sending in (to prison) a magazine – it means nothing to you but it means a lot to the person.’

Some of the projects we visited used mentors to support young adults. It was clear that the mentors we met approach their roles with equal levels of commitment and enthusiasm as staff members. Our participants felt that the factors that should determine ‘matching’ between young adults and staff/mentors should be based more on rapport and the quality of relationship rather than other factors such as gender or ethnicity.

The project visits also allowed young participants to reflect on their own relationships with practitioners.

Some lessons from research

The quality of relationships between staff and young people is considered in detail in the Social Exclusion Unit Report (2005), *Transitions*, which focuses on young adults with complex needs. This found that young people desired understanding, respect, continuity of support, a build up of trust and to be listened to from staff working with them.

Factors that influence young people leaving care (Joseph Rowntree Foundation 2003) recognises that emotional support, whether from family, a substitute family or ‘befriending professionals’ is influential in achieving better outcomes for young people, especially those that have a history of being moved around. It highlights the importance of both informal and professional support in order to enter and remain engaged in education, training and employment and with the transition to independent living.

Messages from policy

Investing in Potential, the government strategy to reduce the number of young people not in employment, education or training (NEETs), is an example of the value placed on a dedicated worker and face-to-face contact in securing positive outcomes for this group. The strategy promises to “Provide young job seekers with access to a dedicated personal adviser from day one of their unemployment claim, more time with an adviser throughout their claim, and more opportunities to be fast tracked to the support available from six months.” (DCSF, DWP & BIS, 2009)

The 2005 Youth Matters green paper highlights the need for a ‘trusted adult’ to provide information and advice on physical, emotional and mental health issues. In particular, “young people with multiple and overlapping needs should have the opportunity to build a trusting relationship with one lead professional”.

Recent guidance on the delivery of Public Service Agreement 16¹ emphasises the importance of the relationship quality between the service user and the ‘lead professional’ (HM Government 2010). The lead professional might be an offender manager, a mental health care co-ordinator or a personal adviser but in all cases they should “invest as much time as possible in cultivating positive, trusted relations with service users to maximise the opportunity for assessing and identifying the best way to meet their housing and employment needs”.

¹ Public Service Agreements reflect the Government’s high-level priorities. They set out the specific improvements that the Government wants to achieve. Public Service Agreement 16 focuses on Socially Excluded Adults, specifically care leavers, offenders under probation supervision, adults in contact with secondary mental health services and adults with moderate to severe learning disabilities. For more information see http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/social_exclusion_task_force/psa.aspx

CONTINUITY

2

Many young adults with multiple needs will have experienced a lack of continuity in their lives – in schooling, family life, housing and/or relationships. Additionally, young adults may experience breaks in the provision of services which have been offering them support, including disruption or termination of positive relationships with practitioners as they move between children's and adult services. Creating and maintaining stability is therefore vital for them in building a more solid future.

We visited a youth centre in Kilburn, north London managed by the organisation P3. They work with young people aged 13 to 25. Participants welcomed this wide age range as they felt that it offered continuity of relationships and that the workers could really get to know the young people and hence know what support will best suit them at certain points of time and development –the young people do not have to form a whole new set of relationships with new workers in a new project.

Whilst visiting the T2A Project in Birmingham, a key worker participant commented on how good it was that whilst the project signposted their clients to other services, they still 'kept hold' of them on their caseloads –so that young adults were not merely passed from service to service, but had a central point of contact to return to.

Centrepoint Greek Street facilitated continuity in a different way, by planning for move on as soon as service users arrived at the project. This enabled young people to see their current situation in the context of a wider journey to more stable housing.

'The key point here is that they see the bigger picture. They think long term.'

Practitioner participant

Some lessons from research

Sustained support over time, rather than one-off episodes of advice is essential. This is recognised by a number of other sources including the Joseph Rowntree Foundation (2004) who note that young people who are NEET may need long-term support, which may go beyond the Connexions upper age limit of 19 years.

The transfer between children's and adult mental health services is another transition point in the lives of these young adults. The designation of a lead person and/or agency to coordinate services for this age group and ensure the transition between services goes smoothly was again recommended by both the National CAMHS Review (2008) and *Listen Up!* (Garcia et al, 2007). Additionally, young people surveyed for *Time to Talk... Time to Listen: A Consultation with Liverpool Mental Health Service Users Aged 14-25* (Young People's Advisory Service, 2007) suggested that it would be beneficial if young people could keep the same practitioner throughout the transition from child to adult mental health services.

Messages from policy

Steps to improve continuity of care have been taken across a number of policy areas. Personal Advisors have been introduced for care leavers to provide continuing support until the age of 21 and co-ordinate a multi-agency pathway plan for leaving care. Financial and social support for education, training and work is provided up to the age of 21 and for accommodation up to the age of 18 through social services or 21 through housing services. This package of support is extended to the age of 24 if the care leaver continues in full time education. (Department of Health, 2003)

Offender managers and the Drug Intervention Programme have been introduced to provide an 'end-to-end approach' to the care and management of offenders. The Bradley Review (Bradley, 2009) recommended that Criminal Justice Mental Health Teams be established across the country to improve continuity of care for people with mental health problems or learning disabilities in contact with the criminal justice system. The T2A Alliance has recommended that intensive support be available for all young adults on release, regardless of sentence length (Transition to Adulthood Alliance, 2009).

Transition between the youth and adult offending systems can involve a number of different transitions between institutions and regimes. Young offenders between 18 and 21 are usually detained in a Young Offender's Institution under a different regime to under 18s. This recognises 18 – 21 year olds as a distinct, transitory group, but there have been concerns about the standard of provision especially for vulnerable young people (Youth Justice Board website).

In 2005 NOMS established a Young Adult Offenders project for 18-24s, a potential outcome of which is the development of a specific regime for this age group at the new HMP Isis, due to open in July this year.

Transitions from child to adult services in the community, such as mental health and drug treatment have caused concern. The National Treatment Agency (NTA) suggests that a care coordinator and transition plan should be in place before the service users eighteenth birthday. They also advocate flexible services 'provided on the basis of need not on the criterion of age' (NTA, 2005).

New Horizons (HM Government, 2009b) identifies the need to develop effective models of mental healthcare for this age group. It outlines potential requirements for services working across transitions including multi-disciplinary and multi-agency arrangements, easily accessible information and environments acceptable to young people.

PERSONALISED Support 3

'It's like they see you for who you are, not who they expect you to be –they don't judge you before they know you.'

Young adult participant

Young adults with multiple needs invariably have complex life stories. Whilst there might be some patterns, no two young adults' lives and circumstances will be the same.

Participants welcomed projects which assessed each person according to their needs, aspirations and potential praising projects which undertook personalised assessments and worked with service users to create a plan specifically designed on their particular situation. This flexibility created a greater sense of possibility and a chance to tell their own story and explain what they can offer.

Fifteen Foundation interviews each potential participant. Whilst issues such as criminal convictions are explored, suitability for the project is assessed on a case-by-case basis, with reference to their current situation. Our participants welcomed this openness, and saw this as a way of creating opportunities for people who are denied access to many other projects due to criteria such as a blanket ban on anyone with any criminal conviction.

vAs may be expected, projects where practitioners had small case loads were able to provide highly tailored support packages. Practitioners at Centrepunkt Greek Street typically have caseloads of six young people.

'Staff relate to you, they listen to you ... they fit around your needs as well as you fitting around theirs'

Resident at Centrepunkt Greek Street

Participants praised projects with such small caseloads, but recognised that not all projects are able to operate at this level of staffing.

On a visit to a law centre which provides support and representation to 18-25 year olds, one of the young adults in our group commented to a staff member that 'it sounds as if you build a personal relationship so you know how to help the young person better.' He went on to describe the service as 'like Connexions plus' –the 'plus' in his eyes represented more time being allocated to building the relationship and understanding, so that support and advice is more personalised, and thereby effective.

Some lessons from research

Tailoring support to individual service users is widely recognised as increasing the effectiveness of interventions, and many organisations have published recommendations to this effect. Two such examples are below.

The Mental Health Foundation's report *Listen Up!* (Garcia et al 2007) analyses the views of young adults using mental health services and practitioners, and concludes that "young people should be provided with a choice of both the type of support they receive ... The organisation should be responsive to both a young person's immediate and longer-term needs."

The Barrow Cadbury Trust's report *Lost in Transition* (2005) underlined the importance of tailoring interventions for young people moving between youth and adult criminal justice services.

Messages from policy

The Government's personalisation agenda and the transformation of adult social care were outlined first in the 2005 green paper *Independence, Well-being and Choice* (Department of Health 2005), later the 2006 white paper, *Our health, our care, our say* (Department of Health, 2006), and leading ultimately to *Putting people first* (HM Government, 2007b).

A comprehensive government policy review (HM Government, 2007a) presented the vision of a Britain "where services are geared ever more to the personal needs of those who use them" and, whilst acknowledging progress, the report emphasised that "the process of personalising services around the user is not yet complete."

Subsequent strategies have prioritised the personalisation of services, such as the 2008-2018 drugs strategy which expressed a "new focus on re-integration and personalisation" (HM Government, 2008a) and proposed piloting the use of individual budgets for those completing treatment to access appropriate assistance, and the New Horizons mental health strategy which focuses on personalised care, choice and control (HM Government, 2009b).

Investing in Potential (DCSF, DWP & BIS, 2009), puts personalisation 'at the heart' of their strategy to reduce NEETs. It acknowledges that 16-24 year olds who either are, or are at risk of becoming, NEET "are very diverse and must be treated as individuals who require tailored support, advice and provision to engage." Proposals include individual tracking of progress, all-age personalised careers advice and tailored support as part of the Flexible New Deal.

MEETING BASIC NEEDS

4

'[Our counsellors are] only used by women who have got their practical needs sorted –you don't want to go to a counselling session and then go and sleep under a bench.'

Practitioner at Women in Prison

Most of the projects we visited supported service users in meeting basic practical needs such as accommodation, food and safety. Staff and service users emphasised the importance of addressing these basic needs in order to enable young people to engage with the service and address other areas of their lives such as relationship issues, work, training or substance use.

As the quote above suggests, accommodation is often the most urgent need presented by young adults on referral to a project. Many projects integrated support around accommodation issues to their service. For example, Fifteen Foundation provides chef training as its core offer, but accepts that unless young adults are in stable accommodation, they cannot engage fully with the training scheme. They therefore provide advice and support to their service users if their housing arrangements are in jeopardy.

The need for nutritious food was another common theme through our project visits, with our participants frequently discussing the desire to control their own nutrition in terms of content of meals, timing, availability and budgeting. The integration into projects of access to good quality food and the facilities to prepare it was always viewed positively by our participants.

Physical safety was highlighted as a particular concern for young adults with multiple needs who are trying to avoid contact with local gangs, or to break links with negative, often intimidating, influences. Most of the projects we visited paid heed to this, with controlled access points such as supervised door entry systems. Our participants particularly welcomed a secure entry system in the Gateway Foyer housing project. They felt that CCTV cameras pointed at the Foyer entrances were a positive thing as they offered residents a greater level of protection both day and night, against intruders entering a building. The Foyer has a high level of human flow so this was felt to be particularly important.

'It makes sure that only the people who should come in can get in and it stops others from trying.'

Young adult participant

Alongside these basic practical needs, projects visited also provided support around physical and mental health, substance use, education and employment and benefits. At each project staff recognised the wide range of needs presented by young adults. Projects strived to meet these needs, either through providing services in house, or by signposting to other services and supporting young people to access them.

Some lessons from research

Research has identified a number of key contributors to a successful transition to adulthood. These include education, housing and life-skills as well as relationships, identity, youth engagement and emotional healing (Massinga & Pecora 2004; Reid 2007). These resources and skills are of even greater importance for emerging adults leaving care than others, because they may not have the safety net of a parental home to return to if they do get into difficulties. Additionally, they may need more structured programs to help with such skills as these may not come naturally from their parents. Programmes often focus on clinical services to the exclusion of these kinds of essential skills and resources (Massinga & Pecora 2004).

A Social Exclusion Unit (2002) report identified seven factors that can lead to re-offending, amongst which were housing need, lack of employment, poor education and financial support and debt. The T2A Alliance report, *Universities of Crime*, highlights the increased needs of young adult offenders across a number of these areas (Chater, 2009). The report notes that “meeting the education and welfare needs of this age group, while holding them appropriately to account for their behaviour, is likely to produce better results than a purely punitive model”. Similarly, a Home Office review into the impact of corrections on re-offending again found that “participation in programmes whilst in custody is only part of the rehabilitative process. Factors such as employment and stable accommodation have a role in ensuring that gains achieved in prison are maintained after release.” (Harper & Chitty, 2005)

Messages from policy

There is a growing recognition within government policy that improving outcomes for socially excluded groups such as offenders or those with mental health problems or substance misuse issues, may require help to address practical needs, alongside therapeutic or criminal justice interventions.

The introduction of multi-disciplinary Youth Offending Teams in April 2000 represented a recognition of the range of practical and emotional needs faced by young offenders. The seven reducing re-offending pathways² as outlined in the *National Reducing Re-offending Delivery Plan* (NOMS 2004) aim to address a wide range of adult offenders’ needs in order to reduce re-offending. The House of Commons Justice Committee (2010) has specifically suggested a multi-agency approach, akin to the youth model, for 18 to 25 year olds. The Integrated Offender Management model (which develops the existing Priority and Prolific Offender model and Multi-agency Public Protection arrangements) also adopts a multi-agency approach meeting the range of offenders’ practical needs.

The *New Horizons* mental health strategy highlights that “interventions that tackle social inequalities such as homelessness or debt may be of benefit to individual mental health” (HM Government, 2009b). Similarly, the government has said that aftercare for drug-misusing offenders “is not one simple discrete process and can involve several important factors, such as housing, support with benefits, managing finances, employment, education and training opportunities, access to mental health services, and rebuilding family relationships” (NOMS 2004). The understanding is that problems with one of these factors can undermine the recovery process and need to be addressed as part of a holistic package of care.

The *Every Child Matters* agenda (underpinned by the Children’s Act 2004) contains duties on local agencies to keep children safe and to promote their well-being. Keeping children safe is also a Public Service Agreement (PSA 13), extending to bullying as well as other forms of victimisation.

² The seven reducing re-offending pathways are: accommodation; education, training and employment; health; drugs and alcohol; finance, benefit and debt; children and families and attitudes, thinking and behaviour.

INFORMATION, MISINFORMATION 5 AND CHALLENGING STIGMA

We visited a wide range of projects, from generic youth services, to arts based projects, to more specialist therapeutic services. Prior to the visits, young adult participants were often unaware of the role and existence of projects. They were especially pleased to learn that several of the more generic services accept self referrals.

Young adults in contact with services often receive information on other services from their key workers or support staff. Practitioner participants noted that as services become increasingly diverse and specialised, it can be challenging to keep up to date in order to signpost young adults effectively. A best practice principle identified by participants is for practitioners and service managers to maintain accurate, up to date information on available services. This is especially true for practitioners working with young adults who have a range of needs and require support from a range of sources.

Young adult participants said that they often receive information about services from their peers and acknowledged that the accuracy of this information can sometimes vary. During our project visits we found that young adults having misinformation or an incomplete picture of services may lead to them avoiding or being reticent to engage with those services. Legacies of bad experiences with services can persist among peer networks. Conversely these peer networks can be utilised to tell good news stories. Harnessing the energies and knowledge of service users to dispel myths and distribute positive descriptions can be as valuable as expensively produced publicity.

Misconception about the role of mental health services were particularly striking. Our visit to the Lambeth Early Onset (LEO) Team enabled participants to learn about the type of support offered and challenged their misconceptions and fears about mental health interventions, such as concerns about the use of straitjackets. Participants left feeling reassured and having had their questions answered.

'So it's not at all like how they showed it on Eastenders then.'

Young adult participant during visit to the LEO Team

The visit to the LEO Team highlighted the ongoing need for practitioners to provide information which challenges the stereotypes of mental health services and the stigmatisation of those who use them. Such challenge is critical given the prevalence of mental distress among young people with multiple needs.

Some lessons from research

A report on Mental Health from the Government Office of Science states that "stigma, prejudice and discrimination continue to be pervasive throughout society, and exacerbate mental health problems. Major benefits could result if a step-change in attitudes to mental ill-health could be achieved." (Jenkins et al. 2008)

The Social Exclusion Unit's report (2004) on *Mental Health and Social Exclusion* identified a number of myths that existed regarding adults with mental health problems; the myth that they are dangerous and violent; that they can't work; don't want to work; are incapable of making their own decisions and that mental health problems are rare and unusual.

Messages from policy

Following the revision of the Mental Health Act in 2007, public debate centred on dangerousness and risk. The government recognised that this had fuelled stereotypes and in 2008 published a guide aimed at dispelling negative images of mental health in the media (The Guardian, 18th Feb 2008; Shift 2008).

Social Exclusion and Mental Health (Social Exclusion Unit 2004) outlined a number of actions for Government departments to eradicate mental health myths and tackle stigma and discrimination. In response to the report, the Department of Health funded the 'Shift' programme, charged with implementing the relevant actions. The Shift Programme is now part of the National Mental Health Development Unit with Department of Health funding committed until 2010/11.

The Bradley Report (Bradley, 2009) made several recommendations to improve training on mental health awareness and learning disabilities in criminal justice agencies.

The Government's commitment to tackling stigma is reiterated in the *New Horizons* strategy (HM Government, 2009b), which outlines a plan of action to achieve this.

GETTING INVOLVED



'Getting involved makes you feel part of something. When you're homeless, you're not part of anything. Once you start to get involved in any of the opportunities, you feel part of something –it makes an actual difference in whether the transition works or not. The more you're involved, the more progress you can make.'

Young adult participant

Engaging service users was a recurrent theme in the project visits, with participants observing good strategies for involvement, and identifying some projects that could benefit from greater, or more structured involvement. Aspects of service user involvement discussed included: project design and planning, user consultation forums, input to evaluation methodologies and practical support.

Participants felt that service user involvement should go beyond simply sitting in a room and talking. It was important that wherever possible they were allowed to contribute to the service in practical ways. They felt this would offer service users a sense of ownership of the service.

Participants and service users at projects visited commented that service user involvement offered opportunities to fill their days with constructive activity, and to gain useful experience and improve their skills. To this effect service user involvement is mutually beneficial –the project receives input which helps in tailoring the service and making it more effective, whilst service users are given the opportunity to make positive contributions and gain useful experience.

Key areas of practical support where participants felt service users could contribute were information technology and publicity design. Participants felt that young adults are often more experienced and confident in using information technology than project workers and could therefore be engaged to assist with tasks such as web design and creation of databases. This could be mutually beneficial as expense often prohibits projects with limited budgets from contracting out this kind of work. Participants felt that young people could make a positive contribution to marketing services as they are likely to be more aware of what is most effective in terms of publicity and may also have the creative skills to input constructively.

Some lessons from research

The Mental Health Foundation's report *Listen Up!* (Garcia et al 2007) outlines the benefits for organisations in involving service users. These include: improved access for young people, development of a more responsive service to meet the range of needs of all young people, increased accountability to funders and partner organisations and more informed training to service staff.

Another area of user involvement widely recommended is participation in recruitment and induction of staff. *Staffing Issues in Foyers: A Best Practice Guide* (The Foyer Federation, 2003) includes several ideas on how this can best be done. One is to allow young people to interview the prospective candidates. This allows young people to have a level of involvement and stake in the centre and also gives them some experience of formal interview situations which can be invaluable in the future (Young Minds, 2006). Involvement in this way may contribute to young people trusting staff, which will in turn aid the development of good relationships between service users and staff.

Messages from policy

The principle of service user involvement has gained prominence over the past decade within adult mental health and social care and is integrally linked with the Government's personalisation agenda discussed previously. *Putting People First*, the 2007 commitment to the transformation of adult social care recognises "real change will only be achieved through the participation of users and carers at every stage" (HM Government, 2007b). It has been embedded as a requirement in the Supporting People funding stream Quality Assessment Framework.

In 2009 the *New Horizons* strategy (HM Government, 2009b) replaced the *National Service Framework*, retaining the themes of service user engagement, choice and control. In particular, it promotes these in services for those undergoing the transition from adolescence to adulthood. It suggests that commissioners and providers will need to incorporate "a youth voice in planning and designing services to ensure that services are genuinely youth focused."

Similarly, the *Youth Crime Action Plan* asserts that "[young people] should be given a say in what goes on in their area, how local issues are addressed and how services intended for them are delivered." (HM Government, 2008b) This approach is supported by the Social Exclusion Unit report on *Transitions* in which 'involving young adults (and their families and carers) in designing and delivering services' is identified as a principle of service delivery (SEU, 2005). The emphasis on family involvement is incorporated in the government's wider policy to 'Think Family'.

7

Aiming Higher

'Why does everyone talk to me about getting a job? – I want to go to college to study and then in the future get a better job than those which they're suggesting to me.'

Young adult participant

During the project visits, participants often spoke of their plans and ambitions. Having had troubled backgrounds did not prohibit them from aspiring to a better future. However they felt that this was not always recognised by project staff. One commonly voiced frustration was that some workers they had encountered along the way seemed to assume they had limited hopes and ambitions.

Participants welcomed projects which offered activities which stretched their abilities and were aiming to improve their skills and confidence. Additionally, they saw activities as a means to help young people talk and seek help in a less direct, more informal way than sitting in a counselling room.

The group spoke positively of the approach at the St Giles T2A project, which employs ex-offenders as staff members –'It shows us what can be possible for someone with my background.'

Both young adults and practitioners participating in the project recognised the importance of meaningful activities, and services that offered a wide range of opportunities were viewed particularly favourably. Addaction and Centrepoint provided two examples of this. Addaction's drug treatment project integrates activities such as sports as a key element to drug/alcohol treatment. Centrepoint Greek Street offers a wide range of activities to residents through partnership with other organisations such as Cardboard Citizens, the Roundhouse and the Princes Trust.

Some lessons from research

A report by the Social Exclusion Unit into social exclusion of people with mental health problems (SEU 2004) found that "people with mental health problems and those working in the mental health field have often raised concerns that health and social care staff's low expectations, negative attitudes, and assumptions about the abilities of people with mental health problems inhibited progress."

A T2A Alliance research report identified: "A universal sense of frustration among participants [young adult offenders] about their employment prospects." (Barrow Cadbury Trust, 2009) Some of these felt that there was a lack of opportunities for personal development in order to improve these prospects whilst in prison. A Prince's Trust report (Calder & Cope, 2004) found that the aspiration of disadvantaged young people in the study to have an 'interesting job' fell by 19% between the ages of 14-17 and 22-25. Research into the impact of corrections on re-offending (Harper & Chitty, 2005) emphasises that it is 'not just having a job but stability and quality of employment along with level of satisfaction expressed towards it' that help prevent offending.

'Young people are more likely to achieve positive outcomes when they develop ambitious, achievable aspirations, combined with the self-esteem, self-efficacy, information and inspiration they need to persevere towards their goals' (Social Exclusion Task Force 2008). Young people need to be helped to develop both these goals and perseverance skills. The *One in Ten* report (2008), looking at transitions from education into work, emphasises the importance of staying committed to and not giving up on young people. There is a need to be creative in opportunities to motivate young people.

Messages from policy

Whilst much recent policy focuses on addressing immediate practical needs, services are also expected to be aspirational as well as problem oriented. In 2003, the *Positive Activities for Young People* programme was launched to provide diversionary and developmental activities for those young people aged 8-19 at risk of social exclusion or becoming involved in crime. The 2005 *Youth Matters* green paper (HM Government, 2005) also promotes the availability of a diverse range of local activities for young people.

New Horizons (HM Government, 2009b), the cross-government action programme to improve mental health and well-being, has 'Reaching Our Full Potential' as one of its four guiding principles. It has been published alongside the *Work, Recovery and Inclusion Delivery Plan* (HM Government, 2009c) to support people in contact with secondary mental health services into work. It says that "lifting the employment aspirations of people with mental health conditions, and those who support them, is a key step towards raising the employment rate. We must challenge out-dated beliefs about mental health and work, whether held by service professionals, employers or people who use services."

What next?

This report has outlined a series of good practice themes identified by young adults and practitioners during visits to project working with young adults with multiple needs. We hope it has provided you with useful guidance, reassurance, and inspiration.

For further reading on the subject, please visit www.revolving-doors.org.uk to access literature reviews on social and therapeutic interventions for young adults, and the commissioning guide which is a sister publication to this report. The bibliography at the end of this document also provides extensive suggestions for sources of additional information.

To keep up to date on the work of the Transition to Adulthood Alliance, please visit www.t2a.org.uk. This website also has a range of interesting reading material, and information about the Transition to Adulthood pilots.

Appendix A of this guide lists all the projects visited as part of this work. Many of these projects' websites also have information that is useful and relevant to this topic.

Finally, if you work directly with young people with multiple needs you may be interested to know about Revolving Doors Agency's national Young People's Forum. This is an opportunity for young people (18 to 28 yrs) with direct experience of mental health problems and experience of the criminal justice system to come together and help us to influence policy and design and improve services. The young people who are members of this Forum come from a range of relevant backgrounds and organisations and from different areas of the country.

Please visit www.revolving-doors.org.uk/service-user-involvement/ for further details.

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Youth Justice Board website: www.yjb.gov.uk

Appendix A: Projects visited

Addaction Transitions Project, Derby

<http://www.addaction.org.uk/>

As well as its young people's service for under 18s, Addaction, Derby provides a specific transitions service for those aged 18 – 25 with substance misuse issues. They do outreach work from the local 'one stop shop', youth hostels and colleges and provide a range of one-to-one interventions including sport and acupuncture.

Centrepoint, Greek Street Project

<http://www.centrepoint.org.uk/be-informed/about-centrepoint/where-we-work/greek-street>

Centrepoint offers services for homeless young people. The Greek Street project is a short-stay hostel for young people aged 16 - 25 who are rough sleeping or at risk of rough sleeping. As well as providing somewhere to stay, young people are helped with issues surrounding money, healthy lifestyles, employment and education opportunities and, ultimately, moving on.

Drive Ahead, London, Depaul Trust

<http://www.depaulnightstopuk.org/content/training>

The Drive Ahead project is a six-week programme aimed at homeless, unemployed, young people aged 17 – 25. It offers the basis to explore employment and training needs alongside introductory driving lessons. As well as the London project, there are projects in Birmingham and Newcastle.

Fifteen Foundation, London

<http://www.fifteen.net/Pages/default.aspx>

Fifteen is a global social enterprise with young people at its heart. Fifteen has four restaurants worldwide – Amsterdam, Cornwall, Melbourne and London – all of which operate a pioneering apprenticeship scheme for young people, between the ages of 18-24, offering them the chance to learn to work in the restaurant business.

Gateway Foyer, London

<http://foyer.websites.bta.com/level2.asp?level2id=7>

Foyers are integrated learning and accommodation centres providing safe and secure housing, support and training for young people aged 16 – 25. The Gateway Foyer project is a mixed needs project run by Look Ahead Housing and Care with 116 bed spaces.

Kilburn Youth Centre, North London, P3

<http://www.kilburnyouthcentre.org.uk/> ; <http://www.p3charity.com/youth.htm>

Kilburn Youth Centre is a 'first stop shop' for young people's needs. It provides a wide range of services for those aged 25 and under, including an advice and information service, accredited IT programmes, a sound recording studio and a sexual health clinic.

Lambeth Early Onset (LEO) Team, Brixton, South London

<http://www.slam.nhs.uk/services/servicedetail.aspx?dir=5&id=506>

The Lambeth Early Onset (LEO) Team is a statutory mental health team that aims to improve clinical and social outcomes through early identification, treatment and support for people aged 16 – 35 years old with psychosis. It provides individually tailored treatment packages which include a range of practical, supportive and bio-psychosocial interventions.

Nacro Milestones Mentoring, HMPYOI Portland

<http://www.nacro.org.uk/services/dorset/nacro-milestones/>

Nacro Milestones is a mentoring project which works with young men aged 18 to 21 who are released from HMPYOI Portland returning to Hampshire, Dorset and South London. Volunteer mentors provide support, advice and guidance on a range of practical issues and personal problems for at least six months post-release.

Open Door Young People's Consultation Service, Crouch End, North London

www.opendooronline.org

Open Door provides confidential counselling and psychotherapy to young people aged between 12 and 24 living in the London borough of Haringey, and a separate consultation service for parents of teenagers.

Roundhouse

<http://www.roundhouse.org.uk/about>

The Roundhouse is a cultural venue that delivers creative projects, ranging from poetry to sound engineering, for 13 – 25 year olds from all backgrounds. The Roundhouse involves young people at every level, from Membership of the Board of Directors to generating marketing campaigns.

St Giles Trust SOS Gangs Project

http://www.stgilestrust.org.uk/what/208746/sos_gangs_project.html ; <http://www.t2a.org.uk/pilots>

The SOS project is one of the three T2A pilot projects. It works with young offenders both in prison (returning to Southwark and Croydon) and in the community who are serving sentences for gang-related crimes. It provides a 'through the gate' service and offers tailored-packages of support.

Streetwise Community Law Centre, Penge, South London

<http://www.lawcentres.org.uk/projects/detail/young-people/>

Streetwise Community Law Centre is a young people's law centre that provides legal advice and casework for young people aged 16 – 24 on a range of legal issues, including homelessness applications, possession hearings, access to welfare benefits and obtaining support from social and mental health services.

T2A Project, Birmingham, Birmingham Probation Service

<http://www.t2a.org.uk/pilots>

The Birmingham T2A pilot project focuses on offenders aged 17 – 24 year olds with medium to low needs. It provides assistance with accommodation, employment, relationships and substance misuse both in custody and the community.

The Urban Academy, South-East London, Kids Company

<http://www.kidsco.org.uk/our-work/the-urban-academy>

Kids Company provides practical, emotional and educational support to vulnerable inner-city children and young people. The Urban Academy is a post-16 educational & life skills academy, specifically designed to meet the needs of young people who reject or have been rejected from other educational facilities, supporting them into university, college or employment.

Women in Prison Young Women's project, London

<http://www.womeninprison.org.uk/aboutus.php>

Women in Prison is a women-centred, women-run organisation. The London project provides a range of 'through the gate' resettlement support to women leaving prison who are returning to London as well as support to those on community sentences. Additionally, it provides specialist support to young women under 25 years of age who are involved in gang-related offending.