

PfA Forum - Week 1

The Local Offer



The Preparing for Adulthood (PfA) team would like to thank everyone who posted on this week's forum. One of the reasons we have established this forum is to share information and direct young people, families and professionals to resources that will help them to understand the changes and to get involved in the developments in local areas. If there is anything that you feel we have not covered sufficiently or you have any further questions please contact us at info@preparingforadulthood.co.uk.

It is important to acknowledge that the Local Offer is still under development in local areas. Some of the pathfinders have made good progress and the Regional Champions are continuing to develop tools to support other areas to develop an effective Local Offer.

As many of you have mentioned a change in culture is central to the success of the new system and that will take time so it is important that children, young people and their families know how to get involved.

We would advise any parents or young people who have concerns that things are not progressing in their area or would like to find out more about how to get involved to contact their local Parent Carer Forum www.nnpcf.org.uk and/or their local Parent Partnership Service www.parentpartnership.org.uk.

PfA have been working with regional champion, SE7, to develop a Local Offer tool which will be available to download on the PfA website within the next few weeks.

For other examples of good practice please see the Preparing for Adulthood website www.preparingforadulthood.org.uk and sign up for our e-bulletin www.preparingforadulthood.org.uk/ebulletin. There is also an information pack on the Local Offer which shows learning from the pathfinders available at www.sendpathfinder.co.uk/infopacks.

Below we have summarised the key requirements on a local authority in relation to the Local Offer. One of the key amendments to the Children and Families Bill is that the scope of the Local Offer now includes disabled children and young people and their parent carers as well as those with SEN.

As outlined in the draft Code of Practice in section 5.1 'The local offer'.

'Local authorities must publish a local offer, setting out in one place information about provision they expect to be available for children and young people in their area who have SEN, including those who do not have EHC plans.

The local offer has two key purposes:

- To provide clear, comprehensive and accessible information about the provision available; and
- To make provision more responsive to local needs and aspirations by directly involving children and young people with SEN, parent carers, and service providers in its development and review.

The local offer should not simply be a directory of existing services. The process of developing the local offer is intended to help local authorities and their health partners to improve provision'.

There are a number of requirements on Local Authorities regarding the way they develop and maintain the Local Offer this includes:

- Local authorities must involve disabled children and young people, those with SEN and their families in developing and reviewing the local offer.
- Local authorities and their partners should seek to work with their local parent carer forum to develop their local offer.
- Local authorities must cooperate with service providers when developing the Local Offer
- The local offer must include both local provision and provision outside the local area that the LA expects to be used by disabled children and young people, and those with SEN, for whom they are responsible, including relevant regional or national specialist provision.

The local offer should cover:

- Support available to disabled children and young people and those with SEN from universal services such as schools;
- Targeted services for children and young people with SEN who require additional short term support over and above that provided routinely as part of universal services;

- Specialist services for children and young people with SEN who require specialised, longer term support

The local offer must include information about:

- Education, health and social care provision for disabled children and young people and those with SEN;
- Details of how parents and young people can request an assessment for an EHC plan;
- Arrangements for identifying and assessing children and young people's SEN, including arrangements for EHC needs assessments;
- Other educational provision such as sports or arts provision;
- Post-16 education and training provision;
- Apprenticeships, Traineeships, and Supported Internships;
- Arrangements for travel to and from schools, post-16 institutions and early years providers;
- Support to help children and young people move between phases of education (for example from early years to school, from primary to secondary) and prepare for adulthood;
- Sources of information, advice and support in the local authority's area relating to SEN including information provided under clause 32 of the Children and Families Bill, forums for parents and carers, and support groups;
- Childcare, including suitable provision for disabled children and those with SEN;
- Leisure activities;
- Support available to young people in higher education, particularly the Disabled Students Allowance (DSA) and the process and timescales for making an application for DSA;
- Arrangements for resolving disagreements, mediation, and parents' and young people's rights to appeal a decision of the local authority to the Tribunal in respect of SEN and provision. This information should also include routes of complaint and redress for health and social care.

Support available to children and young people to help them prepare for adulthood

Local authorities must set out in the local offer the support available to help young people with SEN and disabled young people prepare for adulthood. Support should reflect evidence of what works in achieving good outcomes and include information about preparing for and finding employment, finding somewhere to live, and participating in the community.

Preparing for and finding employment should include information about:

- Support for transition into employment such as supported internship study programmes and how to apply for them;
- Apprenticeships and Traineeships;
- Support available from job coaches and how to obtain it;
- Support available from employment agencies;
- Support available from Year 9 to help children and young people plan their careers, including signposting to where they can obtain information and advice about setting up their own enterprise; and
- Financial support available, including from the Department for Work and Pensions, when they are looking for work or once they are employed.

Finding somewhere to live should include information about:

- Finding accommodation - including information about different housing options such as social housing, housing association accommodation, private renting, shared housing and shared ownership;
- How to apply for accommodation, and where to get financial and other support (such as a personal assistant, assistive technology or modifications to a home) and more detailed advice on accommodation;
- Advice, for people eligible for social care or health support, about what support is available to help them personally, for example in managing their personal budget or recruiting a personal assistant; and
- Opportunities and support to learn the skills needed to live in supported, semi supported or independent accommodation.

Participating in the community should include information about:

- Leisure and social activities, including opportunities for influencing local decision making;
- How young people can access mainstream community facilities and local youth services (for example, access to staff with expertise in supporting young people with different needs);
- Volunteering opportunities and the support available to access them;
- Care support available to help young people access social opportunities (e.g. a personal assistant or assistive technology) and develop friendships, and how to apply for that support; and
- Support in using the internet and social media to find information and develop and maintain friendships, including where they can go for guidance on using the internet safely and how to protect themselves against cyber bullying and exploitation.

The Care Bill will require local authorities to establish and maintain a service for providing people in its area with information and advice about the adult care and support system.

Q

• My question concerns the links between the local offer and the whole range of other information and advice functions, shared across local authorities, schools and colleges:

- The new duty on local authorities to provide impartial IAG to young people with SEN

- The duties on schools and colleges to provide impartial careers IAG to young people, including potentially 1:1 support to those with SEN

- The advice and guidance that ought to form a part of person centered transition planning

- Local Authority duties under section 68 of the Education and Skills Act to encourage participation, especially among vulnerable 16-18 year olds

How best can this be brought together into a coherent IAG offer to young people where possible? Especially considering other potential sources of info such as the National Careers Service, Job Centre Plus and charity and other providers of IAG.

• My concern is of a general nature really. As a parent of two with SEN I find myself overwhelmed by the amount of information out there. Information on its own is not enough it has to be given in a way that we can use it. It has to be relevant before we can ask the question, we need to know what it is we are looking for and I know for my part that has always been the difficult part.

We are still faced by ignorance and we are left to do the challenging whilst trying to maintain a healthy relationship with those supporting our young children. I started off very optimistic with this bill but the more I see the more concerned I am for those left at the mercy of universal providers, mainstream schools and colleges.

There is no money attached to this and yet we are lead to believe that the schools can support our young people with ASD/ADHD and other similar conditions. Not that I am suggesting that money will fix it. We need people in place who can prepare our young people for the rest of their lives and not just the next stage in education.

A In our summary on the Local Offer on page 4 we have detailed the requirement to set out how disabled young people and young people with SEN are supported to prepare for adulthood. This includes setting out support that leads to good life outcomes such as employment, independent living and community participation.

The Local Offer will need to specify the single point of access to the Information, Advice and Support service (IAS). This service should provide tailored, impartial information, advice and support to parents, young people and children with SEN or Disabilities and then map to other sources of Information, Advice and Support/Guidance (IAS/G).

The intention is for Local Authorities to build on their current Parent Partnership Service www.parentpartnership.org.uk to provide a single point of access to impartial information, advice and support to parents, young people and children on matters related to SEN and disability. This service will need to signpost users onto other relevant sources of IAS/G, including those mentioned in the questions above.

There are very specific requirements about the type of information that should be included in the Local Offer and the way that it should be available. This includes specific information on how disabled children and young people and those with SEN are supported to prepare for adulthood with good life outcomes.

There is a requirement for the Local Offer to be co-produced with disabled children and young people, children and young people with SEN and their families. Local authorities should use the information identified in this process to inform their joint commissioning strategy.

There are some examples of good practice in developing the local offer on the preparing for adulthood website www.preparingforadulthood.org.uk.

The way that schools are funded to support young people with SEN changed in April 2013 for more information about this please download the CDC School's funding briefing: http://www.councilfordisabledchildren.org.uk/media/409191/cdc_funding_briefing_for_parents_-_final.pdf

Q

- I would like to know what will be available for children when they reach college age who have SEN but have not been statemented?
- I would like to know what support will be available for children and young people who do not have an Education, Health and Care Plan, typically those who have dyslexia, ADHD and ASD that may have historically been supported at School Action and School Action Plus?
- I wonder about those 16/17 year olds who have just started in mainstream FE colleges, their statement no longer applies and so they are presumably 'out of the loop' and won't benefit from the new EHC plans which would take them up to 25?

A

The Children and Families Bill introduces a new 0-25 system and young people who have not previously had a SEN statement, or those who no longer have a SEN statement as they have just started at mainstream FE college, will be able to request an assessment under the new system. The Local Offer will have to include how to request this type of assessment.

In the current system Local Authorities are required to undertake a Learning Difficulty Assessment (LDA) for anyone with a SEN statement when they leave school, and this can give them access to learning to the age of 25 if it is appropriate, see 6.1 of the guidance. 'Section 139A of the 2000 Act places local authorities under a duty to arrange for a LDA to be conducted for all persons in respect of whom they maintain a statement of Special Educational Needs and who they expect to leave school at 16-19 to receive post 16 education, training or higher education'.

This duty will remain until the Children and Families Bill is enacted. The statutory guidance is available here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/learning-difficulty-assessments>

Q • I hear lots of people talking about the 'Local offer' but when you ask them what it means many say a bit more than a data base. (Google offers the service) I would love a child / young person friendly guide of what it is and how it benefits young people and their families - dare I say I would love each local area to coproduce the local offer with the leadership, direction and construction starting from young people and families. Please make it Facebook compatible as my daughter goes on this every day but i don't think she's ever been on a council website.

- It seems to me that LA's need to spell out exactly what their local offer is, what it means.. who it will affect, how it will improve the lives of those with additional needs (if indeed it will do!) We need information, but we need it to be clear and concise... and not a reworking of what we already know....

- How does the local offer become more than a glorified and very large directory?

Also, there is a risk that it will mainly list lots of 'universal' services which are supposed to be accessible but in practice are not - or at least not without 1;1 or 1:4 support. How do we avoid LAs making it a superficial in this way? Pretty much all disabled/SEN kids want to use these services but often it is really hard for them without support. For example my son was a 1:4 in a specialist environment but 1:1 in a universal setting.

The user, Jaquis, sums this up well:

'Much of it will be turgid and repetitive and not really getting to the heart of things'.

- I also worry about the information overload and yet much of it will be turgid and repetitive and not really getting to the heart of things. The responsibilities on social care, on education are statutory, that they have to make reasonable adjustments for all people with SEN so I worry that the 'local offer' (I agree with the user jonralphs - it's a very vague term) is just going to repeat fairly meaningless information.

A For the Local Offer to be an effective tool that is accessible to disabled children and young people, those with SEN and their families it is vital that the Local Offer is co-produced.

SE7 has been working with young people to co-produce their Local Offer and the young people have requested that there are pod casts and video clips to support them to understand the information. In other regions they are looking at how apps, facebook and twitter can make the Local Offer more accessible.

There will be more examples of good practice around developing an accessible Local Offer available on the PfA website in the coming weeks.

Information overload is not helpful but if the Local Offer is done well it should be accessible and clear what information is relevant to a young person's circumstances. It also creates an opportunity to highlight the good things that are happening in local areas and to look at what universal services are providing for disabled young people and those with SEN.

The Local Offer should provide detail of the single point of access to the IAS service. This service should provide tailored, impartial information, advice and support to parents, young people and children with SEN or Disabilities.

Q • The main question our family has in relation to the local offer is how to find out what it contains? Then, where a child/young person is not in a LA school/college, how does the LA disseminate the information? We have been allocated an advocate for our child (who has ASD, Epilepsy and physical disability plus a Statement of SEN) by the LA but their role appears to be merely to add another layer of 'blocking' and time wasting whilst not advocating on our child's behalf.

We are in a pathfinder area, attended the kick off meetings for the 'green paper' and follow up ones, used to get the emails but seem to have been overlooked lately in any form of communication and certainly the LA do not welcome our feedback - perhaps because it is not what they wish to hear? So, we wonder how will any offer or change to services be shared with families such as ours? Bearing in mind our child gets no support whatsoever at the moment thus we are hardly expecting any less!

We'd be interested to hear how an LA which has been funded to share info and seek opinions as a pathfinder can so readily dismiss YP within their region by not even attempting to share relevant information.

• The education system has severely failed my son who has physical and learning disabilities as well as medical needs. We have been forced to abandon the system as the fight wasn't worth the damage it was taking on my son's health. I am concerned that many of you are raising many of the issues we have faced over the past 18 years and parents who have gone before me, stretching over some 50 years. My biggest concern is we have new rules, new processes but what really is needed is a cultural shift to a collaboration in the interests of the child with a presumption that the persons best able to represent those interests are the parents. We know to our own cost that cultural changes are the most difficult and take time.

I agree that too much information is not helpful, surely if the new provisions are to be successful it should be incumbent upon LAs to provide clear concise information and training to ensure all participants fully understand the new processes.

I have listened to a number of advocates in pathfinder areas and whilst the words have changed the underlying fundamentals seem not to have. I am concerned that the "heart of the matter" has not shifted, there are too many let out clauses, the system is still adversarial and will thrive on obfuscation.

Here's hoping I am wrong!

A It is important to acknowledge that the Local Offer is still under development in local areas. Some of the pathfinders have made good progress and the Regional Champions are continuing to develop tools to support other areas to develop an effective Local Offer.

A change in culture is central to the success of the new system and that will take time so it is important that children, young people and their families know how to get involved.

We would advise any parents or young people who have concerns that things are not progressing in their area or would like to find out more about how to get involved to contact their local Parent Carer Forum www.nnpcf.org.uk and/or their local Parent Partnership Service www.parentpartnership.org.uk.

Q • I am involved in developing the local offer in Hampshire. I am a parent/carer of two disabled young people aged 18 and 19 and also work for the organisation which is developing the IT for the offer.

It is very important, I feel, that the section on Preparation for Adulthood is aimed at young people themselves, though it still needs to also contain the level of detail that their parents (and in some cases the young people themselves) will be interested in.

At the moment the offer is very "wordy" - it is a challenge to make it young person friendly and use other methods (such as podcasts etc) without the funds to commission these.

• I am in a pathfinder and was involved in initial talks about what should be in local offer. Have been really disappointed with result. It is a pretty map with weblinks but all it does is link to council web pages or local NHS. It hasn't added anything to what was in public domain on council or hospital website before. It's been a lot of time and money in meetings wasted. It isn't compatible with macs, iPads etc which is useless. Many people want to access info as a kindle

book or iBook so should be a book format available. I argued hard for it to include eligibility criteria. This hasn't happened. Again this is no improvement on current situation when parents try and access a service and get told their child does not meet criteria, the criteria should be publicly available. None of the hard to find out about services are mentioned eg LD nurse, incontinence service, free MacLaren buggies, LD dentist. These services remain as secret and heavily gatekept and dependent on parent word of mouth as they ever were. As far as I can see it has been a huge waste of money to tell me less than I already knew.

- I am getting worried as to what we are going to end up with. Even if it's all going to be inside a browser A dynamic website takes a good deal of thought, planning and investment. It also needs paid staff to manage it. I don't have much confidence in my area as the budget is fairly small and although users will eventually be given accounts to control their own information to start with it will be managed directly by the firm doing the work. Has anyone got any examples of best practice they can share please?
- Would welcome any guidance they have on how Social Services can develop an offer. What have other LA's done? Are there any areas of best practice?

A As stated in response to some of the earlier questions, for the Local Offer to be an effective tool that is accessible to disabled children and young people, those with SEN and their families it is vital that the Local Offer is co-produced. It needs to be developed in an ongoing way and constantly under review to ensure that information is current.

SE7 has been working with young people to co-produce their Local Offer and the young people have requested that there are pod casts and video clips to support them to understand the information. In other regions they are looking at how apps, facebook and twitter can make the Local Offer more accessible. It is evident from the work being carried out in pathfinder areas that there is a need to invest in getting the Local Offer right in order to share information about what is currently available as well as to plan for the future.

Information overload is not helpful but if the Local Offer is done well it should be accessible and clear what information is relevant to a young person's circumstances. It also creates an opportunity to highlight the good things that are happening in local areas and to look at what universal services are providing for disabled young people and those with SEN.

The Local Offer should provide detail of the single point of access to the IAS service. This service should provide tailored, impartial

information, advice and support to parents, young people and children with SEN or Disabilities.

There will be more examples of good practice around developing an accessible Local Offer available on the PfA website in the coming weeks. To review the current resources and learning please sign up to our e-bulletin at www.preparingforadulthood.org.uk/ebulletin.

Between Monday 10th and Thursday 13th February 2014 we would like people to submit their questions on engagement of young people and families. To submit a question visit our forum and sign up for an account at www.preparingforadulthood.org.uk/forum.

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Thanks

We would like to say a big thank you to everyone who took the time to submit questions and answer them.

The Preparing for Adulthood programme is delivered by:

