



Getting to scale quickly: Group approaches to planning

As part of the SEND reforms local authorities will set out how they plan to move to the new system. This plan must be developed with young people and their families. It will deal with the question of which groups will be prioritised for transferring from a statement or EHC plan, what the local process is, and the role of different agencies.

Many of the SEND pathfinders have been developing their workforce to use person-centred practices when transferring to the new system. One of the problems they have experienced is how to do this at scale. Planning Live was originally used with the Department of Health Individual Budget pilot sites when they had to deliver a certain number of support plans for personal budgets within a tight time frame. This approach has been used in a number of the SEND pathfinder sites to support young people to develop person-centred EHC plans.

For example Surrey used this approach to support young people in transition who were educated out of area and were returning to their local area [http://www.preparingforadulthood.org.uk/what-we-do/pathfinder-support/surrey-\(part-of-south-east-7-consortia-pathfinder\)](http://www.preparingforadulthood.org.uk/what-we-do/pathfinder-support/surrey-(part-of-south-east-7-consortia-pathfinder))

In Hertfordshire it has been adapted to create Living Live, which focuses on developing person-centred information and developing the local offer. Planning Live builds on this and replaces the Preparing for Adulthood review.

Planning Live is a two day process and involves each young person and their family working with a facilitator on their table who supports the process (this could be the plan coordinator). Professionals and providers are invited to attend the day and act as a resource providing information and advice as required. If they are currently supporting any of the young people present they spend time with them helping to gather information. If not, they have tables at the event so they can be called on if needed. The first day often starts by young people or families sharing what has helped them or their child to have a good life and raise aspirations.

The format of the event is a mixture of presentations and working in small groups to develop information for the EHC plan. During the day families and young people are supported to use person-centred thinking tools to identify what their aspirations, interests and wishes are, what good support looks like for them, and what their outcomes are. They consider different ways of achieving these. Groups normally include young people at similar stages in education. It has also been used to support young people returning to their local area, holding the groups in school holidays.

The benefits of this approach include:

- Young people and families report that they gained support and ideas from planning alongside each other. In many situations this support continues well beyond the meeting as young people and families follow and support each other's journeys.
- It is an efficient use of scarce professional time. A number of professionals find it difficult to attend every review. This way they can dedicate a day to supporting young people and families they are engaged with and be available if it becomes apparent that they need to be involved in the future.
- It enables the production of person-centred information for the EHC assessment and plan for a number of young people at the same time. It is particularly good when there are groups who need to develop plans quickly.
- It raises aspirations and provides good information and support. The first day starts with hearing about what has worked for other young people and families.
- It provides quality assurance. As the day is lead by a skilled trained facilitator, the participants and those supporting them learn how to use person-centred thinking tools appropriately and quality assurance issues are picked up quickly.
- It promotes creativity and is solution-focused. Participants benefit from the collective problem-solving of people in the room.
- Families also report that they like meeting key professionals and providers in the system face to face.
- Fun! A number of pathfinders have thought of creative ways of delivering group-planning days. Some events are held on Saturdays or over a couple of evenings and involve activities for young people and their brothers and sisters on the day.
- It builds the confidence and competence of the workforce in using person-centred approaches and specific person-centred thinking tools to develop EHC plans.
- It can provide useful information to develop the local offer and inform commissioning.

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