

Talking points

The NNPCF is a membership organisation and our mission states that “we aim to empower our members to ensure that their voice is heard at a local, regional and national level.”

Working with our membership we have identified a number of key “talking points” - these are topics and themes that are the most important to our membership and the ones that have been prioritised by the NNPCF.

Based on feedback from our membership and from other partners and stakeholders, the “talking point” summarise:

- The lived experience of our members about each topic,
- What is working and what is not working, and
- What we would like to see changed.

The talking points have been created using a range of feedback which includes:

- Surveys (including the SEND surveys)
- Feedback from our annual conferences
- The topics raised at regional meetings
- Themes and topics raised by our membership on social media
- Face to face conversations with our membership

Preparing for Adulthood

Preparing for Adulthood from the earliest years is a key element of the SEND reforms Code of Practice. Chapter 8, gives clear guidance to **all** professionals working with children and young people with SEND but in particular to those who work with young people aged 14 and over. This includes children and adult social care practitioners as well as health practitioners.

High aspirations for all is a key to success and all work being done with children and young people should bear in mind the 4 themes of preparing for adulthood:

- Education and employment
- Health and Wellbeing
- Being part of the community, having friends and relationships
- Independent living and housing options

These outcomes must be considered holistically, with the right focus on all elements to meet the personalised outcomes of each young person.

Families report a number of consistent issues across the country:

- Whilst there are often good, co-produced preparing for adulthood strategies and intentions, provision of services is lacking across the board.
- Joined up working across adult and children's services is limited in many areas
- There is frequently poor planning that is not started soon enough
- Information about preparing for adulthood is limited and confusing both nationally and locally.

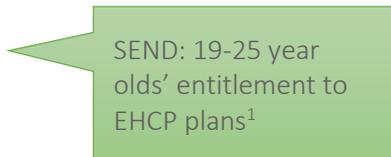
The cliff edge

Families describe their young people approaching school leaving age as “the cliff edge”. Whilst at school, they understand the provision and support their young person is receiving and can align this with the outcomes for their young person. However, upon leaving school the offer from many, if not most local areas is less clear and very often families are unable to see how the services and provision available will serve to deliver the best possible outcomes for their young people. This is because information about services is often poor and too frequently, the services and support parents believe their young person needs are just not available.

Education Health and Care Plans for the post 19 age group

As a result, many families seek to retain an education health and care plan (EHCP) after the age of 19 believing that educational provision is the only viable option for their young person. Frequently parents will understand that options other than education may better suit their young person but a lack of provision and information mean they do not believe this will actually be delivered.

Many families report that EHCPs are being withdrawn even in these circumstances. In determining whether to withdraw a plan a local authority must have regard to whether the educational or training outcomes specified in the plan have been achieved.



SEND: 19-25 year olds' entitlement to EHCP plans¹

The NNPCF would also like to see local authorities take into account the, quality and relevance of non-education services available to a young person’s outcomes when assessing whether to cease an EHCP. If no appropriate non-educational provision is available, the young person should continue in an educational setting with an EHCP.

Often families are only offered part time education provision for their young person (often 3 days a week). Families report that frequently, no or inadequate provision is offered for the other days.

The NNPCF would like to see local authorities consistently providing the required 5 day a week packages with the required follow up from the DfE and inspectors.

A lack of planning

There is not enough planning by schools with parents and young people from year 9 onwards which in turn impacts on the young people getting their voices heard as well as the aspirations of their families for their future.

The NNPCF would like to see greater focus on preparing from adulthood from the earliest ages – to quote one forum “PFA begins at birth”.

Some local authorities have adopted the four PFA themes and integrated them into their EHCPs from year 9 onwards. We would like to see this practice rolled out in all local authorities.

Shropshire Council have adopted the PFA themes for transitions EHCPs and a transitions officer provides support

Good intentions but a lack of provision on the ground

Many parent carer forums report that their local area have good quality, co-produced preparing for adulthood strategies with some stating that transition representatives,

All age disability strategy in Calderdale, PFA strategy in Bedford Borough

Transition manager in integrated services in Warrington, 2 new PFA officers in North Yorkshire. Dedicated

PFA officers and employment co-ordinators have been appointed. However, many report that services on the ground are often lacking. Areas commonly identified are low numbers of supported internships, apprenticeships and employment opportunities for young people with SEND. In addition, availability of appropriate housing is also highlighted with low stocks, little or no choice on what is available.

Local offers need to be better focussed on preparing for adulthood services. The NNPCF would like to see an increased focus from local authorities, the DfE and regulators on the availability of information about local services and the identification of gaps through the local offer.

The NNPCF would like to see the Social Value Act used more extensively to provide employment opportunities for young people with SEND through local procurement processes.



Social Value Act
2013²

Age appropriate services

Many parent carer forums report that adult social care services in particular are overwhelmingly focussed on old people's care. Young people with SEND are often offered services that are not appropriate for them. Those offered housing with older people or offered respite services with older people are reluctant to use these services because they do not meet their needs or help to deliver their desired outcomes.

The NNPCF would like to see more age appropriate services for young people with SEND delivered across the country.

Co-ordination between adult and children's services

Parent carer forums report very patchy co-ordination between adult and children's services in many local areas. This is amplified by the differing ages at which a young person becomes an "adult" across different services and different pieces of legislation with different services

transitioning at different ages ranging between 16, 18, 19, and 25. Very often there are gaps in provision

This means that there is often a lack of clear accountability in local areas about who is responsible for preparing for adulthood.

The NNPCF would like to see a named individual in each area identified as the local PFA officer who is responsible to co-ordinating the provision of services across a local area to prevent gaps in provision. As noted above many areas are moving towards this.

Pathways into employment

Parents report that the pathways into employment for their young people are confusing and at times difficult to access. There are many different routes available such as:

- Study programmes
- Supported internships
- Traineeships
- Apprenticeships
- Access to work

However, families do not necessarily understand the differences between these programmes, who provides them, how long they last, where they are delivered. In addition, often information about what is available locally is very poor.

The NNPCF would like to see a clear national guidance that cover these different pathways and outlines which may be relevant for their circumstances and how to access them. We must also recognise that work may not be the right outcome for all young people with SEND. Those young people for whom employment, education or training is not the right answer, should be offered alternative choices and not forced down the employment pathway.

Preparing for Adulthood has published some information on pathways into employment.³

The NNPCF are working with a number of agencies including BASE and PFA to produce a comprehensive guide for families.

Person centred solutions, including for those people on SEN support

Families report that routes into employment are often very rigid and cannot accommodate the particular requirements of their young person.

Greater flexibility in the pathways into employment (for example the ability to extend the supported internships if a young person is only able to work part time for health reasons) would make them a great deal more accessible for many young people with SEND.

Young people with and EHCP or who have had an EHCP in the past, now have more flexibility in meeting the entry requirements for apprenticeships.

The NNPCF would like to see this sort of flexibility extended to young people who have previously been categorised as needing SEN support. Access to work options should be flexible to accommodate the strengths of those who face academic challenges.

These welcome changes were made following the Maynard review¹⁰

Disability confident employers

Many of the work programmes available focus on supporting the young person and the employer into a successful employment and there is strong evidence of the employability of people with disabilities. However, the disability employment gap remains high at 33.1%.

Schemes to create more disability confident employers and so increase demand for disabled people in the workplace are key to addressing this.

The NNPCF would like to see details of the disability confident scheme posted on every local offer across the country.

MENCAP have produced a document presenting the benefits of employing someone with a disability.⁴

Office of National Statistics Labour Force Statistics⁵

Disability confident scheme⁷

Currently the list of disability confident employers is weighted towards public sector organisations and charities. We would like DWP to focus on adding more private sector employers to the list. The NNPCF would like to see a disability confident “kite mark” or sticker to encourage more small and local businesses to participate.

List of Disability confident employers⁸

The NNPCF regard job carving as an important tool to enable the right jobs to be created for people with disabilities. Job carving is used extensively by employers to outsource functions, with the right support and encouragement, it could deliver huge opportunities for young people with SEND.

Holistic support to get into employment – an “Employment Support Plan?”

Families report that often very simple, everyday activities and considerations are a major barrier to employment. For example, these include factors such as the accessibility of local transport services or the timing of social care visits (for example to get ready in the morning). Small adjustments in the wider support package for young people with SEND can remove otherwise intractable barriers.

The NNPCF would like to see a more holistic approach to employment taken that considers more of the barriers that disabled people face in to get employment. We would like to explore a holistic “Employment Support Plan” that outlines the support that will address these barriers in the same way that an EHCP addresses the support a young person requires to access education.

The government’s “improving Lives” strategy makes reference to joined up support across three key settings – the welfare system, the workplace and the healthcare system. This needs to also include the social care system and communities more generally.

Improving Lives: the Future of Work, Health and Disability⁶

Benefits as a barrier to employment

Another barrier to employment is sometimes the poor support offered to families about what impact even a very modest salary will have on their family's benefits. Families often express fears that paid employment for their young person will result in a fall in overall family income – often something that they cannot afford.

The NNPCF would like to see clear benefits guidance offered and signposting to specific benefits guidance as a part of pathways into employment.

Health and Wellbeing

Forums share that parents lack confidence in the transfer from children's health to adults. They report that adult health services frequently do not have a great understanding of the young people with SEND and this is often reflected in the availability of appropriate services.

Forums have also have raised concerns about the lack of GP engagement with the community of SEND young people who often remain within Child Development Centres up 19 years.

The NNPCF would like to see more joint working from Year 9 onwards with regards to health services from community's teams to the acute hospitals including a focus on the role of GPs

More support for families to learn the processes and language of adult health services before the changeover at 18 years old.

Notes:

1. Department for Education. SEND: 19 to 25 year olds' entitlement to EHCP plans. January 2017
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/send-19-to-25-year-olds-entitlement-to-ehc-plans/send-19-to-25-year-olds-entitlement-to-ehc-plans>
2. Social Value Act 2013.
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/social-value-act-information-and-resources/social-value-act-information-and-resources>
3. Preparing for adulthood
<https://www.preparingforadulthood.org.uk/downloads/employment/routes-into-work-guide.htm>
4. Mencap – Good for business
<https://www.mencap.org.uk/sites/default/files/2017-06/2017.080.1%20LDW%202017%20guide%20DIGITAL%20V2.pdf>
5. August 2017 Labour Force Statistics
<https://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/employmentandemployeetypes/datasets/labourmarketstatusofdisabledpeoplea08>
6. Improving Lives – The Future of Work, Health and Disability published November 2017
https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/663399/improving-lives-the-future-of-work-health-and-disability.PDF
7. Disability confident scheme
<https://disabilityconfident.campaign.gov.uk/>
8. List of employers signed up to the disability confident scheme
https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/678962/disability-confident-list-of-employers.csv/preview
9. Paul Maynard Taskforce recommendations
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/apprenticeships-improving-access-for-people-with-learning-disabilities/paul-maynard-taskforce-recommendations>