

SARA COHEN SCHOOL

# Transition

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## The Transition of Senior ORS-Funded Students to Life Beyond School

What does Dunedin offer?

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Transition into the world beyond school for ORS-funded students can be a difficult time for students and their families. It is important to know what is on offer and how services can be accessed and we must start the transition process as early as is possible. This study does not offer solutions, but provides an overview of what is available and the challenges and successes that service providers and families face.

**Transition:** the process or a period of changing from one state or condition to another: *students in transition from one programme to another (Oxford Dictionary)*

Why have I chosen the topic “The transition of senior ORS funded students to life beyond school” as my topic of study?

Ongoing Resourcing Scheme (ORS) funded students are a minority in our education system. Just over 1% of all school-aged students are ORS funded because their learning, health or development needs are greater than those of the remainder of the school population. Once a student is ORS funded they are able to attend school until the end of the year in which they turn 21. A Section 9 Agreement is required for students attending a Specialist School, or for those over 19 in a regular school. Some take the opportunity to remain at school after 18years, some do not. Generally those with an intellectual disability will remain at school for as long as possible to ensure that programmes are in place for when they leave school. In my experience as a mother of a son who was ORS funded, and as a Principal of a Specialist School I have seen a mixture of successful and unsuccessful transition. This led me to want to know why our current transition system in New Zealand is failing a number of our students and is limited in its success for many others. Why is successful transition not the norm? This study does not seek to list the organisations in Dunedin who offer programmes or transition services for students who have left, or are leaving school, as I do not want to single out, or miss out any such organisation. Nor do I seek to name people I have interviewed as I made the assurance that anything told to me in the course of this study would remain anonymous. This is really important when you are dealing with people from competing services in such a small place as Dunedin. It is also important because many of these services are now setting out on a path of working together in some areas in order to enhance the experiences that their clients can have by pooling resources to provide for the common need. This is in its infancy but promises to be an exciting step forward.

My initial thoughts/ questions:

- Funding – is there adequate funding available through education, health or social development to provide an on-going service which meets the needs of all those requiring it?
- Resourcing – is the resourcing available able to meet the needs of the students?
- Job Opportunities – does our current economic climate contribute to not being able to find placements for students/young people?
- Personnel – are staff adequately trained and do they receive ongoing support which enables them to support young people in their transition?
- Are there too many different people/organisations involved in providing the service?
- Agencies – are they able to provide the programmes that are needed to ensure young people can access their chosen activities?
- Do we actually know what is out there, how services work and what we can expect from them? Is this information easily accessible?
- Are schools adequately equipped to provide lengthy periods of transition for students?
- How soon should senior students start working towards transitioning out of school?

## **The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities**

### **Article 19 - Living independently and being included in the community**

States Parties to this Convention recognize the equal right of all persons with disabilities to live in the community, with choices equal to others, and shall take effective and appropriate measures to facilitate full enjoyment by persons with disabilities of this right and their full inclusion and participation in the community, including by ensuring that:

- a. Persons with disabilities have the opportunity to choose their place of residence and where and with whom they live on an equal basis with others and are not obliged to live in a particular living arrangement;
- b. Persons with disabilities have access to a range of in-home, residential and other community support services, including personal assistance necessary to support living and inclusion in the community, and to prevent isolation or segregation from the community;
- c. Community services and facilities for the general population are available on an equal basis to persons with disabilities and are responsive to their needs.

### **Article 27 - Work and employment**

1. States Parties recognise the right of persons with disabilities to work, on an equal basis with others; this includes the right to the opportunity to gain a living by work freely chosen or accepted in a labour market and work environment that is open, inclusive and accessible to persons with disabilities. States Parties shall safeguard and promote the realisation of the right to work, including for those who acquire a disability during the course of employment, by taking appropriate steps, including through legislation, to, inter alia:

- a. Prohibit discrimination on the basis of disability with regard to all matters concerning all forms of employment, including conditions of recruitment, hiring and employment, continuance of employment, career advancement and safe and healthy working conditions;
- b. Protect the rights of persons with disabilities, on an equal basis with others, to just and favourable conditions of work, including equal opportunities and equal remuneration for work of equal value, safe and healthy working conditions, including protection from harassment, and the redress of grievances;
- c. Ensure that persons with disabilities are able to exercise their labour and trade union rights on an equal basis with others;
- d. Enable persons with disabilities to have effective access to general technical and vocational guidance programmes, placement services and vocational and continuing training;
- e. Promote employment opportunities and career advancement for persons with disabilities in the labour market, as well as assistance in finding, obtaining, maintaining and returning to employment;
- f. Promote opportunities for self-employment, entrepreneurship, the development of cooperatives and starting one's own business;
- g. Employ persons with disabilities in the public sector;
- h. Promote the employment of persons with disabilities in the private sector through appropriate policies and measures, which may include affirmative action programmes, incentives and other measures;
- i. Ensure that reasonable accommodation is provided to persons with disabilities in the workplace;

- j. Promote the acquisition by persons with disabilities of work experience in the open labour market;
- k. Promote vocational and professional rehabilitation, job retention and return-to-work programmes for persons with disabilities.

2. States Parties shall ensure that persons with disabilities are not held in slavery or in servitude, and are protected, on an equal basis with others, from forced or compulsory labour.

For the majority of ORS funded students life at school and beyond is fraught with difficulties, barriers and can't do attitudes that other students and their parents do not have to face. Right from a time a student with disabilities enters the education system, whether at preschool or school, barriers are put in place. We hear time and again the same statements : "how much funding do they bring?" "there's not enough funding for the support needed", "who will pay the extra for the TA hours required?" We don't often hear "what a wonderful opportunity for our school and its community," or 'let's think outside the square to make this work for your family and for the school".

This doesn't change when these same students reach the end of their schooling. The same questions are asked, but by different agencies and in different settings. It is pleasing to note, however, that in Dunedin, at least, this appears to be changing as organisations and agencies learn to work differently and are able to develop their skill set as new employees come on board. (More about that later)

ORS funded students are able to stay at school until the end of the year they turn 21. If they are attending a local secondary school and have reached the age of 19, then they should have a Section 9 Agreement signed which enables them to stay until the end of the year they turn 21. All students who attend a Specialist School must have a Section 9 Agreement regardless of age.

Recently there has been a push to have students leave school with their age appropriate peers at age 18. For intellectually disabled students and their families, the idea of leaving school can be a daunting, and very scary, thought. There must be a long period of preparation and trial to ensure as much as possible is in place, and working successfully, before the student is taken off the roll of the school which has provided them with security and a sense of achievement over a number of years. This is regardless of where the student will be going on leaving school. For a number of students this may also be a time when they move away from the security of home and into a supported living or residential community. It is really helpful to have one move established and working well before the other is attempted.

I would not attempt to dictate to parents or to the Ministry of Education what is the right age for a student with disabilities to leave school, but having worked with many families over the past 40 years, and with my own son, I do know that the longer they can stay at school, the longer the transition and the more ideas brought to table for discussion around possibilities for a varied and 'needs-based ' programme the more successful the final transition is and the longer it is sustained into the future.

## What's Out There?

Dunedin is fortunate to be big enough to have a variety of organisations and agencies offering transition services, day or vocational programmes, supported employment and other activities, and small enough for those organisations to know and respect each other and to meet together for the greater good of their clients and their families. This has been demonstrated by the number of these agencies getting together to learn about and discuss the 'Enabling Good Lives' strategy recently developed by government agencies. (Health and Social Development and Disability Sector – see notes at end). From an initial seminar a working party of interested people has been set up to continue discussions and see what this might look like for Dunedin. I am one of the members of this group.

Currently we have a variety of providers working with our young people and their families or carers. These providers offer day programmes or vocational services, supported employment, drop in centres, work programmes tailored to the needs of clients or the organisation and transition services in some cases. They are funded through the Ministries of Health, Social Development or Education, depending on the age and needs of the client. In my discussions with Managers of these services, the funding always falls short of what is needed and there is a lot of stretching of budgets over a very large surface to ensure that programmes meet the needs of the clients.

As agencies work towards a more needs based and individualised programme system, the funding will have to be stretched even further. No longer is it okay to expect all clients to just fit in with what is offered regardless of their interests or needs. The agencies in Dunedin that offer day or vocational services have all stepped up and are offering programmes designed specifically around the needs of their clients. To do this, however, they require a greater level of staffing and staff who are more knowledgeable and who have training or experience in working with people with disabilities. The costs involved in offering programmes, through having to pay workers more, are then greater and this stretches the available funding even further. But for successful programming which meets the needs of the young, and not so young, people accessing the services, this is what must happen. Gone are the days when it is 'okay' to have someone just sitting in a room full of people because that is all that is available and they might like the company.

As part of this study I spoke to a variety of people. Managers of transition and ongoing services, workers involved in these programmes, transition and supported employment co-ordinators, clients, students going through transition to life beyond school, and parents. The perceived success or failure of the service or experience was entirely based on the individual's perspective rather than on an overview of the whole system or organisation. That, of course, is to be expected as many people involved in this area do have a narrow view which is guided by their own personal experience. Where this was different was in speaking with managers who could talk about the good and the not so good, what changes have been made or need to be made. Generally they had well-defined visions for the future or their service.

Funding, funding, funding – or lack of it. This was the strong message coming through from all providers. To receive \$2.56 per person per hour ( based on a 30 hour week) , or \$3900 per annum, with which to provide a broad spectrum of activities and options is only just short of impossible. Even when this funding is shared by having a number of clients involved in the same activity it is difficult to provide a lot of choice. If we take into account staff wages, upkeep of buildings, activity

costs, transport and all other relevant costs, most are operating on a very tight budget. To employ well qualified and experienced staff, which is the aim of all providers over time, seems to be almost impossible without seeking funding from places other than the current funders – Ministry of Social Development , Health or Education ( through the transfer of ORS funding for those 18 – 21 to recognised transition services). At the moment the funding can be used to provide programmes which are recreational as well as ones which involve continuing education and skill learning. From 2014 transition funding for vocational services or day programmes will become outcomes based. Clients will have to fit into one of three categories to guarantee their funding – paid employment, tertiary education, or a recognised training programme. This is unrealistic and unattainable for many of our people with disability, especially those with severe intellectual and/or physical disability. This ideal world attitude demonstrates a total lack of understanding of and empathy for our young people with special educational needs, many of whom rely on the support of other adults for most, or all, of their day to day living.

In talking to Transition Co-ordinators I learned the following.

- Most students still do not get a long enough transition period when preparing to leave school.
- Parents rely heavily on the advice of professionals and are reluctant to start transition early as it is a reality check which is often too hard
- As a transition co-ordinator it is hard not to get involved at a personal level with families – this is very hard when we want to do our best for everyone concerned.
- Providers and families are struggling to find a service to suit all needs
- Funding is inadequate to provide everything that is required – programmes are still minimal.
- It would be the ideal to be able to provide individualised programmes for everyone requiring one.
- Vocational Services (day programmes) are full with most providers
- There is little work available in Dunedin because employers cannot afford to take on people or have supervisors working with them. It is difficult to have an external supervisor working alongside the client – funding is not there for individualised work like this.  
There are many common themes here, all focussing more on the negative than the positive.  
This is an indication of the frustrations providers feel at not being able to offer everything they would like to.
- When programmes don't succeed it is very difficult to pick up the pieces and start again. Sometimes this is because parents lose faith in what can be provided, sometimes because the intensity of staffing required to enable success is just not available.

#### **What things should transition cover?**

- Further education
- Employment
- Income and finances
- Housing or living arrangements
- Support needs
- Cultural needs
- Recreation and leisure
- Advocacy

- Friends and relationships
- Transport or community access

### **What services are available?**

Vocational Services, also known as Day Programmes These operate from many of the organisations offering services to people with disabilities. They usually focus on offering a range of activities from crafts, the arts (visual art, music, dance and drama), swimming and exercise as well as simple home skills such as cooking and baking. Clients generally choose the activities they wish to be involved in, or have them chosen for them if they are unable to indicate their choices. Some people choose a variety of organisations for their week's programme rather than just attending one. This allows for variety and the opportunity to meet and work with different groups of people. It is important for those attending such programmes that there is consistency and a structure that allows for people to feel valued, understood and safe. Vocational Services in Dunedin are stretched to overflowing, budgets are straining to meet demand and most services do not generally have spaces for new clients in 2014 unless these clients have already been involved in transition during 2013 or they come with Very High Needs funding packages that are not reliant on outcomes based results.

Drop In Centres: As the name suggests, Drop In Centres are run by some organisations to provide a less formal place for people to drop in for all or part of a day. Their clients are generally those living independently or those who can manage their daily lives with minimum supervision. They offer such activities as crafts, pool, card playing, tea and coffee and a chat, as well as visits to local cafes and pubs for a lunch time get together. They also provide access to computers and the internet and are supervised in a less formal manner than day programmes. In many ways they look similar to Vocational Programmes but they do not have such intense supervision. Drop In Centres are becoming more popular as clients are able to choose the activities in which they participate, what days they attend and whether they stay for all, or part, of the day. Transition to these centres must be done over time so that routines are well established and to ensure that this less supervised and less restrictive environment is actually the right place for a young person on leaving school. There are those who, in such a setting, would be very vulnerable and unsafe so it is very important to recognise that, while these centres offer more freedom of choice and have goals towards clients having a good life, they are not the right place for all. As these centres become more established, and as organisations work together to develop ideals similar to the Enabling Good Lives philosophy, we will see them grow and establish themselves as positive options for many young people who are working towards an independent life within their community.

Supported Employment: The Supported Employment service, offered by some organisations, seeks to find supported work placements for people with a disability. It definitely has varying degrees of success. In this time of growing unemployment in the Dunedin area it is increasingly difficult to find jobs for people with intellectual and physical disability. Staff employed to seek out employment for their clients are feeling frustrated about the barriers being put in place for our young people to achieve their goal of working for all, or part, of

the week. As mentioned above there is little work available because employers cannot afford to take on people who are not able to work independently, or have supervisors working with them. It is difficult to have an external supervisor working alongside the client full time as funding is not available for individualised work like this. Many businesses are already working with the minimum staff they can to get by or are cutting staff hours to enable them to continue in business. This does not lead to our disabled community getting employment, or even work experience or volunteering work which is unpaid.

Some organisations have worked around this by setting up their own mini employment or micro-enterprise schemes - firewood, gardening, car washing are examples – which provides their clients with work experience, some payment and a sense of being able to contribute to a working community. These schemes, however, rely on external funding or work contracts to supply to other businesses to enable them to continue and for the workers to be paid. They also rely on having the staff willing and able to supervise the work. In the future this may be an area where families pool support to enable a small group of people to work together to create an enterprise which sees them earning money for the work done.

The Government's insistence on all clients being paid a wage for the work they do in a workshop setting has also meant a big change in who can work and where they can work and means that, for many, where they could work in the safe environment of a 'sheltered workshop', this is no longer the case. This has led to a number of people no longer being able to work because of the level of supervision and assistance they require.

## **Case Studies**

### **Liam aged 23**

Liam is a young man with Down Syndrome. He attended regular schools until the age of 18, at which time he transitioned to a Specialist School where he stayed until the end of the year he turned 21. Alongside the Down Syndrome are ADHD and ODD (Oppositional Defiance Disorder). He lives in a supported house with other flatmates.

During his time at the Specialist School he was transitioned into some work experience placements so that when he left school these activities would be in place for the following year. The school, and his transition funding provider worked together to put suitable activities in place. Liam needs regular monitoring and supervision. He understands superficial commands and instructions and prefers visual aides to help remind him what he must do and how it is to be done.

One of the 'jobs' he had was to collect cardboard from shops in a large and busy Mall. A Social Story was put in place by his school to help both the Mall Staff and shopkeepers, and Liam, know what to do and what was expected. Initially Liam was supported and mentored by the young floor manager of the Mall. He was able to spend time ensuring Liam knew what to do, how to do it, and had time to check regularly that things were going well. However, as in many businesses, the senior management did not understand that Liam needed a large degree of supervision and so, did not allow the floor manager the time to mentor and support Liam. Within a very short time the job fell apart. Liam was not able to cope without supervision, got things wrong and did not have enough time to complete the tasks asked of him. The job became unsustainable and Liam was not able to continue. He was very upset by this. He could not understand why the young mentor could no longer



spend the time helping him and the mentor felt frustrated and angered at not being able to put in the time he promised to do. It also left him feeling as though he had failed Liam and his family. So much so that he left the job not long after and has branched into totally different work.

So, by the time Liam left school, this work experience had fallen apart and was no longer available. This was to be the job he would go to two days a week and it was no longer available to him. As a consequence his first year out of school was spent in vocational programmes that allowed him to sit around doing very little, lacking motivation and lacking the will to want to work. His visual timetable showed what he was supposed to do but he was expert at persuading staff that he wanted to do something different, resulting in a programme quite different to the one set up. It was almost as if he had found a way of ruling the roost and it was necessary to re-establish, with him, his goals and the expectations that were in place for his learning and continuing education.

What is the learning from this?

We know that students only succeed when expectations are clear, small learning progressions are expected and all learning is well supported. Support may be from visual timetables and other visual supports, personnel alongside them guiding them and mentoring them, rules in place that are understood by all and are consistent, and that realistic expectations are in place. Thorough preparation is the key to successful transition and, in this case, the preparation of the Mall Boss was not sufficient for him to understand what he needed to be able to do or allow for the work experience to be successful and sustained. We also acknowledge that preparation for those supporting him in his vocational service was not sufficient, and information or support around how best to deal with some of the behaviours he presented needed to be more clearly defined.

### **Lyndon aged 28**

Lyndon is a young man who has severe epilepsy and learning disabilities. He has a shunt which drains fluid from his brain. He is physically strong and fit but sometimes his seizures make life very difficult for him and his family with whom he continues to live. He has a twin brother who lives in another part of New Zealand.

Lyndon attended regular schools until his final years at secondary when he transferred to a Specialist School. Both he, and his family, were very keen for him to experience as many work opportunities as possible so that a variable and enjoyable programme consisting of work (paid or unpaid) and recreation/leisure was firmly in place by the time he left school. Lyndon independently accesses his local sports' club and joins in rugby and cricket where he can. He is highly respected by the club and is included as part of a senior team as an 'assistant'. He also plays basketball, representing Otago in Special Olympics events.

One of the work placements found for Lyndon was with a small local coal and firewood distributor. Lyndon loved the physical labour involved and would return to school with blackened face and hands having helped bag coal. On leaving school this position was able to continue part time with

Lyndon receiving a very small weekly payment (\$20) for his work. This was on top of his Invalid Benefit.

His mother often commented that he worked much harder than those being paid a full wage and that it was not a particularly equitable arrangement. However, because Lyndon enjoyed it so much it was worth him keeping the job.

Over time the business moved and became primarily a wood merchant. Lyndon continued on, until in 2012 the business finally closed. Lyndon is now without any paid employment and is having to resort to 'vocational programmes' and some volunteer work to keep himself busy. He sees his volunteer work as a job and is very proud of the way in which he supports the organisation through what he does. He is occasionally called in to do extra and this gives him a great sense of pride in his accomplishments as a valued member of the team.

What is the learning from this?

Employment in paid jobs, even when physically able to do the work, is not readily forthcoming and transition providers are being put in a position of accepting work for the young person at less than equal opportunity status. Our young people are generally not able to advocate for themselves and rely on others to do this for them. Lyndon thought that having the job was okay and because he got a few dollars in his hand he felt valued. His parents would have felt he was more valued if he had been offered the minimum wage, even if for a few of the actual hours he worked.

Doing volunteer work with an established charity has given him a sense of pride and a recognition that he is valued within an organisation involved in the well-being of people.

Our job as advocates needs to be clearly defined and the definition shared with all transition providers so that we have a common ground from which to work.

### **Allan – aged 28**

Allan is a young man with Autism and Learning Difficulties. He also struggles with his emotional and mental health and wellbeing. He lives at home with his mother and her partner. For the majority of his schooling he attended regular schools, transitioning to a Specialist School in his senior secondary years. Allan's passion is helping others, especially those less able than himself. While at school he expressed this interest and an interest in obtaining his driver's license.

In his final year of school Allan worked with a number of other students towards his learner's license. He achieved this goal while still at school and proceeded to learn to drive a small motor scooter on which he gained his restricted license. He has since moved to a more powerful 3 wheeler motor bike and his full license. This is his means of mobility and he is very proud of this achievement.

Finding activities of interest for transition for Allan while still at school were rather challenging. He is shy and does not like to put himself into new situations without considerable preparation. He was encouraged to attend his local gym with one of his classmates, who lived in the same small town and

this became a time they could share and continue a friendship. Allan did not want to work in any other way than helping others so he was given opportunities to support other students at school. This proved to be quite successful, and it was felt, that with some close monitoring and mentoring he would possibly cope as a Teacher's Aide. He was offered this as work experience one day a week for the following year.

As Allan's confidence grew so did his ability to make decisions and work alongside students without constant support. He was assigned to one classroom and was able to build a working relationship with the teacher, teacher's aides and students. This proved to be very successful and Allan has remained at the school as a paid Teacher's Aide, working in two different classrooms, for one or two days a week – sometimes paid for both days, sometimes as a volunteer with transport costs paid by the school. This arrangement works well for Allan so that he can retain his full Invalid Benefit and have some extra money for himself. He is paid according to the Collective Agreement for Support Staff and has moved up the scale each year.

What is the learning from this?

Careful and sustained preparation is required to enable to allow this student to feel comfortable in the situation he is in. While he knows all staff well, he still finds it difficult to communicate with them in more than a couple of words. There are one or two exceptions. Mentor staff have taken considerable time explaining to him the importance of communicating openly with other staff. He has no problem communicating with the students as he knows from personal experience how they are feeling. We must remember that people with autism are not always good communicators so steps must be put in place to make this easier. Keeping in contact with his supported employment supervisor is also important. His supervisor cannot believe how far he has come over the past year but is quick to acknowledge that strong supports are in place to make this employment work.

### **Beth – Aged 23**

Beth was diagnosed as a young child with a number of conditions which indicated she might not be able to walk or talk. Thankfully she proved the doctors wrong but she does have Global Developmental Delay which has meant her learning and self-management continues to be a challenge for her. She attended regular schools until part way through Year 10 when her mother and father (reluctantly) made the decision to move her to a specialist school because the regular school was unable to cope with her behaviour and her complex learning needs. Beth remained at school until the end of the year in which she turned 21.

In her final year at school it was established that Beth would benefit from further learning on leaving school. Transition was provided to a service that allowed Beth to learn in a supported environment but which allowed her to make choices as to what her learning might look like. It was also established that Beth needed some recreational or leisure activities and this was set up for one day a week. Beth had also shown skill when working with younger students and expressed a desire to do this on leaving school. She had supported students in this class on their weekly day out in her final year at school. It was acknowledged that this would need to be well supported and supervised and that Beth would need clear guidelines as to what was expected of her at all times, especially when

mixing with older students. The specialist school gave her the opportunity to work as a volunteer in their junior satellite class one day a week in the year after she left school and this has continued. Beth still needs close supervision and direction as she is inclined to forget that she is an adult helper in the room and, when in the company of senior students, will revert to being part of the student group, often making inappropriate comments and acting quite childishly. Beth works one on one with the junior students, reading to them, helping them with their activities and helping the staff with set tasks. It would be very difficult for Beth to sustain a paid position at this stage.

What is the learning from this?

Transition for Beth to the learning centre was well-managed and worked well. She currently spends three days a week there but as its funding is now only certain for another year, this may come to an end. There should have been more time spent on transition to working with the younger students even though she had accompanied them on their day out in her last year at school. This, less formal setting, was ideal as she had to follow the direction of the staff but once she was spending a day in the classroom this was, initially, less successful as she did not have the direction required to make her job meaningful for an entire day. Once more planning and direction was put in place this became easier for Beth. She also learned the routines of the classroom and could work out some of the things needing to be done. Because Beth is socially immature and seeks out male attention ( as in wanting boyfriends) there have been times when staff have had to remind her that she is acting in a staff capacity and not that of a fellow student when visiting the base school and coming into contact with senior students. It is important, when transitioning a student, that their needs are well understood and well supported. Because Beth was transitioning for volunteer work, to a setting where we assumed staff knew her well, it took us a while to see that her support needs were not being met.

**What might the future look like?**

**Enabling Good Lives : Report from the working Party Reporting to Tariana Turia, Minister for Disability Issues.**

A good life would mean disabled people:

- (1)do everyday things in the community
- (2)will not have to go to special places that just provide support for disabled people
- (3)say the kinds of support they need and make sure the money for their support is spent on these things.

It suggests a new way for the future. There has been a focus on supporting people to be included and doing things in the community.

The Working Group said disabled people now want:

- to have more chances to take part
- to be included
- more choices about the people and organisations that can give support
- more control over who gives support.

There are **2 problems** with the way support is at the moment:

- day services are being run from centres

- the way the funding is used can't be changed.

Some people still think that it is ok for disabled people to go to day services in centres if they do not have paid work.

Some disabled people need this level of support.

The Working Group thinks:

- there are people going to day services who don't need this level of support
- day services support people in groups and people miss out on doing what they want to do.

They believe:

- All disabled people would be better off being more included and involved in their communities.
- In the future most support will not be based at a day base or centre.
- In the future support will be around the person's whole day, not just what the person does during the day.

The Working Group:

- knows that there will still be some people who need day services in a centre
- says any support should be focused on a person, not a group of people.

### **Goals for supporting disabled people into the future**

The Working Group came up with **10 goals** they thought were important when planning support for disabled people:

#### **1. Control**

\_ disabled people are in control of their lives and who supports them.

\_ disabled people are supported to set their own goals and take part in activities of their own choice.

#### **2. Support**

\_ look at what support a person needs across their whole day, rather than split up the support into the support you need during the day and support where you live.

#### **3. Having a life**

\_ disabled people and their family/ whanau are supported to dream about what a good life might look like and how this can happen.

#### **4. Respect**

\_ what disabled people and their families say is taken seriously.

\_ support should always be a good experience.

#### **5. Being in the community**

\_ services everyone can use are easy for disabled people to get into and use.

\_ separate disability supports are not the first or only choice.

#### **6. Relationships**

\_ disabled people and their families will be supported to connect with other people.

#### **7. Inclusive communities**

\_ work with and support communities to be more welcoming and include disabled people.

#### **8. Support is easy to get**

\_ any supports for disabled people are easy to get, use and understand.

#### **9. Start early**

\_ talk to family/ whanau when children are very young.

\_ support family/ whanau to:

- dream big for their disabled child
- have community networks
- have support outside of paid support services
- know how to support their child to grow up to be independent, skilled adults.

## 10. Have the right support

- \_ support comes in different ways for different people.
- \_ support changes as people's lives change.

From these they came up with the 10 Principles listed below:

### Enabling Good Lives Principles

**Self determination - tino rangitiratanga:** disabled people are in control of their lives, and supports are tailored around their interests, preferences and goals.

**Whole of life:** supports are designed to take a whole of life approach (ie people's lives are not compartmentalised into day, night, home, community etc).

**Ordinary life outcomes:** disabled people and their family/whanau are supported to imagine what a good life might look like and how this can be achieved. They have opportunities to work, contribute, learn, have relationships, have a family, have a home, take part in their culture and participate in recreation and sport - like others at similar stages of life.

**Mana enhancing:** empowerment: values the contributions of disabled people and their families, and ensures support provided empowers them – ie support should be invisible, not diminishing mana.

**Mainstream is the default:** community based or generic supports are made accessible and available to disabled people before separate disability supports are provided.

**Kotahitanga tatou – whanaungatanga:** supports are based around relationships - a unified partnership connecting disabled people and their family and whanau with communities, building supportive relationships, and encouraging community responsibility.

**Manaakitanga - Community building:** engage and support communities to be more welcoming and inclusive of disabled people – create accessible communities.

**Simplicity:** supports are simple, easy to access, are the least restrictive they can be, and make things easier for the disabled person.

**Timatanga (beginning early):** invest early in families and whanau to support them to be aspirational for their disabled child, to build community and natural supports and to support disabled children to become independent, skilled adults.

**Flexibility:** supports meet the continuum of need and are responsive to people's changing needs and aspirations over time.

The new way of supporting people would mean disabled people could have everyday life in everyday places.

The new way would support people to achieve goals in:

- learning new things
- working
- spending time with friends
- having relationships and a family
- taking part in the community
- taking part in cultural activities.

### Making the Community better

There would be support for community to:

- learn about making buildings easy for disabled people to get into and around in.
- teach bosses how they can support disabled people to be workers in their workplaces.

#### **How would this affect Transition beyond school?**

- Transition would have to be flexible and would need to start early. 14 years of age is a time when we start looking at transitional and vocational choices for our students as it is a time when we narrow the focus of the IEP to concentrate on the skills required to enable a student to live successfully within the community of their choice. Schools would require support so that transition services could be on board early and so that transition could be made as seamless as possible. It would be ideal, in many circumstances, for the school to provide the transition service as we know the students and their families best.
- Transition would mean looking at a broader range of learning, work and recreation or leisure activities than is currently available. There would need to be widespread education in all areas of the community so that disabled people would be seen for their ability and the positive aspects they bring to a community.
- There would be a place for innovative ideas and services that could provide people with appropriate needs-based activities and experiences.
- There would need to be support, through the appropriate Government Agencies, for businesses and workplaces willing to employ those with a disability. This could take the form of additional staffing or monetary incentives that would enable businesses to employ mentors to work alongside those with a disability to ensure their success.
- Families/whanau would need to be better supported so that they are aware of what is available and how they can access services and support. This support should start early, be on-going and seamless.
- Funding would need to be flexible and shared by groups of people/agencies wanting to support individuals or small groups of people with similar interests and skills. Funding would also need to be realistic to ensure well-trained and skilled staff are retained to work with families, employers and programme providers. This funding would need to be able to cover any necessary training for staff involved in transition and mentor support.
- People with disability would need to be listened to or they would require strong advocates who know them well. Often those with physical disability are heard but there are those with intellectual disability who do not have a voice. These are the people who cannot verbalise their needs, who are unable (because of the extent of their disability) to make obvious choices, or who when given choices are not actually given the right ones. Sometimes we assume that everyone wants to be in a regular, ordinary setting but this is not always the case. We must ensure we do not push our views onto those who cannot speak for themselves.
- New Zealand would need to become a society where inclusive practice is the norm, where the Disability Strategy is a living document and where the rights of all people are recognised and catered for. Everyone would feel valued, would have a good life and would be able to achieve their goals and their dreams.

#### **In Conclusion:**

Transition is alive and well in Dunedin but there are parts that cause frustration for the providers, clients and families. Transition beyond school must start early and be well supported so that, at whatever age a young person decides to leave school, there are programmes in place that are well managed and successful.

All services are working hard to provide quality programmes and activities for all clients, based on their identified needs and goals, however, most services are finding it difficult to find places for all those wanting to enrol.

Funding is an issue and, until there is a fresh way of looking at what should be provided, it always will be. The Government must step up and ensure there is adequate funding for all people to be able to access their chosen activities as is their right.

Thank you to those who gave their time, their thoughts and their permission to use their case studies. My eyes have been opened wider to the issues we face as educators of those with special learning needs and I am determined that we will start transition early, ensure students and their families are listened to and that we will work closely with transition providers to ensure our students get the very best transition possible.