

No Wrong Door

Ensuring young people access the right services at the right time and in the right place to meet their needs



North Yorkshire County Council

Challenge

Young people who enter care during their teenage years tend to spend considerable periods in residential care. They are more likely to have placement breakdowns and can follow a path of multiple placements, over time becoming distrusting of positive relationships, disengaging from education and training and falling into patterns of risky behaviour.

Innovation

No Wrong Door is an integrated service for complex and troubled young people. Their needs are addressed within a single team. Operating from two Hubs, No Wrong Door brings together a variety of accommodation options, a range of services and outreach support under one management umbrella.

Partners Involved

No Wrong Door is a partnership led by North Yorkshire County Council and including:

- 7 district councils
- 9 housing/accommodation providers
- Health and CAMHS
- Police

Our Innovation

November 2016

From placement planning to bespoke placement creation



The Hub creates a breathing space for young people to make mistakes without hitting crisis. Together, the young person and their key worker develop a timeline and a plan of action that is reviewed regularly and which enables the young person to see and acknowledge the progress he or she has made.

Pulling expertise into the team as needed, rather than passing cases on



The Hub team is integrated and multi-disciplinary, including clinical psychologists, police, speech therapists, family circle workers, education and employment support and homelessness support. Practitioners work together in a single space with a common theory of practice based on the Signs of Safety framework.

A genuine commitment to co-producing provision at every level



The Hub requires everyone to work together and make things happen in new ways. Changing practice, culture and relationships is hard. Actively involving everyone in the design and continued development of the Hub has been essential.

Thinking differently about assets, resources and value for money



Our purpose is to improve outcomes in the long term, not cut costs in the short term. This means looking differently at resources and assets, and building an evidence base that shows the value in investing intensive time, money and expertise in approaches that will make a genuine difference to the lives of young people.

What we're doing

Smoothing transitions

Young people told us that they were often moved too quickly, which meant they struggled to adapt to new placements. There was often not enough follow-on support from the children's home.

The No Wrong Door model aims to provide young people with the stability, skills and support whenever they need it to successfully manage these difficult points of transition; and, more broadly, the transition from adolescence to adulthood.

Whether young people choose to live independently or try a family placement, whether they want to go back into education or find employment, they are consistently supported by their key worker on their journey.

Providing practical support

Many young people are unprepared for life outside the children's home, and struggle to access education, training and employment. The Hub has strong partnership links to training and education providers, and a Hub worker in a dedicated role helps young people to access opportunities, develop life skills such as cooking and budgeting, and prepare them for the future.

What's changed

Engaging a wider group of professionals

If extra support from any other practitioner is needed, these people are pulled into the team rather than the child being referred to them. This has required bringing key partners on board to work innovatively and collaboratively with us, including the police, who have a permanent team member attached to the Hub.

Instilling a new workforce culture

North Yorks has embraced Restorative Practice and Signs of Safety as evidence-based theories of practice that are adopted across the whole service. This provides a common framework, enabling all staff to talk to one another in the same professional language about the same young people.

Mandatory training in Restorative Practice is given to the whole workforce. This is regularly refreshed, and in-house trainers have been recruited so that training does not have to be bought in. Every member of the team is given a personalised training plan, and this is linked to improving practice and the experiences of young people.

Co-designing with young people

We undertook a consultation with young people that highlighted the importance of a key worker who "sticks with them". The research informed the Hub's integrated model, centred around a key worker who assesses the young person once and structures access to further support. Regular focus groups, chaired by young people with experience of care, make sure the Hub remains true to this principle.

Working in partnership

Strong partnerships have been developed with police, districts, housing providers, health and CAMHS. In addition, council departments have been involved who wouldn't normally be part of this kind of initiative, including finance and legal, to free up permissions and make things happen.

Practitioner-led development

We have maintained a focus on how the new culture is exemplified in adult and professional relationships in addition to professionals' relationships with children and families. At the beginning of development the team held a culture and practice event that focused on getting specialist roles right and working well together. This set the tone for resilient relationships that could stay strong when things got tough.

Thinking differently about value for money

Our challenge is to improve young people's safety and stability, reducing vulnerabilities and improving their emotional wellbeing. This will enable them to engage in education, training and work readiness; to reduce criminal activity; and to engage with the services that can best support them to get where they want to go.

While costs for new bespoke placements are initially high, these are offset by a decrease in costs as adolescents are able to drop down into more stable foster placements. Rapid, intensive responses are expensive but are used for short amounts of time to facilitate slow, managed and more sustainable moves.

Creating flexibility to do things differently

A variety of accommodation types are offered by the Hub to meet and flex to the needs of each individual young person. Genuinely bespoke placements have been developed by thinking differently about who, where and when placements can be provided. This includes those traditionally used for holiday or education purposes, which has necessitated an exemption from Ofsted. Flexibility of residential staff has been supported by using zero-hours contracts, on top of regular salary, to pay for immediate and flexible responses.

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"It provides that essential consistency: a trusting relationship that sticks with them no matter how they move through care."

Pete Dwyer, Corporate Director of Children and Young People's Service, North Yorkshire County Council

The importance of consistency

Young people can struggle to form new relationships once support from a children's home has ended. The Hub puts a strong emphasis on positive relationships that are consistent throughout the young person's journey and that, in turn, gives them the confidence and skills to form new relationships.

There is positive feedback on how workers are sticking with young people as they move on from No Wrong Door. This provides the young person with reassurance that they will receive the same support in future, and allows them to build a relationship in the knowledge that it will not be withdrawn suddenly.

Setting a clear purpose

The purpose of our services for adolescents are firmly around permanence in a safe family setting and not permanence in a children's home. This means that outcomes for services for adolescents have to combine both safety in the short term and wellbeing in the long term into adulthood.

Reducing the number of beds in children's homes has released funds to redeploy into the Hub, and to invest in children's home managers who can shape the culture of their teams.

Reclaiming professional expertise

A 'lightbulb' moment occurred to social workers early on in the process that their roles had become one of monitoring, assessing and signposting rather than doing restorative work with families. No Wrong Door has allowed - and challenged - social workers to reclaim their professional expertise.

Viewing the cohort differently

We have moved away from dedicated specialisms - CSE or gangs, for example - and have taken the view that, as all adolescents are vulnerable to all of these factors, there should be one central team for all vulnerable adolescents.

Uncovering unmet need

The use of speech and language therapists has played a bigger role than the team was expecting, with a very high number of undiagnosed learning difficulties uncovered in children who had not been assessed or had been waiting for an assessment. These therapists have been paid for in part by the pupil premium.

Supporting the system to refer

Over 85% of all current cases are now No Wrong Door referrals. Occupancy levels at the Hubs average at 44.4%, indicating success in reducing the need for residential care while increasing capacity for edge of care work.

Using data to bring partners on board

A new Performance and Intelligence Officer post has resulted in a step change in the volume and quality of data about the practice. There is now a tracker in place that tracks child level data. There has been strong engagement with the Police Supervisors who manage the officers seconded to the No Wrong Door team.

In one example, the team positively influenced the police view of a family (a mother and her teenage son), shifting this away from seeing the family as perpetrators to seeing them as the victims of crime: a vulnerable adult and young person exploited by criminal gangs.

The Hub team has also influenced the use of police bail conditions, for example in a case where a young person was excluded from his mother's home. This data has indicated that the NWD model has the potential to significantly reduce costs for the police service. NY Police now directly fund the NWD Officer Roles.

Building the evidence and business case

An evaluation of the 12 month pilot project revealed that 86% of adolescents remained at home through this successful out-of-care support, with reductions in remands and crisis presentations. In the 12 months to the end of March 2016, just one new out-of-authority placement was used.

On an annual basis it is anticipated that the Hubs will work with approximately 60 of our hardest to engage young people in placements, up to 200 young people on the edge of care, 250 young people on aspirational activities and 50 young people placed in accommodation through our homelessness pathway.

Prior to implementing the No Wrong Door model we ensured that effective project management arrangements were in place to support the delivery of the project. This included strong governance arrangements with our key partners to promote and authorise an innovative environment to mitigate risks and keep each individual organisation informed of progress and key messages.

The North Yorkshire team is refining the model and developing a framework and business case, both to mainstream the model in North Yorkshire and for implementation in other local authorities.

Personal stories

Stories from young people

"It's much better than I thought it would be. I have a key-worker. I can't think of anything they could do better, I can talk to any of the staff if I need to." Said to an Ofsted inspector regarding what the young person thought of the service.

"You can choose meals and take turns in preparing them, staff will help you, for all of us to share."

Said to an Ofsted inspector regarding young people's involvement in the home and preparing for independence.

"The best thing they do here is leave me alone for five minutes when I get wound up. Then they come and talk, they definitely help you." Said in relation to staff's support for the young person when they feel upset and angry.

"Staff go looking for you if you go missing." Said to an Ofsted inspector regarding feeling safe and cared for.

"Knowing that the staff will be there after I have turned 18 makes a big difference and I know they will be because I have seen it happen with others." Said in a young person's focus group about what they liked most about No Wrong Door.

"It's ok mum, it's different to normal fostering because it's [name] and I know him already so I am happy."

Said by a young person to their birth parent stating why they were comfortable going into a NWD Hub Community Family when they had previously been resistant to foster care. Having a relationship with the carer prior to placement really made the difference.

Clinical Psychologist working as the NWD Life Coach

"Having worked in several CAMHS and adult services I have seen how some of the most vulnerable people do not meet the criteria for access to mental health services, yet they experience painful levels of emotional distress. These young people continually fall into a gap in services, meaning that often no psychological support is provided."

However, while it is vital for these young people to receive psychological input I also believe that it can be entirely inappropriate for vulnerable young people to be invited to mental health services in order to talk about their thoughts and feelings. Not only because this clinic approach doesn't work for our young people, but also because being a user of mental health services can provide a narrative that you are 'mentally unwell' and that there must be something 'wrong' with you. In fact many of the vulnerable young people I have worked with are actually experiencing very normal emotional and cognitive reactions to some very abusive and traumatic experiences, therefore while their emotional and cognitive experiences can cause a great deal of suffering they are also very normal reactions to a set of traumatic life events. If we have any hope of helping these young people we need to deliver services in a way that will not further reinforce their perceptions of themselves as being a 'problem', 'not right', 'unwell', or in any way 'responsible' for what they have experienced."

This, I believe, fits with the 'embedded' approach we provide within No Wrong Door. I have to admit that initially being embedded in the home felt out of my comfort zone and made me a little uneasy, but actually has proven to be the most effective way to reach these vulnerable young people."