

Making transitions work – young people’s film

This is a written version of what the people in the film are saying.

A film by young people for the 2007 Enquire conference Making transitions work.

[First person]

My issues with education was: when I got took into care, everybody knew that I’d been took into care before I’d even got a chance to tell anybody myself, which meant I was stigmatised, which meant my work and my behaviour started to go downhill, which meant the teachers started to treat me differently. They did it with all best intentions, but in the long run it actually made things worse. So then I decided, “Why should I bother with my education? Nobody else seems to, so why should I?”

I think communication would be a really good solution for the problems I had when I was in care. Because, if they came to me and actually asked me what I felt that I needed to help me go on in my education and everything else, I’d have told them, instead of going about asking the workers that don’t actually know me as well as I know myself. Then they’d have got what I needed ‘cos I’d have told them. So, I think it’s a really good idea to have maybe a counsellor, a school counsellor in the school who you can go and speak to if you’ve got any problems whatsoever. And you can go and speak to with full confidentiality, knowing that they’re actually going to listen to you and take what you’re saying on board, and not just brush you off like everybody else.

If teachers actually listened to what we were saying then we wouldn’t have half the problems that we do have in the education system, because young people would actually be getting the support they need, because they’re getting listened to. And it would make their life so much easier in the education system.

[Second person]

My issues with education are that: if people don’t get the help that they need, then they feel they are stuck in a rut, which causes them problems later on down the line; getting moved from time to time, having to keep starting new school work over and over again, going backwards and forwards – that’s a serious issue; communication between everyone involved – that’s teachers, parents, guardians, social workers all need to be involved with communication so, any problems arising, everybody knows what they are. My issue with it is that I didn’t learn anything from school – all my knowledge that I have is from books, from TV and my own life experience. There’s nothing worse than being treated differently by the teacher (getting preferential treatment) as it leads to bullying, which is stigma, being called teacher’s pet.

My solutions are: make good practice get passed around – if it’s working well in one school or one educational place (a college or whatever) it should be passed around; there needs to be communication, like I said communication with everyone who’s involved with the young person; and, it’s a good idea to have a counsellor or a specific teacher who the young person can speak to in order to get their problems off their chest.

If I was to wake up tomorrow and a miracle had happened in the education system, it would be that: there is positive feedback to the parents, to the child or young person; that teachers would have a report sent to the parents letting them know how well the young person is doing – keeping

them up-to-date with what they are actually doing at school; teachers would speak to the young person on a level where they both understand where they're coming from.

In the long term, the young person would get more qualifications, their health would be better (physical and mental), there would be less bullying, the stigma wouldn't be there, there would be a fall in crime and they are more likely to avoid drugs and situations like that.

[Three people having a conversation]

- So, what's it like when you've got to move to a new school?
- It's embarrassing, 'cos you dinnae ken anybody.
- You need to start over again – meet new friends.

- And what about the schoolwork?
- You've got to catch up with it all – you've got to catch up with schoolwork.
- You've got different books and that, so you might have to start over on some things again.
- It might be completely different work.

- What could a school do to help someone who'd just arrived?
- Welcome them.
- Give them a buddy.
- A buddy the same age so they can make friends.

- And what would the buddy do?
- Show them about. Help them find their way. Maybe be their mate.

- How could schools make sure that you've got someone to talk to when you need to?
- Have a teacher for a group of folk.
- But, it's got to be somebody you ken well.
- And someone that's not going to be busy all the time – you can go to whenever you need them.
- And you can do some fun stuff with them.

- I cannae wait 'til I leave school, but you've got to look for a job.
- What could schools do to help you get ready to leave?
- It would be good if teachers helped you fill in application forms and gave you more work experience than what you get the now.
- I think there should be more choice of subjects, like painting and decorating and hairdressing, and I think 3rd years should be going to college 1 day a week so they can get into the habit of college.
- I think there should be shorter classes so that you can get more subjects in a day.

- How do you want teachers to treat you as you get older at school?
- I think they should treat you as more of an adult; dinnae order you to do stuff – just ask you, like a normal person.

[Sixth person]

I am a 3rd year pupil at an Angus secondary school, and I have dyslexia, which causes me to have problems with writing, spelling and, most especially, maths. On top of this, I find great difficulty in

organising my school work and even greater problems in remembering and using all the information in my head.

Despite telling my teachers every year that I'm dyslexic, I still find that I'm placed in distressing situations. For example, having to swap completed test papers with a classmate to mark. Recently I got 1 out of 45 in a maths test. It led to me being bullied. Reading out loud in class and being looked at by everyone makes my mind go blank and the words on the page appear to run into each other, making no sense at all.

No assistance or extra time to complete homework or exams. No equipment, like a laptop, to help with homework and revision at home. I get 2 periods of learning support classes per week - great, but not nearly enough.

I now have an IEP, at the request of me and my Mum. Unfortunately I was not included in its setting up. I would have appreciated being included in the process. Finding out about Enquire and the work they do has helped me and my family greatly. I know my rights and my responsibilities. I know how to ask for help. Thank you.

The end

These young people spoke about their own experiences, opinions and ideas to help schools support other young people.

Enquire would like to say thank you to the young people, and to the people who supported them to take part.

You can contact Enquire

- on the helpline 0845 123 2303
- email info@enquire.org.uk
- textphone 0131 222 2439
- or find out more online at www.enquire.org.uk