Getting A Life:
Professional views of its effectiveness and employment outcomes

Dr. Stephen Beyer
Dr. Axel Kaehne

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INTRODUCTION

Government policy is to achieve greater social inclusion for people with disabilities and it has promoted paid employment as one way of achieving this. Their approach to getting more young people into employment has been to ask young people to stay at school longer, and to provide a wider range of options for training and qualification. This has in effect been the strategy for young people with learning disabilities, with many transitioning from school to college. In theory, people with learning disabilities can then access the WORK CHOICES programme, the Access to Work programme, and the WORK programme after further education to enter employment. In some areas people with learning disabilities can access a supported employment agency provided through the local authority or voluntary sector to enter paid work. However, the general policy of pursuing further education and training post-16, along with provision of disability employment support programmes, has not redressed the problem of unemployment for people with learning disabilities. The percentage of people with learning disabilities in paid work is estimated at between 6.4% and 17% compared to a figure of 48% of the general disabled population.

Getting A Life (GAL) was set up to investigate the barriers to employment faced by young learning disabled people and to report to government. It had the support of the Departments of Health, Work and Pensions, Children Schools and Families and Business, Innovation and Skills and with additional support from the Office of Disability Issues. It formed a part of the wider cross government employment strategies *Working towards Independence*, *Valuing People Now* and *Valuing Employment Now*, all of which pursued the goal of improving life for people with learning disabilities. GAL set out to demonstrate the nature and extent of obstacles to transition from education to adult life and employment, but also had as a component:

"…raising aspirations, making changes to the system and creating a clear path to paid employment."[1]

Its stated aims were to:

- Find and share new ways of working at each site so that young people with learning disabilities can leave school, get paid employment and have equal life opportunities
- Explore how to use person-centred planning to bring together the assessment and funding streams from four different national and local policy areas: Connexions and post-16 education; Job Centre Plus (including the New Deal at the time and Access to Work); Adult social care assessment and day service funding;
- Bring these processes together to help young people use public resources in different ways to get the outcomes they want.
- Inform government about what local areas can achieve and what needed to change at a regional, national and/or policy level.

Getting a Life ran from April 2008 to the end of March 2011.

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[1] http://www.gettingalife.org.uk/

THE GETTING A LIFE INTERVENTION

The GAL project developed a model of the actions needed in each year of statutory transition (from 14-leaver year) through consultation with its project partners and experts in the field to deliver its aims:

- to find and share new ways of working at each site so that young people with learning disabilities can leave school, get paid employment and have equal life opportunities
- to explore how to use person-centred planning to bring together the assessment and funding streams from four different national and local policy areas

GAL had a focus on employment following the introduction of the *Valuing Employment Now*[2] policy. Figure 1 summarises GAL's employment pathway that brings together a number of parallel processes: person-centred transition planning; personalisation; supported employment; the curriculum; strategic planning and commissioning (there are others representing other pathways). These are organised into actions in each year of the statutory transition process. These may be summarised as follows:

Annual reviews and employment
Year 9: Person-centred Reviews (PCR) were introduced to fulfil and enhance the requirement of the Code of Practice to carry out a review of the young person's Statement of SEN and to draw up and subsequently review their "transition plan." This stage provides an opportunity for the young person to begin to take control of the planning process with support from their family and the other people who know them well. A trained facilitator was to be put in place for the review meetings, the right people were to included alongside the young person and the family, and the meeting was to address a wide range of questions to find out about the person, their support needs and what they want to do now and in the future. The PCR was to consider how year 10 work experience would be organised, how the young person's career progressed, and how a supported employment agency could help. It would also discuss curriculum options to support this path, and provide any information needed on direct payments and personal budgets as support options and welfare benefit.

Year 10: In this year the young person should be helped to develop a job and career plan using the early vocational profiling or discovery stages of supported employment. The curriculum was then to be modified if necessary to help the young person to learn the things they need for their work experience and beyond. Work experience would be offered in this year linked to the young person's interests and would be community-based. A clear support plan would be put in place for this. Part-time employment and Saturday jobs were to be explored and a discussion take place on what funding streams might be available to support employment. Discussion on welfare benefits, housing options and advocacy would also take place.

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[2] Getting a Life Project (2010) *The Pathway into Employment.* Available at:
http://www.gettingalife.org.uk/newimages/Into%20work%20-%20transition%20planning.pdf

Year 11: In the last compulsory year of education plans for next steps were to be developed. Feedback from work experience would be built upon, with skills being reinforced in the curriculum and the career plan developed further. Plans for on-going work experience and part-time employment would also be made.
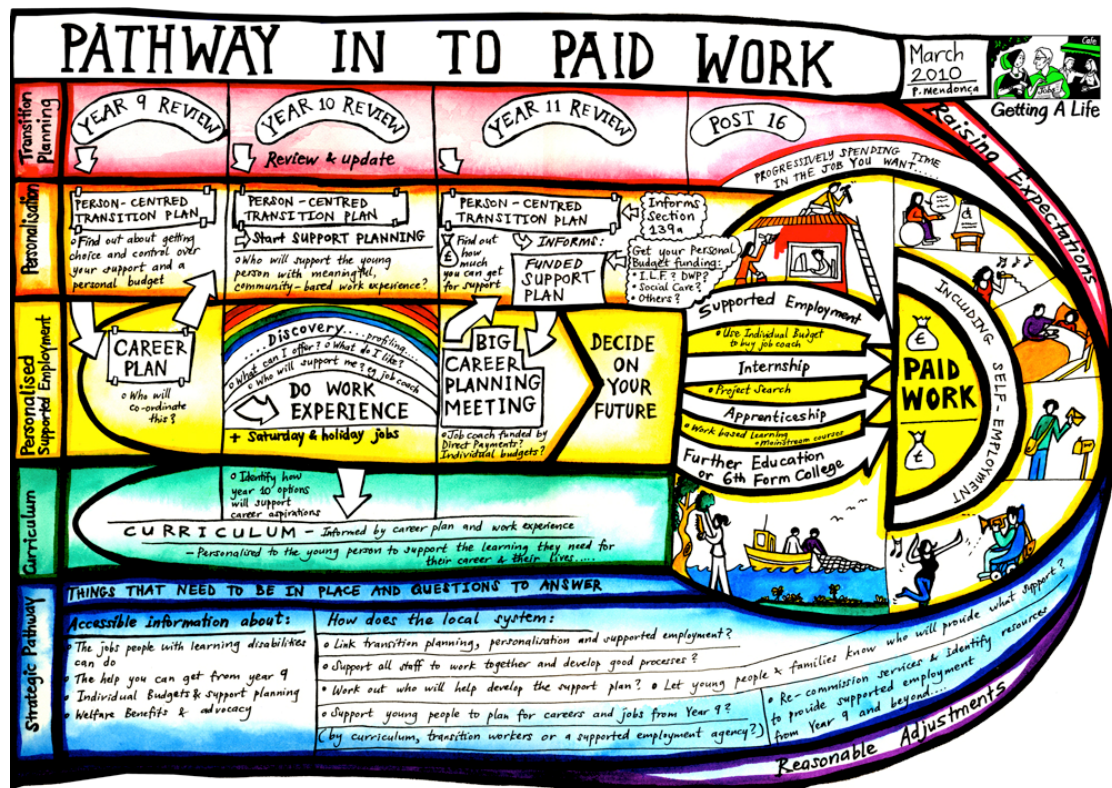
Figure 1: Getting A Life Employment Programme

The family and others who know the young person well and those who have been supporting them in their work experience and/or part time employment would plan the best route into employment. A *"Big Career Planning Meeting"* would be held and the results used to plan career choices. If opting for college, a Section 139a assessment would be completed in order to access post-16 education resources. This assessment used the information from the person-centred transition plan and set out the young person's aspirations for a job or their career plan. It also would take account of the young person's work experience to date. This was to ensure that the young person's post-16 education or training programme was explicitly planned to deliver the young person's plan for employment. A support plan should be put in place if the young person was using a personal budget. If leaving and going into a job, young people would be spending more time in a target job before they left school.

Post-16: In this phase the young person would have various options:
- staying at school
- entering a college
- going into employment with supported employment or the help of a government programme (if it meets their needs
- taking up a training option such as work-based training, Project Search or an Apprenticeship.

In this phase, services, the curriculum, personalisation and supported employment would ideally continue to work together to deliver a coherent service as the young person moved into adulthood and full-time paid employment. Young people who remained in education would ideally have courses that were explicitly linked to a career or job outcome. Again, in the GAL ideal plan, there would be a clear plan to ensure that the young person received the right support and funding at each stage to maximise the chance of employment.

Interventions to support the employment pathway
GAL identified a cohort of young people in each area (target 30) to focus its work on. Nationally, this represented young people in special school, mainstream school, FE college, and some older people who had recently left education. To deliver its *"Employment Pathway"* GAL put in place a number of sub-programmes of work across 12 pilot areas:

Joint planning arrangements: In each local pilot area a multi-agency steering group was convened to deliver GAL. Membership varied in each area but aimed to bring together children's and adult's social services, schools, colleges, Connexions, Jobcentre Plus, local voluntary sector vocational and employment providers.

Person-centred Review (PCR) training: Person-centred planning was at the heart of the GAL approach. All pilot areas were provided with external training on PCR for schools, relevant professionals and families from a consistent source (Helen Sanderson and Associates). Colleges in the pilot areas also received training tailored to their needs with the assistance of the National Institute for Adult and Continuing Education.

Person-centred Assessment training: Two-day workshops were also offered on person-centred assessment for those carrying out assessments with the GAL cohort of young people. The course explored how assessments contributed to young people's PCRs and how person-centred approaches could influence the effectiveness of assessment.

Leadership Programme: A programme of events for young people and for families was organised to develop awareness of all aspects of transition, person-centred planning, and in particular employment. Families and young people considered their own lives and the support they need to achieve what they want. The programme sought to provide an independent and knowledgeable voice in the planning process alongside any professional voice.

Personal Budgets and Direct Payments: Leadership workshops were a mechanism for exploring personal budgets and how they might be used to *"deliver people's transition plans."* Materials and the whole thrust of local GAL planning and consultancy sought to promote consideration of, and provisional budgeting for, personal budgets in support of PCRs in transition.

Employment /Self-Employment workshops: All sites were provided with training in the areas of supported employment and self-employment through experienced practitioners. The approach included the Customised Employment approach, an

intensive version of the supported employment process.[3] In Norfolk, a link was made between GAL and a Project Search employment pilot.[4]

Inclusion Web: The Inclusion Web was a resource to provide a Rich Picture of the young person's life, combining qualitative, quantitative and graphic aspects into a summary chart. It was introduced though a workshop in some areas to help people to focus on social networks as a part of person-centred planning.

Consultancy: The central GAL team provided workshops for pilot site co-ordinators and key staff to develop practice. The GAL co-directors attended and facilitated meetings with all areas to plan and monitor progress. A significant amount of problem solving and planning was carried out with individual sites, the GAL team and their consultants.

Development of materials: The GAL team developed self-evaluation materials for pilot sites early in the project, along with supporting materials for person-centred planning. Materials to support PCR were also developed and provided to pilot areas.

Identification of structural barriers: After training and delivery of Person-centred Reviews in pilot areas, workshops were held in each area to review the content of PCRs and the issues that emerged in trying to fulfil the transition plans coming out of reviews. The GAL team facilitated these reviews in each area.

Employment as an outcome
While GAL set out to investigate and demonstrate the nature and extent of the barriers to employment faced by young learning disabled people, GAL also sought to increase the number of young people with learning disabilities entering paid employment by helping local teams to overcome them.

AIMS OF THIS PAPER

The Welsh Centre for Learning Disabilities was commissioned to evaluate the GAL initiative. As a part of a wider evaluation of the GAL initiative, this paper sets out an analysis of:

1. the views of professionals involved in the delivery of GAL of its strengths and weaknesses and what it has achieved
2. the extent to which GAL helped more people with learning disabilities to enter paid employment than those without the intervention

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[3] Callahan, M. (2004). *Fact Sheet on Customized Employment*. At www.t-tap.org
[4] http://odi.dwp.gov.uk/odi-projects/jobs-for-people-with-learning-disabilities/project-search.php

METHODOLOGY

Web survey of professional views

To explore the answer to question 1, we designed a web survey of staff from a range of professional backgrounds working in each of the 12 GAL pilot areas. All staff members were invited to take part via email from the person co-ordinating the GAL initiative in their area and from the Welsh Centre for Learning Disabilities. The survey was held on the secure Bristol Online Survey (BOS) system. The questionnaire was organised into 25 questions covering the following areas:

- Descriptive data on the respondents
- Views on transition planning and the impact of person-centred review
- Views on assessment for transition planning
- Views of funding of transition plan goals
- Views on employment as a transition option in their area

A list of 180 professionals with some connection to the GAL project was used as the basis for the survey based on the 12 areas. Two further reminders were issued following the original request to take part. Respondents completed the survey online anonymously, apart from information on role and agency.

Match control study of GAL education leavers

In order to answer research question 2 we set out to compare the percentage of young people from the GAL cohort who left education and gained paid employment with an equivalent group of leavers outside of the GAL programme. Forty-eight leavers were identified by the GAL programme in consultation with the pilot sites. Information was available on the age, gender, place of education and whether the person had a Statement of SEN for all the GAL leavers. The placement of each person at July 2010 was determined by the GAL team.

A Connexions area in the North East of England served as a comparison area. An un-named list of the GAL leavers was provided to the Connexions team organised by age, gender, SEN Statement status and place of education. A range of people were identified as having these characteristics. Where more than one person was identified as a comparison, one person was selected at random from the sub-list. When the list was complete, the placement of each person after leaving education in 2010 or 2009 was determined based on Connexions destination survey of SEN clients. In both the GAL and the comparison sample, the destination categories used by Connexions were used to classify post-education placement:

- Education
- Employment P/T (below 16 hours p.w.)
- Employment F/T (above 16 hours p.w.)
- Personal Development Opportunities (includes day centres, volunteering)
- NEET (person not available)
- NEET (unemployed)
- Other (e.g. person moved out of area)

- Training/apprenticeship
- Work experience

Hours worked by the GAL cohort were not available from the local teams. Hours worked met the NI 146 criteria of "1 hour or more." The destinations of the two groups were compared using Chi-square test to establish whether a significant difference existed.

Ethical approval
The web survey of professionals received ethical approval from the Research Ethics Committee in Wales along with other sub-studies in the GAL research (REC Reference Number: 10/MREC09/38).

RESULTS

Web survey of professional views
Description of survey respondents
Forty-five professionals responded to the web survey, a response rate of 25%. Figure 2 shows the professional background of the respondents. They came from a full range of perspectives with teachers and employment workers being the most, and careers advisors, the least represented. A number of managers responded including from health, a transitions manager, a programme manager from a voluntary organisation, and social services team managers.
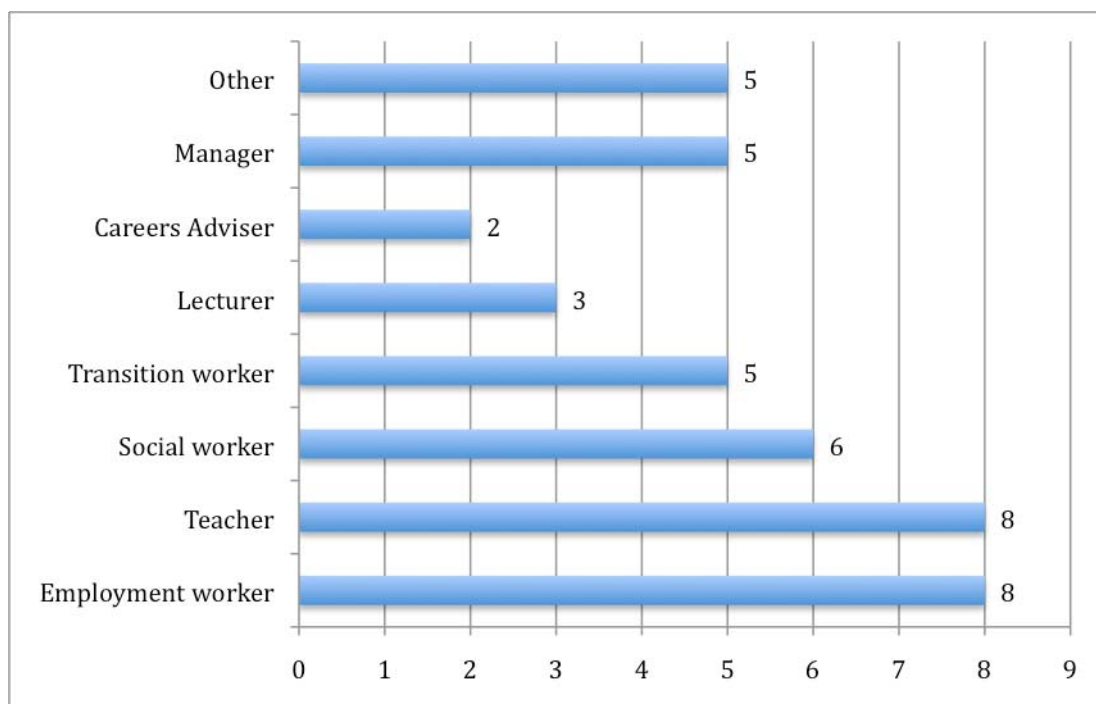
Figure 2: Background of professional respondents

Linked to the roles, Figure 3 shows the number of agencies involved in providing responses.
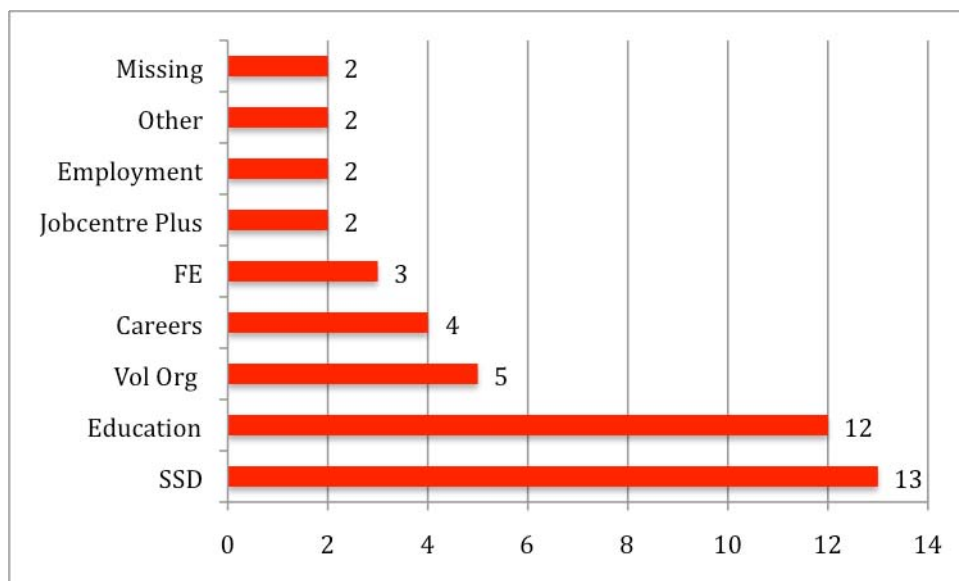
Figure 3: Agency of respondents

Social services and education were most represented in line with the major responsibilities in transition planning. Health perspectives were absent.

Involvement in GAL

We asked respondents about their involvement with GAL. These fell into four primary categories. A number of people had been involved in GAL through the introduction of person-centred reviews (PCRs):

"...the GAL project has given me an opportunity to participate in Person-centred Transition Review training which again has been very useful in my job role. The Gal Project has introduced me to me to a range of other professionals working with young people with learning disabilities." (Teacher)

"As a school representative I was able to report on the running of Person Centered Reviews in our school. I was also involved in identifying pathways for progression." (Teacher)

"Support to FE staff on the GAL site by running person-centred review courses specifically developed for staff working in the post-16 education and skills sector." (Lecturer).

"Direct work with young people including facilitating Person Centred Reviews, undertaking a one page plan project in one of local schools ands general support at consultation exercises." (Connexions Personal Advisor)

"Introducing and supporting person centred approaches and direct work with families. Facilitating person centred reviews in schools."(Lead Officer for Quality and Service Development)

A second form of involvement came through sitting on boards concerned with transition and GAL's intervention, or a management involvement:

"Active member of an active project board attempting to generate new ideas and ways of working." (Teacher)

"As a college manager, and a member of the GAL board." (Lecturer)

A third area was basic casework with young people undergoing transition planning.

"As a social worker I work with young people up to the age of 18/19 and so as they reach the transition age from 14 we need to be planning with their carers for the future." (Social Worker).

A final area of involvement was through developing employment pathways:

"Management / facilitation role regarding employment support and promotion of presumption of employment." (Employment Worker)

"I coach customers in their jobs." (Employment Worker)

The impact of PCRs

We asked respondents to comment on the impact that PCRs had made in their area. Figures 4-12 show a summary of their responses. A majority of respondents (61%) agreed that more people were getting person-centred reviews since GAL began, indicating that a major plank of the GAL intervention was being delivered (Fig 4) Again, a majority (56%) felt that these PCRs were of good quality (Fig 5). A majority (57%) felt that the PCRs were leading to different goals from the previous type of transition planning event (Fig 6). This is important, as previous approaches have been criticised for too often leading to process goals being set rather than life goals.
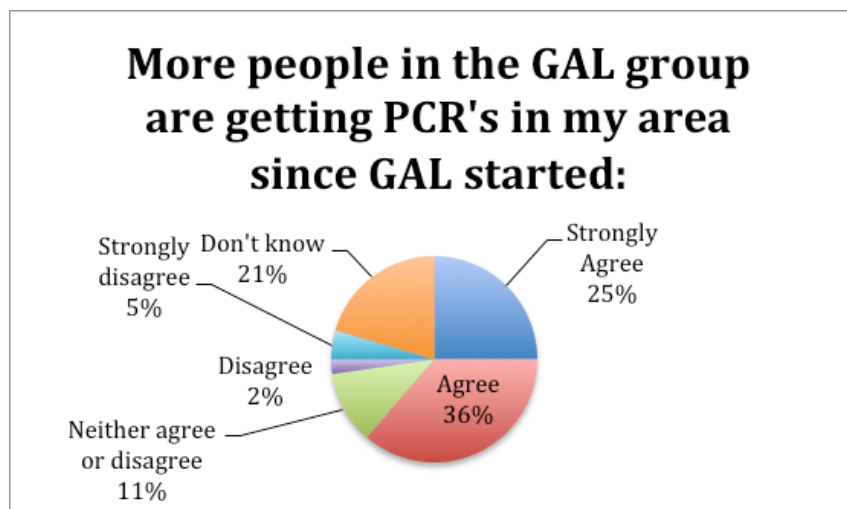
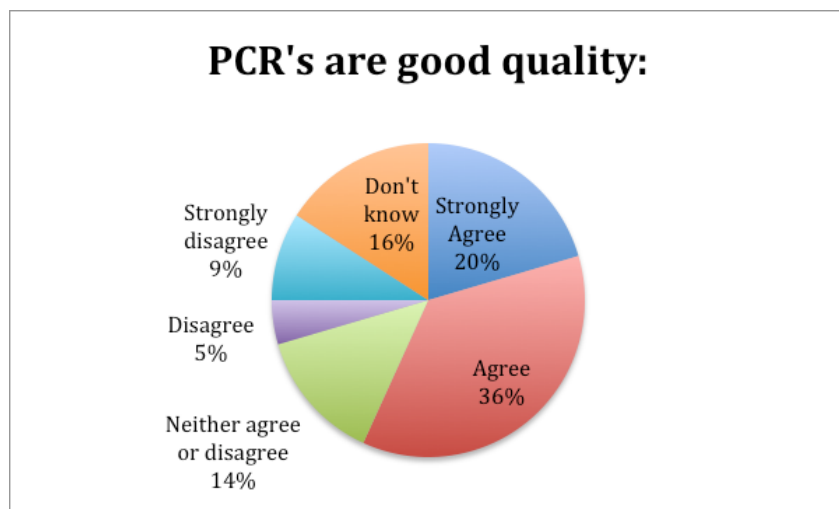**Figure 4: Increased use of PCRs since GAL began**
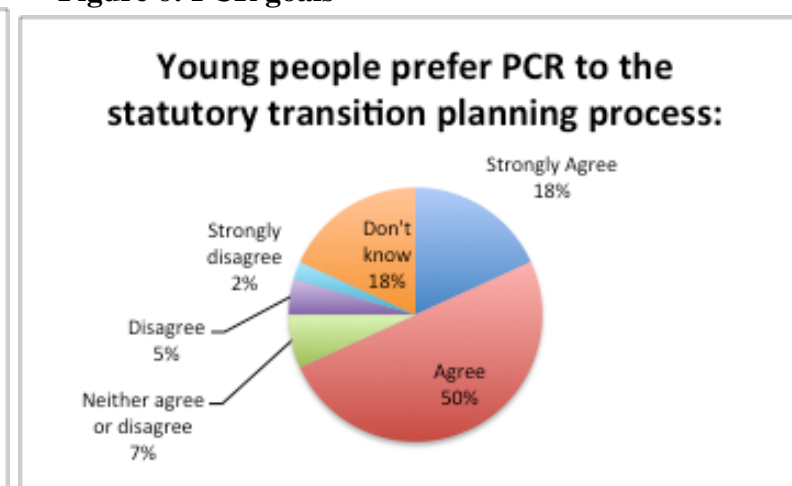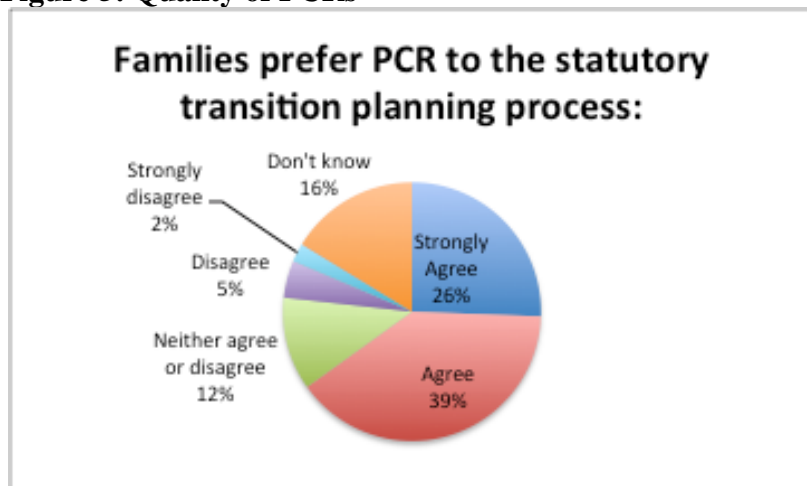
Figure 5: Quality of PCRs

Figure 6: PCR goals

Figure 7: Family preference for PCR

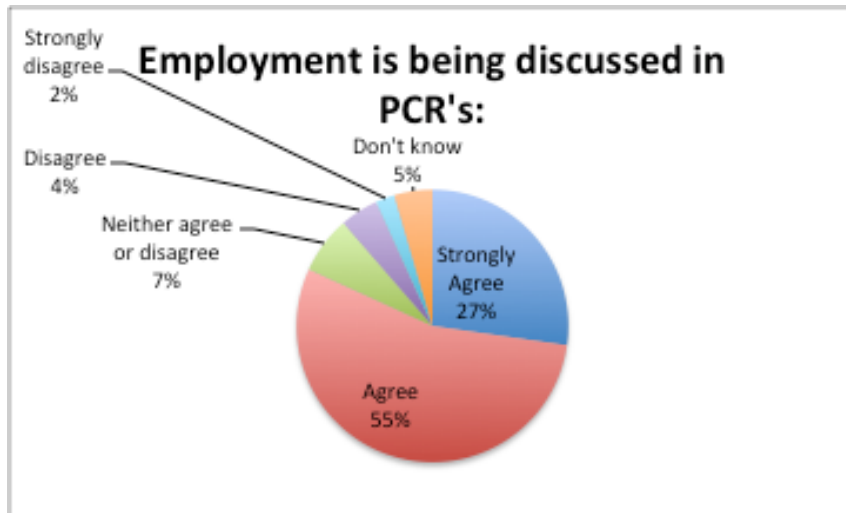**Figure 8: Young people's preference for PC**
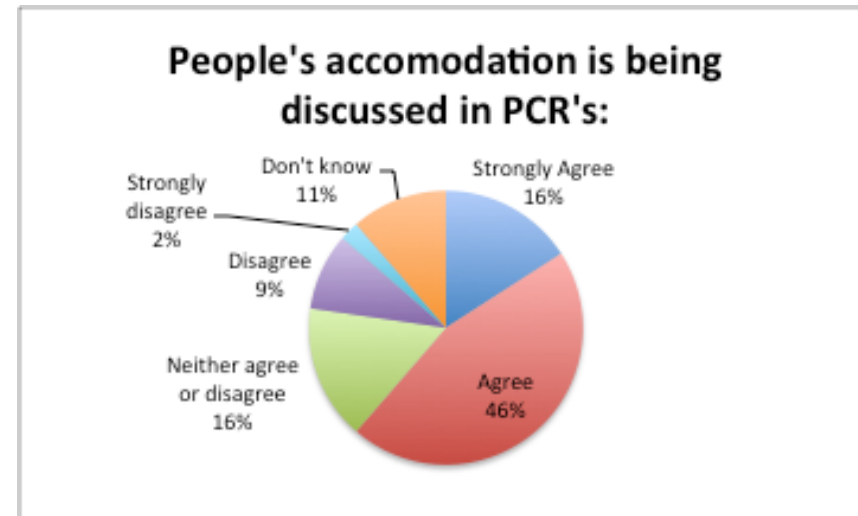
Figure 9: Employment in PCRs

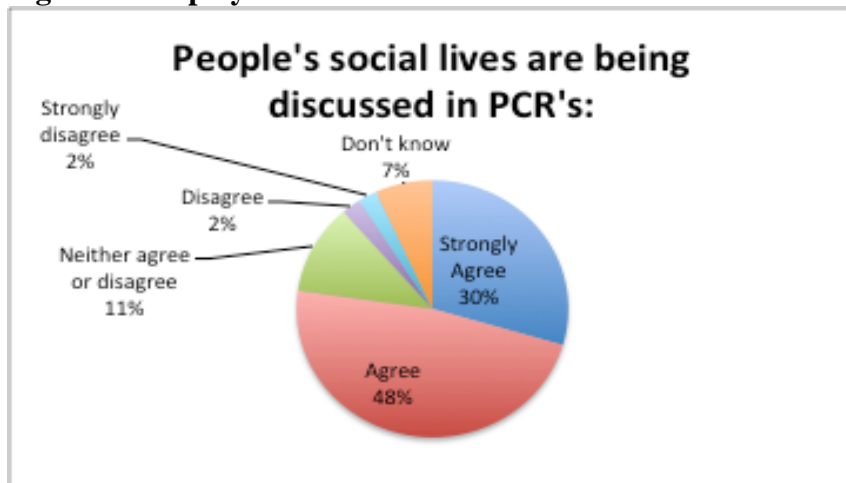**Figure 10: Accommodation in PCRs**

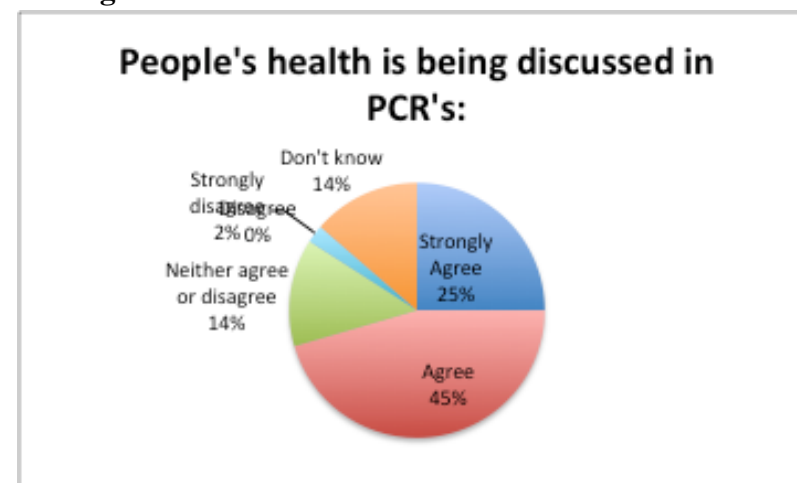**Figure 11: Social lives in PCRs**

Figure 12: Health in PCRs

A majority (65%) of families were reported to prefer PCR formats to the previous statutory transition planning events (Fig 7) as well as a majority (68%) of young people (Fig 8).

When asked about the content of PCRs, the majority of respondents agreed that the main areas of life were being addressed in PCRs. This included employment (82%) (the focus of GAL in its main phase of work) (Figure 9), people's accommodation needs (62%)(Fig 10), their social networks (78%)(Fig 11) and their health (70%)(Fig 12). Clearly the introduction of PCRs had been seen as positive in many respects by a majority of professionals involved.

In each case there were a significant number of people who reported not knowing much about the content of PCRs, ranging from 21% in relation to there being more PCRs with GAL to 5% in relation to employment. This highlights the on-going need for staff not directly involved in transition planning meetings to be aware of the context that goal setting is taking place within to help shape a consistent approach to personalised services.

Outcomes of PCRs
We went on to ask respondents *"What outcomes, if any, are you seeing for young people from the use of PCR in transition planning?"* While there were few reports of life changing experiences at this stage, the responses from professionals were encouraging and wide ranging in the type of outcome mentioned. They could be ordered into the following themes:

Increased involvement of families and young people: Professionals did see people becoming more involved in the transition planning process:

> *"Students having a greater sense of ownership in planning both short and longer term."* (Teacher)

> *"They are much more involved in the planning of their future/lives. They are more confident about making decisions."* (Teacher)

> *"People see that speaking up for themselves works as they are listened to and their plans achieved."* (Service Developer)

> *"In the main the outcomes have been similar although we have seen an increase in provision options and a larger awareness in parents of what their son/daughter can do."*(Transition Worker)

Development of confidence or skills through taking part in PCRs: There were a number of reports of people deriving benefit directly from taking part in the process*:*

> "For a lot of young people with Aspergers and ASD, it is difficult to be in the lime *light, and so in PCRs they are developing their skills in having the focus on them and in becoming a key person with a voice and views." (Social Worker)*

> *"People see that speaking up for themselves works as they are listened to and their plans achieved." (Service Developer)*

Concrete experiences delivered as a result of PCRs: There were some reports that people were being provided with new experiences as a result of PCR*:*

> *"That they have been able to access employment, or travel training, or that decisions they want to make are being listened to." (Employment Worker)*

> *"Some people do achieve placements." (Employment Worker)*

> *"Referrals to YSEP and Project Search, more social activities, more requests for Direct Payments." (Transition Worker)*

> *"A few examples of social lives/activity being enhanced - as long as this via a voluntary cost free agency." (Transition Worker)*

> *"Housing options -local, work experience, paid work." (Programme manager)*

> *"Some greater clarity about what [young people] are aiming for and some external work experience set up mainly by parents." (Social Worker)*

There were some notable differences in reports from different perspectives, arguably because of their position in relation to the PCR process. Teachers generally highlighted positive participation in PCR, whereas Transition Workers and Social Workers concentrated more on changes in activity and experience.

We went on to explore employment outcomes specifically, asking *"What kind of employment goals, if any, are you seeing emerge from PCR's?"* Again, a number of themes emerged from people's open ended comments:

Delivery of work experience and jobs: There were a number of reports of people setting goals in the areas of getting work experience and employment:

> *"Work experience, Sat Jobs and paid work." (Teacher)*

> *"Much better work experience, more work experience, more options for supported employment." (Teacher)*

> *"Part time work, CVs, work experience (Social Worker. Somerset).*
> *Paid employment in new areas." (Social Worker)*

> *"Plans will now state specific jobs which a young person is interested in or suggest post 19 training which may help towards future employment." (Senior Manager)*

> *"Four pupils have taken up employment opportunities as a result of GAL." (Project manager)*

> *"Travel training and independence skills, voluntary work, apprenticeships and paid work." (Employment Worker)*

Empowering people to act on employment goals: The GAL intervention did make people more aware of employment as a possibility and help people to find ways to act on it:

> *"The individual planning that was undertaken as part of the leadership programme in four of the sites- did set employment goals. People thought about their dream jobs and goals were set to get the young person thinking about work. For example, a few families helped the young person in obtaining work tasters for the long summer holidays, using direct payments to get support. Another young man (aged 15) began working in a local hairdressing salon for an hour per week after school. The mother of one young lady with quite complex needs found work experience for her daughter to do on a weekend and was also going to ask the school to ensure her daughter has work experience at school too (she only found out the school offered this when she met up with other families during the leadership sessions) as she had not been offered this despite being 18 years old." (Social Worker)*

Negative comments about the relevance of employment goals: There were more negative comments about employment as a PCR goal than in previous responses, but these were not linked particularly to any professional group:

> *"None, they have led to false expectations with students' families feeling that a vocation is a possibility when in reality it is v. unlikely." (Lecturer)*

> *"Woolly, ill defined 'blue-sky' ideas (Teacher)*

> *"a) Totally unrealistic unachievable aspirations are generated - requiring considerable moderation or disappointment. b) Parents may shrink back in horror at thought of son /daughter being exposed to the harsh reality of the world of work - major factor here can be fear of loss of long term benefit stream (Service developer)*

It is interesting that these comments seem at odds with the wider experience of staff across professional roles. In general there seems to be a consensus that employment is important and possible, but expectations need to be realistic and manageable. The loss of welfare benefits remains an issue that causes concern, despite significant work within the project at briefing people on a more favourable welfare benefit regime in 2011.[5]

Factors that have helped make PCRs be effective

Figures 13-16 show the results of questions relating to factors that have helped make PCRs effective in people's areas. The provision by GAL of training in PCR techniques from a consistent source was reported to have been a positive factor by 65% of respondents (Fig 13).

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[5] Welfare benefits are under review as we write in summer 2011 and care is needed that changes do not undermine family and young people's confidence that employment can make them better off and secure.

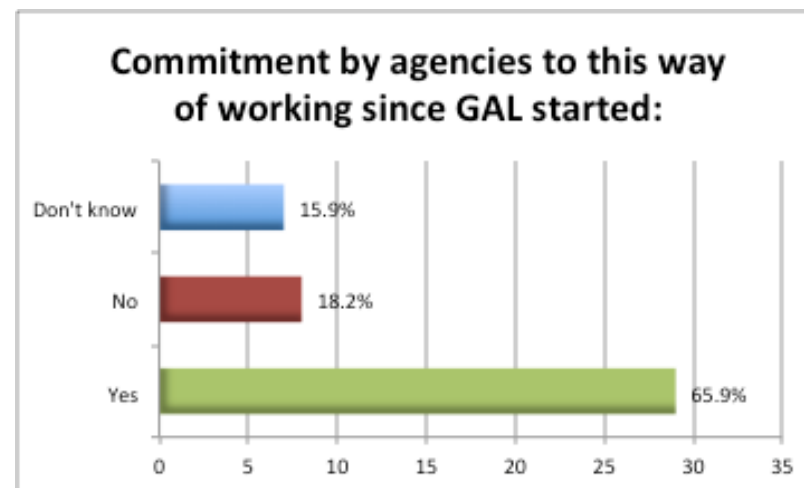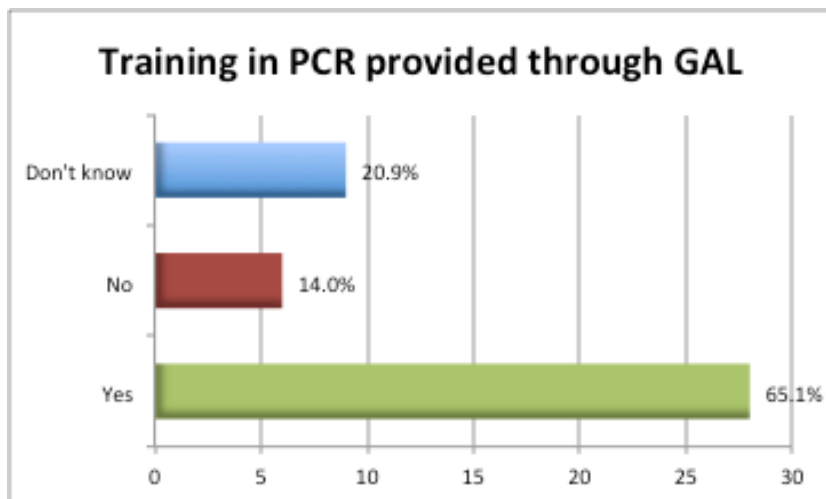**Figure 13: Has training helped PCRs be effective?**

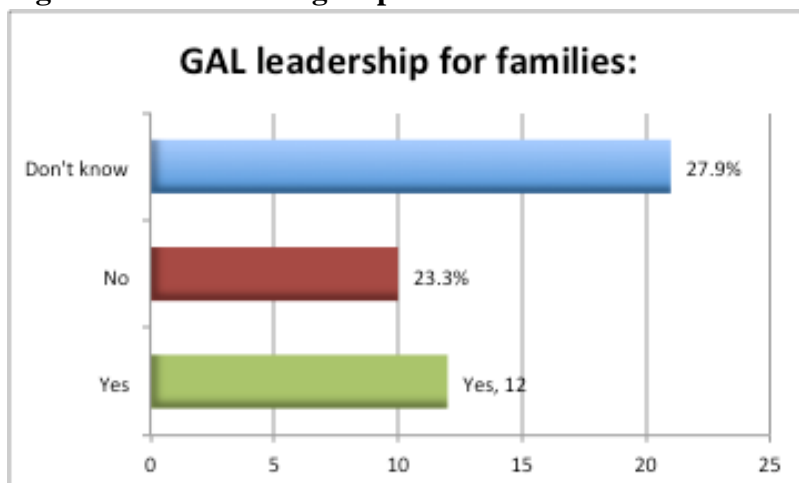**Figure 14: Has agency commitment helped PCRs be effective?**

Figure 15: Has family leadership work helped PCRs be effective?

Figure 16: Has YP leadership work helped PCRs be effective?

GAL did seem to have acted as a catalyst for agencies making a commitment to using PCR, 66% reporting that this had been a positive factor in PCR effectiveness (Fig 14). The leadership programmes for families and young people offered through GAL have had a low profile among professionals with 28% (Fig 15) and 47% (Fig 16) of respondents saying that they did not know about its influence on PCR effectiveness. This is a disappointing result as the programmes had the development of an independent voice for consumers on the quality of transition (and therefore on PCR).

A follow-up study of families using GAL has focussed on the experience of families and young people of the leadership programmes and may be a better source of information on this intervention.

We went on to ask respondents *"Has anything else helped Person-Centred Reviews be effective in your area?* Again a number of additional factors emerged.

The shift in work by schools: A number of respondents mentioned the importance of changes in ways of working by schools as key to getting effective results from PCRs:

> *"Having a clear programme and school being committed- forces other education providers to offer the same." (Social Worker)*

> *"School devoting an extra large amount of time for PCR's for this group." (Teacher)*

> *"School commitment." (Social Worker)*

> *"Schools sharing their experience with other schools to aid in the process." (Transition Worker)*

The availability of other programmes and concrete resources: The National Transition Support Programme did offer local authorities some resource to promote good practice in transition and this played a role in making GAL effective in some areas:

> *"The National Transition Support Programme and SEN HUB." (Lecturer)*

> *"The venues and facilitator are important in making sure that the environment is welcoming, relaxed and also conducive to the approach and methodology of PCRs." (Social Worker)*

> *"Other Transition and PCP initiatives (other than GAL)." (Employment Worker)*

> *"LA funded training for all special schools to receive awareness raising sessions and support with implementation in schools." (Project Manager)*

Enthusiasm and commitment of particular staff to the notion of PCR: Many respondents underlined the importance of staff commitment to the model:

> *"Committed and enthusiastic staff." (Connexions Personal Advisor)*

"Team commitment, working together." (Transition Administrator)

"GAL co-ordinators being pro-active in promoting PC reviews and providing training for connexions and tutors." (Lecturer)

"A very committed and effective GAL co-ordinator who has worked to convince different agencies that PC reviews can work with their systems not against them." (Careers Advisor)

"Wider recognition that PCRs are good practice." (Non-dependent Government Body)

"The commitment of people in local area to make things happen." (Service Developer)

There were a minority of negative comments about the PCR process, some seeing it as overly prescriptive and others seeing it as generally ineffective:

"We have increasingly used the ideas of PCR in own review process, ignoring the 'fluffy' dogma imposed on us, and endeavoured to make the planning process person centered rather than using the PCR model as the new dogma." (Transition Worker)

"Difficult to see any real effectiveness in use of PCR at all." (Social Worker)

Significant barriers to effective PCRs
Figure 17 shows respondents views on barriers to PCR in their area. Clearly a majority (69%) felt there remained significant roadblocks to the PCR process
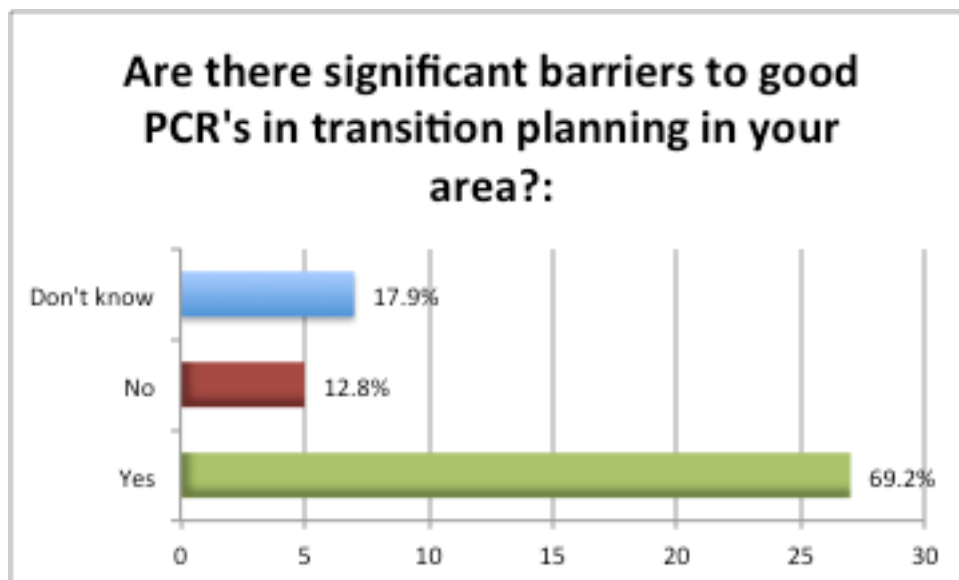
Figure 17: Existence of local barriers to PCRs

We asked people to tell us about these barriers. These fell into five categories:

A remaining lack of commitment: Some agencies still see the implementation of PCR as problematic, costly, or just have not understood its benefits.

> *"From discussion with colleagues - some reluctance to implement - seen as very time consuming, takes up disproportionate staff time, PCR viewed as preventing key information from being gathered (false perceptions in my view)." (Teacher)*

> *"School have not fully understood person centred approaches and adopted there own way of working that gains statistical evidence for practice." (Social Worker)*

> *"Lack of understanding and sign up from mainstream services." (Social Worker)*

Competing goals: There were conflicts between the perceived priorities of some agencies and the implementation of a person-centred approach.

> *"I do have some concerns that some training providers/FE colleges are more concerned about meeting their needs rather than the individual needs of the young people." (Teacher)*

> *"Perception that other assessments/plans are needed. Some agencies protective of their own systems." (Non departmental Government Body)*

Availability of resources to deliver good PCR, including time and training: The longer-term availability of time and suitable resources to deliver PCR to all who needed it was an concern to many.

> *"Time, access to a facilitator." (Teacher)*

> *"Not enough professionals trained to facilitate yet. Some schools not yet on board. Time commitment is high for college tutors to do PC reviews." (Lecturer)*

> *"Time is still an issue Statutory requirements - understanding how these can be met at the same time as Person Centred goals." (Careers Advisor)*

> *"Not enough professionals trained to facilitate yet. Some schools not yet on board. Time commitment is high for college tutors to do PC reviews." (Lecturer)*

> *"The idea of PCP reviews has been taken up by Care Managers but the time element of each person centred review becomes an issue with case load and also that the understanding of how they should be held. Sometimes format seems to be set in stone with no thought to how the customers disabilities will impact on the way they should be held." (Employment Worker)*

> *"Schools and colleges not embracing the process and not understanding it properly, thinking that it takes 'too much time' instead of seeing it's time and cost saving potential. PCRS not being mandatory." (Transition Worker)*

Consistency and quality of PCRs: There were some concerns that the quality and consistency of PCRs was not being assured, and that this could present a longer-term problem for PCR effectiveness:

> *"Consistency and quality assurance." (Team Manager)*

> *"Cascade training runs risk of diluting the quality (has happened in one context)." (Social Worker)*

Concerns about employment as a realistic goal: Some respondents still felt that people were not setting their expectations at the correct level around employment:

> *"Carers reluctance to embrace employment." (Employment Worker)*

> *"Hopes for finding jobs set too high above reality." (Employment Worker)*

> *"Lack of realistic expectations of the individual's skills, motivation or employability in the face of unimpressed employers who have their own needs uppermost." (Social Worker)*

Overcoming barriers to effective PCRs

We asked respondents *"How might these barriers be overcome?"* Themes fell broadly into resourcing PCRs, training, motivating partner agencies, and difficulties with employment as a realistic goal:

Resourcing PCRs: Respondents looked for greater commitment in resourcing PCRs and the staff needed to deliver it, including independent advocates for young people to help them find their voice:

> *"I personally think that their should be more independent advocacy support available to support young people with learning disabilities to be able to express their views and opinions when choosing college courses or wanting to change courses." (Teacher)*

> *"More / same resources (fear of the looming cuts!!!!) Better commissioning, commitment, management etc." (Employment Worker)*

> *"Financial support for schools, recognising that doing PCRs well takes more resource." (Project Manager)*

Training for PCRs: There was a clear message that training needs to continue and embrace a wider staff group and families:

> *"More training for teachers in schools and colleges." (Lecturer)*

> *"More staff training and awareness." (Teacher)*

> *"Cascade training to transition team professional's e.g. social workers and care managers. Have as part of a core offer. Introduce mentoring and coaching of those*

not yet trained - otherwise culture develops of I've not been trained so I can't do it or it's someone else's' job."(Lead Officer)

Motivating partners to participate in good PCR: Some respondents felt there was a need to be more prescriptive around what PCR was and how it should be delivered:[6]

"Legislation stating what a PCR should look like, take it out of the school and give it to independent providers." (Social Worker)

"Motivation /expectation. Yes raise the concept of work with parents/schools and children from an early age - but there will be a 5 -10 yr time lag. (Social Worker)

"PCRs becoming the only way that transition reviews are done, PCR trainers and quality checkers in education, PCR training embedded in teaching degrees." (Transition Worker)

"Implement proposals of SEN green paper. Use legislation to compel joint agency working." (Non-departmental Government Body)

"By not using PCR as the new dogma, and actually listening to young people, and by not thinking about how the process reflects on us as professionals, but how it affects the young people." (Transition Worker).

Employment: One further theme among the comments was how to deal with expectations around employment and the availability of employment:

"...Educate, compel or bribe employers to employ." (Social Worker)

"Educate employers or bribe them to employ." (Employment Worker)

Impact of the family and young person's leadership programme
A minority (38%) of respondents felt the leadership programmes had had an impact,

Figure 18: Overall impact of family and young person's leadership programmes

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[6] There is some evidence in the 2011 Green Paper on SEN that PCR may be considered as a mainstay of transition planning in the future for life choice and health.
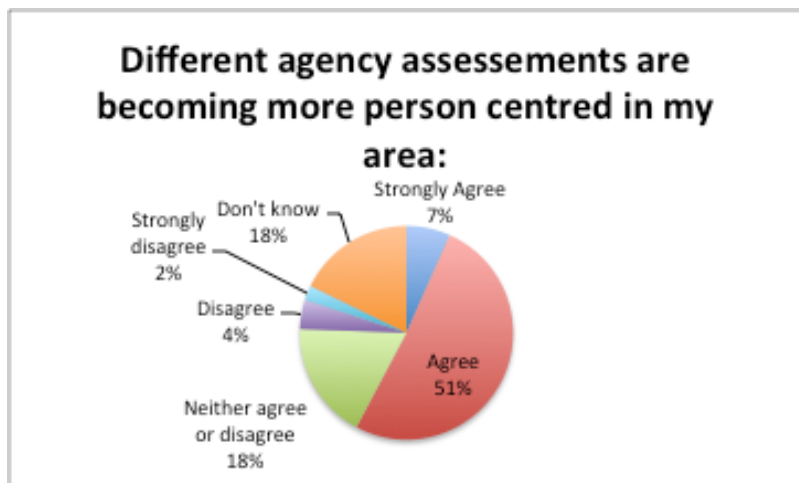
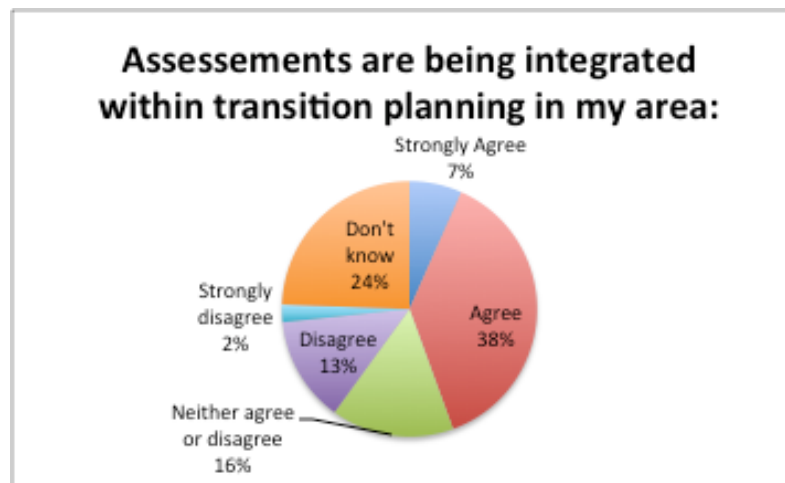**Figure 19: Progress in person-centred assessments**

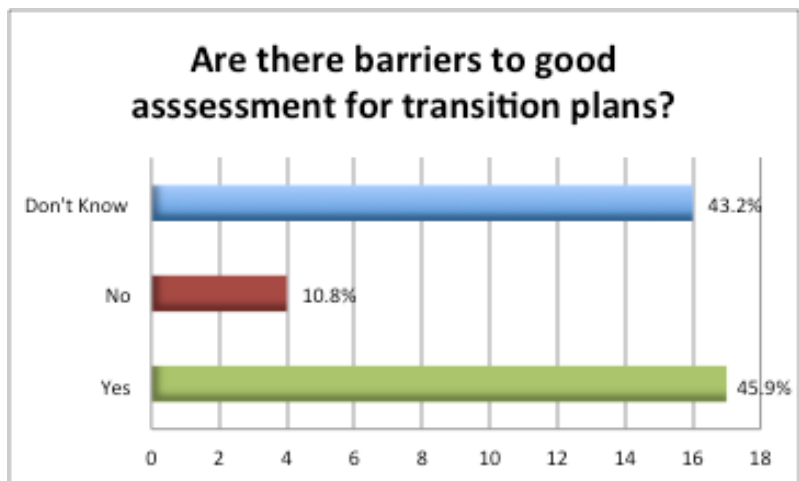**Figure 20: Progress in integrating assessments**

Figure 21: Existence of barriers to good assessment

a greater number not knowing about the programmes (48%)(Fig 18). This echoes previous responses that were unclear about its impact on PCRs. The issue of user and family leadership on quality of transition, on employment as an option and to help enable people to play an independent role in the process is clearly an important one. It appears that the leadership programmes, that set out to deliver this, did not penetrate professional perceptions.

Progress on more responsive assessments
Figures 19-21 show the views of professionals on assessments and how this may have progressed under the GAL initiative. A majority (58%) (Fig 19) of people reported that different agency assessments were becoming more person centred, while something short of a minority (45%) (Fig 20) could say that assessments were being integrated. A significant number felt they didn't know about integration of assessment (24%), suggesting that respondents were not generally aware of how other agency assessments were being managed. Figure 21 shows that a large number of respondents were unclear about any barriers existing around integrated assessment (43%). Forty-six percent could identify barriers. This is important, as one of the consistent complaints of families of people with disabilities is that there are too many assessments they have to go through with too much overlap in information being requested.

Significant barriers to assessment
We explored this issue in more detail by asking respondents *"What are the significant barriers to good assessment for transition plans in your area?"* The primary barriers were inconsistent implementation of assessment protocols, resources again, particularly in the careers services, and differing targets and priorities.

Inconsistent implementation of assessment:

> *"Inconsistent implementation (i.e. lack of involvement) by some special schools across our area. Most are now coming on stream now." (Teacher)*

> *"Getting different agencies to co-ordinate the above processes... that will be responsible for leading/co-ordaining on them?" (Lecturer)*

> *"Lack of capacity and differing targets across agencies make it hard for them to work together." (Social Worker)*

Resources and issues within Connexions:

> *"Connexions workers do not really understand the philosophy and operate in parallel to the approach in GAL so can jeopardise plans." (Social Worker)*

> *"Reductions to connexions service, the lack of an integrated assessment tool (although piloting the L for L&W framework which should help." (Lecturer)*

Differing targets and priorities:

"Lack of capacity and differing targets across agencies make it hard for them to work together." (Social Worker)

"Currently - due to the different approaches in Child/adult services - this is being given attention to change and work differently." (Transition Manager)

"All agencies agreeing to take part, cost (e.g., of Educational Psychology assessments), agencies using different formats, not having shared language/criteria etc." (Careers Advisor)

"Respite and LAC assessments and reviews have to be done separately." (Project Manager)

There were also some concerns voiced that GAL had not taken account of existing good practice in areas before they introduced their ideas:

"Good practise already existed - but a complete audit was not taken at the start of GAL, so the progress that could have been made has been wasted by a lack of good communication from the start." (Teacher)

"Some previously useful communication techniques are barred from being used. Only Gal ideology allowed." (Employment Worker)

Overcoming barriers to assessment

Again, we asked people *"What positive initiatives, if any, are you seeing in making assessment across agencies more effective in transition planning?"* The attempts to personalise *careers assessments* were see as broadly positive:

"The attempt to make the S139a assessment more personalised and the aim to make it and the PCP reviewed annually." (Teacher)

"Piloting Learning for Living and Work framework which brings together information from many agencies such as education, Social Services, Connexions, Health, parents etc. Also in Manchester there is a pilot for Matching Provision to Need tool." (Lecturer)

"Managing the statutory demands of S139a assessments, Fair Access to Care and Annual reviews is a major problem / challenge. We are however good at sharing the assessments through the area transitions groups." (Lecturer)

"Some work going on to ensure that the S139a is based on PCR material- is improving the quality of them." (Social Worker)

"We are developing a tool that will help us plan provision and support from 14 upwards - it will be based on contributions from multi agency partners and person centred plans/profiles." (Careers Advisor)

"Revision of S139a Connexions assessment to align with PCR's." (Project Manager)

There were a number suggestions that detailed *joint working* was also contributing to better assessment, including getting better joint agreements and transition protocols in place:

"Earlier and joint working in partnership between children and adults agencies." *(Employment Worker)*

"Just at the point of joint assessments being completed with young people across services. Set up of Transition Planning team is a step forward." *(Transition Worker)*

"The in-school drive we have introduced to gather other professions together have had some impact," *(Transition Worker)*

"Good transition protocols in place." *(Service Development)*

"Consultation with people and families on assessment tools and what would make them more person centred. Inclusion of one page profiles as a minimum." *(Lead Officer)*

Progress on individualised funding of transition plans

Figures 22-24 show the results of people's views on individualised funding. Only 27% were able to say young people were using Individualised Budgets and only 34% using Direct Payments. Fifty-five percent were able to identify barriers to the use of more flexible budgets. Many more people were unclear about the extent of changes in funding, with the numbers being uncertain ranging from 32% and 34% for Individualised and Direct Payment progress and with 45% uncertain about barriers.

We went on to ask respondents if *"There any other way that funding for young people in transition has changed due to the area being a GAL site?"* There were relatively few themes identified here.

Some pilot work on funding models:

"A pilot has just begun with some of our young people to look at individual budgets." *(Social Worker)*

"Indicative budgets at 17 from adult services to help with planning." *(Social Worker)*

*"There was a trial for combining education and social services money for those 16-18."* *(Teacher)*

"Better use of FE funding because of joint working between schools and colleges and voluntary sector." *(Non-departmental Government Body)*

Lack of progress:

"Set up of transition planning team so young people have some support with planning between 16 and 18 but still no indicative budget given so that people can
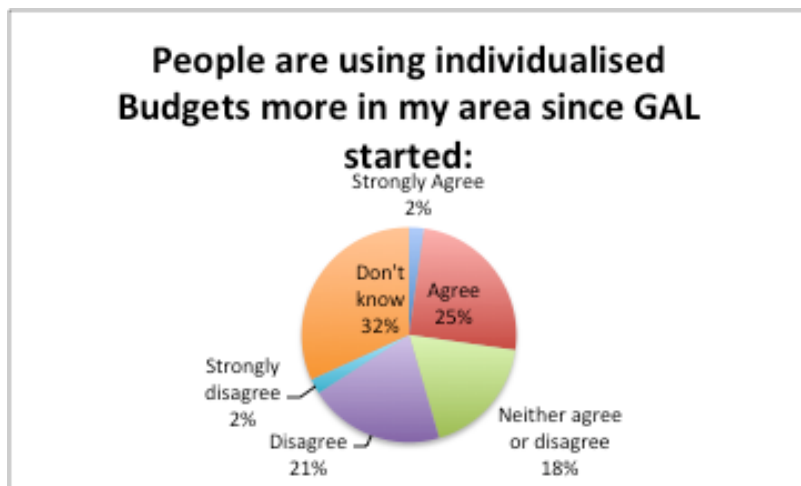
Figure 22: Progress in use of Individualised Budgets
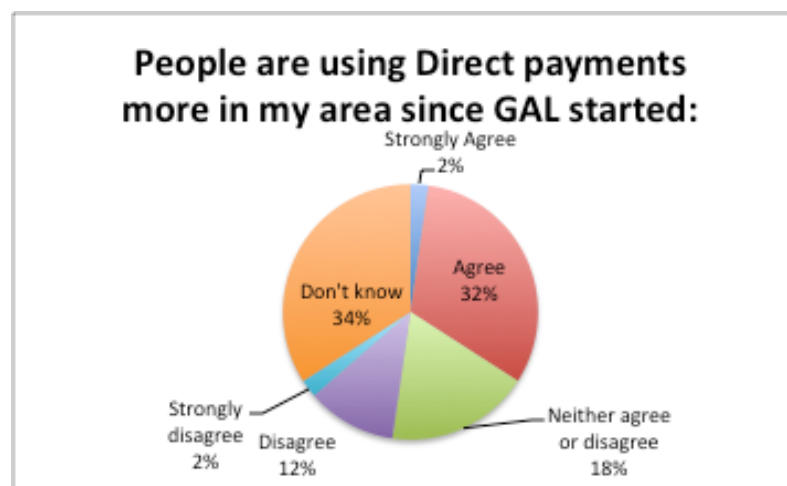
Figure 23: Progress in use of Direct Payment

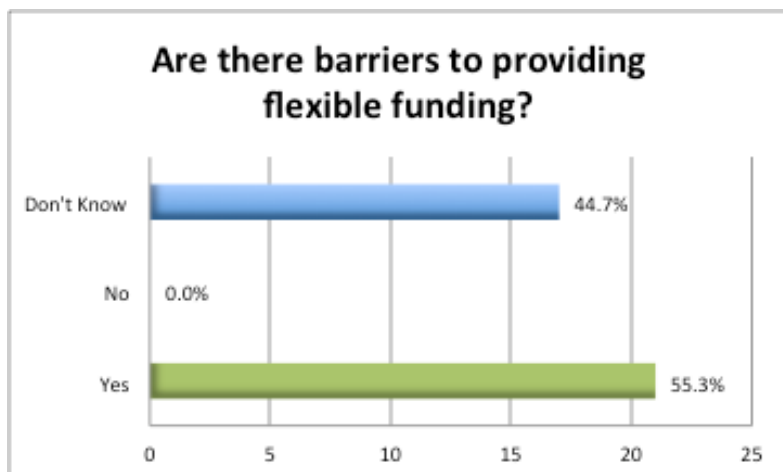**Figure 24: Existence of barriers to use of flexible funding**

"Set up of transition planning team so young people have some support with planning between 16 and 18 but still no indicative budget given so that people can support plan themselves." (Transition Worker)

"No, except that allocations and are smaller owing to cuts." (Social Worker)

We also asked respondents *"What outcomes, if any, are you seeing for young people from changes in the way funding is provided in transition?"* Again, there were relatively few outcomes identified in this area:

"Unfortunately the lack of choice means that the money has a limited impact." (Teacher)

"Early days yet." (Social Worker)

"Not embedded enough yet." (Service Development)

"Still require mix package - not always an option in some LA areas." (Transition Worker)

"Very few changes so far - we are hopeful that as more young people get individualised budgets, it may contribute to better, more holistic plans and outcomes. We are also changing how we plan post 16 provision - by building this more effectively into Transition Planning." (Careers Advisor)

There were some positive outcomes mentioned:

"Young people are less likely to fall through the net and become NEET because of creative ways to combine employment, education and social care funding." (Project Manager)

"More work experience prior to leaving school and a small improvement in paid work attained as a result." (Employment Worker)

"More parent led plans using DPs but some are struggling to do something new without much support with planning." (Social Worker)

There were significantly more barriers than positive outcomes mentioned:

Funding availability:

"Availability of funds and number of agencies involved." (Teacher)

"Budgets and availability of skilled and suitable staff are very limited and increasingly threatened by cuts." (Employment Worker)

"Council budget cuts and organizational chaos." (Employment Worker)

"[Council] withdrawing any funding other than in house services. Only offering £35 a week to access any other services in the area. This has lead to lack of any choice or opportunities." (Transition Worker)

"Significant changes to PCT's impacts on flexibility of funding."(Strategic Manager)

Funding criteria:

"Pupils who had shared care are not allowed to do so post transition, this presents blocks to parents from the start of transition in accessing the best for their children." (Teacher)

"Children Services not supporting personal budgets." (Social Worker)

"Inflexibility of the current system and LA budgets being individual to departments not seen as a LA Budget." (*Transition Worker*)

Lack of appropriate systems:

*"*Different statutory funding streams across agencies and lack of success of RAS approach in some areas." (*Social Worker*)

"No RAS system in place." (*Social Worker*)

"Funding bodies (e.g. YPLA/DWP/Jobcentre Plus commission on block contract to main providers and this dis-empowers localised and person centred models instead needing people to fit the mould of the funding stream and the provision offered by the mainstream provider (no choice and control)." (Strategic Manager)

"No mechanism to pool health, care and education funding. LA adult/children divide." (Non departmental Government Body)

The relatively poor response in this area suggest that progress in funding flexibility has been less positive than other aspects of transition and may represent an area for more creative work in the future.[7]

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[7] Jobs First is an initiative to more fully explore the use of Individualised Budgets to support employment for people with learning disabilities. See www.odi.dwp.gov.uk/odi-projects/jobs0for-people-with-learning-disabilities.php
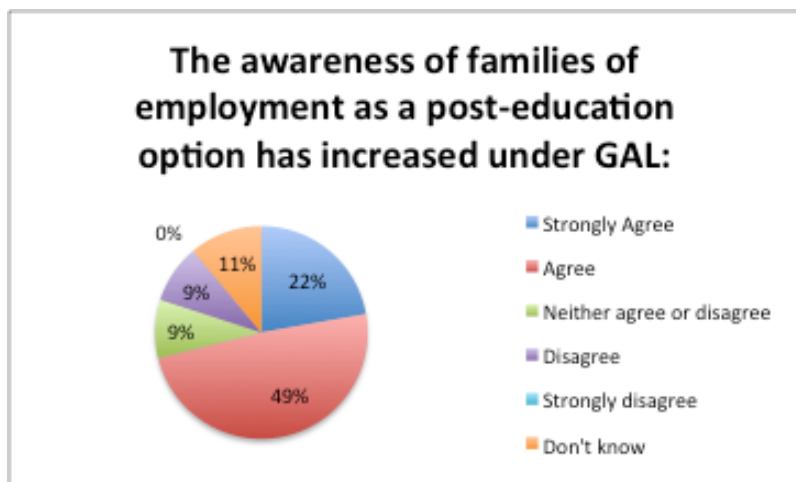
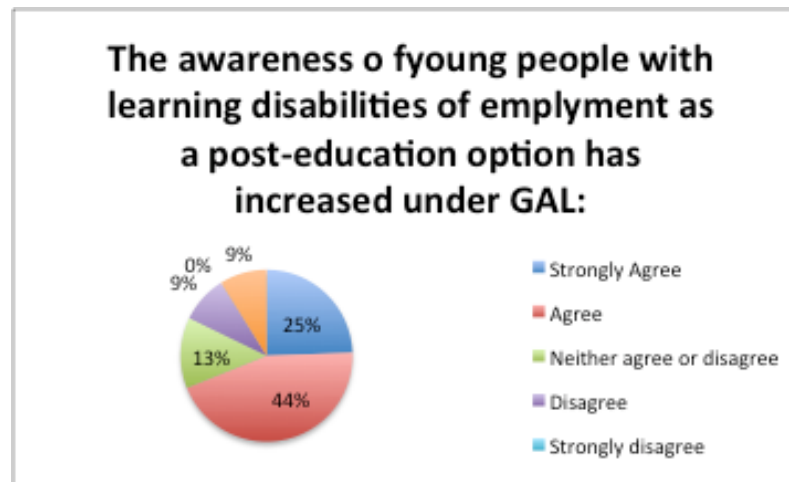**Figure 25: Change in awareness of families of employment**

Figure 26: Change in awareness of young people of employment
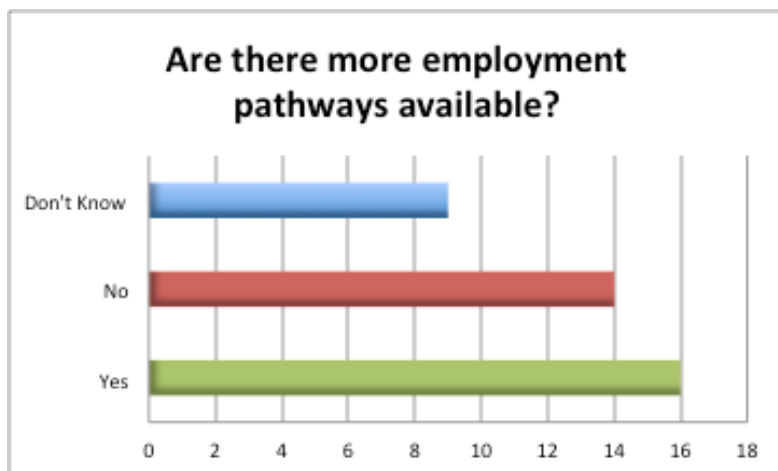

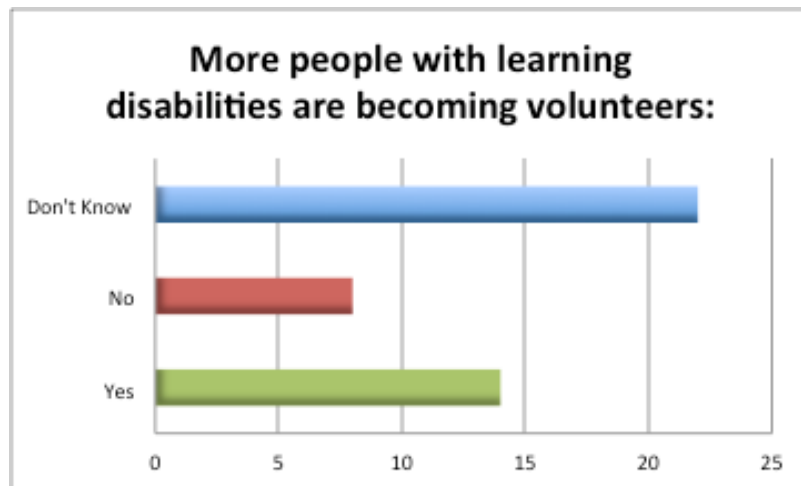**Figure 27: Growth in availability of employment pathways post-education?**

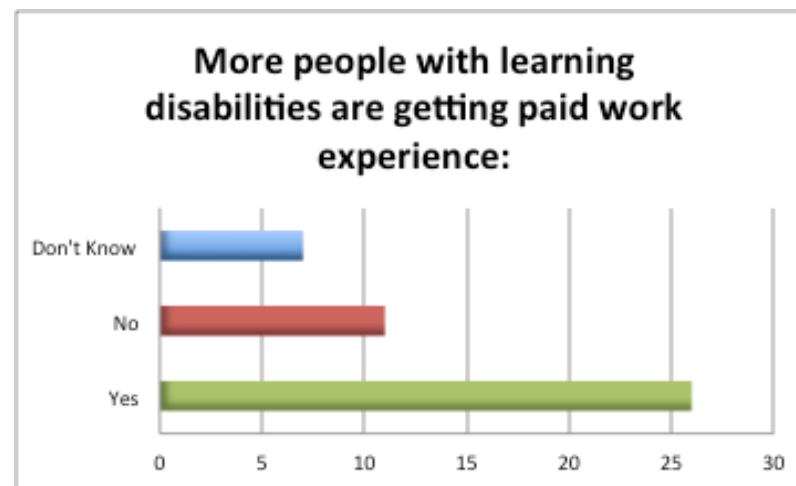**Figure 28: Growth in people becoming volunteers?**

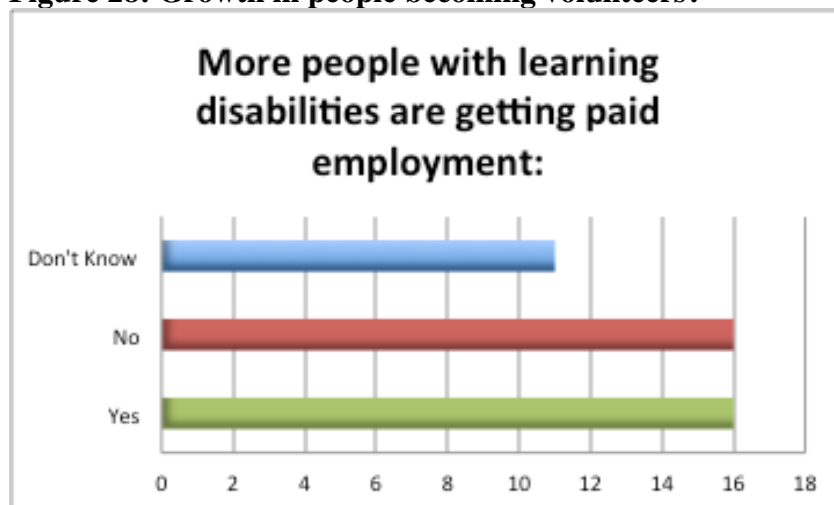**Figure 29: Growth in people getting paid work experience?**

Figure 30: Growth in people getting paid jobs?

Views on the growth of employment, work experience and volunteering as a result of GAL

There have been a number of initiatives that have played a role, or staff feel will play a role, in the future:

"Since I have been given the opportunity to network with other professionals our centre has been more aware of supported employment and we have worked together to provide work experience opportunities. Once our young people leave our educational centre there is now a pathway for continued support into employment. At least now I can see a continuing progression for them." (Teacher)

"Project Search is being piloted this year. Partnership between college a supported employment provider and an employer (Hospital) More parents and yp [young people] are becoming aware of supported employment as a possible route." (Lecturer)

"Funding for programmes like Project Search and YSEP have created more opportunities for young people to develop and demonstrate the skills they have to offer in a work environment. It also enables families to understand the level of on-going support that is available to their family member." (Employment Worker)

Better work experience, YSEP[8] info on supported employment (Transition Worker)

"20:20 scheme, jobs first." (Service Development)

"We have been able to establish links with employer networks to raise the profile of GAL and promote the skills and abilities that young people could bring to a work force. GAL had secured the buy in from a major employer and college to deliver Project Search. Feedback from the employers was extremely positive." (Employment Worker)

The emergence of supported employment and self-employment as options:

"Supported Employment, Supported Self Employment, Training with Social Enterprise." (Social Worker)

"More joint working pathways between schools and supported employment agency." (Employment Worker)

There were also some negative comments about progress on delivering better employment pathways.

"There has been no shift in the SE options or with the way Job Centre Plus works so the only success has been where families have taken the initiative." (Social Worker)

"No more or less than before." (Social Worker)

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[8] Youth Supported Employment Programme

"The funding for Foundation Learning is both vague and complex. In a recent meeting with the YPLA and colleges, none of the colleges understood fully the mechanism for using funding to pay for supported employment - one of the best routes into paid work that we have found. Apprenticeships are unavailable to people with significant learning disabilities - because of the requirement to achieve Level 2 qualifications and functional skills, despite many people with learning disabilities being able to perform very effectively in the workplace. A further barrier is the change to government-funded programmes - such as the Work programme and the emphasis in payment on results. We have seen some improvement in numbers entering paid work, but not yet sufficient." (Careers Advisor)

"The GAL programme had no means of engaging or enlisting employers. In a recession with 30+ applicants per job employers are able to be very selective." (Social Worker)

"Impact of recession and lack of job vacancies has inevitable affected opportunities for work placements and employment." (Employment Worker)

Match control study of GAL education leavers

The research set out to see whether there had been any identifiable increase in job outcomes among the GAL clients. GAL itself identified 20% of clients within the GAL cohort as entering employment. However, this took no account of what might be achieved without the influence of GAL. The background was poor, with only 6.4% of people with learning disabilities being in employment, identified within the NI 146 reporting arrangements. However, we wished to compare s similar group of people with a learning disability to establish if there was an employment effect. We were able to generate a matched control group of people with learning disabilities leaving education from a Connexions area in the North West, matched by age, gender, school type and education status. We were then able to establish the destination point after education to see the relative number entering employment.

Table 1 shows the match characteristics of the GAL and the Connexions comparison samples. This suggests that the samples were a close match.

Match criteria	Connexions match sample	GAL
Age at leaving		
16	1 (0.2%)	1 (0.2%)
17	3 (0.6%)	3 (0.6%)
18	5 (10.4%)	5 (10.4%)
19	12 (25.0%)	12 (25.0%)
Over 19	27 (56.0%)	27 (56.0%)
Gender		
Female	20 (42%)	20 (42%)
Education		
Special school	42 (6.3%)	42 (6.3%)
Mainstream school	0 (6.3%)	0 (6.3%)
College	6 (6.3%)	6 (6.3%)
SEN status		
Statement of SEN	48 (100%)	
		48 (100%)
Total	48	48

Table 1: Characteristics of the match comparison samples

Table 2 shows the comparison between the destinations of the GAL leaver sample and the Connexions matched comparison sample.

Destination	Connexions' match sample	GAL
Education	24 (50.0%)	24 (50.0%)
Training/apprenticeship	12 (25.0%)	0
Employment (Any hours)	3 (6.3%)	9 (18.8%)
Personal Development	2 (4.2%)	7 (14.6%)
NEET	5 (10.4%)	3 (6.3%)
Other	2 (4.2%)	5 (10.4%)
Total	48	48

Table 2: Destination of GAL leavers compared to a match control sample

There were differences between the two samples in respect of employment, with the GAL cohort reporting an employment rate of 18.8% compared to 6.3% for the non-GAL matched comparison sample. The match control group produced employment rates post education near to the average for England taken from NI146 returns for 2009/10 while the GAL cohort was three times higher. There was also a large

difference in the use of training places taken up, with the GAL sample having no such placements registered. Personal Development placements, mainly made up of day service of skill centre placements, was higher for GAL that the comparison, but in total this did mean that the level of NEET (Not in Education, Employment or Training) was also a little lower in the GAL sample than the comparison group.

The figures are encouraging that the GAL approach has had an impact on employment outcomes, with an employment rate 3 times higher than for the matched comparison group. This is important evidence for the impact of individual approaches on employment. However, the pattern for the two samples was still dominated by the number of "education" places taken up by leavers, largely college places taken up post-special school.[9]

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[9] The numbers of people compared is relatively small and a Chi-squared test to establish statistical independence of the pattern of leaver placements for the two samples overall, returned a significance value of p=0.517, suggesting that the overall pattern of placements was close to, but not, statistically significant.

CONCLUSIONS

GAL set out to investigate the barriers to employment faced by young people with learning disabilities, and to report to Government. The initiatives taken within GAL also addressed many, but not all, of the problems young people with learning disabilities face in relation to getting and keeping employment. The task was ambitious. Transition is a complex area involving many agencies, professionals, a number of pieces of legislation and a potentially complex pattern of activities to be planned and supported. GAL was an attempt to understand and make concrete the procedures that focus planning on life outcomes rather than services and to guarantee the participation of young people and families through person-centred planning.

The data presented here suggest a positive pattern of outcomes, with GAL being seen to have done a good job of introducing effective Person Centred Reviews into areas, and supporting its development where PCRs already existed. Positive outcomes have been identified from PCR and it is liked by families and young people, as reported from the professional perspective. The goals from PCRs are different from those generated by previous systems and employment has grown as an option.

GAL has promoted a move towards shared assessment across professionals. Reducing the number of assessments done and duplication of information is clearly important to families and agencies. The results are unclear as to whether there has been a significant impact on assessment systems, or the family experience. Joint record keeping has not been achieved, but a shared understanding of what is important to know, and how different perspectives can be brought together in PCR, has been an important outcome in some areas. Other research reports will address this issue from the families own perspective.

GAL has promoted the use of flexible personal budgeting to deliver transition plans and there is some evidence that some positive outcomes have been achieved, even in relation to employment outcomes. However, much remains left to do before the impacts are more wide spread and any benefits are understood. We will have to rely on the Jobs First initiative for further evidence in this regard.

The *Valuing Employment Now* strategy was introduced after GAL was underway. GAL was placed as a demonstration site under the VEN strategy and it cannot be judged only in relation to employment outcomes. However, there is evidence here that employment pathways have improved. The results of our matched control study shows, at 18.8%, a three times higher employment rate for the GAL cohort than for the control group. The comparison group rate at 6.3% is almost the same as the national average levels for 2009/10 from NI 146 returns. This is encouraging for the likely impact of individualisation on employment outcomes.

We still have little evidence on the quality of these jobs and more data is required from LAs on these outcomes if we are to be sure the processes generated by GAL are to fully achieve the positive outcomes from our study. Clearly there remains much to be done in relation to providing greater levels of employment, given the very low employment rates of this group of people, but promoting employment as a transition must assist in this goal.

GAL as development model has had weaknesses. The programme has been largely advisory and it has been up to local services to implement guidance in their way and through their management and political control mechanisms. This means it is difficult to get a consistent approach and to make progress on all aspects of transition, particularly where the development of new employment support pathways are needed. GAL has benefited in some cases from synergy with the Transition Support Programme where direct funding for service has been available, and this has been used to further TSP and GAL issues. However, in general GAL's progress has been reliant on the ability of a whole range of local services to resource change. This necessarily leads to variation in progress across areas and in the extent to which any one area has achieved progress on all relevant issues.

GAL has been a part of a moving story, as changes have been underway in many policy and service areas of direct relevance to its work, and indeed the GAL project team have contributed to debates around these changes. DWP have launched Work Choices during the GAL intervention. Connexions and the LSC have changed, their work moving into LA management of one of the two new skills agencies. Welfare reforms, such as the introduction of the ESA benefit have been introduced. *Valuing Employment Now,* with its increased demands on LAs around employment for people with learning disabilities and others was been introduced and then any impetus removed from it in the light of new policy priorities. There is some concern expressed in this survey that the wider changes may impact negatively on jobs for people with learning disabilities. Overall the economic situation provides a difficult background for future development. Within this GAL has provided a focus for understanding the impact of these changes on the important matter of transition of this small, but important group of young people and its work on PCR has provided an important forum for the development of awareness of employment and planning for individuals to work. The professionals in our survey have acknowledged this and PCR undoubtedly represents an important way forward in planning employment outcomes for those with special needs at school.