In the case of young people and young adults with enduring and complex additional support needs, it is essential that transition planning is started within the statutory timescales, at the latest, in order to identify and secure the right provision, whether this involves staying on at school, entering further or higher education or participating in other programmes. It is essential that there is open and frank discussion between training and education providers and young people and their families about the type and availability of support.

Enquire, the Scottish advice service for additional support for learning, hears from families about the reluctance of providers to specify the type of support that will be available, as they are not aware of the funding and resource allocation in an adequate timeframe to support the transition duties in the additional support for learning legislation. This creates a stressful and disorganised transition from school, thus beginning the next stage of the young person’s learning journey in a detrimental way.

Some young people stay on in special school education beyond their 18th birthday after which point they no longer have rights under the ASL Act, and therefore cannot refer a failure to carry out transition planning to the ASNT. In some cases the young person has remained in school education because no suitable post school learning opportunity has been identified. School, carers and social work staff may lack the knowledge required to identify opportunities and information may not have been shared with or sought from voluntary sector providers.

Parents and carers report that FE college support services can be reluctant to discuss a student’s support needs with their parent on the grounds that they do not have time to do this, college is not school and discussion should be with the student. This causes anxiety for parents particularly when transition planning has not been satisfactory and parents are left to follow up post school options. A more understanding approach to parental involvement by colleges would be helpful.

The majority of the calls the Enquire helpline receives about post 16 education concern a pupil’s right to stay on at school after their 16th birthday, where the school has suggested the pupil should leave. It also hears of situations where the local authority advises, midway through the school session, that a young person’s special school placement will end on their 18th birthday, when it had been previously agreed that the young person should remain at school until the end of the school year. Once again, this is not in line with the objectives of the transition duties embedded in the additional support for learning legislation.
Supporting young parents

Supporting 16-19 year old mothers, and fathers, is important to ensuring post-16 learning is available for all. The availability of affordable flexible, high quality, consistent early childhood education and care would support young mothers and fathers continuation or re-entry into education or training, increasing their employment opportunities and decreasing the likelihood of their child growing up in poverty.

While appropriate childcare places and funding might be available locally to suit re-entry into education and training (and if not, this should be a priority) other barriers might prevent young parents making use of them. Young parents might not be familiar with the options available and lack trust in formal services. While ensuring the options are available is very important, information and support should be in place from the antenatal period onwards to familiarise young mothers and fathers with these options. Building positive relationships with institutions and childcare providers such as childminders or nurseries in advance would make it easier for new, young parents, to make more informed decisions about when and how to return to learning or employment. Teenage parenthood is often a catalyst for young people to change their lives and being aware of their new responsibility invest in their life-long employability. Making it easy for them to take up new opportunities that they might have rejected before parenthood will bring benefits for their young child throughout life.

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Children in Scotland is the national umbrella agency for organisations and professionals working with and for children, young people and their families. It exists to identify and promote the interests of children and their families and to ensure that policies and services and other provisions are of the highest possible quality and are able to meet the needs of a diverse society. Children in Scotland represents more than 400 members, including most of Scottish local authorities, all major voluntary, statutory and private children’s agencies, professional organisations, as well as many other smaller community groups and children’s services. It is linked with similar agencies in other parts of the UK and Europe.

The work of Children in Scotland encompasses extensive information, policy, research and practice development programmes. The agency works closely with MSPs, the Scottish Government, local authorities and practitioners. It also services groups such as the Cross Party Parliamentary Group on Children and Young People (with YouthLink Scotland). In addition, Children in Scotland hosts Enquire - the national advice service for additional support for learning, and Resolve: ASL, Scotland’s largest independent education mediation service.