

Report highlights support for young people with learning disabilities and autism

December 15 2014

A report highlighting how best to support young people with learning disabilities and autism as they make the transition into adulthood was launched this week at an event in the Senedd.

The report highlights the outcomes of a flagship [project](#) that supported vulnerable [young people](#) in nine Local Authorities. Assembly Members were invited to hear from Cardiff University's Dr Stephen Beyer, who led the research.

The Regional SEN Transition to Employment project worked with 1,766 young people with a [learning disability](#) and/or [autistic spectrum disorder](#), helping them and their carers to build a brighter future.

Focusing on people with severe and complex needs, it sought to promote independence and inclusion, while addressing the gap in support for 14-19 year olds who were making the transition from full-time education to employment.

Lead researcher, Dr. Stephen Beyer, based within Cardiff University School of Medicine's Welsh Centre for Learning Disabilities, said:

"The Real Opportunities project is one of the few examples where significant staff resources have been used in an evidence based way to benefit young people and their families in transition from school.

"Our research shows that the project tackled a wide range of problems

faced by young people at this difficult time in their lives and has helped us find out more about 'what works' in successful transition, particularly in relation to getting people ready for employment."

In preparing the young people for work, 751 employers provided 1,210 work experience placements.

Career Opportunities Project Manager, Angela Kenvyn, said: "This project is a prime example of how European funding together with collaborative approaches can benefit vulnerable young people in Wales. With the right support in place the young people have achieved so much and been truly inspirational."

Led by Caerphilly County Borough Council, the project was backed with £9.2m from the European Social Fund through the Welsh Government and delivered in partnership with the [local authorities](#) of Bridgend, Carmarthenshire, Merthyr Tydfil, Neath Port Talbot, Pembrokeshire, Rhondda Cynon Taf, Swansea, and Torfaen.

Other agencies delivering aspects of the project were Elite Supported Employment Agency, Learning Disability Wales, Mencap, National Autistic Society, Remploy, and the Welsh Centre for Learning Disabilities at Cardiff University.

Zoe Richards from Learning Disability Wales said: "Real Opportunities has addressed Welsh Government concerns about the lack of opportunities in employment and independence for this group of young people.

"It has ensured that young people were able to access their right to a normal life with aspirations beyond the traditional day service and endless college courses that we have seen historically offered.

"Not only has the project witnessed young people and families growing in confidence through varied opportunities, but we have also witnessed a better networked, better trained, more cost effective workforce.

"The added value of this project has come from the non-disabled young people involved in mentoring disabled young people through their transition, thus increasing disability awareness amongst non-disabled young people and allowing access to age appropriate support from their peers."

More information: To view the full report visit the Real Opportunities website: [www.realopportunities.org.uk/n ... act-report-2014.aspx](http://www.realopportunities.org.uk/n...act-report-2014.aspx)

Provided by Cardiff University

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