

**How to successfully support young people with Intellectual Disabilities (ID) and
their families during the transition into young adulthood?**

July 2020



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Overview / rationale for conducting study.

The ratification of the United Nations Conventions on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) has ignited the conversation around the human rights of people with disabilities. This includes the topical debate on appropriate and inclusive education for people with Intellectual Disabilities (ID) and how they are supported during their transition into post-secondary opportunities such as higher education, statutory funded training centres and employment.

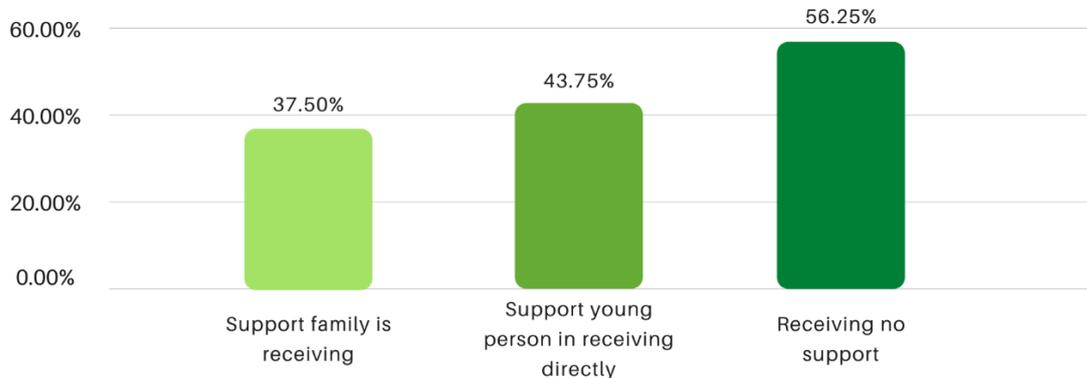
To better understand the experiences of young people with ID and their families during such an important transition, Blossom Ireland conducted a piece of research. This study was conducted in July 2020 using both qualitative and quantitative research methods. Research participants consisted of 32 parents or guardians of young people with ID aged 14-20. The findings from this study have played a vital role in the development of service provision within Blossom Ireland, namely the launch of Blossom Connect – a national programme that supports young people with ID aged 15 to 25 and their families to develop a practical transitional plan during the transition into adulthood.

Findings

An overarching theme emerged in that families felt unprepared for their upcoming transition into adulthood for various reasons.

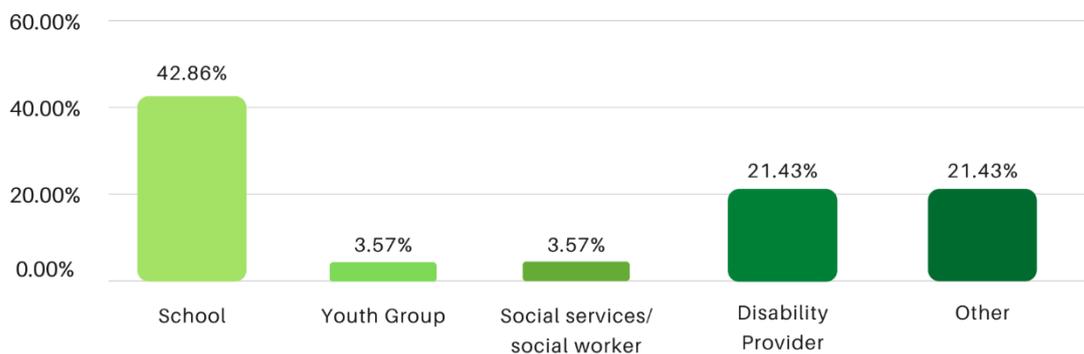
Over 56% of participants disclosed that their family are not receiving any support during their transition into adulthood.

Figure 1: Support received by families and young people with ID during transitions



Of those who said that they were receiving transitional support, the type and quality of support significantly differed between respondents.

Figure 2: Provides delivering support to families and young people



We asked family what type of support would encourage a more successful transition for their young person and their family.

“I would like someone to help me, to communicate with us as a family, to set some road map for the transition, etc. But I know I am dreaming on this one!” [Participant 1]

“It would also be good to have a source where you could see all the options rather than piece meaning it together based on what you learn from other parents”. [Participant 2].

“Practical stuff – more training and education for my family” [Participant 3].

“Career and life guidance for beyond secondary”. [Participant 4].

“More information maybe 2yrs before they finish up from school” [Participant 5].

“I’d love for a clear timeline for what’s happening and what happens next”. [Participant 6].

“Info on how the transition will work, what options are available, what I need to do” [Participant 7]

“Just someone to talk to us as a family” [Participant 8].

“A slower more detailed transition” [Participant 9].

In addition to this, participants were asked as a parent what type of support would they like to receive before, during and after these transitions.

“Reassurance and feedback from trusted independent individuals”

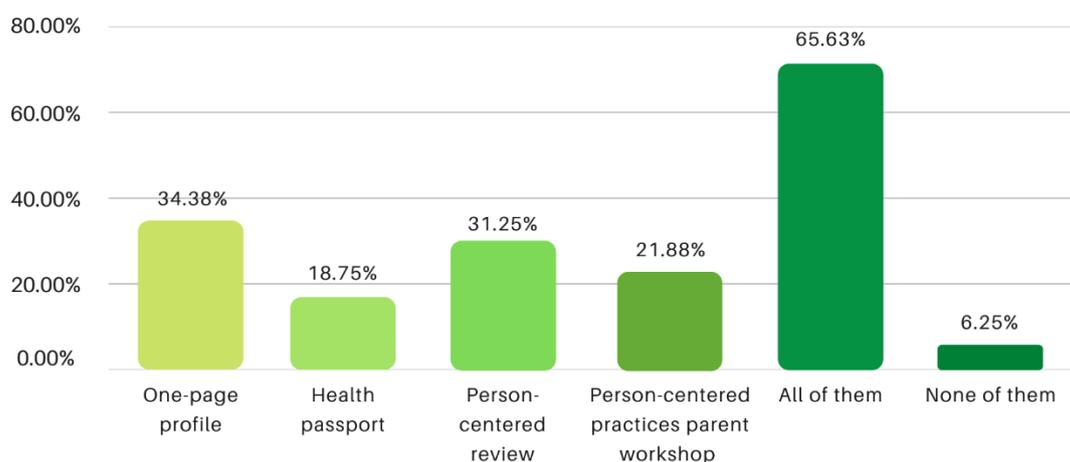
“Effective communication from service provider that’s person-centred and not just tick the box”

“Transparency around all the options available”

Blossom Connect

Over 65% of respondents disclosed that they would like to avail of transitional support services.

Figure 3: Type of support families would like to avail of during transitions



Education is a basic instrument of social integration and efforts should be made to give the opportunity... to facilitate the transition from school or higher education (HE) to employment and to develop the concept of life-long learning (Council of Europe 2003 cited in DES 2007:15).

Additionally, Scanlon et al (2014:4) describe a key objective of the National Council of Special Education (NCSE) (2006:12) to be that;

Students with special education needs will achieve outcomes from education which will facilitate them in transferring to the workplace, progressing to further education and lifelong learning, participating meaningfully in economic, social and cultural activity and, in effect, in living fulfilled lives independently in the community.

However, this study illuminates that there is a significant gap in transitional supports and practical plans to guide young people with ID in their transition into adulthood and life-long learning that takes place in post-secondary opportunities.

The National Disability Inclusion Strategy (2017) notes that people with disabilities need to be properly notified about viable education and employment options; however, there is no official department responsible for delivering on this. Therefore, there is a need to address this gap in service provision. Blossom Ireland aims to address this gap within Blossom Connect – a national programme that supports young people with ID and their families to develop a practical transitional plan during the transition into adulthood.

Blossom Connect meets the gap in lack of transitional supports available to young people with ID by facilitating person-centred reviews, setting action led achievable goals and guiding young people with ID and their families during such a vital transition in their life.

According to Scanlon and Doyle (2018:5) “there is substantial evidence” that person-centred planning and techniques support an individual understanding their own “strengths and interests” and in turn informs their support networks (such as their education provider or employer) of the same. Additionally, person-centred techniques support the development of concrete goals and an understanding of an individual’s future aspirations prior to their transition out of compulsory education (Scanlon and Doyle 2018:6). An essential element to person-centred planning is “based upon what is important to a person from their own perspective” (Kilbane et al 2008:27). Therefore, the most crucial factor in a successful transition is that it is led by the wants, needs, aspirations and self-discovery of the individual and their family (Scanlon and Doyle 2018). This is the essence of Blossom Connect.

Blossom Connect works closely with young people and their families to identify key short-term and long-term goals in an action focused way and create a plan on how to begin achieving these goals. Blossom Connect is tailored to each young person as we recognise life

is not a case of one size fits all and therefore a bespoke transitional plan coupled with personalised goals is essential. This is an independent programme that is lead by the needs and wants of each young person and their family.

More information on Blossom Connect can be found here;
<https://blossomireland.ie/blossom-connect/>

Contact the Blossom Connect team by email connect@blossomireland.ie or telephone (01) 877 0763.

Bibliography

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