



KING EDWARD'S HOSPITAL FUND FOR LONDON

King's Fund Centre

EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR HANDICAPPED SCHOOL LEAVERS

A Report of a Study Day held at the King's Fund Centre on

20 November 1979

King's Fund Centre
126 Albert Street
London NW1 7NF

January 1980

QBAM (Kin)

| | |
|---------------------|------------|
| KING'S FUND LIBRARY | |
| 126 ALBERT STREET | |
| LONDON NW1 7NF | |
| Class Mark | Extensions |
| QBAM | Kin |
| Date of Receipt | Price .. |
| JAN. 1980 | donation |



1929933866

King Edward's Hospital Fund for London

EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR HANDICAPPED SCHOOL LEAVERS

Report of a study day held on 20 November 1979

This study day organised by the Fund took as its starting point Chapter 10 of the Report of the Committee of Enquiry into the Education of Handicapped Children and Young People (the Warnock Report). (1)

INTRODUCTION

In his opening remarks, Peter Clyne, Assistant Education Officer, ILEA said the organisers of the study day had made three main assumptions.

- 1 that there are too few further and higher education opportunities for handicapped school leavers;
- 2 that too many handicapped school leavers are unaware of those opportunities that do exist;
- 3 that too many people assume handicapped school leavers have no need of further and higher education.

He went on to suggest that the conference should consider factors which currently limit the opportunities available and how existing provision could be expanded and improved. The aim should be to determine which, in realistic financial and political terms, were the issues deserving priority. Mr Clyne concluded with the hope that this would be the first of a series of conferences and seminars on this theme.

THE PRESENT SITUATION

Mr J F Allen, Director of the National Bureau for Handicapped Students (2) began by pointing out a paradox: that the development of interest in courses for handicapped youngsters and the development of sophisticated aids which widened employment possibilities for them were taking place at a time of high - and increasing - unemployment (especially youth unemployment), so that, for a significant number of school leavers, the only option was in fact likely to be unemployment.

In considering Warnock's question about how we can ensure young handicapped people achieve independence and an opportunity to play a role in society, he said these young people and their parents were increasingly looking to further education and training as holding the key to their future happiness. Furthermore, schools and colleges were responding to this and, with the help of agencies like the Manpower Services Commission, they were establishing a variety of new courses. This process is likely to snowball as attitudes to handicapped people change and the provision of facilities is itself likely to increase the expectations of young people with disabilities. It is also likely that Warnock will stimulate demand for such courses; the report said that it was impossible to predict future demand for further education, but did say it would grow with provision.

This, he said, is an area where there is clearly a lot of catching-up to be done. It is in society's interest to make the effort for, as Warnock

discovered, there are many underemployed, as well as unemployed, handicapped young people. Expansion should be greatest in the area of quite basic courses at further education colleges and similar establishments - an area in which development has already begun with, for example, 70 further education colleges starting courses for mentally handicapped young people in the last two or three years. As Warnock points out, illness and hospitalisation can often interrupt schooling to the extent that many of these young people do not reach their potential by the age of sixteen or even eighteen.

Mr Allen was of the opinion that the aim of such courses must wherever possible, be the attainment of employment; the balance between education and vocational training must be preserved, but he declared a personal prejudice against what he called 'education for education's sake'. Handicapped people, whose handicaps will allow, want to work and if some form of positive discrimination in training is necessary to make this possible, then so be it.

Looking at institutions involved in providing courses at 16 plus, schools should (in addition to offering assessment two years before leaving and effective careers guidance) plan courses to develop social competence, independence and an understanding of the world of work. Schools can help prepare young people for transfer to further or higher education or to work in a number of ways:-

- 1 they can make further schooling more readily available, either in the same school (Warnock pointed out that 16 tends to be the maximum as well as the minimum leaving-age for many handicapped pupils) or in sixth-forms in other schools or in sixth-form colleges;
- 2 they can develop link courses with local colleges of further education;
- 3 schools can run carefully planned work-experience schemes.

Turning to developments which can take place in further education colleges, Mr Allen noted that many colleges had been running excellent courses for handicapped young people, or making special arrangements to accommodate them on existing courses for some years now. Quoting a survey conducted by the National Council for Special Education (3) in 1975, he gave a number of examples of the things that were being done in England. Warnock divided courses into two groups: first, those which might be described as basic, concerned with social competence and independence, block or day release courses for workers with special needs and literacy courses; and second, the making of special arrangements for young people to attend ordinary further education courses, sometimes modified, special vocational courses at operative level, special units within further education colleges to provide for young people with more severe difficulties and disabilities.

The voluntary sector has set up much of the existing provision, especially that related to particular disabilities, and has done a great deal of pioneering work providing courses with a high vocational element.

Day centres and hospitals pose problems in that they are cut off from the mainstream of educational development, and there is a real need for links to be made with local further education colleges.

An increasing number of young people are receiving training in Employment Rehabilitation Centres; the Hester Adrian Centre's study (4) of these believes these courses to be realistic and to provide a bridge to work or further training. Mr Allen hoped, however, that the educational content of the ERC courses would be reviewed.

The needs of the majority of severely educationally-subnormal young people are met by Adult Training Centres. Warnock stressed that waiting periods for admission should be reduced - they can be up to two years. There should always be a strong educational element in Adult Training Centres, and this means close co-operation between education and social services departments, with local education authorities assuming responsibility for the educational programmes developed there.

On higher education, Mr Allen said that what was needed was supporting services rather than attention to course content. He drew attention to the use of Community Service Volunteers to help severely disabled students at some universities, to special arrangements for hearing-impaired students at Durham and East Anglia and special accommodation at Sussex and Southampton. Such arrangements should be carefully monitored to test their effectiveness. The Open University deserves special mention for its most commendable record.

Winding up, Mr Allen said the present financial situation gives little cause for optimism; at a time when we have become aware of the need to expand services for handicapped school leavers, the Minister for the Disabled has spoken of the folly of pretending disabled people can be unaffected by cuts in public spending.

SPECIALIST CONTRIBUTIONS

Mrs Velma Klinger, Special Education Inspector, ILEA was the first of four speakers to make short specialist contributions. She took issue with Mr Allen about 'education for education's sake'. There are occasions when this is perfectly respectable; she gave an example of a young person with a terminal illness who would not live long enough to be able to work.

Physically handicapped leavers from special schools are not a homogeneous group; some are only mildly disabled but have special learning difficulties, while others are very disabled but need advanced further education or higher education. In general, however, physically handicapped school leavers need further education more than non-handicapped young people and Mrs Klinger listed three main reasons for this:-

- 1 problems resulting from interrupted education, which means they need longer to cover the same ground;
- 2 specific learning problems, often the result of associated brain damage;
- 3 problems of immaturity; 'though children in special schools are not necessarily more immature than other children', Mrs Klinger said they did have difficulty sometimes in making a realistic assessment of their situation.

Some young people would benefit from a longer period at school, but many would gain more from extended education at a college. This could be

either at a residential college, which might offer particular benefits to those with very special needs or those who need to get away from home in order to mature, or at an ordinary further education college. The latter might seem the automatic first choice on the grounds that it is integrating, but there could be problems - attitudes in these colleges are sometimes slow to change and integration may be only an illusion.

Derek Child, Research Officer, Royal National Institute for the Blind, speaking with particular reference to the needs of visually handicapped school leavers, considered the time spent in further education to be crucial to the satisfactory integration of the young person into work and society. He presented a case study to illustrate the difficulties encountered by a blind youngster trying to establish himself in the sighted world without support and encouragement. Much greater use of ordinary colleges of further education would help these young people very considerably in achieving integration.

Peter Lowe, Vice Principal, Hereward College, based his remarks on his experience of the first eight years of Hereward College's existence. Colleges like this have both special facilities and special knowledge which enable them to stretch their students to the greatest possible degree. In the first eight years, 17% of the college's students had gone on to higher education, 23% to ordinary further education and 25% to employment. Mr Lowe found particular significance in the breakdown of the types of school previously attended by Hereward's students. With respect to the 1978 intake, 30% of students had been able to attend ordinary schools, yet they had been unable on leaving those schools to find further education colleges offering appropriate courses for them, or had felt the need for a course at Hereward to bridge them to the next stage in their career, that is either more education in ordinary colleges or open employment.

Mr S R Merrifield, Headteacher, Oak Lodge School suggested that hearing-impaired young people who can cope should be able to use ordinary further education colleges as of right - not because a particular headteacher has influence and can gain 'special favours'. Many deaf youngsters, however, cannot really benefit from ordinary colleges; lip-reading, even in ideal conditions, with good lighting and teachers continually conscious of the problems, becomes at best, an insufficient form of communication.

THE DISCUSSION GROUPS

Discussion was obviously wide-ranging; the following summary draws together points raised by all or most groups and then deals with important topics considered in only one or two of them.

1 Assessment The importance of this process and its interdisciplinary nature was emphasized by all groups. Disabled members were, however, particularly concerned to stress that the student and his family must play a prominent part in assessment. There was a feeling that it should be 'loosely-based' and leave some considerable degree of choice to the person who is the subject of the assessment.

2 Need for Information If parents and students are to be involved in making choices they must know all the alternatives. Professionals also need more

information, but information must be directly available to disabled people and not accessible only through 'professional filters', a process which can increase dependency.

3 Professional Relationships Most groups considered it important that concerned professionals should acknowledge their interdependence (one group talked about the need to 'desegregate the professions' !). Opportunities for different professions to share some of their training would help this. It was also felt that services provided should be more closely related and groups discussed the possibilities of joint funding by education and social services departments.

4 Counselling There was a demand for more effort to be put in to parent counselling and education, with the aim of raising parents' and students' expectations.

5 Further and Higher Education Opportunities A number of groups stressed the importance of a variety of further education and higher education opportunities, including 'education for education's sake' which many considered essential in order to improve the quality of life for severely handicapped people.

6 Employment All groups felt that employment should be the first choice, but agreed that this was simply not a possibility for many young people, and that we should be developing meaningful alternatives. One group thought an individual should be aware of his 'market value' in order to make a proper decision about what to do after school.

7 Special Colleges Special colleges were seen as having an important role for the most severely handicapped; they could encourage the development of an ethos in favour of further education among handicapped students, giving some a chance to get away from home, and stretch students to the limits of their capacity.

8 Cost Benefits One group felt that a cost-benefit analysis of further education for handicapped students would reveal the huge social cost of not providing it.

SUMMING UP

In his summing up, Dennis Coe, Chairman of the National Bureau for Handicapped Students who had not been present earlier in the day, reiterated and expanded upon many of the ideas that had been reported back from the discussion groups. He too emphasised the importance of getting assessment right and the need for an efficient information service for students and their families.

Examining some of the facilities for education and training available, he expressed some doubts about the educational content of some courses organised by the Manpower Services Commission. Regional Advisory Councils could play an important part in monitoring the educational content and coordinating the efforts of different colleges and centres. Although he emphasised the importance of the educational content, the aim of the courses must be preparation for employment. We must not lower our sights from this.

Finally he stated his concern at recent cuts in public spending, especially as they seemed likely to mean a reduction in discretionary grants, which were often vital to handicapped students. Implementation of Warnock would cost money and this must not be forgotten in the present financial crisis - the social cost of doing so would be too high.

REFERENCES

- 1 Report of the Committee of Enquiry into the Education of Handicapped Children and Young People (the Warnock Report) published May 1978, HMSO, London.
- 2 National Bureau for Handicapped Students,
c/o Middlesex Polytechnic, All Saints Site, White Hart Lane,
London N17 8HR.
Publish a regular newsletter.
- 3 National Council for Special Education,
17 Pembridge Square, London W2 4EP
- 4 Young Persons Work Preparation Courses - A systematic Evaluation
Barbara Speake & Edward Whelan, Hester Adrian Research Centre,
The University of Manchester, Manchester M13 9PI

The Long Term Care and Community Team at the Centre would like to express their thanks to Peter Clyne, Assistant Education Officer, ILEA and the National Bureau for Handicapped Students for their help in setting up this study day.

King's Fund



54001000237241



