**File: LocalOffer-InterviewP5.mp3  
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**Interviewer: To start with would you mind introducing yourself, for the recording?**

P5: Yes, sure. I'm P5. I work for [anon.]. My official job title is transitional worker. I will just say a little bit about what that is.

Within the code of practice there’s this thing called Preparing for Adulthood. My job title refers to that, really.

It’s about working with young people and their families, and all the different organisations that work with young people with special education needs and disabilities, in trying to think about what adult life might look like for that group of young people as they prepare to leave education. Thinking about what opportunities there might be, other than…

We used to have this conveyor belt where young people went to school, then they went to college, and then they were NEET. (Laughter)

This is to try and shift some of that sort of stuff, really, around how we might improve some of the outcomes for young people, particularly around work and meaningful opportunities within communities with young people.

To see how young people can make a valuable contribution, really, rather than just being a recipient of services, and trying to shift some of that thinking as well about how we do that.

That’s my job, so it’s varied and interesting.

I do some really boring stuff as well, which is my statutory stuff that I do. (Laughter)

I do a lot of the work [moving 0:01:12] young people that have high support needs over into adult care services. So one of my jobs is to identify that group of young people within social care that are clearly going to need a lot of additional support to live their lives as young adults.

Between 30 and 35 young people every year move, get to 18. When you think about that as a group, in the old days 110 young people had a statement. On average 110 young people had a statement.

Social care provide additional support to about 30/35 of those young people. What’s that? About 27 to 31% of the actual population getting additional social care, on top of their educational needs that might have been met through their statement.

I work with all the different organisations that work with those young people. Some of the young people we work with have got a range of different healthcare services connections – schools, behavioural therapists, psychologists.

**Interviewer: Charities?**

P5: Yes, we link into charities. Much more working with our early intervention colleagues around that sort of stuff. We’re much more reliant upon that for young people that don’t meet our access criteria. Because lots of young people you have to get through the door first to be able to get any additional support, so a lot of our additional support now is provided through personal budgets.

**Interviewer: \_\_\_[0:02:26]?**

P5: Yes, so children see personal budgets as their way of a nominal sum to meet their assessed needs. They have been through their assessment processes. Then the plan is based upon that budget.

What people buy now is very different. I would never have imagined what we spend that money on when we started this back in 2006. What people spend money on now is very, very different. It couldn’t be any more [varied 0:02:50], I suppose, than what it [is]. Well, it could be. [I think it will change again]. (Laughter)

**Interviewer: [It will be].**

P5: I hope it does. I hope we’re challenging more, really, around it, but yes, it’s changed dramatically from what people actually buy. So it’s very interesting, very varied, really wide.

**Interviewer: Really important as well.**

P5: One of the things we’re doing at the minute, at this time of year there’s a big thing around 16 plus \_\_\_[0:03:10]. We look at all the young people’s requests for additional funding in colleges, and sixth form schools, and stuff like that. We’re looking at individual plans \_\_\_ to see what funding levels they will get to support them.

**Interviewer: Are you in Anne’s team, Anne [anon.]?**

P5: No, I'm not, but I work with Anne a lot. I do work alongside Anne a lot, yes. I'm her link into social care services.

**Interviewer: Okay, yes.**

P5: I'm based in social care services. She’s based within educational services, really.

**Interviewer: Yes. Okay, that makes more sense.**

P5: Yes. They’re managed under the educational improvement services, really, educational support services, so they're managed down that line.

**Interviewer: Yes. A lot of my job over the last 12 months seems to have been-**

P5: Understanding our structure?

**Interviewer: Yes. (Laughter)**

**Interviewer: Well, that’s what I was just thinking. So this connects to…**

P5: Yes, I don’t know.

**Interviewer: You don’t know? (Laughter)**

P5: Yes. \_\_\_[0:04:02] [Crosstalk].

**Interviewer: Yes.**

P5: Yes, so there’s lots of different services. You can come into a meeting and there could be seven different agencies for that young person, just involved in that meeting. Do you know what I mean? How do you bring that together in \_\_\_[0:04:16]? (Laughter)

**Interviewer: Yes. How does information get shared in that sort of context then? Is that…?**

P5: That’s really messy. It’s much easier within the local authority than it was, but it’s still difficult. You still need protocols and agreement within the local authority, so we still struggle to…

**Interviewer: Yes.**

P5: An example today. Part of our educational psychology service doesn’t share information with us that they hold on a child or young person. We would have to get the family’s permission. Which is great, that’s absolutely fine, no problem in getting that, but surely \_\_\_[0:04:49] local authority \_\_\_?

**Interviewer: Yes.**

P5: Well, I'm sure you’ve heard it before. It’s absolutely impossible.

**Interviewer: Is that because of concerns around privacy or what the [data is saying]?**

P5: It’s absolutely around privacy, yes. I don’t think families have as many issues around that. It’s us as organisations that have those issues. Families want us to, as long as we ask permission, I think, but they want us to share stuff, really.

**Interviewer: Yes.**

P5: When you ask families they think it’s absolutely ridiculous that we don’t share.

**Interviewer: They would probably think you would do it automatically anyway.**

P5: The assumption is that we do. Do you know what I mean? Unless it’s obviously a safeguarding issue, or something that’s on a need to know basis, that sort of thing. That sort of stuff should obviously be kept as private, but that’s all we need, isn’t it? If we can keep the private stuff private, that’s fine.

**Interviewer: Yes.**

P5: The other stuff, the day to day stuff, should be shared. We can’t sort it out.

**Interviewer: You can’t?**

P5: No, \_\_\_[0:05:50]. (Laughter) I've been doing this job-

**Interviewer: You will. We will one day. (Laughter)**

P5: We will one day. We must be able to, mustn’t we?

**Interviewer: Yes.**

P5: But our systems don’t talk to each other, even within the local authority. We have Capita – sorry, I must not call it Crapita. (Laughter) in educational [services 0:06:06].

**Interviewer: [Crosstalk].**

P5: [Stop reading Private Eye].

Capita, so that’s educational services, that doesn’t speak to our service, which is developed by OLM CareFirst. None of them talk to each other.

**Interviewer: Is that technically or infrastructure [systems 0:06:22]?**

P5: They're all different software for client records. They’re all different client records.

Capita is on the schools/educational way of recording a child’s – I don’t even know if the HC plans are on there yet, but that will be where the HC plan is uploaded onto.

All the children’s information records are on there as well [around things] – well, all the stuff around their assessments are still on paper. Anything that was written by an educational psychologist [is in a file 0:06:53].

**Interviewer: [In a drawer]?**

P5: I could take you along and you will see. It’s just full, a whole room just full of children’s files [at 0:07:02] schools.

**Interviewer: Blimey.**

**Interviewer: Certainly all that stuff should be [Crosstalk].**

P5: In the 21st century. (Laughter)

**Interviewer: Yes. Early days.**

**Interviewer: The paperless office is never going to happen.**

P5: We’ve got a long way to go if we can’t even do that ourselves, really. Social care [has been planning that 0:07:19] in that sense, I suppose, because all our records are uploaded. Nothing goes on paper anymore. Everything is loaded onto the child’s file, and the child’s record, so nothing is kept on paper anymore.

**Interviewer: Yes, it’s the way the future should be. (Laughter) That’s great.**

**Well, specifically then, if we talk about the local offer, can you tell us a bit about when you first heard about it, and your first thoughts, and all that [Crosstalk 0:07:48]?**

P5: It’s not a new thing, I suppose. [We weren’t surprised 0:07:50] by the local offer, because I suppose the idea of the family information service has been around for a long time.

At least in the last decade we’ve had a responsibility, since 2004, since the Children and Families Act of 2004, to develop the family information service. So it wasn’t a new idea in that sense, I suppose.

\_\_\_[0:08:11] established through discussions around the SEND stuff back in 2011 was the first time we saw it being branded as a local offer. That’s all I know really.

I know what the idea of it is, obviously, but I don’t know if it’s well understood by people, and I don’t think it’s owned by anyone really. Do you know what I man?

The local authority is obviously the lead person on that, but I don’t think it’s actually owned [out in the city 0:08:42]. If you asked, even in the special schools, “Do you know what the local offer is?” I bet you families wouldn’t know what it was.

**Interviewer: What do you understand the local offer to be?**

P5: As a starting point it’s supposed to be an information base really. It’s not only that, obviously, is it really? That was the idea, is it’s an information base of everything across a child’s growing up years that might be useful, so there’s one spot for people to go for that information.

It’s only as good as the people putting information onto it, isn’t it? Like any of this stuff is really. How active and accessible it is. It doesn’t feel very active, does it, when you go and look at it?

I don’t want to criticise people, but in my opinion it doesn’t feel very active or engaging for folk to be able to use it in a meaningful way. I don’t know if that’s where people do go for stuff sometimes.

**Interviewer: Yes.**

P5: I think people do word of mouth much more in this world. In the disability world I think people are still in that world. Unless they find something that’s more useful to them.

**Interviewer: Yes. Do you have a role at all where you talk to people about local offer and you signpost towards it?**

P5: I use the local offer in the sense of not calling it that. I don’t brand it as that when I talk to people.

**Interviewer: Oh, that’s interesting, yes.**

P5: I don’t think we do that so well. We don’t do that. I don’t think we’re actively using it. As I say, it doesn’t feel active and lively, but it’s only active and lively as long as we use it with people.

Even to get access to laptops to take out to family’s homes, to show them where it is, would be a good starting point. Say for example for our early intervention workers, who probably see about 170 families a year that are below our threshold for additional support, but are struggling their way through, thinking about what their children’s lives look like around that.

They work very widely across different services as well, because like I say there are often five or six services involved in young people’s lives. If they could use that in a much more meaningful way with folk, by using a laptop or using a family’s…

I sometimes us the family’s computer, but that feels a bit intrusive at times, (Laughter) to show them where things are, where they can go to. It’s here, but sometimes I think people think it would be better if it looked better.

**Interviewer: Yes, you’re to get them there and [Crosstalk 0:11:011].**

P5: Then keeping them there. Do you know what I mean? You only go back and use stuff that you think is going to be useful to you on the internet, don’t you, really?

**Interviewer: I don’t know whether you’ve been a position where you’ve shown it to a family, but in fact it seemed to be quite static, or just seemed to be a list, I guess, is how it’s seen sometimes.**

P5: I'm really nervous about using it as well, because the first time I used it something I showed them was inaccurate, so that doesn’t help. It was a service that didn’t exist, so that doesn’t help. Or doesn’t exist anymore. It did exist, but it didn’t exist anymore.

You’re reticent then yourself about using it, (Laughter) because you think, “Ah, that’s not up-to-date.” The way I use it now is that I go and look to see if there’s anything new on it, that I don’t know about, so that I can take it out to people rather than being a bit reticent about using it.

**Interviewer: Yes. You kind of embed it more into your work, basically?**

P5: [Crosstalk 0:11:56]. I don’t go out and brand it as a local offer, which isn’t helpful, really, in lots of ways. But it doesn’t look that good, does it, (Laughter) if I'm really honest, in my opinion, as well? [Obviously it’s my] my opinion.

**Interviewer: We had no involvement in its design, so you can say whatever you like.**

P5: It comes from the family information service. That was the software we bought, I think, at that time.

**Interviewer: Yes, it just looks like that. It’s another bit of that webpage.**

P5: It just looks like a…

**Interviewer: [You can sort of tag on 0:12:26].**

P5: It does. It’s just an information directory on the back of a…

It’s not very interactive, is it? There’s not much you can do with it really. There’s not much fun in it, is there, really?

**Interviewer: Yes. Is there a reason why you don’t use local offer as a term? Is that just because you don’t think about it, or is there any other sense?**

P5: It’s in my head all the time, but I suppose that’s the work we’ve been [dead proud about] doing, I suppose. We’ve been quite good at doing that stuff. I would like to brand it, I really would like to brand it, but I suppose getting confidence in it will be the thing.

**Interviewer: Yes. I suppose also, because it’s been a conversation in the steering group quite a few times, what does local offer mean?**

P5: [Yes 0:13:05].

**Interviewer: You could-**

P5: It’s very Whitehall, isn’t it?

**Interviewer: Well, yes. It’s not something that you use in your daily chat. You wouldn’t hear it down the pub, people talking about the local offer.**

P5: What’s the local offer at the pub tonight?

**Interviewer: Yes, but it’s also-**

P5: “Have you got a new ale in?” (Laughter)

**Interviewer: It’s also quite generic as well. Which is a good thing, in a way. It doesn’t brand it as special.**

P5: The areas I suppose that are more interesting are the areas where they’ve made it much more about what’s going on, rather than on, “What do you need to know?” and branding in a questioning sort of way. “What do you need to know about special education needs and disabilities?” Doing it that way, which is a much more inquisitive way, rather than directory of services, which it shouldn’t be.

**Interviewer: Yes. Some other people have talked around service land, as well. There’s this thing, service land.**

P5: There is this thing called service land.

**Interviewer: It’s easy. You can see how it can get-**

P5: [We could fall into it, and I assume 0:14:00] that’s where it’s at, at the minute, really. It advertises service land. It is the front shop window for service land, as it exists at the minute. We don’t want to do that. We don’t want to have [about] service land for folk.

**Interviewer: What do you want to do? What should we be doing?**

P5: What should we do? I don’t know. I'm no [boffin 0:14:20], knowing and understanding what makes it attractive to folk, but it’s not very attractive.

It’s an information directory, as I've said a number of times there. That’s all it is. I don’t know how you make it…

There must be stuff that you can put on the front of it that makes it much more exciting than it is, isn’t there?

Have you looked at some of the stuff in other parts of the country? Where did we look that I thought was quite good? We’ve looked at other places and thought theirs was quite interesting, or it looked like it would be more attractive to use.

**Interviewer: There were some which…**

**Interviewer: That are more interactive, aren’t they?**

**Interviewer: Yes, they’re more interactive. There’s also ones which have maps on them as well, which I think immediately…**

P5: We wanted to do that. We wanted to start with Culture Lab, but they couldn’t get a research thing alongside it.

Young people want a map where buildings jumped out and told you what they did within them. (Laughter) \_\_\_[0:15:11] had this idea of that sort of thing.

You walk around [anon.] City Centre, and sometimes you don’t know what a building does, but if you had a map the building jumped out of, and then there were words that told you what was going on in that building, that sort of thing, and how young people might get involved in it, that would be a really good way of describing the city centre to them. (Laughter)

Interviewer: Yes. Almost as a navigational…

P5: Absolutely, yes.

**Interviewer: A bit more about what’s going on.**

P5: What’s going on, and just make it a bit wacky, really. Do you know what I mean? I don’t know what wacky is these days, I'm too old to know what wacky is, but to have it a bit more lively.

Because a lot of the young people don’t read. Actually, there was one thing that [hasn’t 0:15:47] changed. A lot of people do read a lot better than they used to.

One of things [that’s happened in] education for young people over the last 30 years is that you wouldn’t believe how much the reading standards have improved amongst young people \_\_\_[0:15:56]. I can see it in the last 10 years. The population has really changed.

Something that would make it just a bit friendlier to young people, really.

**Interviewer: Who do you imagine the intended user of the local offer is at the moment?**

P5: Professionals.

**Interviewer: Yes?**

P5: It’s just for workers, I think. I've never heard one family say to me, “Oh, I've looked at your local offer.” \_\_\_[0:16:16].

**Interviewer: Why do you think it’s been designed like that? Is it something about the process, or is it a local authority thing, or is it just getting it…? I don’t know. I'm speculating here.**

P5: Well, local authorities have got to change, haven’t they, I suppose? Because we still are very much about, “We’ve got the answers”, rather than, “The community might have the answer for what it might look like.” We’ve still not sussed that out, really, how we do that properly with folk.

**Interviewer: Yes.**

P5: We see a legal duty, and we jump to do something, and then, “Oh, we’ve done that now.” (Laughter) We don’t think about how it needs to change, and evolve, and how it needs to become more involved with folk.

It doesn’t need to belong within the local authority, for example. Some areas have looked about other organisations hosting them, and that would be a good thing to do with the local offer.

**Interviewer: That means letting go.**

P5: We need to let go, and we need to let go more often. I'm not a Tory in this stuff, but I think that this is not new stuff either. Localism is not new either. Do you know what I mean? This stuff needs to…

We haven’t got all the answers. Our communities have more answers than we do. I suppose we do some of that through funding of parents’ organisations, but we need to let go a bit more.

**Interviewer: Do you see your local offer then as a legal duty?**

P5: It is a legal duty, yes.

**Interviewer: But it’s nothing new, as well, so…**

P5: It’s nothing new, but it’s a new legal duty out of the Children and Families Act, that local authorities had to have a responsibility to maintain a local offer. It doesn’t tell you how it has to be done though.

**Interviewer: Yes.**

P5: Which is absolutely great. I don’t want to be told how a local… There are other things I would like them to tell us how to do, but they don’t do that. They don’t tell you that neither. (Laughter) Then be clear about the requirements.

Yes, we have a legal duty to do it, but we don’t have to do it ourselves. It’s how it evolves with other partners, really. We’re not the experts in these areas. We’re not.

**Interviewer: Yes, and I guess it’s a chance for, you're saying, the community to bring some of the knowledge onto the website?**

P5: Yes. I think local authorities are really wary. I don’t know what [anon.] is like, but I think they're really wary about something where it’s a public forum.

**Interviewer: Yes, I can imagine. It just being open.**

P5: This kind of libellous activity, I think, really, but forums don’t usually operate like that, and moderators are there to help with that stuff anyway on forums, so you can address those issues really quite easily. We’re just tentative about anything that might appear even for five minutes, before a moderator might take it down.

**Interviewer: Yes. “Will we get sued?”**

P5: Yes. There’s always the risk, and the risk to reputation and all that sort of stuff, and people do put stuff up, but we’re all mature adults. (Laughter) \_\_\_[0:19:11].

**Interviewer: Sometimes. (Laughter)**

P5: Sometimes. (Laughter)

**Interviewer: Is the local offer just something that comes under your jurisdiction or how did you become involved? Why is it…?**

P5: Well, within the children with disabilities service I suppose, yes, we would be a key partner in providing a lot of the information on that bit as well, around what children with disabilities services look like and how you access them.

As I was saying before, we have access criteria and all those sorts of stuff. That’s public information. It has to be up on the local offer. That’s one of the requirements of access to healthcare and educational services \_\_\_[0:19:46].

When you look at it I don’t even think it’s compliant, but anyway they think it is. (Laughter)

**Interviewer: What makes you think it’s not compliant? This is going to be completely anonymised, so don’t worry.**

P5: I know. (Laughter)

**Interviewer: Just for us. (Laughter)**

P5: Because the budget stuff is not up-to-date, for example.

**Interviewer: Okay.**

P5: We should be further on, on that stuff. Certain sections are probably in development. We’ve got until this year, I think, haven’t we?

**Interviewer: It keeps getting – I wouldn’t say it’s being postponed, but it keeps [staged 0:20:18]-**

P5: We’ve got until this September. It’s not long. It’s three months away now.

**Interviewer: Yes. No, it isn’t long. It felt like a long time away at one point.**

P5: When they said last September it was another year, so you have to have it up and running fully. So we have to have it up and running for September 1st.

**Interviewer: September 1st?**

P5: This year. [So it’s fully 0:20:34] compliant, and the Ofsted inspection will look at the local offer when it…

The framework is going to be announced. I'm sure you're not very interested in this sort of stuff, but all local authorities over the next three years, next year will be a pilot year, they plan to inspect 20 authorities around the reforms, and local offer is one of the key things within the framework that they’re proposing.

**Interviewer: Oh, really?**

P5: The framework is supposed to come out before 17th July. It will be interesting to see what’s in it.

**Interviewer: Yes, and they're going to make sure that the information is up-to-date, or it’s the right information, or it’s usable information?**

P5: I would be interested to see what the framework is going to inspect [Crosstalk 0:21:07].

**Interviewer: Okay, so no-one knows yet?**

P5: What will happen then is the local authorities will then jump to answer those questions within the framework, really. We don’t let it become something that’s organic. We don’t have a plan to let go. (Laughter) We have a plan to respond rather than a plan to think how it might develop.

**Interviewer: Yes. I was talking to someone the other day that says a lot of these types of services tend to just be a bit of an echo chamber. You get told to do something, so then obviously you're compliant to that, and then you say back, and then \_\_\_[0:21:39] to be monitored and of course you’ve done the thing, because there’s this weird…**

P5: It’s just linear conversations. It just goes backwards and forwards. It’s not that we pretend, but we play around it, talking to people and different stakeholders, really. We don’t really let go.

**Interviewer: What was your involvement in the launch event, because that’s where I remember you being quite involved in that?**

P5: Just because they asked us, “How do we do a launch event?” and less people have done events, I suppose, over the years, and we’ve done a number of events over the years around different…

We used to run an annual event, a local offer type event around the transitional planning, opportunities for young people as they prepare to leave school. We used to run that with [Connexions 0:22:21] every year. Just really practical stuff really. It wasn’t anything ground-breaking. (Laughter)

**Interviewer: It’s important stuff, though. It’s important graft at the end of the day.**

P5: Yes. Just getting people, and then knowing who’s invited, and just knowing what you have to do. Just simple stuff.

**Interviewer: Yes. How do you think the launch event went?**

P5: Alright. It just felt like an event, rather than…

Nothing lively about it neither. It was just a traditional event, really, wasn’t it? Nothing…

**Interviewer: I think we’re going to plan to do another one come the end of the year. I think October time or November there’s going to be a relaunch on the local offer.**

**What was interesting I thought about the launch event was just how – I was only there for a short period of time, because I came in, I set up, and I went off, and I did a tag team with a bunch of other people who came in.**

P5: It was very professional orientated, wasn’t it, the event?

**Interviewer: It felt like it. That’s what I was going to say. It was a lot of organisations sat at desks. I think there were a few families that popped in. I was there for the first hour or so, and there weren’t many schools.**

P5: No. One group of 21 young people came from one school, bussed in.

**Interviewer: Yes. Maybe that’s the point, though, actually, in the way that professionals is the first starting point, I don’t know, to start getting the message out there.**

P5: It depends what you want it to be thought, isn’t it? Because the danger of doing it that way is that it just becomes service land. It becomes what professionals know rather than a conversation about what needs to change sometimes.

One of the places where [I want to see 0:23:59] that conversation happen is online. It would be really good if we could start talking to people about how we shift stuff as well, rather than just the bubble of service land, really. Because service land doesn’t provide life for people.

**Interviewer: I'm sure that probably feeds into one of your next questions, Interviewer, doesn’t it?**

**Interviewer: Which one?**

**Interviewer: Oh, sorry. (Laughter)**

**Interviewer: [Did you have one in mind 0:24:20]?**

**Interviewer: I will let you carry on.**

**Interviewer: [That was interesting. That was just a curious]-**

**Interviewer: Sorry, I'm chatting too much [Crosstalk].**

**Interviewer: My next question was just about your involvement in the setting up of the local offer [Crosstalk].**

P5: Really practical, as I was just saying before there. It was really just around, “How do we get the event off the ground?” That’s why I came into the January/February meetings, really, because there was a bit of panic around, “What do we do to have an event?”

It was a very traditional event, as I said. We need to start shifting how events look. They need to be themed better, I think. They need to be a bit more fun. They're very dry, aren’t they?

**Interviewer: What do you mean by themed?**

P5: Growing up is a good theme. Thinking about the future is a good theme for people.

One of the things [I used to do 0:25:13] was do it around planning lives. So that we could take one issue with a group of young people and their families, we loved for young people and families to come, one issue that they're all struggling with, and do an hour planning with them about, I don’t know, “One thing to do in your free time that you're not doing at the minute. What’s the one thing?”

We would have a lot of community connectors there, so people that we know, that sort of thing, in different organisations around sports, leisure.

Their challenge would be, as well, to try and get as many of those young people connected over the coming month after that, really.

Just to make it a bit different. It might only be 10 young people and their families, but that we did something practical with folk as well.

Planning lives is a really nice little tool just helping people to think about what’s possible.

**Interviewer: Planning lows?**

P5: Planning lives. It’s called planning lives.

**Interviewer: Oh, planning lives?**

P5: It’s the simple stuff. It’s just simple stuff taken out of person centred planning stuff really. It’s just some of the really practical stuff that’s taken out of person centred planning tools.

The four big tools are essential lifestyle planning, personal futures planning. I'm struggling now. (Laughter) [Map and path 0:26:21].

We just take little tools. There’s loads of little tools within there that you could take out and help people just do an hour’s plan about one thing – I'm just thinking off the top of my head – one thing that you could do in your free time.

For young people that’s really good, to try one different thing that they’re not doing at the minute. Then to provide advice, information, and support around that after that as well, so then have other agencies that will be then there to help around benefits.

Do you know what I mean? Line people up sort of thing. In some ways have a little bit of a complete offer around doing something different.

We would just call that local offer live. We were trying to brand it as that sort of thing with colleagues. “Can we not do something like that?”

We haven’t got far with that as an idea. It’s a little bit out of people’s comfort zone, I think, sometimes. It’s dead easy to do. It’s quite simple to do.

**Interviewer: It sounds really sensible, because also then you give an event a purpose. It’s very clear you’re coming here to learn something, and not just to collect some leaflets, for instance, or whatever.**

P5: Yes, about service land.

**Interviewer: It sounds a good idea, actually. It gives something like the local offer some purpose, because you can imagine – sorry, I'm doing a really bad job of an interview here, because I'm talking about ideas, but you can imagine someone – I can’t imagine if this is a paper based toolkit, but completing one of these little tools.**

P5: It’s just this one page profile is what we use.

**Interviewer: Yes, okay, so you can imagine someone working through something like that, and then identifying with the local offer, the local resources, but the point would be it’s not service land resources, it’s actually just what’s going on in your community. Who would you go and see? Who could you go and knock on the door of?**

P5: We’ve got those people. We’ve got good links with Sage. We’ve got good links with music, arts, and drama, and they're really up to trying to open doors for young people with special educational needs and disabilities.

We’ve got those people that are really up there for doing it, really, and we’ve got the people with the person centred planning skills that can facilitate that for an hour/hour and a half, and help people just shift forward on one thing.

It’s really useful thing not just to use it in that way. You can take it into other areas of your life. Do you know what I mean? It’s a good way of just thinking about an issue.

**Interviewer: Yes.**

**Interviewer: Cool. Have you had much contact with the steering committees as it’s been carried on, or is that…?**

P5: No. I don’t have any involvement or any contact with them. [Day to day I 0:28:38] speak to [anon.]. [anon.] is our operational person and we always speak to [anon.] all the time.

**Interviewer: Do you get a sense from her of the sort of challenges they have been facing at their end, and the challenges that the local offer faces generally?**

P5: The challenge is ownership, isn’t it? We’ve all got to own it. We can’t expect one person to own it. I think that’s probably what always happens. Not always happens, but it does happen a lot, in local authorities in particular, is that it’s in a person’s job title, so we expect them to do it all, and they can’t.

**Interviewer: Yes.**

P5: It’s not possible. (Laughter) It’s a sense of ownership.

**Interviewer: There might be a bit of a feeling that it’s already been done, that they satisfied the requirements, and then…**

P5: Definitely. It goes back to that linear conversation. The government asks one thing and we feedback down the line that we’ve done it, like you were saying before. That’s what happens. We don’t do other conversations with folk, and we don’t take ownership sometimes.

**Interviewer: I think you were at the meeting, weren’t you, where they put together a new – I would see it as a hierarchy of various different groups.**

P5: Unbelievable.

**Interviewer: And local offer was a task and finish group, I think, yes.**

**Interviewer: Oh, yes.**

**Interviewer: I think planning for adulthood was also there, and that was task and finish. Because that’s done. (Laughter)**

P5: I couldn’t believe the hierarchical nature of that structure.

**Interviewer: Yes.**

P5: It was astonishing. [What are you thinking 0:30:03]? The whole SEND reforms is about becoming a different type of organisation, a much more circular organisation. (Laughter)

[I] didn’t see it, but it was totally top-down. This board sat on the top, and they would make decisions, and these people would feed up from the bottom. “Have you not learnt anything about what these reforms are about?” (Laughter)

**Interviewer: Do you think that’s because it’s like a culture change [Crosstalk 0:30:29]?**

P5: Absolutely, it is, yes.

**Interviewer: Is that something which is achievable?**

P5: I think it is, yes. I think the self-direction and the personal budgets and that are starting to show us that that’s where we need to get to. Do you know what I mean? We need to shift some of the power away from us, really.

**Interviewer: Can you say a bit more about that then? Have there been examples of where you can see those processes working?**

P5: Yes, definitely. I think we need to start cutting out some of the assessments that we’re doing.

There’s an opportunity there, as well, I think. Because EHC should be able to become the single point of gathering information about a child’s needs. That should be the one process.

Then whether a child is eligible for additional support, we should be able to decide from that information whether they meet our access criteria.

Then we’ve got a simple tool that we call the resource allocation questionnaire, which will be able to decide what level of funding a child can have across it.

We’ve just got 12 bands of funding, so it’s not [hard 0:31:21]. (Laughter) So you get one of these pots of funding depending on your level of support you need.

Over the last seven years we’ve shifted from a very traditional model of us providing services, and those very much like we go out – I knew usually before I went out and saw a family just from the referral information what I was going to give them. It was very much a professional [gift 0:31:43] sort of model, really. (Laughter)

Now it’s not. Well, it still can be, and we still see some of that happening, but it’s still very much about trying to be a bit more transparent about what resources are available to folk.

The conversation isn’t about what service I provide you, but, “This is what your child needs, based upon what we’ve discussed in the assessment. This is the level of funding based upon the questionnaire, and your child’s needs are measured against all the children who have questionnaires.”

This is reviewed every two years, and we look at the allocation every two years, based on what we’ve done from assessment [information 0:32:15]. Then tailor it again, or move it round a little bit where there’s an increase in need, or there’s a change in needs, and we can tailor the allocations to that.

We’ve just done that again. It took us three years to do this time, but we’ve done it twice now, so we’re in quite a good position to know that the allocations are pretty fair, and can meet the levels of need that people have.

People have changed what they buy. The conversation isn’t now about what I can give to you, it’s about, “This is your allocation of resources. What do you want to do with it?”

**Interviewer: Yes.**

P5: “What sort of life do you and your child and your family want?”

We’ve seen a big shift away from residential respite services, because families didn’t really want to send their disabled children away to overnight care. Most families don’t.

Some families have to, because their sons or daughters don’t sleep, and actually they need 40 nights a year when they know that they're going to be able to sleep, (Laughter) just to get through the other 325.

Most people have moved away from that, and they just want their child to be part of the family, so support workers go away on holiday with the family. Some children do need that level of support, so they take a support worker away with them to go to…

I always remember [anon.]going on one of the first ones we did back in 2007. He took his support worker away. They went for 10 days in Ibiza. The family had a great time, they spent some time together with [anon.], but also [anon.]spent some time with the support worker.

He was 15/16 at the time, so he could go and do different things that he wanted to do as well, rather than having to spend his whole holiday with his family at that age. Which you wouldn’t do if you were 15 or 16. You would be starting to do a little bit on your own.

And because there were two of them he could get into the pool. He couldn’t get into the pool when he went on holidays before, because his mam was knackered from lifting him over the years and had spondylosis in the top of her spine.

The support worker and dad could lift him into the pool, so it made sure that he got into the pool every day, and that improved some of the outcomes, when you think about it.

That was good for him, because he had spasticity in his legs, so him stretched in the pool was really good, that sort of thing. He got a suntan. He looked really well when he came back.

Everyone had a bit of a holiday. Everyone had a different type of holiday for much cheaper than spending 10 days in the respite unit. Do you know what I mean?

**Interviewer: Yes.**

P5: Part of the family, doing ordinary family…

There’s lots of examples of that sort of stuff there. Just dead practical stuff that people do as well.

Another family didn’t really want carers coming into the house all the time, so they just changed the flooring in the living room, so the flooring has improved and...

**Interviewer: They spent the budget on that?**

P5: They spent it on some flooring. Rather than having carpet, if you had flooring – flooring has improved – with a better grip on it, then the young man didn’t need a carer every time to get up, because he can assist himself. So they just changed it. They just changed the flooring.

Another family had access to the front but they could never get in the garden, so all they did was put a step in and five flags. We couldn’t have done it, because it wouldn’t meet our requirements for that sort of thing, but they did it as a practical way of making sure they could get out in the garden when the rest of the family were out in the garden.

**Interviewer: Is the culture change there very much around the local authority giving up control, do you think? [Is that what you're saying 0:35:28]?**

P5: Very much so, yes. There were lots of debates and arguments with managers about agreeing that sort of stuff at the start, but now it’s not quibbled about really. There is some quibbling still goes on [around it], but largely now those things just seem part of what we do now.

We wouldn’t have done it. What’s it called, the grant, for adaptations to house? That’s what that should be doing. We shouldn’t be spending our money.

That would be the sort of discussion you would have had in the past. There’s a lot less now. There’s a long way to go. Some people still haven’t got it and still want to have control.

**Interviewer: Yes. There always will be those types of people, I think.**

P5: Absolutely.

**Interviewer: They will be there to the bitter end, I imagine.**

P5: [Crosstalk 0:36:13]. It’s amazing. In teams you can still see the new ones coming through as well, who act in the same way. The culture might have changed some if every day you need to revisit with folk. Every day.

**Interviewer: Thinking about that culture change then, another important thing about the local offer is this idea of getting people’s feedback.**

**It’s kind of what you were talking about earlier as well. It’s not just about professionals. It’s meant to be about people being able to say what works, what doesn’t work, what’s missing. Have you seen that…?**

**I'm getting a sense I know what the answer to this is already.**

P5: No, I haven’t seen that yet.

**Interviewer: How could you imagine that might be working? How should it work, I guess?**

P5: [I think it’s got to work in 0:36:55] lots of different ways. I don’t think we’re going to open up the website to people to write comment, are they?

I think we need to reach out and do different things with folk, and we need to work with other people locally in their areas, or within their schools, or wherever it is that’s the most comfortable place for them – within their homes sometimes – about shifting that stuff.

These colleagues here are early intervention colleagues in this room. This is the CAF team, the Common Assessment Framework team.

They do all the stuff with children [underneath 0:37:23] thresholds for safeguarding. They work a lot with our early intervention workers.

We’ve got two early intervention workers now. They have very much a problem solving sort of approach in their work. Their work is all about going out and looking at, “What can we do? What can we move forward?”

That’s a different way of trying our work, because we didn’t do that sort of stuff for a long time.

**Interviewer: How does that work in practice then?**

P5: They work alongside \_\_\_[0:37:50] just under 1000, wasn’t it, with a statement in [anon.] at the end, 921. We were only seeing 220 of those children in our service, but we knew we had a legal duty, under the last government, to increase short breaks, so we do it by getting out into the schools.

The schools make a lot of the referrals, and family services make a lot of the referrals, Pass It On Parents make a lot of the referrals, and [Network 0:38:18] work very closely, because \_\_\_. They do a lot of work [Crosstalk] local offer group.

**Interviewer: Yes.**

P5: They do a lot of work alongside, and they try and make sure they don’t duplicate work by meeting every term to see what the young people are doing and what sort of issues [arise 0:38:33].

So we’re much more trying to go out and engage folk, rather than waiting for the referral to come in. It’s a much better way of doing stuff, rather than waiting for a crisis or people not feeling as though they're getting the right information.

**Interviewer: Yes.**

P5: That has improved, I think, our profile, but you can’t satisfy everyone all the time, and we still have a lot of complaints, but… (Laughter)

**Interviewer: Yes. Who doesn’t?**

P5: Yes, but I think some of that is frustration with lots of the systems that exist really. They are daft systems. You wouldn’t believe some of the loopholes they make people jump through.

**Interviewer: Yes. In the context of the local offer then would it be about going to communities and…? I don’t know whether it would be like just talking to them about what they use or [Crosstalk 0:39:17].**

**Interviewer: [Crosstalk] the role of the local offer [Crosstalk]?**

**Interviewer: Yes.**

P5: That’s why I don’t think it’s just IT based. Do you know what I mean? It’s got to be much more about our frontline services in that stuff, really, and what our frontline offer is.

**Interviewer: I think that is a big challenge in local offer. It’s seen to be the website.**

P5: And it’s not.

**Interviewer: Yes.**

P5: It’s how people do their work as well, and be much more problem focused, and not looking at service land.

How do we help young people be active citizens? How do we spread a wider message of the council, which is we have a responsibility to support all our citizens to be active and making a contribution in the city.” That is one of the city’s chief aims is, really, is to do that.

That’s what we’ve got to carry out, really, when we’re out there thinking of folk, about how do we open doors for young people? Using the knowledge and information that we do have, how do we find the community connectors out there as well, that will help us to get through the doors of the young people as well?

**Interviewer: What’s a community connector?**

P5: I suppose we always talk [about 0:40:22] different people within communities. Obviously there are community leaders, there are protagonists, and then there are connectors, the people who do…

The leaders don’t really want to talk to us, because they're busy leading, and promoting their community, and doing lots of stuff.

Protagonists will always play around on the outside, and they will help you sometimes but they like to have a bit of fun with it all really, and sometimes they will cause trouble as well.

The connectors are the ones you want to find, and there’s lots of people out there within the city that are connectors that are really good. They just do it every day. People don’t call them that. That’s what we’re looking for in folk, that sort of thing.

In the East End we’ve got a couple of wonderful people that we work with that just know. They work for Age Concern now. They don’t even work \_\_\_[0:41:02]. They’re [wonderfully knowing] what’s going on in the community. They know what’s going on in the East End. They can link you in with anybody. [Crosstalk] long time.

**Interviewer: They just kind of talk to people?**

P5: They’re just really open people, and they just talk to people, and they just really engage them. Those are the people we’re looking for all the time. (Laughter)

**Interviewer: Do you have almost like a list or a database of people that you [Crosstalk 0:41:24]?**

P5: [There’s not many of them]. We haven’t found that many of them. We would like to find a lot more. That’s why we try to talk to other people, to see if they know who they are within areas.

We work a lot with [Nunsmoor 0:41:34]. Nunsmoor have got some wonderful people that are great community connectors, in the West End as well.

[HealthWORKS 0:41:40] have got some good people that they know in their area as well that help them. Some people don’t always want to share that though \_\_\_ [Crosstalk].

**Interviewer: Well, no. I imagine it can be in short supply as well.**

P5: [It is in] short supply.

**Interviewer: Yes.**

P5: But we’re always looking \_\_\_[0:41:54].

**Interviewer: Are you a local offer champion?**

P5: No, I'm not.

**Interviewer: Do you know the local offer champions?**

P5: Yes.

**Interviewer: Yes? We’ve been thinking around actually whoever they are, because sometimes that could be a professional or-**

P5: I haven’t done the training. I wear the badge, obviously I've got the badge, but I haven’t done the training, so I can’t call myself a champion.

**Interviewer: Oh. Have you got the, “Ask me about the local offer”?**

P5: Yes.

**Interviewer: I've got one of them as well. (Laughter) Am I a champion?**

**Interviewer: I've not got one.**

**Interviewer: I do mention it. Well, you didn’t come to the launch event. That’s why I got one.**

**Interviewer: Oh, sorry, yes. (Laughter)**

**Interviewer: I always wear it to all my local offer meetings.**

P5: It’s a nice [Crosstalk 0:42:26].

**Interviewer: It’s a nice badge. “Ask me about the local offer.” That’s what it says. Point people to the website.**

P5: With a green triangle on it.

**Interviewer: I guess that was something they seemed like they might play an important role, actually, whoever they are, in actually being that community connector.**

P5: Some of them are really good folk as well. There’s two of them in our office. Our early intervention workers do want to use it, but they haven’t got any way of using it when they're out and about in the community.

**Interviewer: Is that because they don’t have the equipment?**

P5: [Crosstalk 0:42:52]. Yes, they don’t have a laptop, or tablet, or whatever.

**Interviewer: Yes. Obviously if you type in ‘local offer [anon.]’ you don’t necessarily get that, because you get special offers at Tesco maybe. (Laughter)**

P5: It does come up, [anon.] FIS local offer, but it’s under…

**Interviewer: The other thing I was going to say was that part of the point of getting feedback is also it’s meant to feed into commissioning, [or I guess in general 0:43:23].**

**I read commissioning in two ways. There’s what the local authority call commissioning, which is like service land type commissioning. Then I think more just commissioning in terms of people doing things for other people much more loosely.**

P5: Well, over the last three or four years we’ve been trying to shape that away from just being around \_\_\_[0:43:43], especially within 16 plus education. We’re trying to shift that towards work with young people, because young people want to work. Their aspirations are, like any other young person really, are to work.

We’re trying to shift some of the way that we commission away from traditional educational providers towards ones that provide the majority of their learning within work environments, within work placements.

We’ve got four so far, and they're a range of employment, from the potential of being openly employed through to quite intensive supported employment, and three or four steps along the road in that. So a mixture of supported employment and open employment. Two supported employment environments. The NHS are our main employer.

**Interviewer: Oh, really?**

P5: Yes.

**Interviewer: Oh, wow.**

P5: They’re absolutely brilliant. Only small numbers, but every year they will employ seven or eight young people with learning difficulties/disabilities within the NHS Hospital Trusts, and they have done that for the last three years.

**Interviewer: Just for me to understand that a bit more then, is that services – in a sense are you saying the service in a way is actually the fact that people are getting work opportunities?**

P5: Yes. Young people were saying to us, “We don’t want to go and sit in college for the next three years and end up NEETs. We actually want to work.”

How do we shape work for them? It’s hard anyway to get work, but we’re starting from such a low position anyway. The employment figures for young people with special educational needs and disabilities are horrendous.

Only 45% of young people with physical disabilities end up in work. Only 15% of young people with autism end up in work. If you’ve got a learning disability it’s 7% of young people, and I think that’s over-egging it really, end up in employment.

We’re starting from a really low base anyway. If you can get three or four you’re increasing it by a percentage point. More really. (Laughter)

Young people have been saying that for a long time. “How do we get nearer to work?” So we’re trying to shift more and more the providers, because we think more and more young people could, if we started earlier [in that stuff around employment 0:45:50].

So we do respond, but not in that formal sort of way really. There’s different ways of responding, I suppose, though, isn’t there? There’s different ways of responding.

We haven’t got anything written down, but young people told us over and over again, in lots and lots of different consultations, that that’s what they wanted to see.

Like I say, the NHS have been superb in [anon.].

We need more employers. We would love the university to be an employer, Northumbria and [anon.]. I think there are lots of opportunities within the universities to employ people.

**Interviewer: We’re doing, as part of our \_\_\_[0:46:23], are having internships just specifically for young people with disabilities.**

P5: Oh, are you?

**Interviewer: Yes.**

P5: Brilliant.

**Interviewer: Primarily the audience this year has been young college or undergraduate students, but I think the intention is to open it up a lot more.**

**It’s the first time we’ve done it in our group, so we’re just seeing how it works this year, but luckily we have a very passionate student, a very passionate advocate, who is all into disability law and legislation, and he’s been driving it forward.**

P5: Wow.

**Interviewer: Yes, I know that is a big challenge.**

P5: We would love to talk to anyone who is willing to talk to us, really.

The NHS really want to talk to people as well, and they really want to support other employers to think about it as well.

We’ve got a wonderful human resource manager that leads it in the Trust. If your colleague can get a human resources colleague on-side – if they’ve got already got one that’s brilliant, but if they can get a human resources colleague onside that’s the winner.

We know we make progress when we get a human resources [Crosstalk 0:47:29] honestly. Because they know how to talk to the employers in the different sections. We would be really interested in that.

**Interviewer: I will link you up with him. He’s quite a character. He’s very passionate. (Laughter)**

P5: Right.

**Interviewer: Yes. Whether you will be able to get HR onside I don’t know, but…**

P5: You're a massive employer in the city now. You’re going to replace us soon, the universities, as an employer, I would have thought.

**Interviewer: Yes, well, between ourselves and Northumbria you know it’s huge. It really is.**

P5: I always thought [Crosstalk 0:47:58].

**Interviewer: Sorry, [Crosstalk].**

P5: [Crosstalk] cut off again, but we will talk to anyone about the opportunities. Because we’re interested in the internship model. That’s what we’re interested in.

We’re really interested in place and train. Young people that can do three days in work and a day and a half on employability skills training. The idea being the longest job interview, really, a 12 month period that these young people then…

Then obviously we want employers to commit to some sort of element of employment, but we will assist with some of that as well.

**Interviewer: Yes.**

P5: We’ve got some money that we can twist to help support that as well.

**Interviewer: Well, definitely we will [think through 0:48:36], because we’re trying to do a whole broad [themed] participation thing anyway within the university, which is both staffing and also student wise.**

**I think a lot of the universities think the issues around disabled people and people with special educational needs is solved by the fact that now we can make reasonable adjustments, there are reasonable processes.**

**Often that fails to recognise that that’s people that come through the door. Imagine the route, the journey they have been through, to get there.**

**They're the really passionate, got all of the resources available to them, maybe financial/social. They’ve had a very supportive family, possibly, more often than not.**

**Loads of people just are not fortunate enough to be in those circumstances, and they wouldn’t even think this is an opportunity that’s available to them, so getting people through the door in other ways is probably quite important. That’s the level of conversation we’re trying to have at the moment.**

P5: [Crosstalk 0:49:37] colleagues, but we’ve got some wonderful-

**Interviewer: Well, we work in computer science, so… (Laughter)**

P5: Computer science is probably the biggest area that young people are interested as well. Do you know what I mean? They’ve got some wonderful computer scientists in the city that are at home in their bedrooms.

One young man they tell me he’s beyond degree level, really, but he’s never been near a school or any education for the last five years. He’s just self-taught all the time, really.

We’re trying to get him out of his bedroom at the minute, back into learning, but in a productive employment sort of way. So that his skills can be used in a much more productive way rather than just doing a course.

**Interviewer: I will definitely link you up with [anon.] in that case, who is our student who is doing it all. He will be really interested. I've deviated a little bit.**

P5: He wrote a piece of software for children that were struggling with English and maths.

He has to be given a brief, because he needs a brief to develop anything, really, but he was given a brief for what they wanted him to do, which was about, “How would you invent a bit of software around footballer’s names, where children that were interested in football might engage in spelling around spelling footballer’s names?” \_\_\_[0:50:47].

So he designed a football where footballer’s names would jump out of the top, with their photograph on top, and \_\_\_[0:50:54].

**Interviewer: Nice and simple.**

P5: Very simple.

**Interviewer: Engaging.**

P5: Very [engaging 0:50:59].

**Interviewer: [That’s important].**

P5: Well, this thing about jumping out at them [Crosstalk].

**Interviewer: I think we’ve touched a lot on just the last few questions [Crosstalk].**

Interviewer: I know. I took over a little bit there, didn’t I? Sorry, Interviewer. I'm big mouth [John 0:51:11].

**Interviewer: I think you’ve mentioned it anyway. Just talking about the local offer specifically again, and I think you’ve mentioned it, what would a successful local offer look like to you? What would you want to see it become?**

P5: Lots of different things, I suppose. Going back to that thing about it’s not just a dry old information directory. It needs to be much more dynamic.

It can be. There are good ideas around, and people have wonderful ideas around the authority about how it could be different. It just needs to be given a bit of focus now, I suppose.

**Interviewer: What does dynamic mean for you in thinking about the local offer?**

P5: Doing different things. Do you know what I mean? Some of those ideas I was just throwing around there, really. Things that we talked about just in the office about how we might make it more engaging for folk. Not a diary of events, but a number of different things over the year. If we started doing things regularly with folk…

Not that it becomes boring, but \_\_\_[0:52:07], but it develops a routine around it as well, and some of this stuff is quite routine sort of stuff. Growing up happens in quite a regimental way.

**Interviewer: It could be like a, “What’s going on nearby” sort of…**

P5: Change it around a bit as well. [We’re in a 0:52:25] routine. It needs to go out into different parts of the city as well, where people live, or different schools, like I said before.

I'm worried about doing it round schools. I don’t think they're the best places to do them round necessarily with folk.

**Interviewer: What do you think the biggest challenge is then? What’s been the biggest barrier to making it a success?**

P5: That we just continue to act as if it’s a legal requirement to do, and we will do the minimum.

END AUDIO