Supporting disabled students:
Enhanced Theory of Change for multi-intervention transition support

TASO

Key:
- Type 3 evidence box
- Type 2 evidence box
- Type 1 evidence box
- Type 3 link
- Type 2 link
- Type 1 link
- Assumption (A)
- Change mechanism (CM)

CHANGE MECHANISMS:

Change Mechanism 1: Early engagement with HEPs --> students integrate the lived experience of their disability with the HE journey --> improved knowledge and / or increased confidence and trusting relationships with staff / support services

Change Mechanism 2: Familiarisation with and early awareness of student life --> students feel empowered and better prepared for HE --> improved experience of HE

Change Mechanism 3: In-depth understanding of disabled students' needs by HEP staff / peers --> improved support for disabled students that is provided early on --> better provision and increased use of support, confidence among disabled students and impact on progression after HE

Change Mechanism 4: Support by significant others (e.g., parents/supporters) --> maximization of student readiness and competencies --> increased student confidence (and, therefore, sense of empowerment) in navigating HE

Change Mechanism 5: Tailored staff awareness and training aligned with disabled student needs --> increased staff confidence in supporting disabled students' needs --> improved student access to and use of support services

Change Mechanism 6: Integrated / joined up support provision --> awareness. access to and use of support throughout transition (and, therefore, a sense of empowerment) --> increased skills and knowledge for success in HE

Change Mechanism 7: Early access to HE experience --> increased disabled student self-determination (and, therefore, sense of empowerment) --> improved post-transition outcomes

ASSUMPTIONS:

Set 1 – Student-related assumptions

1.1 Students have time available and invest it to actively engage with HEPs and to take up the support on offer to them during their transition journey.

1,2 Disabled students share information about their disability/ies as early as possible so that appropriate adjustments can be made to teaching, assessment, and pastoral care.

1.3 The interventions/programmes generate awareness and confidence among those that have not shared information about their disability to declare or seek targeted support.

1.4 Disabled students welcome the opportunity to learn about disability support from HEPs and related interventions and engage with them.

1.5 Disabled students experience their engagement with staff and other stakeholders as being supportive and trustworthy.

1.6 The interventions / programmes implemented lead to observable impacts on disabled student transition into HE.

1.7 Professional, statutory and regulatory bodies (PSRBs) provide clear information on fitness to practice in a way that supports disabled applicant knowledge of the benefits of a professional course of study.

Set 2 – Staff- and other stakeholder-related assumptions

2.1 There is senior leadership support and buy-in to develop and implement interventions / programmes to support the transitions of students with disabilities into HE.

2.2 Education providers are proactive with supporting students with a disability and reflect their commitment through activities such as staff training, student access to disability services / resources.

2.3 Education providers identify appropriate interventions / adjustments aligned with specific disabled student needs.

2.4 Staff and other stakeholders (such as peers involved in interventions) form supportive and trustworthy relationships with disabled students in all engagements conducted.

2.5 Faculty members understand the importance of their role in the academic success of students with disabilities and the reasons why transition into HE might be more difficult for students with disability.

2.6 Staff will engage with training workshops and resources, and that this training will lead to a change in behaviours or attitudes towards students.

2.7 Parents and supporters are receptive to the idea of transition support and understand the benefits it can accrue for students as they enter HE.

2.8 Parents and supporters will engage with transition interventions/programmes if provided with the opportunity, and that such engagement will support student transitions.

2.9 Professional, statutory and regulatory bodies (PSRBs) support staff clarity about reasonable adjustments or anticipatory inclusive design.

2.10 Staff have appropriate approaches to sharing information about disability with key colleagues and these do not put undue burden on students.

Assumptions set 3 – Operational/Intervention-related

3.1 HEPs engage with the multi-intervention approach when designing programmes to support disabled student transition.

3.2 HEPs will conduct a gap analysis of support currently in place to make most use of the multi-intervention approach to transition support.

3.3 There are sufficient resources available for implementing a programme of transition support at HEPs.

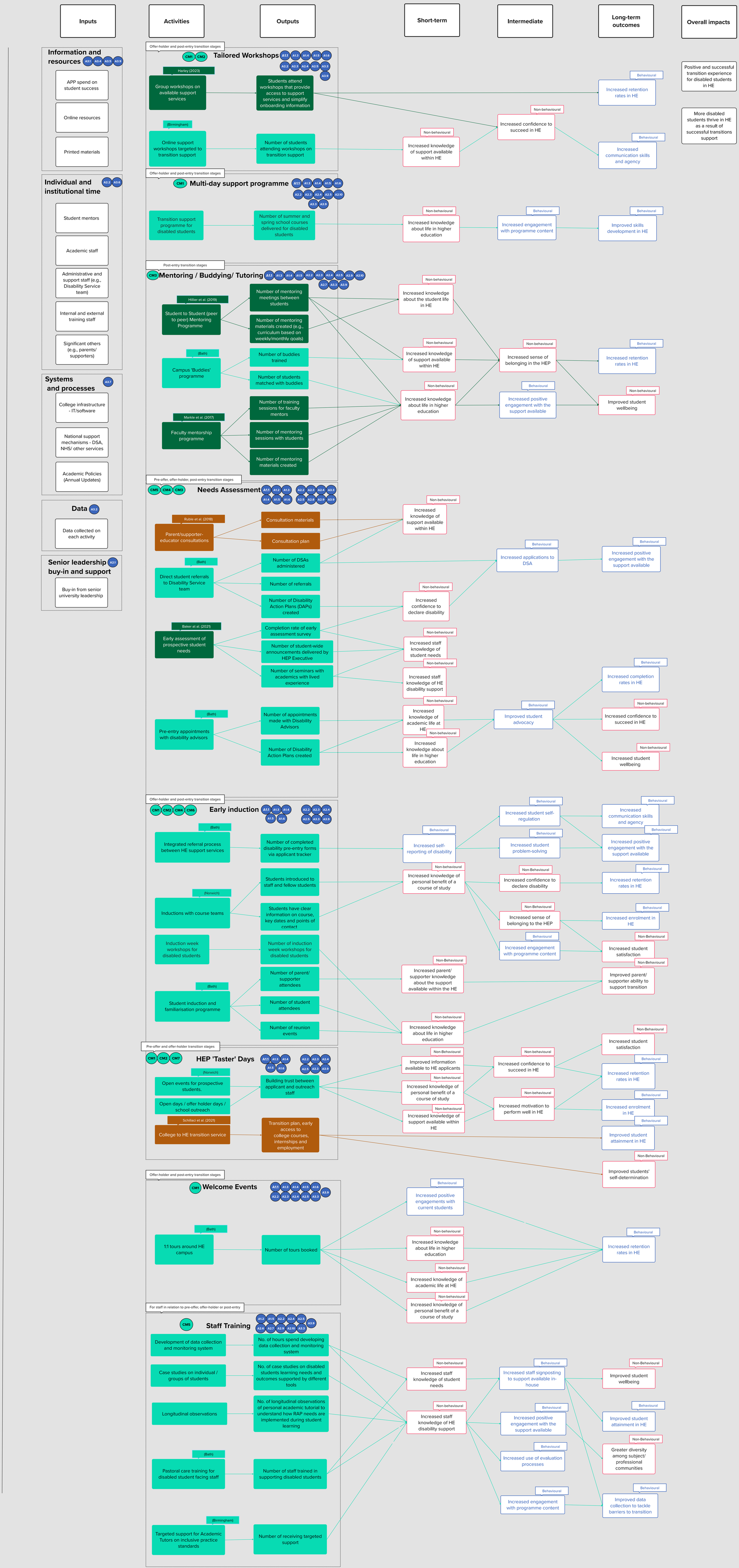
3.4 Institutional data is available to track the impact of the transition support interventions/programmes implemented.

3.5 HEPs will collect data where existing data does not exist to evaluate the impact of the transition support programmes implemented.

3.6 Transition support programmes are planned and implemented early on in the student's transition journey at the pre-entry stage or within the first term of a student's entry into HE.

3.7 An accessible, multi-format mode (group vs individual, online vs in person) of collaboration will maximise engagement in the process, in terms of co-creation and use of the resources.

3.8 Resources and information co-created with students and staff will lead to better aligned guidance and more effective practice.

3.9 A multi-disciplinary project team that includes staff from across different parts of the HEP and students/alumni with lived experience will contribute insights and experiences that strengthen the project methods and aims.

3.10 A joined-up, holistic approach to transition support will identify students who require additional support throughout the admissions process and will successfully signpost these