

CLAHRC BITE

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A bite-sized summary of CLAHRC research: Preparing young people to leave Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) with confidence



“We don’t feel like adults, just because we’ve turned 18”

What?

CLAHRC EoE researchers used creative, participatory approaches to co-devise a transition preparation programme with young people leaving CAMHS.

Who?

Eighteen young people attending and leaving CAMHS and 30 mental health practitioners from three NHS Foundation Trusts in Cambridgeshire/Peterborough, Hertfordshire and Norfolk/Suffolk.

Why?

Our previous CLAHRC study looked at the mental health of 17-year olds facing transition from child and adolescent care services. The small study suggested that young people would benefit from improved preparation¹. In this study young people explored the details of transition preparation.

Background: In most regions of the UK young people attending CAMHS are discharged or transferred to an adult service at age 17, 18 at the latest. This transition is often poorly managed and poorly experienced by young people with negative outcomes². The system has little flexibility to account for individual needs, readiness or ability to cope with the move. Young people may benefit from improved preparation¹.

Key findings: Leaving CAMHS is a highly anxious and uncertain time for most young people. This may be underestimated by clinical staff. As a result, little preparation is offered. Young people agreed and outlined:

- recommendations covering transition preparation content, access and delivery
- a range of training needs for staff, parents and young people
- a set of core person-centred transition preparation aims
- preparation activities, support needs, tools and structures for monitoring and recording progress across transition

Thirty clinical staff assessed the recommendations for achievability in routine clinical settings. They identified lack of resources and inflexible NHS structures as potential barriers.

Recommendations: Young people would like mental health service providers to dedicate time and resources to CAMHS transition preparation for all leavers, including those discharged to primary care. Improved joint working and communication between CAMHS and other services would facilitate smooth transitions. Flexibility is needed for young people to move on when they are ready, confident, able to cope and flourish in the adult world.

Dissemination: The young people and researchers have presented to senior management, Board and CAMHS transition review meetings. Two participating trusts plan to develop the young people's recommendations with a view to implementation. Through the joint clinician workshops, important dialogues began between CAMHS and adult mental health services which are set to build in the future.

References

1. Memarzia J, St Clair M, Owens M, Goodyer IM, Dunn VJ. Adolescents leaving mental health or social care services: predictors of mental health and psychosocial factors one year later. *BMC Health Services Research*. 2015; 15:185
2. Paul M, Ford T, Kramer T, Islam T, Harley K, Singh S. Young people's transfer and transitions between child and adolescent and adult mental health services: The TRACK Study. *The British Journal of Psychiatry*, 2013; 202 (54), 36-40.

Photograph overleaf: some of the young people's main worries about leaving CAMHS recorded on post-it notes during the workshops

What is NIHR CLAHRC East of England?

The National Institute for Health Research (NIHR) Collaboration for Leadership in Applied Health Research and Care (CLAHRC) East of England is a five year programme of applied health and social care research which focuses on the needs of people with complex problems, often vulnerable, when multiple agencies are involved in their care: young people, frail older people, those with dementia, learning disabilities, acquired brain injuries or mental ill health.

The CLAHRC East of England collaboration encompasses some thirty-six organisations, with research hubs in the Universities of Cambridge, Hertfordshire and East Anglia working closely with individuals and organisations involved in the whole care pathway.

Service users and carers are at the heart of what we do, in parallel with an ambitious public health research programme.

Co-production and collaboration at all stages of the research process are fundamental to making a positive impact through applied health research.

For more information:

Website: <http://www.clahrc-ee.nihr.ac.uk/2015/06/transition-from-child-adolescent-mental-health-services-camhs-users-and-leavers-co-produce-a-transition-preparation-programme/>

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