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In this section



Top transition tips for mental health professionals

This information is for

- professionals in Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) who are about to support one of their autistic patients with **mental health** difficulties to transfer to adult mental health services
- professionals in adult mental health services who are about to start working with an autistic young person with mental health problems.

CAMHS workers

- Work with the young person to **prepare them for the change** by finding out as much as you can about their new routine.
- Give the young person a photograph of their new worker and where they will meet. Perhaps you could go with the young person the first time.
- Support the young person to write a letter to their new worker explaining their needs, their strengths, their challenges and ambitions, if the young person is happy to do this. This could also be a really helpful tool for demonstrating the progress the person has made since they started to meet you.
- Work with the young person to ensure that they know where they can get support both for mental health issues and for everyday life challenges, especially if the young person is going to be discharged rather than transferred.

Are there any local projects that you could refer them to? Do they have a **personal budget** they could use in order to buy support?

- Work with others involved with the young person, eg parents, school, social worker, youth or employment service worker (or equivalent in your area) and other professionals, to ensure that they have a plan and routine after they leave school.

Adult mental health workers

- Share any existing experience or knowledge of autism you have with your colleagues.
- Learn more about **autism**, a developmental disability that affects more than 1 in 100 people.
- Get to know the person that you are working with and do not make any assumptions or generalisations. All autistic people are different.
- Be aware of **sensory issues**. A person on the autism spectrum may experience acute hearing, sensory overload, or may find touch painful. This might mean that waiting in a busy waiting room will be an anxiety-provoking experience. Consider an alternative meeting place, maybe of the person's own choosing.
- Keep your sentences short and simple. Give one instruction or idea at a time. You may be taken literally, eg "Please wait outside" and "Do you hear voices?" could be acted upon and interpreted in a very literal way. It is not an attempt to be clever or funny.
- Be careful what you promise, eg a 9.30am meeting may be taken by an autistic person to mean just that and not a few minutes either side. Any changes to this may cause great distress, meaning your planned meeting is wasted and trust possibly damaged.
- Allow time for the person to process information. It can take a long time for a person on the autism spectrum to process information. If you disrupt their thought pattern, the processing time may need to start again. As a suggestion leave about six seconds processing time.

- Write down the main actions and outcomes of the meeting down and write down the next appointment time. If possible send a reminder.
- Give very clear instructions about medication. With the person's agreement maybe consider a dosette box with days and times clearly labelled, and even have this made up by the local pharmacist if appropriate.
- Arrange a three-way meeting with the CAMHS worker. Many professionals prefer to meet patients without being swayed by others' views. However, when working with an autistic person, you may find it useful to find out more about the person prior to the first meeting in order to reduce the chances of causing distress or anxiety.

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Useful links 

Social media 

Quick contact 

Sign up for email updates 

To get email updates from us, update your details and preferences, take part in our communities, and use other services, please sign in or register.

The National Autistic Society

Until everyone understands

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