

Exploring the transitions of young people with autism from childhood to young adulthood

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The aim of this paper is to review current positions in transition literature and to identify the role for a community psychological perspective in understanding the transitions of young people with autism. In doing this we would like to introduce a forthcoming project where we will be exploring the experiences of transitions of young people with autism, their families and professionals involved with the families, within a framework which strives to challenge the dominance of a deficit model of autism and explain and research autism from a perspective of valuing neurodiverse qualities and perspectives. The research will capitalise on some of the reported positive engagements with new technologies by people with autism and host synchronous online interviews with young people with autism (14-21 years), parents of young people with autism and professionals working with young people with autism. In addition to this, the young people with autism will be invited to join a synchronous discussion forum where they will be encouraged to collaboratively develop a wiki in order to produce a working paper of information and advice for policy makers reflecting their own voice within the management of the transition process. This is consistent with the overall approach of the project which is to work with young people with autism and draw upon their expertise and experience. The proposed research also poses the question of what transition services, based on understandings of autism as a form of 'neurodiversity', might look like and how services influenced by this re-framing might enable the young people and their families in the transition process. This project draws on two trans-disciplinary perspectives; disability studies and critical community psychology. Through synthesising these two perspectives, this research project will bring a necessary criticality and clarity of theory to understandings of transition to adulthood in a neurodiverse world. The project aims to apply these theories in very real professional, institutional and policy contexts.