

Social Work Online Team Training (SWOTT) toolkit - Facilitator Notes

An Introduction to Neurodiversity

CASE STUDY 3: SUPPORTING WITH TRANSITION

Learning Objectives

- To explore the complexities of supporting a young adult transitioning from child to adult services, particularly when they have both a learning disability and some form of neurodivergence.
- To highlight the intersectionality of neurodivergence and learning disabilities and how one can mask or complicate the other, impacting support needs.
- To encourage reflection on how professionals can approach the multiple diagnoses in a balanced individualised manner.

Q&A

1. What are the main challenges Jake might face during his transition from child to adult services?

- Transition periods can be particularly stressful for neurodivergent people and/or those with learning disabilities, due to changes in routine, environment and support systems.
- Jake may experience anxiety or distress if he is not adequately prepared for these changes. He may also struggle with the loss of structure or relationships built in a previous setting.
- Adult services may have less flexibility or less specialised provision, which could lead to unmet needs if a proper transition plan is not in place.
- Encourage thinking about what a needs-led transition should include and how professionals can advocate for continuity of care.
- Responses should consider how the gaps between children's and adult's services can result in reduced support during a time of increased vulnerability.

2. How can professionals best support Jake's family during this transition period?

- Jake's family may feel uncertain or overwhelmed about the future, especially as they relinquish some of the familiarity and trust built with children services.
- Support should include clear, consistent communication and involvement in decision-making. Families should be treated as partners, not observers, they often have greater insight into their young person than other support services.
- Professionals should validate the family's concerns, while also helping them focus on what Jake can achieve with the right support.



- Information should be provided in accessible formats, and professionals should avoid making assumptions about the family's understanding of adult services.
- This questions encourages reflection on the emotional aspect of transition, not just the practical one.

3. What considerations should be made in terms of Jake's communication needs as he moves into adult services?

- Jake and his family's communication style must be central to planning. If Jake uses non-verbal or alternative communication methods, these should be clearly documented and shared with adult service providers.
- Changes in staff or settings may increase Jake's anxiety and reduce his ability to express needs. Ensuring consistency and familiarity where possible is important.
- Responses should explore how adult services can make reasonable adjustments to communication practices, rather than expecting Jake (and his family) to adapt.
- Answers should also include how assumptions about 'compliance' or understanding can lead to unmet needs if professionals do not check for true comprehensions. In some cases, this may include conversations about Mental Capacity.

4. What is the impact of conflating autism and learning disabilities when planning support for someone like Jake?

- Neurodivergence and learning disabilities are distinct, though they may co-occur. Assuming they are the same can result in support that is either inappropriate or incomplete.
- For Jake, such conflation might lead to missed opportunities to develop specific skills or adaptations that work specifically to support his neurodivergent needs (for example, his sensory sensitivities, changes in routine, or ability to focus).
- Conflation also reinforces stereotypes and lower expectations about his potential.
- Encourage responses that highlight the importance of holistic, individualised assessments that consider the nuances of all diagnoses (this can include physical and mental health conditions too).
- This question supports deeper thinking about how diagnostic labels can help or hinder access to the right kind of support.

5. How can adult services ensure that they are providing a smooth and continuous service for individuals like Jake, who are transitioning from a specialist education setting?

- Transitions should begin early, with multi-agency planning and clear documentation of Jake's needs, preferences, and history. As Jake is in specialist education, it is likely that he has an Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP), which should be reviewed to ensure it reflects all of Jake's needs and how they integrate.
- Professionals should take the time to learn about what has worked for Jake previously, rather than starting from scratch.
- Service continuity can be improved with better communication between children's and adult teams, and by involving the young person in planning.
- Responses should explore how adult services can adapt, rather than assuming the young person must 'fit' their systems.
- Consider how delays or unclear eligibility criteria for support can result in significant stress for both young people and their family.

