



Research Inspired by Service Experts

What strategies are effective for improving young peoples' experiences of transition between child and adult mental health services?

Key findings



The National Institute for Health Research (NIHR) published guidelines for transition from child to adult services for young people using health or social care services in 2016.

- Research suggests transition is a difficult time for young people and often the guidelines are not being followed.
- Transition is reported to be frustrating and lacking in advance planning and preparation.

Transition experiences could be improved by:

- Tracking and monitoring young people approaching transition
- Involving parents/carers
- Providing joint planning and information transfer that is individualised
- Having a dedicated transition clinic and protocols
- Providing clear information to young people
- Providing a variety of services for young people

What did we find?

We found a lot of research around transition, how transition should be planned and carried out, and the difficulties associated with transition, but only some of the research talked about ways that we could improve the experience of transition for children and young people.



What should transition look like?

There are clear guidelines around transition, which are published and regularly updated by the National Institute for Health Research (NIHR), the research arm of the NHS. The current guidelines for transition from children's to adult services for young people using health or social care services are from 2016.¹

These guidelines apply to transition from CAMHS to AMHS, as well as transition to all other health and social care adult services, and they aim to improve the way transition is planned and carried out. The guidelines say that transition should:

- Involve the young person and their carer at all stages.
- Take account of the young person's maturity, abilities, circumstances, diagnoses, needs, and communication skills
- Focus on what is positive and possible for the young person, and identify support available.
- Treat the young person as an equal in the process, take account of their views, address relevant goals and outcomes, and fully involve them in the way transition is planned and carried out.
- Involve child and adult services working together.
- Proactively identify and plan for young people with transition support needs
- Provide safeguarding information for vulnerable young people.
- Ensure the young person is registered with a GP.

Citation Top Tip

If you see a little number above a word **like this¹** then go to the references section at the end of this report to see the source of the information.



What does the research say is happening at transition for children and young people?

Despite clear guidance regarding what should happen at transition, research suggests the guidance is not always followed.² Transition for many young people is reported to be frustrating and difficult and lacking in advance planning and preparation.³ Transition normally happens when the young person is experiencing a number of other life changes and transitions (for example from school to university, or from home to living independently) and it is a challenging time to manage without help.^{4,5} Studies suggest the availability of services is patchy, there are big gaps in the handover of care, there is a lack of specific transition protocols, and information is not transferred properly between CAMHS and AMHS.^{6,7}

How could transition be improved for children and young people?

Some research has highlighted ways the transition experience could be improved for children and young people. In particular, there are also some 'new' examples of services that could improve transition.

0-25 services^{5,8}



Some areas in England have now set up mental health services that support children and young people from ages 0-25, rather than the traditional CAMHS that ends at 18. This allows flexibility in the timing of transition and allows the young person to be transitioned when they are ready rather than because they are 18.

Managed transition^{9,16}

The Milestone transition study developed a new support tool, the Transition Readiness and Appropriateness Measure (TRAM), to support and plan for transition with young people. TRAM should help with decision making and help improve transitions by identifying early those who need a transition from CAMHS to AMHS, or those who can be safely discharged or referred to a community-based service.

What else?

We found lots of other suggestions and recommendations about how to improve the experience of transition for children and young people between CAMHS and AMHS. Some of these would need further research to explore how well they work, and the best way to carry them out in practice.

- Tracking and monitoring young people approaching transition – gradually preparing them by talking to the young person to develop their understanding and let them ask questions, and to reassess their needs and readiness for transition.^{3,8,10,11}
- Parents/carers should be involved at all stages of transition.^{6,13}
- Care plans should be produced with the young person, be individualised and developed in special planning meetings.^{3,11}
- Every young person should have a dedicated transition clinic and/or transition practitioner or peer support worker to support them throughout the transition.^{11,15}
- Every area should have a specified transition policy or protocol which is clear and structured.^{3,8,13}
- Clear information about the transition process should be provided for the young person –they should be provided with the emotional support required, and further information about how to return to services should transition fail or the young person choose not to transition.^{3,11}
- There should be a variety of treatment options / services available, and services should move from transitions being based on age to being based more on the young person's needs. This makes services more accessible and flexible and gives other options for those who need support but don't meet the AMHS treatment criteria.^{3,11,12}
- There should be more training for clinicians on safe and effective transitions.^{8,11}

CAMHS and AMHS working together

- Joint planning and joint working between CAMHS and AMHS during transition should happen so the young person can build a relationship with the AMHS team.^{3,14}
- There should be effective information transfer, transfer of care and continuity of care between CAMHS and AMHS.^{3,12,13}
- Referrals and acceptances between CAMHS and AMHS should be carefully monitored so no one gets forgotten.^{3,7}



Over the last few years there has been a lot of research done around transition between CAMHS and AMHS. Much of the research suggests that unfortunately transition is a challenging time for young people that is not always properly managed. There are no clear guidelines on the transition between CAMHS and AMHS, instead only general guidelines that apply for transition from children's to adult services across all health and social care .

Despite there being clear guidelines about transition within NHS services, it seems that not all areas and services are able to provide a good transition experience for young people.

There are however lots of suggestions on how the transition experience could be improved for young people, and some areas have established a variety of different services that are better suited for supporting young people in transition in the future.

Research should now be done to look at how effective these new strategies are for helping young people's transitions between CAMHS and AMHS, and what the young people think of them.

What did young people ask us?

Children and young people who have used the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) in Devon were asked about their experiences and what questions they would like us to answer. Children and young people also rated which questions were the most important to them. One of these questions was: what strategies are effective for improving young people's experiences of transitions between child and adult mental health services?



What did we do?

We searched for any past research on transition between CAMHS and Adult Mental Health Services (AMHS) that included information on children and young people's experiences. We did not include studies or documents that were not about the English CAMH services as we know that there are differences between the services in the rest of the United Kingdom, and in other countries.

We searched nine different scientific databases in order to find evidence for this summary, including: NICE Evidence, TRIP database, Epistemonikos, CDSR, CENTRAL, MEDLINE, APA PsycINFO, HMIC and CINAHL. This search identified the most recent and relevant research about young people's transition experiences. We also looked at other studies that were mentioned in the papers we found, and then brought all the key information together for this summary.

Experts in transition between CAMHS and AMHS, and a group of young CAMHS users, were asked to review this summary to make sure that it is accurate and easy to understand.

Scientific databases used:

NICE Evidence: National Institute for Health and Care Excellence Evidence database
TRIP database: Turning Research into Practice database
Epistemonikos: <https://www.epistemonikos.org/>
CDSR: Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews database
CENTRAL: Cochrane Central Register of Controlled Trials database
MEDLINE: Medical Literature Analysis and Retrieval System Online database
PsycINFO: American Psychological Association Psychological information database
HMIC: Health Management Information Consortium database
CINAHL: Cumulative Index to Nursing and Allied Health Literature database

References

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Links :

<https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ng43>

<https://www.milestone-transitionstudy.eu/>

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