

OxPCF & Oxfordshire CAMHS NDC Webinar – Moving into Adulthood

 **Date: 14th March 2025**

 **Speakers:**

- James Stacy – Clinical Psychologist, CAMHS Neurodevelopmental Pathway
 - Laura Agnew (Nursing and Allied Health Professional Clinical Lead)
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Introduction

This webinar explored the transition into adulthood for neurodivergent young people, focusing on the challenges and changes that occur as they move beyond childhood services and supports. Topics included legal rights at 18, access to education and employment, mental health continuity, and planning for independence.

The session aimed to support parent carers by offering practical strategies, expert insights, and answers to common questions about preparing for and navigating this important stage of life.

Key Insights from the Webinar

Transition to Adulthood: Why Planning Matters

Turning 18 brings significant legal, emotional, and practical changes for neurodivergent young people.

- Legal rights shift at 18 – including capacity, consent, and decision-making responsibilities.
- Many supports accessed in childhood (e.g., CAMHS) do not automatically continue into adulthood.
- Transitions can be overwhelming without clear guidance and preparation.

Supporting the Transition

- Begin planning early – well before age 18 – to avoid gaps in support.
- Involve your young person in decision-making as much as possible.
- Keep detailed documentation of needs, diagnoses, and educational support.
- Be realistic but hopeful – small steps toward independence matter.

Mental Health & Medication Challenges

Accessing consistent mental health support and continuing medication after 18 can be complex.

- There are significant gaps in adult ADHD services, particularly for ongoing prescriptions.
- CAMHS referrals end at 18; support from GPs and adult mental health services is often inconsistent.
- Transitions between services can cause distress if not managed proactively.

Navigating Mental Health Care

- Speak with your CAMHS clinician in advance to plan transitions.
- Contact your GP early to discuss continuity of care and prescriptions.
- Consider non-clinical support options like youth counselling, online tools, or peer support.

Higher Education, Employment & Disclosure

Young people may need support to access and stay in education or work settings.

- Disclosure of diagnosis can be empowering or risky depending on the environment.
- Masking and social exhaustion are common in new settings.
- Reasonable adjustments can help, but advocacy may be required.

Supporting Education & Work Success

- Encourage your young person to explore what support they need and how to ask for it.
- Support slow, staged introductions to new environments.
- Explore supported internships or disability-friendly employers.
- Share relevant information only when it feels safe and beneficial.

Accessing Benefits, Driving & Legal Tools

Understanding available support is key to building a secure adult life.

- Benefits like PIP and Universal Credit are needs-based, not diagnosis-based.
- Driving and independence require careful planning for those with anxiety or communication differences.
- Power of Attorney and capacity assessments may be needed for some individuals.

Practical Planning

- Apply for PIP and Motability early if relevant – delays are common.
- Use tools like communication passports and planning charts to support independence.
- Seek legal advice if Power of Attorney or Deputyship may be needed.
- Connect with your local SEND and social care services for guidance.

Q&A Summary – Supporting Neurodivergent Young People Through Moving into Adulthood

1 Driving & Non-Speaking Autistic Individuals

Q: What support is available for non-speaking autistic young people who want to learn to drive?

A: Preparation strategies may include using communication cards, practice scenarios, and breakdown services that accommodate alternative communication needs.

2 Supporting PDA Young People with Exam & School Challenges

Q: How do we support intelligent PDA individuals who can't access exams or school?

A: Consider a multi-agency approach, including EHCP review, Education & Employment Team input, and individualised education pathways that honour autonomy and reduce demand.

3 Disclosure in Employment

Q: Should a young person share their autism or mental health diagnosis with an employer?

A: If safe, consider gradual unmasking with an emphasis on strengths and needs. It's important to weigh the benefits and risks, and seek supportive workplace environments.

4 Medication Beyond CAMHS Age

Q: What happens to prescriptions like melatonin or ADHD medication after turning 18?

A: In most cases, GPs continue existing prescriptions for melatonin and antidepressants. ADHD medication remains a challenge in Oxfordshire; CAMHS encourages early discussions with GPs and adult services.

5 Power of Attorney for Non-Communicative Autistic Adults

Q: Can a parent apply for power of attorney for their autistic adult child who doesn't communicate?

A: A capacity assessment is the first step. Seek legal advice, as power of attorney must be granted voluntarily unless the Court of Protection becomes involved.

6 Benefits for Non-Verbal Autistic Adults with High Needs

Q: What benefits can a young person receive if they do not speak or leave the house?

A: Benefits such as PIP and Universal Credit are based on need. Maintain detailed documentation of ongoing challenges and daily support requirements.

7 Mental Health Support for Autistic Young People with Trust Issues

Q: Where can a young person with mental health needs and trust issues get help?

A: Explore youth-specific services, including non-traditional or peer-led support, and consider involving parents in the support plan to build trust.

8 Additional CAMHS Support

Q: Can CAMHS offer any extra input when a young person is struggling?

A: Families should speak with their CAMHS clinician and explore options including targeted youth support or referrals into adult services when appropriate.

9 Alternatives to ADHD Medication

Q: Are there alternatives to ADHD medication?

A: Yes – including environmental adjustments, visual supports, routine-based tools, and recommended reading such as “Taking Charge of ADHD”. Local ADHD parenting courses may also help.

✓ Action Points

- Start early planning for post-18 transitions (education, health, benefits)
- Keep up-to-date documentation of needs, diagnoses, and care
- Connect with education, social care, and employment support teams
- Discuss medication continuity and referrals well before transition
- Explore non-clinical forms of support (e.g., peer groups, youth services)
- Apply for appropriate benefits and grants (e.g., PIP, Motability)

Resources and Further Support

◆ National Autistic Society – Transition Support

Guidance on moving into adulthood, further education, employment, and legal rights.

👉 www.autism.org.uk/advice-and-guidance/topics/transition-to-adulthood

◆ Oxfordshire County Council – SEND Local Offer (Preparing for Adulthood)

Offers local guidance and contact points for education, EHCP transitions, benefits, and social care.

👉 www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/send-local-offer

◆ IPSEA – Legal Advice for EHCP and Post-18 Education Support

👉 www.ipsea.org.uk

◆ Contact – Benefits and Financial Support for Disabled Young People

👉 www.contact.org.uk

◆ Citizens Advice – Power of Attorney Guidance

👉 www.citizensadvice.org.uk

◆ Taking Charge of ADHD – Dr. Russell Barkley

Highly recommended by clinicians as a practical ADHD guide for parents and young adults.

👉 [Available from UK booksellers]



Book Recommendations – Moving into Adulthood for Neurodivergent Young People

For Parents & Carers



Autism and Asperger Syndrome in Adults – Dr. Luke Beardon

A practical and compassionate guide to understanding adult autism, including challenges with work, independence, and social expectations.



Supporting Your Autistic Teen into Adulthood – Debby Elley

Clear, relatable guidance for parents preparing their autistic teenager for adult life, covering identity, decision-making, and transitions.



The Parents' Guide to Coping with Autism and ADHD – Claire Droney & Christopher Green

Tips for managing everyday challenges, routines, and long-term planning for teens approaching adulthood.



Transitioning to Adulthood with Autism: Navigating the Legal and Social Maze – Charlene Tilton

Focused on UK services and support systems, this book outlines legal rights, EHCP transitions, and adult social care.

For Young People



The Spectrum Girl's Survival Guide – Siena Castellon

A brilliant resource for autistic teen girls (and non-binary teens), covering relationships, education, mental health, and future planning.



The Awesome Autistic Go-To Guide – Yenn Purkis & Tanya Masterman

A practical guide for autistic teens and tweens, including strategies for independence, identity, and managing change.

 **Taking Charge of ADHD (UK Edition) – Dr. Russell Barkley**

Although US-based in origin, this version is tailored for UK readers and offers excellent tools for young people and their families to manage ADHD across school and work life.

 **A Different Sort of Normal – Abigail Balfe**

An illustrated memoir perfect for late tweens and early teens exploring neurodivergence, identity, and growing up.

Stay Connected and Share Your Voice with OxPCF

Join OxPCF (Oxfordshire Parent Carers Forum) to stay informed, connect with other parent carers, and have your voice heard in shaping services for SEND families.

Links

 Website: www.oxpcf.org.uk


 Email: info@oxpcf.org.uk

 Join our Mailing List: eepurl.com/dNVTTE


Share your feedback: www.oxpcf.org.uk/feedback

 SEND Connect Newsletter: tinyurl.com/SENDConnectNewsletters


 Events: oxpcf.org.uk/events

 Volunteer with Us: oxpcf.org.uk/volunteer

 Join our Online Peer Support Group: facebook.com/groups/oxsendroom/

 Join our Announcements Only Community WhatsApp Group:
chat.whatsapp.com/BRH9Knm8fuNBIFY1OhrZIE

Help Us Build Our Resource Page!

We're putting together a comprehensive resource page to support families of neurodivergent children in Oxfordshire. If you have any useful recommendations—whether it's a local support group, charity, website, book, or practical resource—we'd love to hear from you!  Please email your suggestions to: info@oxpcf.org.uk