

Transition to adulthood webinar session 1 script

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Hello and welcome to session one of the Autism and transition to adulthood webinars. These webinars are brought to you by the Greater Manchester Autism Consortium part of The National Autistic society.

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The aims of the webinars are:

- To provide space for you as parents and carers to think about what adult life might look like for your young person
- To focus on what is important to and important for your young person
- To highlight the kinds of information and evidence required to access support
- To inform parents and carers of your legal rights and entitlements

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This session will cover:

- What to start thinking about and what information to start gathering
- Making a key facts card
- Thinking about the support, adjustments and life skills your young person is going to need
- Thinking about your needs, and looking after yourself

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Additional webinars are available as part of this series on the following topics:

- An introduction to Special Educational Needs and Disabilities and post 16 education
- Higher Education
- Routes to employment
- Autism and applying for Personal Independence Payments (PIP)
- Requesting help from social services: Care Act assessments

We will not cover every topic that is relevant to your young person, but hopefully the sessions will give you a starting point to think about their specific needs and you can dip in and out of the sessions as you feel is relevant to your family.

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Getting a life

- Thinking about, let alone planning for, a whole adult life is too big
- Need to think about what is *most* important

- Breaking our perspective down to one day can highlight some of the essential points our young people will need in their life as adults

It is easy and tempting to avoid the whole subject of our children growing up and living an adult life. It just seems too big, complicated and overwhelming.

Realistically though, none of us had our adult life all mapped out by our 16th birthday!

Hopefully in adolescence we start to think about the things we enjoy, value and are good at, and we try to make choices that will take us toward those experiences and away from those we don't enjoy, don't feel good at, and don't see as hugely important.

This can be a real culture shift after focussing on a special educational needs model that is often targeted on weaknesses or deficits.

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...So let's just zoom in on one day in the life of our young person. Let's think about one day that would be close to the best day ever, and one that would be the worst day ever! It is OK to be a bit humorous here – by exaggerating we can get to the essentials of what life needs to contain and avoid.

- Imagine what the best day ever would look like for your young person. Write down 3 things the best day ever would be sure to include (*you can think about people, places, activities or items*)
- Now imagine a really bad day... What 3 things would be present or happening on this awful day? (*think again about people, places, activities or items*)

There is a template of the good day/bad day to download from the webpage for this session or you can just make your own notes.

If you like you could talk through your ideas with your young person, with other family members who know them well or perhaps with a friend or professional you trust.

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Next let's look at what is important to and for your young person and what is the difference between these things.

Important to

What a person likes

Who they like to be with

What they are good at

What their values are

What kind of places or situations they like to be in

Important for

What a person needs to be content

What they need to be safe

What they need to be physically and mentally well

The kind of support they need to achieve the above (well-being)

There can sometimes be a tension between the things that important to and important for a person – i.e. the things they want and the things they need/ the things they enjoy and the things that are good for them/ what they want and the impact that can have on others...

Can be helpful to look back at our good day bad day lists and pick out what is important to, and what is important for. It's also important that we don't let ourselves or services overly focus on the important for as after all that's not how any of the rest of us run our lives!

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The next slides are about making a key facts card or what is sometimes referred to as a passport for your young person. You may have heard of these before, or perhaps you haven't, either way you may think, why would one of these be useful?

- Many services change or end from 16 onwards

In childhood we can become fixated on 'provisions'. Where our child goes to school and what support and services they get there. In adult services it is less about 'where someone will go' and more about piecing together a life with maximum, safe independence that works for the young person. This is a very different way of thinking that takes some getting used to!

- It is likely that your young person will be accessing more community based activities and these may not have autism expertise

Wherever possible, this is a time to increase community presence and awareness as being unable to tolerate e.g. public transport or leisure spaces is going to limit life choices in adulthood. A passport of key info can make this less daunting and run smoother. Can think of it as a 'quick start guide'

- A key facts card can help people become knowledgeable about your young person, and it's a way to highlight and request support or 'reasonable adjustments'
- What this contains will vary from person to person and may need tweaking in some situations

Some young people won't go for this idea and it's best not to push it in this instance. However, you can still have an A4 guide to send to e.g prospective colleges or the GP. Sometimes a one off experience e.g. a hospital stay will require a more tailored guide.

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..You might have had, or heard of, one page profiles. This is basically the same idea. Here is the OPP of an autistic young lady with learning disability who is supported to live in her own flat.

[*see example one page profiles at end of the script](#)

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...this is the OPP of a young man at University. He would have a different and education focused version for teachers etc. but this version aims to be more multi purpose.

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This example is for an adult living pretty much independently in the community. It is basically a request for people and community services to make reasonable adjustments. It is a legal requirement for all public services to make RAs for people with disabilities, including autism. (Equality Act 2010)

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Here is a template for creating your own profile. It is best to keep it to one side of paper and around 200 words long is about right. Hopefully the examples will give you some ideas.

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Some commonly helpful communication tips to include:

- Slow it down a bit
- Say what you mean
- Use words I can understand
- Don't expect me to understand something unless you have clearly told me about it
- Check I understand before moving on to the next point
- Avoid confrontation
- Give me enough time to process what you are saying – e.g. wait for 6 seconds before saying anything else
- If it is something you need me to remember – write it down as well as telling me
- Show me instructions in writing or in pictures when possible

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We looked at how we could use the things that are important to and important for your young person as a way to focus on the elements that will be need to be present and absent in their adult lives. Another way to break this down is to look at the Keys to Citizenship. This model came from the drive towards person centred planning, particularly in relation to people with learning disabilities.

The keys to citizenship model includes:

- Friendships and relationships
- Getting around
- Money
- Home
- Hobbies, interests and social life
- Education and training

- Staying healthy and being safe

Champions of person-centred planning began with the question, what is important to all of us? What are the things we all need to have a life/to be a full citizen? The diagram on this slide is what they came up with. A few years ago, the GMAC transitions group looked at what the keys to citizenship might look like for autistic people. On the next slides we will discuss the resources they created and how you can use them.

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The GMAC transition group put together a resource called Growing up in greater Manchester – A guide for young people and their supporters. This guide aims to think about each of the areas listed on the previous slide, but with a particular focus on those tasks or skills that autistic people may find particularly hard, or need explicit teaching rather than picking up in a more natural way.

The group were focussing on young people in mainstream settings, so depending on your young persons needs you may find the levels aren't appropriate for them. In special schools however, there is likely to be more focus on life skills teaching at this age – just make sure the targets will be transferrable to their real-life domestic settings and aren't all school related. In looking at each skills area you need to think, 'where is my young person at now?' 'What would be a realistic and helpful target to have in this area?', 'what is the smallest and most achievable step we can take towards it now?'

Young people with Education Health Care Plans should have transition reviews from year 9 at their annual review meetings, and these should follow the themes in these resources, so you can use them as a tool for these reviews.

You can download the Growing up in Greater Manchester resource free from the webpage for this webinar.

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The Growing up in Greater Manchester resource covers 6 areas which mirror the Keys to Citizenship; Getting around, money, home, hobbies, interests and social life and education and training. For each area there is information on:

- Main things to think about
- Top tips
- Skills checklists, these are broken down into 3 levels bronze, silver and gold. The terms 'bronze, silver and gold' are simply a guide and you can use whatever wording works best for you if this isn't appropriate for your young person. You may change them to level 1,2 and 3 for example, or not label them at all if the young person would feel self-conscious about that. It is a flexible tool that can be adapted to your young persons needs.
- Resources and useful links

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Here is an example taken from the Growing up in Greater Manchester guide. This example is from the home skills section:

Bronze	Silver	Gold
<i>Being as independent as possible at home, with full time support</i>	<i>Using current support to increase independence</i>	<i>Able to live independently and ask for help when needed</i>
I can put my clothes in the washing basket I can get myself a cold drink	I can stay at home on my own for an hour or two if I have a mobile with me and someone to call	I know who to call when things break or go wrong

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Another resource you may find useful is the Preparing autistic young people for adulthood in Greater Manchester checklist. This resource was also developed by the Greater Manchester autism Consortium’s transition group and is a checklist tool. It can be used by:

- Autistic children and young people aged 12-25 and their parents/carers
- Primarily for children and young people who have a diagnosis of autism, but do not have an EHC plan
- An additional tool for autistic children and young people who have an Education Health Care Plan (EHC)
- Professionals supporting autistic children and young people through periods of transition

The checklist includes sections on the following:

- The views of the young person
- A checklist for staff autism training
- Independent living
- Friends, relationships and community
- Good health
- Useful links and resources

You will find a link to download this free resource on the webpage for this webinar

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You may have been used to target setting with your young person in a very school focused way until now – e.g. around handwriting or classroom behaviour or hanging their PE kit on the right peg! Unfortunately, a lot of this won’t apply when it comes to having a life in the real, grown up world. We will take a closer look at post 16 education in another webinar, so for now we’ll look at the other life headings.

Take your time over this. Maybe focusing on one skill area and seeing how the process goes.

- Friendships and relationships
- Getting around
- Money
- Home
- Hobbies, interests and social life
- Staying happy, healthy and being safe

Have a think about where your young person is up to with their life skills in these areas. For some young people we will be looking at how to progress their independence in each area, in others it might be looking at what kind of support they will need in each area and who could/should provide that.

Whether you use the Growing up in Greater Manchester tool of the Transition Checklist you can use the following prompt questions to help you think about where your young person is now and what small steps could they make with support to develop their skills. As we saw in the home skills example of the previous slide.

- Where is the young person up to now? What can they do without support?
- What would be the next step in improving their independence in this area?
- What tiny step can we take towards this at home/as a family?
- What do we need to help us (equipment, tech prompts etc.)?
- When will we start?

Thinking about where our young person is in relation to these areas is also helpful in preparing for applying for PIP and/or a Care Act assessment which we will look at in the other webinars in this series.

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This session has focused on the needs of your young person but this is also time to think about you and your future. What is important to you and your family? What is sustainable?

- Allow yourself time off from dealing with the admin, planning etc.
- Consider support groups
- Find out what your local carers centre offers
- Request a carer's assessment for yourself (more information in the care act session)
- Make time to monitor, reflect on, and improve your own mental and physical well-being
- Seek help if and when need it

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International evidence shows that these 5 factors support people to achieve and improve well-being – regardless of age, circumstances etc.

Do you have all of these in your life? Are you running low or missing out on one or more of them? What could your small, next step be?

You may want to contact local Carers centre, you can search for your local centre online as they may well offer some activities that tick the boxes.

You can also contact us here at The Greater Manchester Autism Consortium where we can share information on what support is available in your area.

5 ways to well being:

- connect** Discover ways to re-connect with your family, friends and community.
- notice** Take notice! Pay attention to yourself and what is around you.
- be active** Simple ways to get moving in everyday life.
- give** Do something kind to boost your happiness.
- learn** Learning something new gives a strong feeling of achievement.

<https://www.gmmh.nhs.uk/5-ways-to-wellbeing/>

<https://www.mind.org.uk/workplace/mental-health-at-work/taking-care-of-yourself/five-ways-to-wellbeing/>