Exploring the Transitions of Young People with Autism from Childhood to Young Adulthood

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Overview

- The National Autistic Society ‘Don’t write me off’ campaign
- Our project
- Embracing Neurodiversity
- Positive examples: Specialisterne
- Transition services of the future...
Draws attention to real-life stories of people with autism

Currently:
- Only 15% of people with autism have a full time job
- One third currently without a job or access to benefits
- 79% of those on incapacity benefit want to work

Government needs to:
- Ensure that Employment and Support Allowance works for people with autism
- Jobcentre plus staff to understand and meet their needs
- A national strategy to transform access to employment
Very little literature exploring transitions for young people with autism
Seek to examine how pathways during the transition to young adulthood are experienced by young people with autism
What role do families play in negotiating transitions for young people with autism?
How might reframing autism as ‘neurodiversity’ impact on young people’s transitions?
The Research Plan

- Stage one: online synchronous interviews
  - 3 groups of participants: young people with autism, parents/carers of young people with autism and professionals working with young people with autism

- Stage two: Online discussion group and the development of a Wiki
The use of new technologies

- Can be more effective when researching with people with autism as it removes the need to read FTF cues
- Increasing number of people with autism are using the internet as a forum for self-advocacy
- Strong movement has developed online drawing on ideas of ‘neurodiversity’
Embracing Neurodiversity

- Rejection of the presentation of people with autism as ‘impaired’ in particular traits
- Celebration of autism as a type of neurodiversity
- Questioning of ‘normality’, e.g. people without autism = neurologically typicals or NTs
- Seek to draw on the skills of many individuals with autism
- A change in the social nature of workplaces?
A way forward: The case of Specialisterne

- Translates as ‘The Specialists’ and is an IT company employing people with autism
- Employs 60 people and has a turnover of almost £2 million
- Sonne: “This is not cheap labour and it’s not occupational therapy. We simply do a better job.” (The Independent May 31st 2009)
- Importance of recognising some of the potential issues in working in a socially-dominated environment
Transition services of the future...

- Important to carry out research with young people with autism and their families
- A focus on the understanding of difference rather than a focus on deficit and impairment
- Facilitating the transition of young people with autism into a range of options that best tap into the abilities of the individual