

Lost in space: Transition and social networks of young people with Intellectual Disabilities.

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Background: Many young people with learning disabilities with complex health and support needs are surviving into adulthood. In the UK policy documents highlight the problems faced by young people with ID at the point of transition to adult life and the barriers faced by youngsters from minority ethnic community communities. School leavers with learning disabilities are often lost within service structures as part of the transition process and young people with ID from minority ethnic communities faced many barriers in access and use of services. Their needs and aspirations during the transition from children to adult services are unknown to many of the service providers which may be attributed to lack of appropriate transition planning process. This results in the lack of real opportunities for young school leavers with learning disabilities to partake in ordinary community and social activities culminating in social exclusion, and creating barriers in accessing services.

Method: The aim was to identify the views, aspirations and social networks of young school leavers with ID. Forty-three young people with ID and their family carers (n=43) were interviewed over two time points. A semi- structured interview schedule was developed using pictures in order to capture the young person's social network, feelings about transition and future aspirations. The interview schedule was based on *Talking Mats*, and the themes comprised of immediate family, close relationships, important friendships/contacts, day time activities at school and college and leisure activities. The majority participants were young people from South Asian community (from Pakistani and Bangladeshi communities). And the sample also included young people who are White British and their families.

Results: The results indicate that young people with ID have the same aspirations as other people. The study shows that (1) young people lose their social networks after transition to adulthood or adult services, (2) Young people with ID from minority communities have limited social networks and (3) many people with severe learning disabilities have very limited social networks.

Conclusions: This study has major implications in terms of transition planning for young people with ID with special reference to people from minority ethnic communities. Many youngsters are lost in space at the point of transition and there is need to refocus on their aspirations and social networks.