



CENTRE FOR AUTISM
MIDDLETOWN

Transition



RESEARCH BULLETIN ISSUE NO. 1

Supporting the promotion of excellence throughout Northern Ireland and Ireland
in the education of children and young people with autism spectrum disorders.



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Transition

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This Research Bulletin is designed to be a resource for teachers working in both mainstream and special education settings.

Issued quarterly, the Bulletin will provide accessible summaries of relevant peer reviewed research articles and literature reviews for education staff working with children and young people with ASD. The summaries will be structured to provide teachers with easy access to the key points of the research or review. Each summary will finish with an Implications for Practice section which will provide teachers with key best practice points which they can consider integrating into their daily work with children and young people with ASD.

Each Bulletin will be themed around a particular area relating to children and young people with ASD and will commence with an interview with a key figure in the area and conclude with a brief synopsis of key points highlighted.

The current Bulletin topic is 'Transition'. It provides summaries of 10 articles selected from peer reviewed journals over the period 2004 to 2009.

The Bulletin begins with an interview with Mike Chapman who is the state-wide Director of Services of Division TEACCH's Supported Employment Programme.

Please note that the views represented in this document do not necessarily reflect the views of Middletown Centre for Autism. Reviewers have, where possible, used the original language of the article which may differ from UK and Ireland usage and the usage of a range of terminologies for ASD.

INTERVIEW WITH MIKE CHAPMAN

State-wide Director of Services of Division TEACCH's Supported Employment Programme
University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill USA. This interview was conducted in September 2009

1. How long have you been working in the area of transition and what is your particular expertise in this area?

I have been working in the field of transition for over 20 years. In that time I have assisted in the management of a Supported Employment Programme for Division TEACCH, in the United States, which assists individuals with ASD to find and maintain employment. In my work with the TEACCH Supported Employment Programme I have had a number of responsibilities from job coaching to being a counsellor to being the Director of the Programme.

2. Please attempt to define the concept of transition and why it is important in the lives of people with ASD?

For this question, the definition of transition I will refer to is the act of moving from one stage of life to another. In most instances, people refer to "transition" as the act of leaving secondary school and becoming an adult in the community. In the community we are expected to work and live as independent individuals. For adults with ASD this transition is no less important than it is for anyone else.

3. Why are transitions so difficult for people with ASD?

For individuals with ASD, the transition to adulthood is full of uncertainty and experiences that they are often totally unprepared to handle. Our school system typically prepares us for the real world by giving us lots of general knowledge that we can modify and adapt to get through most everyday situations. For individuals with

ASD the ability to use that knowledge effectively to navigate new experiences is difficult. Many times explicit knowledge needs to be taught for each new experience. Only by doing this can we help individuals with ASD navigate their world.

4. What can happen if a person with ASD is not prepared for a transition?

If any person is not prepared for transition they will struggle to live effectively in the community around them. For people with ASD this may result in them not being members of the work force, not living in their own homes and ultimately living in unsuitable situations. In some instances, this can mean institutionalisation.

5. Do people with Asperger's syndrome also have difficulties with transition?

People with Asperger's syndrome can suffer some of the same situations as those with more severe autism. Some may never reach their true potential while others may end up living on the edge of society, ostracised and isolated with few contacts or ties in the community. No one wants this for their family member.

6. What can teachers do to facilitate transition for children and young people with ASD?

Teachers should help prepare students with ASD for transition by exposing them to many different opportunities during their school years. They should help the student with ASD learn functional skills in the school and in the community around them. We recommend that every student over the age of 14 be involved in

community based vocational and recreational opportunities. These opportunities should be focused on teaching skills that lead to positive adult outcomes and independence in the community. Skills should focus heavily on social, communication and independence skills as well as other typical vocational skills. By assessing and offering opportunities to develop skills in community settings, we are helping the individual with ASD prepare for the transition from school to adulthood.

7. What can parents do to facilitate transition for children and young people with ASD?

Parents could work to develop systems at home that will allow the child to do chores around the house and activities in the community independently. They could work with the schools to do functional assessments and collaboratively with school staff, use those assessments to create good education plans that will help their children transition to adulthood more easily.

8. Is there one thing that you think every school could do to facilitate smooth transition for pupils with ASD?

They should perform an ongoing functional assessment over the entire academic career of the student. From this assessment, they should develop target goals and teach those goals in community and classroom settings. They should offer a varied instructional programme to focus on what the student can do and use visual supports to create the greatest level of independence. This will create more successful transitions to adulthood for the students they teach.

Interventions Addressing Transition Difficulties for Individuals with Autism

RESEARCH AIM

The authors set out to address strategies and approaches to support children with autism when transitioning between activities. They suggest that pre and primary school children can spend up to 25% of their day in transition activities.

RESEARCH METHOD

The authors reviewed current literature addressing intervention approaches for transitional difficulties.

RESEARCH FINDINGS

The authors identify five interventions from the literature that are deemed helpful in facilitating smooth transitions.

1. **Verbal and Auditory Techniques:** Stereotypic repetitive behaviour was reduced when advance warning was given to children by teachers two minutes before the actual transition compared to those who were given no advance warning. Transition time also decreased when children were taught to respond to a verbal prompt from the teacher to move to the next activity and then to ring a bell at the next activity.
2. **Behavioural Momentum:** This involves interspersing co-operation requests for the child to participate in favoured activities with requests for the child to participate in less favoured activities. For obvious reasons this is particularly well suited to a transition in which the student is expected to move from a preferred activity to a non preferred activity; this has been shown to increase cooperation in children with autism and may be applicable to increasing co-operation with transition requests. When using behavioural momentum, it is important to use a varied, random

sequence as continually presenting a small number of requests for favoured activities in the same order is likely to reduce co-operation and may increase problem behaviour. Visual cues should be incorporated into interventions to address transition difficulties given the deficits in communication associated with autism.

3. **Visual Supports:** Co-operation with transition in children with autism was increased when a teacher presented a photograph of the next activity simultaneously with the verbal cue to transition. Where the aim is to encourage receptive communication skills the visual prompt should be faded over time.
4. **Activity Schedules:** The use of an activity schedule coupled with a timer to signify the end of an activity decreased the frequency of verbal cues as well as the time spent in transition. An advantage of this system over visual and verbal supports is that it may facilitate increased independence.
5. **Video Priming:** Allowing children to watch a video of an upcoming event (e.g. getting ready for an art lesson) can make the event more predictable. Video priming can decrease problem behaviours associated with transition and the authors anecdotally noted that as problem behaviour decreased, children increased their use of language and became more engaged with environmental stimuli.

IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE (by the authors)

- Learning to transition between activities is a skill that must be learned in the same way as any other new skill must be learned.
- Teachers should first consider the amount of time a transition should take as well as any

Interventions Addressing Transition Difficulties for Individuals with Autism CONTINUED

additional demands (e.g. hand washing) that may be associated with the transition.

- Ideally there should be an adult at the activity to which children are transitioning so that when children arrive at the new activity they can begin immediately rather than having to wait for the entire group to be ready.
- Teachers should systematically teach children desired transitioning behaviours through modelling, rehearsal and feedback, so each student understands the expected behaviours.
- If activity schedules are used, they should include a visual representation of transition times and activities involved in the transition. As children become more efficient and fluent in each transition, the individual steps can be faded to promote independent functioning.
- Education staff should aim to make transition as predictable as possible for the child and once this has been achieved they should consider other issues surrounding the transition, e.g. the number of steps involved in a task, the length of a task and the reinforcing value of the activity they are finishing and the one they are about to start.
- Any technique used to promote smooth transition should have a high probability of maintenance and generalisation.

Full Reference

Sterling-Turner, H. E. & Jordan, S. S. (2007). Interventions addressing transition difficulties for individuals with autism. *Psychology in the Schools*, 44(7), p. 681-690.

Transition of Children with Autism from Intensive Behavioural Intervention Programs into the School System

RESEARCH AIM

To examine similarities and differences in the beliefs of Intensive Behavioural Intervention (IBI) staff and school staff around the issue of the transition of children with autism IBI programmes to school.

RESEARCH METHOD

26 IBI and 11 school personnel from rural and urban Canada completed two specially designed questionnaires to ascertain what they believed to be important in the transition process and how they felt the transition from IBI programme to school should be implemented.

RESEARCH FINDINGS

Scores on the questionnaires indicated that IBI participants had a stronger belief in the importance of teaching skills and collaboration; the IBI staff believed that transition planning should begin earlier. All participants agreed on the key personnel that should be involved in transition to school from an IBI programme.

IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE

(by the authors)

- IBI and school staff agreed that transition planning should and does occur.
- Protocols and self-help routines should be adjusted to match the school environment.
- Participation of a wider range of both IBI and school staff in planning is necessary for successful transition planning.
- Both groups agreed on the importance of inclusion, individualising the transition process and the importance of involving families in transition planning.

Full Reference

Levy, A. & Perry, A. (2008). Transition of children with autism from intensive behavioural intervention programs into the school system. *Journal of Developmental Disabilities*, 14(1), p. 1-10.

Transition for Young Children with Autism from Preschool to Kindergarten

RESEARCH AIM

The transition from preschool to kindergarten for children with autism can, if managed properly, establish social and academic development. The authors had three goals:

1. Identify and integrate critical elements in the transition process taken from the published literature.
2. Develop a practical tool that families, schools and agencies can use to assess their transition process.
3. Conduct a pilot field test with three families to determine both the perceived importance of each transition element and the extent to which each element was experienced in recent transition.

RESEARCH METHOD

The authors reviewed current literature and compiled a list of 25 recommended elements for transition from preschool to kindergarten. These recommended elements were built into a survey which was administered to the parents and teachers of three children with autism. The participants rated each element using a Likert scale..

RESEARCH FINDINGS

The authors found that the 25 elements were of high importance to families and teachers of children with autism transitioning from preschool to kindergarten. The elements also provided a tool for gathering information for transitioning.

IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE

(by the authors)

Those with ASC experience the same Need Threat as TD peers, challenging the assumption that people with ASC have a reduced need for social contact. The authors claimed that anxiety in both groups could be increased with inclusion and diminished with exclusion or ostracism.

The notable difference between the two groups was the lack of effect on the mood of those with ASC. This could be for a variety of reasons.

Those with ASC may:

- The transition process needs to last longer than a year to be successful.
- Establishing roles and responsibilities can also contribute to successful transition.
- The elements were used retrospectively for the study but the authors believe it would be used most effectively 18 months prior to transition.
- Future research should look into each element to establish when they happen and what contribution each make to successful transition.

Full Reference

Forest, E. J., Horner, R. H., Lewis-Palmer, T. & Todd, A. W. (2004). Transition for young children with autism from preschool to kindergarten. *Journal of Positive Behaviour Interventions*, 6, p. 103-122.

Autistic Spectrum Disorders and Primary- Secondary Transition

RESEARCH AIM

The transition from primary to secondary school has traditionally been a focus of concern regarding pupil anxiety, social integration, lack of progression and underachievement. The study aims to find out the perceptions of stakeholders with regard to current arrangements to support the primary to secondary school transition of children with ASD.

RESEARCH METHOD

The authors selected five participants with ASD who were transitioned to secondary school and conducted interviews with their parents, primary school teachers, secondary school teachers, educational psychologists and speech and language therapists. They analysed the interviews by comparing emergent themes.

RESEARCH FINDINGS

The results illustrated that there was a diversity of transition routes among the children with the majority of pupils experiencing a delay in the placement. The responses on children's perspectives on their new school were received positively but they reflected the children's desire for real inclusion in activities. The authors noted that the delay in placement decisions caused stress and anxiety for children and this could be avoided in future by more rational, timely, strategic and joined-up placement decisions. Parental evaluations of transition were considerably lower than professionals.

IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE

(by the authors)

- The elimination of delay in placement decisions.
- The elimination of exclusions from school.
- Timely, planned, long-term strategic decision-making.
- Better, faster, less formal, more realistic, reciprocal communication between all stakeholders.
- A full range of provision, with available vacancies, explained/understood by all stakeholders,
- catering for combinations of need rather than singular need.
- Professional resource/time available to supporting transition effectively, without a change in the key worker at times of transition.

Full Reference

Jindal-Snape, D., Douglas, W., Topping, K. J., Kerr C. & Smith E. F. (2006). Autistic spectrum disorders and primarysecondary transition. *International Journal of Special Educations*, 21(2), p. 18-32.

Evaluating the College Transition Needs of Individuals with High-Functioning Autism Spectrum Disorders

RESEARCH AIMS

To highlight the needs of students with High Functioning Autism Spectrum Disorders (HFA) who are transitioning from high school to college. This population is likely to experience significant and unique challenges adjusting to the new environment.

RESEARCH METHOD

The authors conducted a review of the current literature pertaining to the challenges faced by students with HFA who make the transition from school to post secondary education.

FINDINGS

The authors discussed areas to be considered when a student is transitioning such as deciding what type and size of college to attend and where the student is going to live. The authors implied that the smaller Further Education (FE) colleges may be better suited to taking an individual approach and their size may not be as intimidating as universities. It was also noted that the smaller the campus the more visible the difficulties and differences. Other areas of discussion included the assessment and teaching of appropriate independent living, social and interaction skills and the recognition of the need

to teach the “hidden curriculum” specific to the college environment. The intricacies of disclosing one’s difficulties were discussed along with the student’s realisations that he/she may need support in a wide range of areas: academically, socially, financially and with self organisation and communication.

IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE

(by the authors)

- Transition plans need to be devised early with a graduated approach e.g. students may live at home for the first year until the extent of the academic and geographical rigours are dealt with before adding the final independent transition process.
- The college could identify a member of staff who can meet regularly with students with HFA and act as a “point person” if academic and social demands become too great.
- The use of peer mentors who can provide ongoing social support for students with HFA was also highlighted as valuable and effective.
- The authors recommend that students become familiar with their new college by using their college’s website, taking on-line tours and if possible visiting the campus in person before enrolment

Students’ areas of difficulty	Colleges’ areas of difficulty
Academic content	Clear identification of students in need of services
Time management	Hidden nature of the difficulties
Organisation	Student reluctance to disclose
Study skills	Larger class sizes
	Limited tutor/student contact

- Students with HFA may benefit from high levels of support particularly during induction and orientation; this support may be provided by parents, peer mentors, accommodation officers and tutors.
- In general, students with HFA benefit from supports that are commonly provided to those with learning difficulties including: preferential seating, note takers, extra time and quiet rooms for exams. Additionally, some supports that may not be universally offered to students with special educational needs were also highlighted as being potentially helpful for students with HFA e.g. permission to avoid group discussions, group seating arrangements and group projects.

Full Reference

Adreon, D. & Durocher, J. S. (2007). Evaluating the college transition needs of individuals with high-functioning autism spectrum disorders. *Intervention in School and Clinic*, 42(5), p. 271-297.

Supporting More Able Students on the Autism Spectrum: College and Beyond

RESEARCH AIMS

The authors aim to provide recommendations regarding the needs of college students with ASD around times of transition.

RESEARCH METHOD

The authors reviewed the literature pertaining to the incident rates and classification of ASDs and the supportive requirements of young adults transitioning to higher educational settings taking social development issues into account.

FINDINGS

The authors emphasise the challenges young adults face in becoming independent from family, entering university and ultimately the work force. It also reflects on the concept that transition is a critical time in the lives of young people with ASD. The authors make recommendations to ease this important and potentially stressful time.

IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE

(by the authors)

- Individualised intervention may be the key to students with ASD making successful transitions to university and the labour force.
- Support teams and parents need to examine the suitability of a university in meeting the student's needs and must prepare the student for the transition at an early stage.
- Universities will need to learn how to assist in teaching social and independent living skills for students with executive functioning issues.
- It is important that the student identifies himself or herself as having a disability to facilitate necessary and appropriate accommodations being made by the university team.

Full Reference

Vanvergeijk, E., Klin, A. & Volkmar, F (2008). Supporting more able students on the autism spectrum: college and beyond. *Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders*, 38, p. 1359-1370.

School-to-Work Transition and Asperger's Syndrome

RESEARCH AIMS

This report aims to identify the psychosocial and vocational characteristics of people with Asperger's Syndrome (AS) and the support needed to be successful in the workplace. It also aims to examine the specific work-related challenges associated with AS.

RESEARCH METHOD

The authors provide a systematic review of school to work transitions faced by people with AS and recommendations for school to work transition are provided..

RESEARCH FINDINGS

The authors report that a careers education should have a dual focus. Firstly, it should increase awareness of career opportunities compatible with the abilities and interests of people with AS and secondly, it should provide them with opportunities to practice and improve their general employment skills and enhance selfconfidence. The multi-disciplinary transition team plays an essential role in the job search process by encouraging the individual to stay focused on the strengths and assets that they have to offer. They can break the process of gaining employment into manageable goals and help students recognise what information is relevant to potential employers. Supported education programmes can help create successful transitioning into post- secondary educational settings and job coaches, working within supported employment agencies, play a key function in assisting with the securing and retaining of employment. Transition teams play a crucial role in helping students access

information about their legal protections, develop skills at disclosing disability related information to employers and identify and request accommodation needs. They also equip employers with insight and strategies to prevent barriers in the workplace for employees with AS. The service they provide should be individually tailored to the employers concerns and needs.

IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE

(by the authors)

- The transition team should emphasise avenues of relevant work experience such as part-time jobs, internship, service learning and community-based work experience.
- The transition team should assist the student to write a Curriculum Vitae (CV) that highlights their skills and relevant experience.
- The transition team should provide scripts, role-play scenarios and immediate constructive feedback.
- Supported education may include stress management training, tutoring, peer support, faculty mentorships, career counselling, adjustment counselling and referral to campus resources.
- Services provided by the job coach may include vocational training, restructuring of job duties, ensuring that the employee completes job duties in an appropriate manner and providing followup services as required.
- The job coach can assist in identifying and remedying problematic behaviours.
- Accommodations to assist employees with AS with maintaining concentration include purchasing a noise-cancelling headset, relocating the employee's office space away

School-to-Work Transition and Asperger's Syndrome

CONTINUED

from audible and visual distractions and installing cubicle walls to reduce visual distractions.

- When communicating with employers, the advantages of hiring individuals with AS such as their cognitive abilities, attention to detail, loyalty, dependability and the fact that these individuals are often less distracted by the social aspects of a workplace, should be emphasised.

IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE

(by the reviewer)

It should be noted that a transition team is not current practice in Northern Ireland or the Republic of Ireland. It is recommended that services ensure a multi-disciplinary approach to a transition review.

Full Reference

Higgins, K. K., Kocha, L. C, Boughfmana, E. M. & Vierstrab, C. (2008). School to work transition and Asperger's Syndrome. *Work*, 31, p. 291-298.

Two Year Evaluation of a Vocational Support Programme for Adults on the Autism Spectrum

RESEARCH AIMS

The authors aim to provide a description and evaluation of a vocational support programme for adults with an ASD.

RESEARCH METHOD

The impact of involvement in a vocational support programme for people with ASD was assessed in nine participants over a two year period. The authors used questionnaires and interviews with participants and their parents to assess employment rate, level of income, job retention, hours worked and length of time taken to secure job placement.

RESEARCH FINDINGS

A comparison of the number of jobs held before enrolling in the programme and one year after enrolment showed that employment levels increased by 78%. Two participants (already employed at enrolment) found permanent positions with a higher salary. Seven participants who remained in their jobs had held these positions for an average of 12.5 months and for six of the nine participants this was their first paid position. Results demonstrated that over time individuals with ASD could become more integrated in the work place. Individuals with ASD scored well on measures of greetings and for interest in socialising with co-workers but remained low for participation in social activities outside the workplace and making friends in the work place.

Individuals with ASD presented with difficulties such as knowing how their role related to the roles of other employees, making friends, doing other employees' work without receiving recognition and being unfairly blamed for co-workers' mistakes.

Supervisors and coworkers reportedly admired the reliability, honesty, strict adherence to rules and attention to detail of participants, who would often complete the job tasks exactly as trained with precision and motivation. Support from the co-workers was very influential to the success of all the participants. Overall, the results suggest that individuals with ASD can be successful in competitive entry-level employment. However, specialised programmes and services will need to be developed, evaluated and prepared in order to support them in the process.

IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE

(by the authors)

- More emphasis should be placed on vocational preparation before leaving secondary school for individuals with ASD.
- Closer collaboration between schools and families would be beneficial in helping the individual with ASD to transition. This may also lead to more work experiences in the community prior to leaving school, which would significantly enhance the individual's awareness and understanding of the realities of employment.
- Professionals who are directly supporting adults with ASD in the work force should focus additional efforts on social integration with co-workers.

Two Year Evaluation of a Vocational Support Programme for Adults on the Autism Spectrum CONTINUED

- Educating supervisors and co workers as to how to interact with an adult with ASD may also enhance social integration and acceptance.
- Building social support networks outside the job placement such as groups for adults with ASD could further facilitate the generalisation of social skills developed in these settings

Full Reference

Hillier, A., Campbell, H., Mastriani, K., Vreeburg Izzo, M., Kool Tucker, A., Cherry, L., Beversdorf, D. (2007). Two year evaluation of a vocational support programme for adults on the autism spectrum. *Journal of Career Development for Exceptional Individuals*. 30(1), p. 35-47.

A Qualitative Comparison of Perceived Stress and Coping in Adolescents with and without Autistic Spectrum Disorders as they Approach Leaving School

RESEARCH AIMS

To compare the experience of stress during the final educational transition (leaving secondary education) between students with ASD and students without ASD.

RESEARCH METHOD

The authors conducted an interpretative phenomenology analysis on a range of qualitative data including interviews, diaries and drawings gathered from 17 volunteer participants all of whom were in the final year of compulsory education at an English school. Ten had a

diagnosis of ASD and seven had no diagnosis; the mean age was 15 years. None of the participants had a learning difficulty.

RESEARCH FINDINGS

The research indicates that all participants experienced stress when considering their options after secondary school. The experience of stress and coping is qualitatively different between the two groups. The authors asked the participants six key questions about their experience of stress. A summary of the participants' responses to these is set out in Table 1.

Questions 1-6	Participants with ASD	Participants without ASD
What kind of things do you feel cause you stress?	Experiencing actual harm e.g. bullying	Pressure coming from school work and the pressure of school
What do you feel when you suffer stress?	Participants were broadly in agreement with this experiencing physiological, visible, cognitive discomfort	Participants without ASD reported higher levels of physiological discomfort
How do you feel you cope when you suffer stress?	Mostly poorly	Mostly well
What worries do you think you will have when you leave school?	Mostly related to relationships	Mostly related to education and careers
How do you think you will be able to solve these problems?	For the most part personally with minimal external assistance	For the most part personally with a lot of external assistance
Do you feel that the way you think you will solve those problems is adequate to get over them for good? Or do you believe they may return?	Most were unsure about the future and predicted more worry in the future	Most indicated that worrying is futile and did not predict worry in the future

A Qualitative Comparison of Perceived Stress and Coping in Adolescents with and without Autistic Spectrum Disorders as they Approach Leaving School CONTINUED

In summary, the authors indicate that the participants with ASD had concerns about being harmed and about relationships when they left school. They felt they did not cope well with stress, did not seek out help with their stress and felt that they would experience more worry in the future.

IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE

(by the authors)

- Support for students with ASD should be more available in schools.
- Existing support in schools should be stronger and more visible for students with ASD.
- Schools should make links with support groups especially those groups which already provide social support and/or supported social encounters for individuals with ASD.

Full Reference

Browning, J., Osborne, L.A. & Reed, P. (2009). A qualitative comparison of perceived stress and coping in adolescents with and without autistic spectrum disorders as they approach leaving school. *British Journal of Special Education*. Online version accessed 36(1), p. 36-43.

Transitions: Perspectives from Parents of Young Children with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)

RESEARCH AIMS

The authors aim to investigate the perspectives and concerns of parents of young children with ASD in relation to transition. The authors distinguish two different types of transition. The first are 'vertical transitions' which are developmental and predictable, experienced by all students and have received most of the focus in the professional literature. The second are 'horizontal transitions' which are less predictable than vertical transitions and refer to the movement of pupils on a daily or weekly basis. Despite being under investigated in the literature, horizontal transitions have been identified as particularly challenging and stressful.

RESEARCH METHOD

Four couples with children aged from six to eight years old were interviewed three times during the study over a nine month period.

RESEARCH FINDINGS

Transition that parents considered to be effective were child centred. Parents wanted professionals to:

- Understand their children as individuals.
- Recognise what works for them and use this knowledge to implement transition strategies.

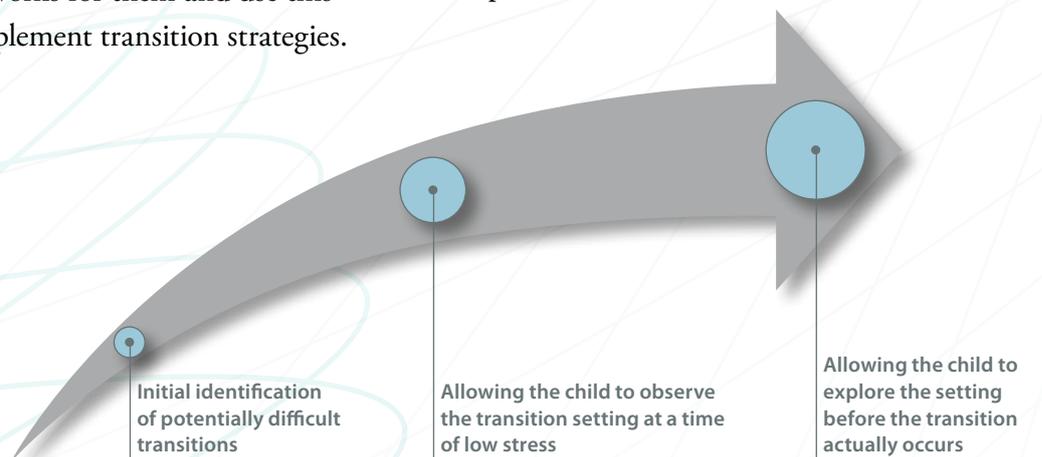
Preparation for transition began with an understanding of the child. This involved understanding the reactions of the child to transition in general and then applying this knowledge to transitional situations. Parents also identified barriers to successful transition. This included the lack of communication between children and education professionals and a lack of recognition of transition strategies on the part of education professionals.

While parents understood the different types of transition they tended to focus on horizontal transition. The results indicate that parents are under considerable pressure to support their children in making horizontal transitions and that the transition from school to adult life was only considered when time allowed.

IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE (by the authors)

Both vertical and horizontal transition strategies identified by this study followed a three step paradigm consisting of:

- identify
- observe
- explore



Transitions: Perspectives from Parents of Young Children with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) CONTINUED

- In the case of a new classroom this would involve identifying the new classroom situation, observing the child's reaction to the classroom and new teacher and allowing the child the opportunity to explore the new environment.
- Communication between home and school is a vital link for successful transition. Parents highlight the need for a child profile form to be completed by parents and the teacher and then given to the subsequent teacher. This would contain information about the child's likes and dislikes, strengths and needs and any idiosyncratic information about the child.
- As well as serving as a communication facilitator, the child profile could be utilised as a planning tool for facilitating vertical transitions. It is noteworthy that when communication between home and school was consistent it facilitated strong co-operation between them. Visual timetables and social stories were also identified as being effective in preparing children for horizontal transitions.

Full Reference

Stoner, A. H. & Bock, J. (2007). Transitions: perspectives from parents of young children with autism spectrum disorder (ASD). *Journal of Physical and Developmental Disabilities*. 19, p. 23-39.

Key Points in Transition

- Preparation is critical when facilitating a smooth transition for children and young people with autism. As summarised from the research articles a range of preparatory techniques congruent with the child or young person's age and ability should be used.
- There are different frequencies, intensities and directions of transition.
- Parents and professionals working with a child or young person need to reflect on the perspective of the child or young person. An ostensibly simple or minor transition can cause significant upset.
- Appropriate methods to reduce potential difficulties and stress should be employed. For teachers it may be as simple as allocating time with the child or young person to prepare them for the change. For some children and young people this preparation may need to start up to 24 months before the transition happens. For older children and young adults it is important that staff at college or university they are planning to attend are aware of the unique needs of the student with ASD so that support systems can be provided to reduce anxiety.

The articles summarised in this Bulletin provide evidence that, when facilitated sensitively, transition can be managed effectively. Most importantly, the effective management of transition can have a significant impact on a range of areas in the life of the child or young person; notably, a reduction in anxiety, improvements in independence and increased quality of life for the child or young person.

YOUR OPINION

We hope that you have found this Research Bulletin informative. We would appreciate if you would take a few minutes to give us feedback by simply clicking on the survey link below.

[Survey](#)
for Transition

The Centre's Research and Information Service welcomes any correspondence including suggestions for future Bulletins to: research@middletownautism.com

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