

CAMHS to AMHS Transitions Day
Presented by QINMAC
29th January 2010

A transitions day was held by Quality Improvement Network for Multi-Agency CAMHS (QINMAC) on 29th January 2010 for staff working in Tier 2 and 3 Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) across the UK. The day was chaired by Carol-Anne Murphy (Nurse Consultant in Transitions, Five Boroughs Partnership NHS Trust).

The day provided an opportunity for staff working in Tiers 2 and 3 to discuss current protocol regarding the transition of young people from CAMHS to Adult Mental Health Services (AMHS), and to examine the problems that services face at present. The day incorporated presentations from members of Tier 2 and 3 services, who spoke about protocols their own services have in place regarding transitions, the results from recent audits and what these imply. Two young people from the Very Important Kids (VIK) panel also attended the day, and spoke about their own experience of transition. The young people provided a valuable insight into how they believe services can improve the way in which transitions are dealt with, and offered useful ideas for improvement from the perspective of a service user.

Current problems identified regarding the transition from CAMHS to AMHS

Numerous problems were identified as key to overcome in order to further develop and improve the way transitions are dealt with. The main issues include:

- *Age of Transition*; It was evident from discussions throughout the day that there is a disparity between services in terms of the age that transition takes place. Some Trusts transferred young people to AMHS at the age of 16 years, whereas others would not begin the transition process until 6 months before their 17th or 18th birthday, or later in some cases. In other Trusts, the age of transition depended on whether the young person was in full time education, which was found to complicate matters further.
- *Protocol*; As above, where protocols are in place, these are not consistent between Trusts. This was found to cause confusion for young people and their parents/carers, as what may have been the protocol in one trust may be entirely different in a different trust.
- *Lack of Communication*; Staff spoke about the lack of communication between CAMHS and AMHS, and the need for greater knowledge and understanding of AMHS for CAMHS workers, and vice versa. Staff felt that if

they were more knowledgeable about each service, the transition between services would be smoother, and both staff and young people would know what to expect when the transition process begins.

- *Service User Involvement*; The young people who presented on the day highlighted that the transition process can be a very daunting experience, and spoke about how they felt their views were often overlooked. The need to involve service users in their own transition was emphasized, and the lack of comprehensive information available to service users regarding transition to AMHS was also identified as a problem.

Next Steps for Transitions

During an end of day discussion, guests were asked to identify the next steps for transitions, and what changes they would like to see in the near future. Some of the main points identified are listed below:

- *Develop Transition Standards which are Consistent across Services*;
 - The need to develop a national transition protocol was identified numerous times throughout the day. This would make transitions more consistent and avoid confusion and frustration for young people and their parents/carers.
 - However, emphasis was put on the need for services to be flexible regarding the age of transition. Services need to consider a young person's needs and developmental age, rather than purely chronological age.
 - QINMAC to review services and develop transition standards (including standards for commissioning). To be reviewed this year.
- *Improving Communication/Relationship between CAMHS and AMHS*;
 - This could be achieved through CAMHS working creatively with AMHS, and vice versa. This may include joint presentations and joint training days within each service, providing an opportunity for staff to learn more about the other service, and what the young person can expect.
 - Also discussed was the introduction of a link nurse for transitions (in both CAMHS and AMHS), who will have more in-depth knowledge regarding transitions, so if staff or young people have any queries they know who to approach.
 - Stronger links should be developed with AMHS, and CAMHS should involve them in what is happening i.e. provide information on Young Minds, VIK etc.

- Transition meetings were also discussed, through which representatives from both CAMHS and AMHS join to plan a young person's transition. The young person would also be involved in this, and it would provide an opportunity for joint assessments in order to avoid multiple assessments
 - The idea of a secondment/rotation of CAMHS workers to AMHS (or vice versa) was also discussed, to give a greater insight into what to expect from a service following transition, and will help to overcome the "fear of the unknown".
 - The young people from the VIK panel spoke about how they would have found an advocate for transitions very useful and supportive. The young people said that the advocate would preferably be separate from both CAMHS and AMHS, and perhaps would have gone through the transition themselves, where they are able to speak from experience. Where this is not possible, a representative from AMHS would be preferable to CAMHS, in order to gain greater insight and feel more involved in AMH services. The advocate would be able to inform the young person about what to expect, and would be a familiar face for the young person following transition.
- *Involving Service Users in their Transition*
 - It was agreed that it was very important for young people to be routinely involved in the planning of their own transition, and to be kept informed throughout the process.
 - Services need to introduce better systems for young people to feedback thoughts, ideas, experiences etc., and to also put systems in place to act on this feedback.
 - When developing protocols/standards for the transition process, young people's views need to be taken into account, and incorporated into protocol. The use of feedback sheets and seeking opinions from Young Minds, VIK panel etc. should be considered.
 - Services need to look at developing resources for young people who are transitioning in order to provide them with information about the transition process. These resources may include websites, information packs, discharge packs, and welcome packs upon entering AMHS, that services have a duty to provide
- Furthermore, it was mentioned that all staff and services can learn from good practice. It was emphasised that attention needs to be drawn to good examples of transitions, and that this should be recognised and rewarded.