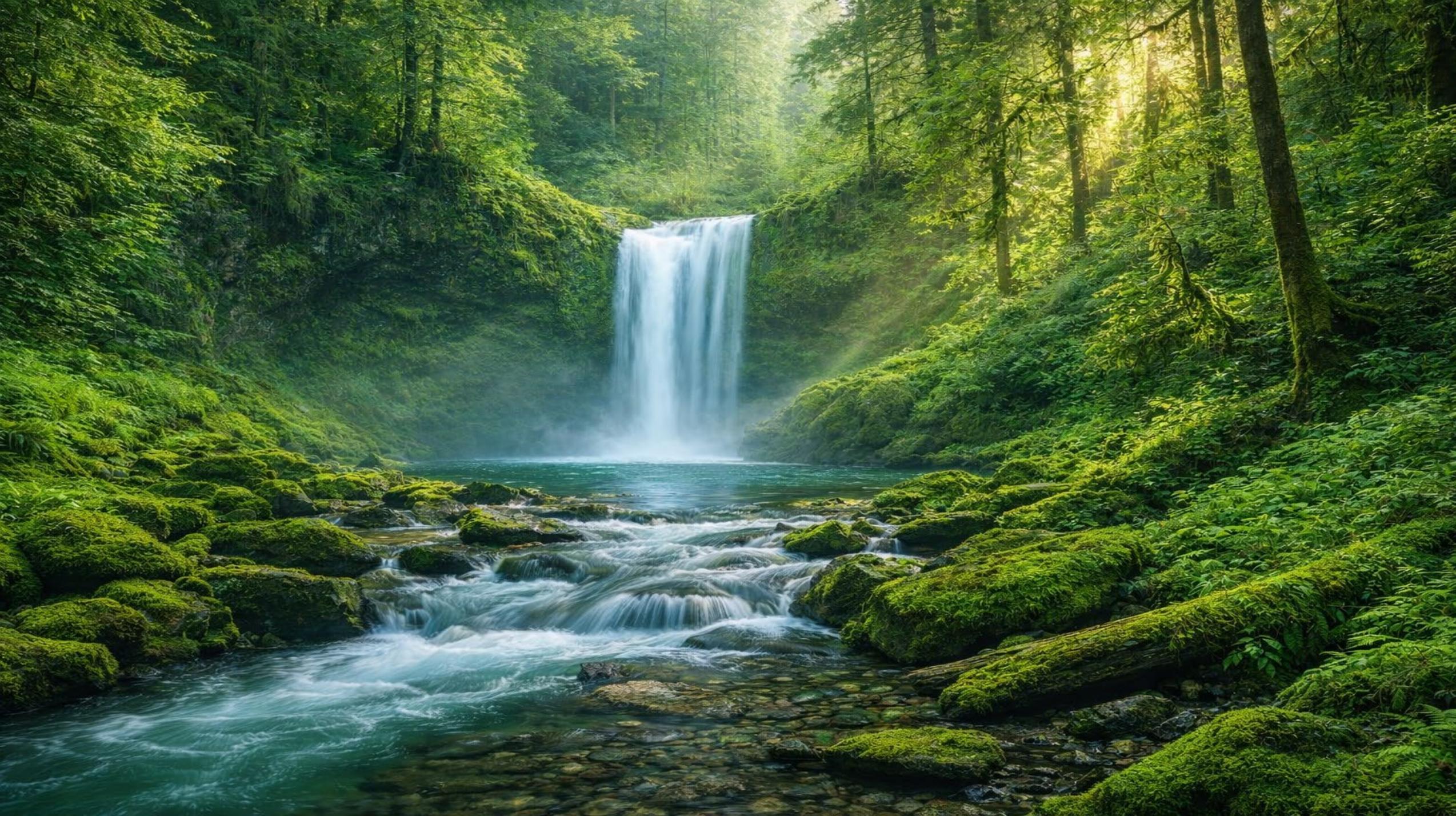


INVISIBLE IN PLAIN SIGHT

Crises in Neurodiverse Youth

Presented by Dr Nudrat Rizvi

Birmingham and Solihull Mental Health Foundation Trust-CYP DIVISION



LET'S SEE WHAT THE DATA SHOWS US...

CRHTT Crisis Presentations (n=67) Neurodevelopmental Distribution



**CRISIS IS RARELY SUDDEN
IT IS CUMULATIVE AND PREDICTABLE!**



PATTERN OBSERVED IN COMMUNITY CAMHS

ACCUMULATION OF RISK: FROM SYSTEM BARRIERS TO CRISIS



INCREASING VULNERABILITIES

Environmental / Modifiable Factor:

- **Delayed Identification & Fragmented Care Pathways**
NICE NG11; NHS England neurodevelopmental guidance
- **Educational Exclusion & Inadequate Support**
DfE 2023–24; SEND research; NICE NG11
- **Social Isolation & Loss of Protective Relationships**
Felitti et al., ACE Study, 1998
- **Safeguarding Risk & Exploitation Vulnerability**
Contextual safeguarding literature
- **Housing Instability & Justice System Contact**
Centrepont 2023; Homeless Link 2023; Youth Justice Board



TRAJECTORY PATHWAY TO CRISIS

- **Baseline vulnerability**
↓
Delayed identification & support
↓
Loss of structure (education)
↓
Isolation & escalating risk
↓
Crisis presentation





DELAYED ASSESSMENT AND ACCESS TO SUPPORT

- **NICE recommended timeframe: \leq 13 weeks**
- **Typical waiting time in practice: 12–36 months**
In some areas waits of 4 years or longer are reported
- **People waiting for autism assessment in England: \approx 227,000**
- **LOCAL CONTEXT — BIRMINGHAM**
- **Children and young people (0–16): Over 12,000 awaiting autism assessment**
- **Young people aged 16+ not open to mental health services:**
Waiting times commonly extend to several years
- **CAMHS waiting times: 527–791 days *NHS England, 2024.**

*NICE NG11; NHS Digital Autism Waiting Time Statistics; National Autistic Society analyses; Children's Commissioner for England; NHS England reports; Local service data (Birmingham)

EDUCATIONAL DISENGAGEMENT

- **Autistic pupils are disproportionately affected by exclusion and attendance difficulties**

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/timpson-review-of-school-exclusion>

- **Autistic children are twice as likely to be excluded; exclusions rose 59% between 2011–2016**

<https://www.birmingham.ac.uk/news/2019/autistic-children-more-likely-to-be-excluded-from-school>

- **30.8% of autistic pupils persistently absent vs. 20.9% peers**

Parliamentary evidence, 2023

<https://committees.parliament.uk/publications/41153/documents/203219/default>

- **Youth Justice Board data: Excluded children are far more likely to enter youth justice systems**

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/youth-justice-statistics-2022-to-2023>



LOSS OF STRUCTURE AND STABILITY

- **Severe social isolation**
<https://www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk/resource/childhood-vulnerability>
- **Risk of abuse and neglect**
<https://www.nspcc.org.uk/what-is-child-abuse/types-of-abuse/neglect>
- **Safeguarding and exploitation vulnerability**
<https://www.contextualsafeguarding.org.uk/resources/publications/>
- **Family strain and relationship breakdown**
<https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/publications/mental-health-effects-on-children-and-young-people>
- **Housing instability and homelessness risk**
<https://centrepoint.org.uk/about-us/research-and-policy/>
- **Disproportionate contact with justice system**
<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/youth-justice-statistics>
- **Radicalisation risk; at increased risk of exploitation and extremist grooming**
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/independent-review-of-prevent>



ESCALATION of RISKS

- **Self-harm rates substantially higher than in non-autistic youth (up to ~7×)**
<https://www.autistica.org.uk/what-is-autism/suicide-and-autism>
 - **Suicide risk markedly elevated (≈5–9× higher than general population),**
<https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC10018918>
 - **Anxiety disorders affect ~40–50% vs ~7–10% in general youth**
<https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ng170>
 - **Depression rates 2–4× higher than peers**
<https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ng170>
-

Systematic review & meta-analysis:

- ***Psychotic experiences; pooled prevalence ≈ 24% vs 5–12% general population***
https://academic.oup.com/schizbullopen/article/1/1/sgaa046/5899822?utm_source
- ***Pooled prevalence of psychosis in adults with autism ≈ 9.4%*** <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/35063494>
- ***Life expectancy reduced by ~16–30 years on average***
[https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lanpsy/article/PIIS2215-0366\(18\)30356-5/fulltext](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lanpsy/article/PIIS2215-0366(18)30356-5/fulltext)

COLLABORATION

- **Understanding the problem is the first step toward addressing it**
- **Mental health services initiated local data collection to understand patterns**
- **This informed the development of cross-system dialogue**
- **Supported by Clinical Senate, RMC, ASD services, and St Basils leadership**
- **Partnership working with Birmingham City Council, education, and social care**
- **Working together to reduce gaps and strengthen coordinated pathways**
- **I now invite our partner colleagues to share their frontline insights.**

