

## Exploring the views of young people with mental health conditions and learning disabilities on their transition to adulthood and independence



*“There is an assumption that upon reaching 18 years old, young people’s needs stop overnight because one day they are 17 years and 364 days old and the next day they are 18. Their needs are still changing, and those needs don’t stop just because they turn 18”.*

*(Parent of an 18-year-old young person)*

The above statement speaks about the common experience of some young people who have mental health conditions and learning disabilities in Lambeth. In our most recent research project, we have heard from 19 young people aged 14 to 25 about the common issues they are facing, as follows:



### Lack of information and support on basic benefits and process

Parents must do the research themselves and they find it difficult that no one is telling them in advance and suddenly everything comes as a shock. *“There is also an assumption that young people will be transitioning in some kind of care or another service, but actually there is no other service.”*

### Disjointed services

Young people receive support when they are in crisis point - e.g., after a hospital admission and the crisis team was involved. A parent said:



*“We didn’t have a care coordinator until she was nearly 17 and that contributed to disjointed care that we had so she had involvements with different physiotherapists within Lambeth CAMHS over the years, different clinical physiologists.”*

Adult services usually don’t respond, and one reason mentioned was that CAMHS aren’t referring properly.

### No real preparation for young people

There is no information on what is out there and training on life skills, transport, and resilience building. Some care leavers were not prepared to leave care and found there is no support available for those struggling with mental health problems. Similarly, one young carer who is looking after her brother found that she had to learn things on her own. Annual reviews often don’t happen at Year 9, leaving the families to figure out the support needed by young people.



There is not enough opportunity for young people to interact, join groups, and they are relying on social media. Schools are not always helpful in finding the appropriate support for the young person. Young people are not prepared to respond/deal with medical care letters which are sent to them.



### Lack of help for those who are new to the country

Young people agreed that coming into the UK for the first time and how lonely they felt really affected them. Unaccompanied minors and young people in similar situations need to feel more involved in the community. They said that they felt very lonely and on top of that could not speak much English. This further exacerbates their mental ill-health.

### High threshold in adults' services

There is not enough intervention from social care including preventative or early help. Young people fall through the gap or disengage when they don't meet the threshold for adult services.



### Role of foster care

Foster carer did not understand how to support the young person and how to keep her safe, resulting in deterioration of her mental health due to stress. The social worker also left and there was no proper turnover to the new person, causing the young person to disengage.

Young people and parent/carers said that some things can be done including the following:

- *Building the resilience of young people through training on life skills, learning about taking responsibility, and arts-based activities. It is also important for them to have a conducive environment with people they can trust and speak to alongside professionals.*

- *Preparing a roadmap starting from transition meetings with all relevant agencies who will start working with the young person at 17 years old to prepare the young person for adult life. This should extend to age 25.*
- *Care coordination is important, such as having a named GP, and having a point of contact who can advise when parents and young people need to access information.*
- *Social network for parents so that parents who have children with similar needs can have conversation about common issues faced and their possible solutions. This could be informal peer support like the ADHD support group to talk about what is less understood or other ways to offer early support.*

Healthwatch Lambeth is the independent voice for Lambeth people. We listen to their experiences of health and care with a view to inform service commissioning, development, and delivery. We conduct engagement activities through research and community outreach, give information on various health and care topics, and work in partnership with local and national groups.

If you need more information or have stories to share, please contact us on **020 7274 8522** or at [info@healthwatchlambeth.org.uk](mailto:info@healthwatchlambeth.org.uk)

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