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Autism Transition to Adulthood Groups (ATAG)

Submission date
04/10/2023

Recruitment status
No longer recruiting

Registration date
05/10/2023

Overall study status
Completed

Last Edited
21/04/2026

Condition category
Mental and Behavioural Disorders

[ ] Prospectively registered
[X] Protocol
[ ] Statistical analysis plan
[X] Results
[ ] Individual participant data

Plain English summary of protocol

Background and study aims
Our project will improve understanding of how social care professionals can enhance the life chances of autistic people without intellectual disability. We will conduct a feasibility study to learn if it is realistic and possible to conduct a research project testing a new intervention. This group intervention will support autistic people in a successful transition to adulthood.

Over the next 10 years, in the UK ~175,000 autistic people will engage in transition to adulthood. This is a challenging time, as they face the demands of adult life while support decreases.

This research aims to understand how possible it is to find 70 people who agree to take part, and if they are willing to continue taking part in the study. It will tell us if it is possible to do a bigger study to see if the intervention is effective.

Who can participate?
We will recruit 70 autistic people aged 16-25 years old to take part in the study.

What does the study involve?
Participants will be randomly allocated to receive usual care, or the new group intervention. Thirty-five people will receive the new intervention.

The intervention is being developed by young autistic adults and autism professionals. It involves six online group sessions, facilitated by an autistic young adult and two social care professionals. It will cover different topics including understanding the autism label, identifying your needs and understanding your rights, and where to get help. Carers, nominated by each participant, will also be offered online resources to learn about these topics.

Participants will complete questionnaires measuring well-being, interpersonal support, autism social identity, loneliness, and quality of life before the intervention starts, and after 3- and 12-months. We will also invite participants to be interviewed to find out their views on the intervention and taking part in the study.

Autistic people are involved in the research project. The intervention and research has been designed in collaboration with a group of autistic people.

What are the possible benefits and risks of participating?
Participants may find that taking part improves their well-being, but there is no guarantee of this. They may also benefit from the extra contact that comes with being part of the study. Even if there is no direct benefit from taking part in this study, participants will help to improve future support for autistic young people.

In terms of risks, participants may find it tiring to complete the questionnaires. We will try to ensure participants are comfortable and can take one or more breaks as needed. Participants might find that some of the topics covered are distressing, for example talking about challenges. We will help participants to get further support if needed.

Where is the study run from?
University of Bath (UK)

When is the study starting and how long is it expected to run for?
January 2023 to June 2025

Who is funding the study?
National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR) (UK).

Who is the main contact?
Kate Cooper, k.r.cooper@ucl.ac.uk

Contact information

Type(s)
Scientific, Principal investigator

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Integrated Research Application System (IRAS)
321840

Central Portfolio Management System (CPMS)
55812

National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR)
204276

Study information

Scientific Title
Peer-group intervention to promote successful transition to adulthood for autistic people: A feasibility RCT of Autism Transition to Adulthood Groups (ATAG)

Acronym
ATAG

Study objectives
This research is a feasibility study to learn if it is realistic and possible to conduct a research project testing a new intervention. This group intervention will support autistic people in a successful transition to adulthood. It will tell us if it is possible to do a bigger study to see if the intervention is effective.

Ethics approval required
Ethics approval required

Ethics approval(s)
Approved 15/05/2023, HRA and Health and Care Research Wales (HCRW) (Castlebridge 4 15-19 Cowbridge Road East, Cardiff, CF11 9AB, United Kingdom; +44 (0)2920 230457; approvals@hra.nhs.uk), ref: 23/WA/0113

Primary study design
Interventional

Study design
Interventional randomized controlled trial

Study type(s)
Quality of life

Health condition(s) or problem(s) studied
Autism spectrum conditions

Interventions
Participants will be randomised across two interventions: (1) Autism Transition to Adulthood Group (ATAG), or (2) Care as usual (CAU).

The ATAG intervention involves six online peer-group sessions in groups of 8-10 autistic young people with social care and autistic facilitators.

The CAU intervention involves receiving the standard care for autistic young people in each participant's region.

The randomisation sequence will be generated by Sealed Envelope TM. Randomisation will be stratified by age (16-17 or 18-25). Participants will be randomised to one of two treatment groups on a 1:1 ratio, that is either ATAG (intervention arm) or CAU (control arm).

Intervention Type
Behavioural

Primary outcome(s)
Participant impact will be measured using the Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale (WEMWBS) at baseline, 8, 16 and 24 weeks

Key secondary outcome(s)
1. Affiliation with the autistic community will be measured through the Autism Social Identification Scale at 8, 16 and 24 weeks
2. Quality of life will be measured using the EQ-5D-5L at 8, 16 and 24 weeks
3. Interpersonal support will be measured using the Interpersonal Support Evaluation List – Short Scale at baseline, 8, 16 and 24 weeks
4. Loneliness will be measured using the UCLA Loneliness Scale at baseline, 8, 16 and 24 weeks
5. Resource Use will be measured using the Adapted Client Service Receipt Inventory at baseline, 8, 16 and 24 weeks
6. Carer Impact will be measured using the Social-care-related quality of life (ASCOT-CARER) and Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale (WEMWBS) at baseline, 8, 16 and 24 weeks

Completion date
30/06/2025

Eligibility

Key inclusion criteria
1. Age between 16 - 25 years
2. A clinical diagnosis of Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)

Participant type(s)
Service user

Healthy volunteers allowed
No

Age group
Mixed

Lower age limit
16 Years

Upper age limit
25 Years

Sex
All

Total final enrolment
70

Key exclusion criteria
Current exclusion criteria as of 10/06/2024:
1. Risk of suicide
2. Risk of harm to others
3. Have attended autism psychoeducation or post-diagnostic support from a professional over the past 12 months
4. English, non-English & Welsh literacy levels such that the intervention materials are inaccessible without reasonable adjustments and a supporting person is not available

Previous exclusion criteria:
1. Risk of suicide
2. Risk of harm to others
3. Have attended >6 sessions of autism psychoeducation or post-diagnostic support over the past 6 months
4. English, non-English & Welsh literacy levels such that the intervention materials are inaccessible without reasonable adjustments and a supporting person is not available

Date of first enrolment
01/07/2023

Date of final enrolment
10/06/2024

Locations

Countries of recruitment
United Kingdom

Study participating centre
University of Bath
Claverton Down
Bath
England
BA2 7AY

Study participating centre
Tavistock and Portman NHS Foundation Trust
The Tavistock Centre
120 Belsize Lane
London
England
NW3 5BA

Sponsor information

Organisation
University of Bath

ROR
https://ror.org/002h8g185

Funder(s)

Funder type
Government

Funder Name
NIHR Central Commissioning Facility (CCF)

Results and Publications

Individual participant data (IPD) sharing plan

Participants are asked whether they consent to their anonymised data being shared with other researchers who have received appropriate ethical approval for their research. This will be made available to other eligible researchers on request.

IPD sharing plan summary

Available on request

Study outputs

Output type	Details	Date created	Date added	Peer reviewed?	Patient-facing?
Results article		07/04/2026	21/04/2026	Yes	No
Protocol article		19/11/2024	02/12/2024	Yes	No
Study website	Study website	11/11/2025	11/11/2025	No	Yes