



CALDERSTONES PARTNERSHIP NHS FOUNDATION TRUST

PERSON-CENTRED STAFF TRAINING TO ADDRESS THE CHALLENGING BEHAVIOUR OF ADULTS WITH AUTISM

SUMMARY

A pilot staff training programme was launched in 2010 by Calderstones Partnership NHS Foundation Trust. It was made up of autism-specific interventions and was targeted at a core ward team supporting several men with autism. These men were described as having challenging behaviour. This innovative training was tailored to the needs of these specific individuals, with an emphasis on positive behavioural support, communication strategies and environmental support. It changed the emphasis from teaching theory to practical skills to help staff cope with the consequences of challenging behaviour. The impact of this training led to a marked decrease in challenging behaviour as well as a 64% increase in staff knowledge in person centred autism specific interventions – an important correlation for all staff working with individuals with autism and all those involved in training. One member of staff said: *'I learnt a lot, I now know that I shouldn't be making decisions for my service-users.'*

KEY OUTCOMES

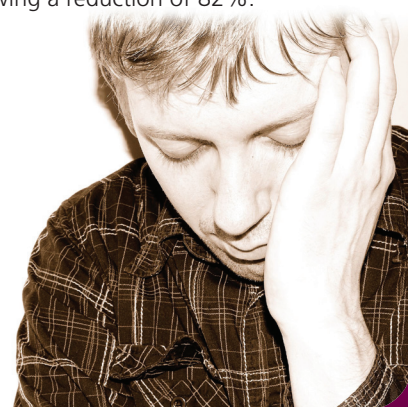
- **Training increases staff knowledge by up to 64%** At the beginning of each training session staff members were given a questionnaire which assessed their current knowledge on the topic and interventions taught. The questionnaire was repeated at the end of the training session. The training session outcomes showed significant increases in knowledge:

 - **Environmental Support** - pre-test scores were on average very good, demonstrating an existing knowledge of environmental factors which would affect an individual with autism. Their post-test scores increased by 14%.
 - **Communication Strategies** -staff knowledge was also quite high pre-test, with an average increase of 30 %in the post- test scoring.
 - **Behavioural Approaches** -staff post-test scores increased by 20%
 - **Person- Centred Approaches** - staff showed the largest increase between pre and post-test scores, with an average increase in knowledge of 64%.
- **Staff interviews support positive training outcomes** Of the 26 core staff, 17 gave their consent to be interviewed, and, those who attended two or more of the training sessions were identified to take part in a semi-structured interview. Six separate, tape-recorded, interviews were carried out with a core standard of questions delivered by the project lead Sarah Jackson. Where answers were very short, the interviewer expanded on questions to explore responses in greater depth.

There was a definite shift in their learning and thinking around issues of working with people with autism, particularly from support workers. They said:

 - *'It helps staff to look through a different pair of eyes. We can look at a negative behaviour and work out why it has occurred.'*
- **Challenging behaviour incidents reduced by of 82%**

Challenging behaviour incidents were collated from electronic records pre and post staff training. All instances, including self-harm, were included, regardless of severity. This data was collected from September 2009 (pre- training) and September 2010 (post- training). There were 22 recorded incidents of challenging behaviour pre-training and only four recorded incidents post- training, showing a reduction of 82%.
- *'It was interesting but it is difficult with our service-users as it is all about our presumptions of what their choices might be.'*
- *'I learnt about communication and understanding with service-users. I know not to shout or repeat myself when it might appear that a service user does not understand.'*
- *'I am definitely more aware of the importance of visual aids, activity boards and such like. We all like to use visual aids everyday so we should allow our service-users to do the same.'*





GOOD PRACTICE CASE STUDY

BACKGROUND

Calderstones Partnership is the first Learning Disability NHS Foundation Trust to be authorised. It is based in the Ribble Valley near the village of Whalley in Lancashire and provides a specialist service to people with a learning disability, including in-patient assessment and treatment and community based services across the North West. Calderstones has approximately 1650 staff members working across its services.

Sarah Jackson is an Advanced Practitioner at Calderstones Partnership NHS Foundation Trust who was required to introduce a new innovative practice as part of her Master's Degree, and as such focused her attention on the reduction of challenging behaviour instances in individuals with autism.

Long-term exposure to challenging behaviours is recognised as difficult for carers and can lead to staff burn-out, potential abusive practices, and increased staff illness. Sarah found that staff members were implementing short-term interventions in order to manage challenging behaviour, however these strategies were potentially maintaining challenging behaviours in the longer term (Hastings, 1996). Therefore, Sarah devised a staff training programme which had a shift in emphasis from teaching theory to teaching practical skills to enable staff to cope with the consequences of challenging behaviours.

KEY AIMS

- No intervention alone can address all the complexities surrounding autism. This training package aimed to use the most scientifically promising treatment interventions (Research Autism, 2006) which is arguably the most successful method of supporting service-users with autistic spectrum conditions (Mesibov et al, 2005 & Smeardon, 1998)
- To reduce service-user challenging behaviour instances (Van Bourgondien et al, 2003)
- To improve service-user quality of life
- To help staff cope with instances of challenging behaviour and reduce the potential for staff burn out and illness.

KEY STAGES OF SET-UP

Twenty- six core staff members (five registered nurses and 21 support workers), working in two low-security flats within Calderstones were the focus of this staff training programme. They supported seven service-users diagnosed with autism and learning disabilities who also displayed extremes of challenging behaviour. Some of these individuals were detained under the Mental Health Act, whereas others were informal service-users.

Although these core staff members had many years of practical experience of working with individuals with autism, it was felt they would benefit from a training package designed to increase awareness of interventions that could be applied in practice, encompassing approaches designed to address the particular needs of the individuals they were caring for.

To create the training programme, the project lead Sarah Jackson arranged focused meetings with key stakeholders which

highlighted four themes that were pertinent to the seven service-users. These were:

- environmental support
- communication strategies
- behavioural approaches
- person-centred approaches.

These themes formed the basis of the training package. This ensured the training targeted the specific needs of individual service-users. It was felt that these themes would address service-user issues of communication, social interactions, flexibility of thought process and sensory issues, with the expectation that challenging behaviour incidents would decrease.

Specialists in each of these four themes were then recruited to develop and deliver the training package. Each training theme was delivered twice, with eight training sessions being delivered over a two month period targeting the whole core staff team. The emphasis of the training programme focused on less restrictive responses, better understanding and the amelioration of challenging behaviour.

In order to evaluate this pilot, a multi-method triangulation approach to data collection was used including both qualitative and quantitative methods These included:

- Number of Challenging Behaviour instances between 1st September 2009 and 30th September 2009 (pre-framework training) compared with instances of service-user Challenging Behaviour between 1st September 2010 and 30th September 2010 (post framework training)
- Percentage of staff attendance at framework training
- Framework training pre and post staff knowledge questionnaires
- Semi-structured interviews highlighting the experiences of staff members



GOOD PRACTICE CASE STUDY



HOW IT WORKS

As no single intervention can address all the needs of people with autism, a combination of evidence-based approaches were included in the staff training programme. It

was devised on the principles of successful autism frameworks of care such as 'SPELL' Structure, Positive [approaches and expectations], Empathy, Low arousal and Links: (Smeardon, 1998) and 'TEACCH' Treatment and Education of Autistic and

related Communication handicapped Children: (Mesibov, Shea and Schopler, 2005). Summary of the content which the training covered

ENVIRONMENTAL SUPPORT:

- Maintaining a predictable physical environment
- Using structured approaches such as routines, visual timetables, plans and rotas
- Ensuring activities have a clear start, middle and end
- Preparation for change
- Appropriate sensory stimulation
- Low arousal approaches
- Information should be given in an appropriate form
- Sensory integration strategies
- Consistency in approaches
- Relaxation strategies

PERSON CENTRED APPROACHES:

- How people with autism see the world
- How people with autism learn and communicate
- Developing skills
- Skills generalisation
- Skills maintenance
- Having empathy
- Building trust
- Finding out about individual pleasures, hopes and ambitions
- Finding out about what motivates the person
- Ensuring the individual has opportunities to develop relationships

BEHAVIOURAL APPROACHES:

- Managing risk
- Managing challenging behaviour
- Setting up rules for behaviour
- Understanding consequences
- Danger awareness
- Teaching about abstract concepts
- Diet, and possible effects on behaviour and concentration
- Dealing with obsessions and pre-occupations
- Token systems
- Prompting
- Shaping
- Chaining
- Extinction
- Re-direction and time-out
- Fading out prompts and reinforcers

COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES:

- Using appropriate language
- Communication books
- Communication passports
- Social stories
- Picture Exchange Communication System
- Visual cues: gestures, Makaton, objects, pictures, symbols, planners, diaries or the written word
- Minimising distractions
- Avoiding sarcasm, metaphors and turns of phrase
- Being positive!
- Encouraging meaningful choices which are not too complex
- Allowing extra thinking time
- Teaching emotion awareness
- Intensive interaction





GOOD PRACTICE CASE STUDY

RESOURCES

For the majority of this project no additional funding was needed, as professionals who were involved simply made time for the pilot. The only additional funding was for two environmental support training sessions, as an external trainer was brought in, and the cost of hosting steering group meetings. The funding for this was provided by the Calderstones Learning & Development Department at a cost of approximately £3,745.

KEY CHALLENGES

- One of the key challenges was ensuring staff members were able to be released from their duties to attend the training. In order to overcome this challenge, the project lead, Sarah Jackson, ensured that senior managers were aware of the rationale for the pilot from the start and that they were fully informed of its progress throughout. This meant that they were also able to plan for staff cover to be provided.
- Another challenge was encouraging staff members to change their ways of working through training, and the role modelling of autism interventions. It was hoped that the more staff members who received training, the more likely a critical mass of likeminded people would develop. Thus reaching a tipping point in adopting new methods of working.

KEY LEARNING

- Targeted educational sessions to the staff team proved effective in increasing skills in managing and ameliorating instances of challenging behaviour.
- Identifying lead people in their field to deliver the training sessions also proved an effective component of the educational sessions.
- Locally owned and coordinated delivery of these educational tools was essential. Further additions may need to be considered to sustain this improvement, such as role modelling and clinical supervision.

- Education and training as identified in the National Adult Autism Strategy is the key to providing a positive patient experience

SUSTAINABILITY

Following the success of this training pilot, the Trust now incorporates elements of this into autism Treatment & Care Plans, making implementation part of daily routine.

The local autism team will continue to measure the effectiveness of future training initiatives and current treatment and care planning using person centered outcome measures. The autism team are continually establishing a supportive framework to support individuals and their teams to reflect on and adapt their approaches to working with people with autism.

NEXT STEPS

- **Potential roll-out**
The emerging principles learnt from this pilot are transferrable to other clinical areas. Elements of this training package could be re-developed and rolled out for implementation in the wider Trust. by the Project Lead and stakeholders relevant to the training themes. However it is important to remember that challenging behaviour is subjective and a very personal thing. An event that affects one service-user in one way may affect another differently. Therefore, outcomes of the training may differ greatly from service-user to service-user.
- **Training delivery options**
Alternative delivery options are being explored for delivering training content. It may be possible to develop this training into an e-learning training package, which staff members can access from onsite computers. It may also be possible to video record training sessions. These two methods of training could be combined with additional short practical sessions for core staff members offered through the monthly 'Autism Team' meetings on how to use specific framework tools / interventions.

SUPPORTING MATERIAL

The following resources are available as an appendix to this case study

- **Appendix 1- Resources Required for Autism Framework Project**

FURTHER LINKS

The National Autistic Society, SPELL framework:

<http://www.autism.org.uk/our-services/training-and-consultancy/our-training-courses-for-practitioners/the-spell-framework-for-intervention.aspx>

TEACCH Autism Programme:

<http://www.teacch.com/>

FURTHER LINKS

Mesibov, G. B. Shea, V. & Schopler, E. (with Adams, L. Burgess, S. Chapman, S. M. Merkler, E. Mosconi, M. Tanner, C. & Van Bourgondien, M. E.) (2005) The TEACCH approach to autism spectrum disorders New York: Kluwer Academic/ Plenum.

Research Autism (2006) Evaluated interventions Bristol: Research Autism. [online] last accessed 26 October 2009 at URL <http://www.researchautism.net/interventionlist.ikml>

Smearon (1998) The SPELL Framework London: The National Autistic Society. [online] last accessed on 12 June 2009 at URL <http://www.nas.org.uk/nas/jsp/polopoly.jsp?d=528&a=3362>

Van Bourgondien, M. E. Reichle, N. C. & Schopler, E. (2003) Effects of a model treatment approach on adults with autism Journal of autism and developmental disorders Vol.33, No.2, pp.131-40

CONTACT FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

- Sarah Jackson
Advanced Practitioner

Email:

Sarah.jackson@calderstones.nhs.uk

Telephone: 01254 821447