The Parent Autism Training Programme

Evolution and Development of the Training Materials
Identifying the Core Areas of Need

• Partners surveyed parents about their core needs and requests for training based upon a review of the literature about parent education in autism.

• The top requests became the main indicator of the content which would be incorporated into the training curriculum.
Developing a Suitable Programme

Potential models of parent education were shared with partners through Basecamp. This explored methods developed and used in the UK – such as The National Autistic Society, Autism Concern, Autism West Midlands, Barnardo’s, and various Local Authority training programmes, etc. This information was used to help inform the best time frames, curriculum and methods to roll out the ESIPP training programme.
Recruiting and Training Local Trainers

• Initially, 4 core trainers from AASP and Target Autism to supervise the local trainers during their induction

• Host institutions to determine who will undertake the process of becoming an ESIPP trainer

• Local trainers in training observe training sessions delivered by core trainers at least once

• Local trainers in training deliver a module in the presence of core trainers

• Local trainers in training have access to videos of the core trainers delivering training to help them in their delivery of the programme

• Host institutions then are responsible for the sustainability and training of their own training teams
Developing a Useful Timeline

• Partners then had to decide the most suitable time frame to deliver training. Weekends were identified by parents as preferable.

• Keeping this time frame in mind, a training curriculum was agreed – consisting of six modules (2 hours each in the original language).
Rolling Out the Programme

- The decision was made to trial the first 3 modules over a weekend, using lead trainers from the UK and Cyprus. Shadow trainers were taking part in each of the target organisations.

- This was to allow for time to translate to the audience from the original English language version of the training.

- This also allowed time for feedback from the participants, and work on further edits to improve the programme.
Organisation of the Programme Roll-Out

Modules 1-3
Training in Zagreb, Skopje and Limassol
March-May 2016

Modules 4-6
Training in Zagreb, Skopje and Limassol
September-November 2016

All 6 Modules
Training in Zagreb, Skopje and Limassol
February-March 2017

Training sessions to be conducted in full, in local language (no translation)
Three full training sessions (6 modules each) delivered until the end of the formal ESIPP timescale
Rationale for Programme Roll-Out Timings

• Allow time for feedback from course participants, partner organisations and shadow trainers.
• Time to analyse and take into account data from official course feedback.
• Enable teams to refine the training, allowing for continuous development.
The most requested content was placed in a checklist to help ensure that all areas of study requested by parents were covered at some point within the modules or non-core additional training. The grid helped identify when key concepts would be covered within the training and ensured that all key topics were addressed.
The Core Curriculum

Curriculum developed to address issues raised by parents in surveys.

1. AN INTRODUCTION TO AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDERS
2. VISUAL STRUCTURE
3. MANAGING SENSORY SENSITIVITIES
4. EXPLORING COMMUNICATION
5. POSITIVE APPROACHES TO SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT AND INTERACTION
6. UNDERSTANDING AND MANAGING CHALLENGING BEHAVIOUR

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Modules Were Designed to:

• Aid and grow an understanding of the autistic condition
• Introduce a range of strategies that can be implemented to help address some of the many needs these children and their families face
• Present the latest best practice as recognised by autism practitioners and experts in the field.
• Develop parental confidence - assisting them in making and implementing self-help strategies that will go some way toward easing the great demands that caring for children with autism requires
Non-Core Modules

- The parent survey and contact with families in the 3 countries identified a number of ‘non-core’ topics in which some parents were interested.
- These trainings were trialled, and identified as ‘optional’ non-core training for parents and localities that were interested in the topic areas.
- Subjects included: Puberty, Eating Issues and Sleep.
The objective for this session is to establish a common understanding and knowledge about Autism Spectrum Disorders and help parents understand the unique profile of differences, strengths and difficulties for their child. Activities highlight what knowledge parents may already have about the condition, and provide chances for parents to reflect upon their child’s presentation of autism in greater detail.
The objectives for this session are:

To help parents utilise their child’s visual learning strength to increase understanding and reduce stress.

To develop an awareness of the different types of visual structure:

- Physical (the environment)
- Schedules (what to do and when)
- Work systems (how to do it, breaking down an individual task into visual steps)
- Visual prompts (objects, photos, pictures and words)

Parents have the opportunity to look at a variety of visual prompts and schedules, and are encouraged to make similar, suitable support materials that will be useful for their child.
The objectives of this session are:

• To identify the 7 senses and how hyper and hypo sensitivity can present.

• To understand how sensory differences can impact behaviours.

• To learn strategies and develop “toolkits” for coping with the impact of sensory sensitivities.

Parents take part in activities that increase their knowledge about the senses and how their children may be affected due to their autism. Parents are encouraged to develop a sensory profile of their child, and to be able to use methods to help address those particular sensory needs.
The objectives of this session are:

• To explore the development and purpose of communication.

• To understand how Autism Spectrum Conditions can impact expressive and receptive communication.

• To learn strategies for supporting communication and communication development.

• Parents will have the opportunity to practise different communication methods for non-verbal children such as picture exchanges and simplified sign language.
Module 5
POSITIVE APPROACHES TO SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT AND INTERACTION

The objectives of this session are:

• To develop an understanding of the social differences associated with the autism spectrum.

• To understand how the development of play skills underpins successful social interaction.

• To explore practical strategies that aid the development of play and social skills.

• Parents learn how to use everyday materials (such as mirrors), toys and games that can be used to foster and encourage social interaction in their children. Parents are taught to try and enter their child’s world of interests, instead of trying to quash those behaviours. This develops opportunities for genuine interaction with their child.

The Social Groups of Autism
(Wing & Gould, 1979)

Aloof, isolated, withdrawn
Socially passive
Socially active, but makes ‘social mistakes’
Formal and stilted, socially awkward
The objective of this session is to find out about how a person’s Autistic differences can impact on their behaviours, explore the underlying reasons why and identify practical strategies to prevent, manage and de-escalate challenging behaviours. This session brings together the knowledge and understanding developed in previous sessions to identify these strategies (e.g. visual prompts).
Tutorials to Consolidate Course Information

We have found that parents benefit from the opportunity to discuss techniques that were studied on the programme directly with experienced professionals. Working together, we have been able to help parents to develop and implement strategies such as picture exchange communication, visual supports or social stories – adapted to the specific needs of their child.
“My Participation in this project will result in concrete support in the independent future of my son...”

Comments and feedback have been elicited from parents to help further refine and develop the education programme. The data has been very positive thus far, encouraging all involved in the great value of the ESIPP project.
ESIPP partners are involved in working to ensure the sustainability of the project. A great deal of interest has been shown by people throughout the world – and the model has potential to be successfully introduced outside of the initial target area of south east Europe. The availability of the resource materials will further generate interest amongst parents and professionals for some time to come.
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