



Knowledge Exchange Seminar Series (KESS)

...is a forum that encourages debate on a wide range of research findings, with the overall aim of promoting evidence-based policy and law-making within Northern Ireland



Parent training in evidence-based practice for Autism

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The Need for Effective Parent training

The number of children being diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) is rising and with this there is a growing number of children waiting to be diagnosed

Despite the fact that it is parents who carry the greatest burden of caring for their children, there has been little investment in effective parent training

Parental Stress

Keenan et al (2007) Families reported that they:

- were restricted in pursuing personal, educational, occupational, and employment interests
- experienced considerably more psychological distress than the general population (i.e., 88% of parents reporting their stress levels as highly stressed or quite stressed).
- Experience greater levels of chronic health conditions (25%)
- did not receive sufficient support or advice and information during and after diagnosis and the statementing process
- also noted significant distress when trying to access home, family, or respite support. As a result they sought non-statutory support (e.g., charitable organizations) or relied on their family for support instead.
- were prepared to move house, to gain appropriate services for their children

Parental Stress & Coping

Hastings et al. (2005) identified four types of coping strategies used by parents.

These are:

- 1) active avoidance coping
 - 2) problem-focused coping
 - 3) positive coping, and
 - 4) religious/denial coping.
- Mothers more likely to use problem solving strategies
 - No difference in levels of emotional responding

Parental Stress & Coping

Dunn et al. (2001) noted that parents of children with autism experience more stress and are more susceptible to negative outcomes than parents of children with other disabilities.

- They examined the relationship between stressors, social support, locus of control, coping styles, and negative outcomes such as depression, social isolation, and spousal relationship problems.
- Their results showed that higher levels of depression were correlated with low feelings of control and avoidance as a coping strategy.
- Low feelings of control and escape as a coping strategy were also correlated with increased feelings of social isolation.
- Low levels of social support were further correlated to increased levels of spousal relationship problems.

Parental Involvement in Interventions

- Reduces family stress (Koegel et al. 1996).
- Better outcomes in measures such as:
 1. Nonverbal (Anderson & Romanczyk 1999) and verbal communication (Stahmer & Gist, 2001),
 2. Behaviour management (Lutzker & Steed, 1998)
 3. Higher levels of appropriate play skills (Stahmer, 1995)
 4. Joint attention (Vismara & Lyons 2007)
 5. Imitation and social responsiveness (Ingersoll & Schreibman, 2006)
 6. Greater levels of positive parent- child engagement (Mahoney & Perales 2003).

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Science and the Treatment of Autism: a Multimedia Presentation for Parents & Professionals

- University of Ulster
- Queen's University, Belfast
- Erasmus University, Rotterdam
- Istituto Europeo per lo Studio del Comportamento Umano
- Specialpedagogiska Institutionen, Stockholm University
- The State Diagnostic and Counselling Centre, Iceland
- ANTAM
- Parents' Education as Autism Therapists
- Universidad de Oviedo
- Akershus University, Norway
- University of Applied Sciences, Munster



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- Need to provide parents and professionals with an informed choice for their children
- Data driven decision making to ensure Best Practice
- Funded by Leonardo da Vinci Lifelong Learning Programme



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Simple Steps uses video footage of parents and their children to educate other parents and professionals on all aspects of autism:

- Parents & Professionals
- Understanding Behaviour
- Measuring Behaviour
- Increasing Behaviour & Teaching New Skills
- Dealing with Problem Behaviour

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- Parent friendly but scientifically accurate
- Online
- Culturally sensitive
- Measuring Behaviour
- Learning to Teach
- Interactive Training



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Get in touch

"Judy's life, and ours has improved dramatically since beginning Simple Steps. I'd recommend it to anyone coping with Autism...!"

Simple Steps Autism: Helping Children with Autism

A little about us...

Simple Steps Autism is an online tool offers teaching to help parents of children with autism. It is also a valuable teaching resource for students to understand how behavioural science may be applied to autism. It will help you understand autism and how it affects your child's ability to learn, to communicate and to build relationships. You can do something to help your child reach their full potential using our online video tutorials, animated lessons, advice sections, and downloadable resources.

To start your journey click here!

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- Feedback from the projects showed that parents strongly agreed that the tool helped them
 1. understand their child's behaviour
 2. decrease inappropriate behaviour
 3. teach new skills
 4. easy to understand and use
 5. made a significant difference to their child and family.
 6. the resource was also available continuously and was therefore easily accessible when required.

Parent Training

This presentation recommends that government in Northern Ireland invest in parent training as a cornerstone of evidence-based practice, while drawing on a European project that originated in Northern Ireland to meet the needs of parent training through the use of internet-based training in evidence-based practice.





Northern Ireland
Assembly



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