

Young People, Autism and Justice

2012 - 2015



Evaluation Report
Emeritus Professor Roy McConkey OBE
Ulster University June 2015

Executive Summary

The Young People, Autism and Justice project was funded by a grant of £300,990 to Autism NI from the Big Lottery. It commenced in August 2012 and was completed in June 2015, although a further one year extension into 2016 will enable the project to further disseminate the outcomes and recommendations from this evaluation.

The overall aim of the project was to empower young people with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) (including Asperger's Syndrome) to develop social and life skills to stay safe and to support those who are or at risk of engaging in criminal activity, to better recognise the causes and consequences of their behaviour and relate more appropriately to the police (PSNI) and the Criminal Justice System (CJS). The project also delivered parent/carer ASD training to help families support their young people. A key project aim was to ensure that the PSNI and CJS personnel are aware of the needs and difficulties of young people with ASD and to facilitate these agencies, where possible, to appropriately adjust their responses to meet these needs.

The project undertook four strands of work:

- **Skills for Staying Safe**

Group workshops focused on developing the social and life skills to stay safe as well as building positive relationships with PSNI and emergency services. Main topics of the workshop were exploring techniques for staying emotionally and physically safe in the home, the community and with social media. In all, 10 workshops were facilitated - attended by 79 young people in the Greater Belfast area.

In addition, a website was developed containing safety resources directed at young people. The Autism NI Alert Card was further developed and an 'In Case of Emergency' (ICE) wristband was produced so that young people could receive appropriate help when needed.

- **S.E.L.F Programme (Supporting and Empowering Lives for the Future)**

Individualised mentoring support was provided for 16 young people who have come into contact with the CJS. The aim was to increase confidence, self-esteem, and provide them with a range of opportunities to develop personal skills. In all, 20 participants took part in the programme.

- **Parent Training**

Various workshops were held along with conferences in order to support parents in helping to keep their young people safe, and to equip them with strategies for nurturing social skills more broadly. They also aimed to bring other personal benefits to parents including improved well-being.



- **Training for staff in the Criminal Justice System agencies.**

Short training workshops were held - aimed at raising awareness of ASD and developing practical strategies that personnel such as the police can use when responding to and communicating with a young person with ASD with whom they may come into contact. A total of 37 workshops were provided by the project attended by over 1,000 personnel.

In addition an ASD mobile response website has been developed (as an easy reference point) to enable service personnel to obtain easy to read information about ASD on their mobile phones.

At a very early stage in the project an inter-agency targeted poster campaign was created to highlight Autism awareness with the PSNI and Youth Justice Agency. Autism NI created and distributed "Take a Second Look- sometimes we are too quick to label people" posters and flyers to every PSNI station in Northern Ireland. These resources not only raise awareness but also reinforce the learning from the training course 'Understanding Autism: Strategies to Support an Individual'. An outcome from this initiative was the opportunity to influence a screening tool (being developed by the Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists in partnership with the Department of Justice) to include a section targeted at identification of ASD titled "Does this person show social difficulties?". This tool is available to PSNI Custody Sergeants to activate contact with an appropriate adult.

Evaluation Report

Autism NI invited Emeritus Professor Roy McConkey (Ulster University) to act as an external evaluator for the project. His main functions were to:

- Act as a 'critical friend' when planning the activities undertaken in the project, based on his past experience and knowledge of developmental disabilities. This contributed to the formative evaluation of the project.
- Prepare tools to monitor activities undertaken and to obtain information about the impact and outcomes they had with the target groups. This was another feature of the formative evaluation of the project that will assist with its sustainability within the organisation and its dissemination to other agencies.
- Assist with the analysis of the information gathered so that a summative evaluation can be undertaken of the outcomes from the project.

This report gives details of the activities undertaken by the project under each strand and highlights the learning from each area. The resources developed by the project and the insights gained are being disseminated in the one year extension of the project funded by the Big Lottery. This allows the learning from the project to be disseminated across Northern Ireland thus reaching more young people with ASD and increasing the ASD awareness training for PSNI and other CJS agency professionals. These elements will enable mainstream and specialist services to alert young people and their parents to issues around personal safety and better prepare them for living responsibly within society.

Acknowledgements

My grateful thanks to the Autism NI project staff:

The project was supervised by Dr Arlene Cassidy MBE and implemented by Sue Macleod, Jackie Addis, Christine English, Sean Harmon and Christine Quail.

Special recognition must go to the young people, their family, carers and all who took time to contribute their experiences and perceptions of the project.

The views expressed in this report are those of the author and are not necessarily those of Autism NI.

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Introduction

The majority of individuals with ASD are law-abiding citizens. Their lives revolve around rules and the correct way of doing things. This brings structure to their daily lives and most find it impossible to be deceitful, dishonest or to do something they know to be wrong (Frith, 2003). However, some people with Autism may be more vulnerable to criminal acts being committed against them because of their social difficulties and they may be taken advantage of by unscrupulous individuals or become unwilling accomplices to criminal activity. Hence, they may come into contact with the Criminal Justice System because of their social difficulties, their trusting and open personality, their particular 'special' interest or their unusual sensitivity to sensory experiences. Appropriate support therefore needs to be in place so that people with ASD receive fair treatment from the Criminal Justice System.

A small minority of people with ASD do commit offences of a criminal nature but these crimes are generally due to the behaviours and traits associated with ASD such as their obsessive and ritualistic behaviours. Davis and Schunick (2002) states individuals with ASD might come into contact with the police for the following reasons: self-stimulatory and self-injurious behaviour such as hand flapping, pinching self, self-biting, repetitive actions and thrashing; wandering alone – some children with ASD are attracted to water and may therefore be especially at risk; peering into windows; turning water on and off; behaviour may mimic drug abuse or mental illness; bizarre or disruptive behaviour such as lining up objects, pica (eating inappropriate objects), toe walking; robotic like speech; hitting or biting people; involvement in altercations e.g. they may commit a crime without realising what they have done wrong. Four types of offences have been identified:

- The individual is deliberately led into criminal acts by others due their naivety. The Multi Agency Steering Group (MASG) Report (NI Assembly, 2010) on special needs challenges for the Criminal Justice System states the following: *"Children with ASD are a vulnerable group. Naive of situations and lacking in social judgement, they can easily find themselves in contact with the police and Criminal Justice System who fail to recognise the reasons for their strange displays of behaviour. Professionals in public services, such as the police, have low levels of awareness of Autism and may not know what to do when someone has it. Often policemen have misinterpreted actions; for example one news story of a young boy with Autism who was served an Anti-Social Behaviour Order for staring over a neighbour's fence. (A life less ordinary – People with Autism, A Guide. New Philanthropy Capital)". "The child or young person's condition needs to be acknowledged and understood. Police and other front line professionals who are likely to come into contact with those with ASD need Autism awareness training"*. For example when the adolescent wants to be accepted by their peer group and is encouraged to steal or cause damage to property as an initiation into the group. Often the requests become more daring and as they strive for acceptance, he or she potentially run the risk of being caught by the police and charged with the crimes (Attwood, 2007). There may also be the potential for teasing and bullying by the group which may provoke a violent outburst or assault by the person with ASD (Dubin, 2006).

- The person may react with aggressive outbursts also due to disruptions to their routines or changes in daily circumstances. Their routines are so well rehearsed and information processing skills so slow that they respond with panic and fear to even minor changes which can manifest itself in anti-social behaviour and damage to property (Frith, 2002).
- Anti-social behaviour can also result due to a lack of understanding of social cues. For example an individual with ASD fails to follow the 'rules' around invading personal space and touching that can result in either of these actions being misconstrued as sexual with criminal charges being brought against the person for assault.
- The person's obsessions and fixations can also result in anti-social behaviours. They may take a particular interest in something or someone that they cannot have access to and this may cause them to commit a crime such as stalking or theft. Howlin states that individuals with ASD's are particularly vulnerable to crime for the following reasons: a fascination or 'special interest' that could be fatal e.g. fire or poison. Howlin cites the example of a young man who had such an interest in washing machines that he would break into shops and people's houses to examine them; strong dislikes such as the sound of a baby crying or a dog barking leading to an aggressive outburst; lack of knowledge of appropriate and inappropriate touch leading to accusations of sexual harassment; unexpected violence and outbursts provoked by triggers in the environment; pre-occupation/adoration for an individual leading to stalking; activities appropriate in childhood which are perceived as inappropriate in adulthood e.g. picking up or tickling toddlers that belong to strangers.(Howlin 2006)

In summary, in many instances people with ASD do not generally break the law intentionally but rather their behaviour or social naivety may cause this to happen inadvertently (Autism Society of America, 2000). Debbaudt (1998) stated training should be provided for police and fire personnel and all personnel included in the Criminal Justice System.

Responding to need

Understanding why people with ASD commit crimes is not to excuse their actions but rather to indicate the responses that are needed to protect them and society from inadvertent criminal activity. **As Figure 1** shows, three main groups need to be involved.

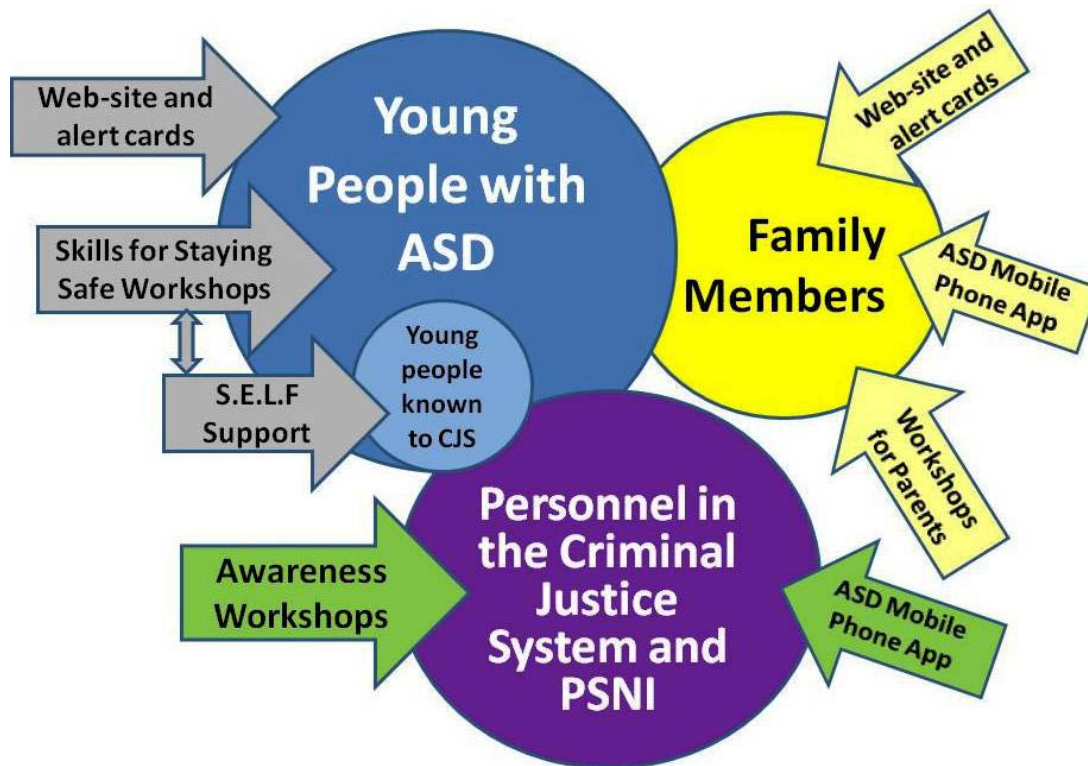


Figure 1: The target groups and activities undertaken by the Project

Young people with ASD

From a young age, a person with ASD needs to be taught social skills and insights into the effect their behaviours can have, to minimise the risks of unwittingly committing offences. They need to know how they can protect themselves and how to summon assistance when help is required. These preventative actions need to be undertaken with all young people diagnosed with ASD.

However, there is also a small sub-group who may already have come to the attention of the Criminal Justice System. With them, more individual support is required so that they can be assisted to learn from their mistakes and minimise their chances of re-offending.

Family members

Nearly all young people grow up and continue to live with their families well into adulthood. Therefore families are well placed to support their young people and detect early signs of inappropriate behaviours. They may nonetheless feel at a loss as to how to respond and guide their sons or daughters, therefore parents will benefit from advice and guidance. This guidance has proved beneficial in protecting their children and also addresses issues that flow from when their young person can legally make their own decisions.

Personnel in the Criminal Justice System and PSNI

In Northern Ireland, this includes probation service, youth justice agency as well as the PSNI and Social Workers employed by Health and Social Care Trusts (HSC). These professionals need to be able to recognise when a suspect of a crime has ASD and take appropriate action during interviews. Under the Disability Discrimination Act (2005) amended by the Autism Act (NI) 2011, they must also know how to make 'reasonable adjustments' to further actions in relation to charging, court appearances and sentencing.

Project Activities

Figure 1 summarises the main activities undertaken by the project with the three groups. These were based around the twin strategies of training and the provision of resources. During the project, the content of the training courses along with the associated resources were developed and evaluated with each target group. This report summarises the main features of each activity undertaken and the main lessons learnt. This information was obtained from records kept by the project staff, information obtained from self-completed questionnaires by participants and interviews which the external evaluator undertook with project staff and their partners who were members of the steering group.

Project staff consisted of four part-time workers. Sue Macleod was the project coordinator and had responsibility for the training courses provided to parents and CJS personnel. Christine English and Sean Harmon were the project workers with responsibility for the workshops provided for young people, and the development of resources. Administrative support was provided by Christine Quail and consultancy support was provided by Jackie Addis.

The multi-agency steering group for the project had representatives from the Royal College for Speech & Language Therapists, South East HSC Trust, PSNI, Youth Justice Agency, Probation Service, NIACRO, Mindwise and Autism Initiatives. It met three times a year. Two members of this group contributed to the evaluation.

1: Skills for Staying Safe Workshops

Young People aged 8-18 years old were invited to attend a 10 week group workshop focused on developing the social and life skills needed to keep safe. Young people who completed the programme successfully were awarded a recognised AQA Level 1 accreditation in personal safety. The course was developed by project staff and approved by AQA (Assessment and Qualifications Alliance). Autism NI is an approved AQA accredited examination centre. The course work is marked by project staff and a sample sent to AQA for external verification.

The workshops were designed with three age groupings of participants in mind: 8-12 years; 13-15 years and 16-19 years. Different formats were tried: eight to ten weekly sessions; summer schemes with daily meetings over one week and an 'after-school' club held in a secondary school. They were held in a variety of venues: mostly at Autism NI Headquarters in Knockbracken Healthcare Park in South Belfast, a church hall in Lisburn and in a local secondary school.

The workshops were facilitated by the two project staff assisted by volunteers who were recruited mainly from the pool of volunteers known to Autism NI; they included persons with psychology degrees, teaching and occupational therapy qualifications. Most volunteers also had a relative with ASD.

The topics covered in the workshops were:

- Getting to know each other
- Working as a team
- Emotional Safety*
- Relationships*
- Home and Community Safety*
- Internet safety*
- Police and Emergency services*
- AQA course work
- Celebration

(Note: An asterisk indicates the topics assessed for the AQA award).

Additional topics were added for the older teenage participants:

- Financial safety
- Drugs and alcohol

These topics and the skills associated with them were covered in an age-appropriate way using group work, individual work, role-plays and games. Breaks for snacks and drinks provided opportunities for social interactions in a semi-structured but safe environment. Hand-outs were provided each week which together formed a summary booklet to which young people could refer to in the future to remind them of the advice given. These hand-outs were also a prompt for parents to discuss the content of the session with their son or daughter so as to further build on their learning. The celebration at the end of the course was a chance to recognise the participant's achievements throughout the course. This celebration and the achievement of the AQA qualification was intended to increase the young person's self-esteem and confidence in social situations.

Participants were recruited mainly from the large confidential database of families kept by Autism NI. This database contains contact details of parents who are members and those non-members who had attended training courses or made enquiries through the Autism NI Advice Line. Notifications of the workshops were sent by email and posted on Facebook to families in the Greater Belfast area. From the feedback received, nearly 80% of parents reported that they had heard of the workshops through Autism NI mailing and Branches with 11% coming from school and the remainder from various contacts such as other services and word of mouth.

Parents reported that for 73% of registrations, they had decided the young person would attend; 24% took the decision together with the young person and two young persons (3%) decided for themselves.

In all, ten workshops were held as shown in **Table 1**. An evaluation report prepared by project staff is available on each workshop.

Table 1: Participants in the Skills for Staying Safe workshops

Workshop	Number children	Age range	Attendance
2a; Oct-Dec 2012	5 male 4 female	8 -12 years	87%
2b: Feb-April 2013	5 male 2 Female	13-15 years	70%
2c: Oct-Dec 2013	6 Male	16-18 years	90%
2d: Feb-May 2014	5 Male 2 Female	7-12 years	97%
2e: June-July 2014	2 Male 2 Female	12-15 years	84%
2f: Feb-April 2015	7 Male	7-13 years	71%
2g: August 2013	9 Male	8-12 years	98%
2h: August 2014	5 Male 3 Female	8-11 years	93%
2i: Oct – Dec 2014	12 Male	14-19 years	93%
2j: Sept-Dec 2014	7 Male 3 Female	12-14 years	68%

In all 63 males (80%) and 16 females (20%) attended the ten workshops. Attendances were generally good with few children dropping out. In all 52 participants obtained an AQA Level 1 award for their course work.

Characteristics of the Participants

Registration information was available for 60 young people attending the ten workshops (76%). Of these 78% were male. The average age of those attending the workshops was 12.3 years (range 7.7 to 17.9 years). All were Northern Irish.

In all, 52% reportedly had a diagnosis of Asperger's and 48% of Autism. The young people with a diagnosis of Autism attending the workshops tended to be older than those with a diagnosis of Asperger's.

The average age of the young person when the diagnosis was made was 6.2 years (range from 1 to 17 years) but for those diagnosed with Autism this happened at an earlier age (5 years) compared to an average of 7.1 years for those with Asperger's.

In all, 77% of the young people had a statement of special educational needs with 70% of the children attending mainstream schools, 5% in special units attached to mainstream schools and 25% in special schools. Young people with a diagnosis of Autism were more likely to attend special schools (37% of this group compared to 15% of those with a diagnosis of Asperger's).

Most young people (83%) lived with both parents with 17% from lone parent families. In all, 30% of attendees were only children, with 33% having one sibling, 28% had two siblings with 8% having three or more siblings.

In terms of level of deprivation based on postcode of the home address; 22% of families lived in the top 20% of most deprived areas of Northern Ireland and 32% living in the top 20% of least deprived areas. Moreover, the majority of parents (mostly mothers) (60%) had obtained 'A levels' or higher education qualifications (compared to 36% in the overall population). An attempt had been made to recruit young people for a workshop in an area of marked deprivation in Belfast but this proved unsuccessful.

Of the families represented in the workshops, 55% reported a family member as having an Autism Spectrum Disorder: for 17% this was another child; 10% had a brother or sister with ASD and 28% another relative. Among the young people attending the workshops; there were four sets of siblings: nine in all (15% of the total).

Reactions to the workshops

The young people were asked to give their reactions to the workshops in terms of what they liked best; things they did not like and if they had learnt new things (although they were not asked to provide examples). Most were very positive about the sessions. The things they liked best tended to reflect more the process than the content of the workshops; with the tuck shop, teamwork, games and the staff all getting mentions. Meeting and making new friends was also a common comment.

Likewise parental feedback was sought through courtesy calls after the sessions or through a feedback session at the end of the workshop. They too spoke of the value of the workshops for their young person, noting particularly the social opportunities that the workshops provided. Sample comments include:

'She loved it. When she came home she told me about the types of activities and showed me the summary sheets she had been given.'

'He's really enjoying himself; talks about the other boys he has met. He is more confident to go places; wanted to go to the Christmas market this week and he never usually asks to go places.'

'N's teaching assistant says he has started to ask for more help at school.'

'Since he started the course, he has started a new guitar club in school – before he wouldn't usually have gone out of his comfort zone much.'

'He is now travelling to and from school independently. I feel the staying safe programme helped considerably to achieve this.'

'He's pointing out the safety risks at home.'

'He told me the workers made him laugh, he loved getting stars and certificates, and he knows more about safety and feelings inside himself.'

Few suggestions for improvements were made but those that were contributed mentioned the need for more workshops, and for them to be held at different times and in more convenient locations. Youth groups specifically for young people with ASD were also mentioned.

Parental perceptions of changes in their child

Although all parents were invited to rate changes in their young person’s behaviour after the workshop in a self-completion questionnaire that was posted to them after the workshop, only 18 parents (25% response) responded which is not unusual for postal questionnaires.

Table 2 summarises the percentage of parents rating each behaviour on a five point scale. The items are ordered from those at the top on which the majority of young people were reported to have improved (with none disimproving) through to those behaviours on which the young people had shown least improvement. It is heartening that the behaviours which the workshops had targeted were ones that parents confirmed that their son or daughter had shown improvements. Equally it is unlikely that a short course would have as much impact on deeper seated emotions around anger and depression.

Item	Much Improved	Some improvement	Much the same	Some what worse	Much worse
Self-esteem	28%	50%	22%	0	0
Conversational skills	11%	61%	28%	0	0
Ability to keep safe and avoid trouble	6%	66%	28%	0	0
Understanding other people’s feelings	6%	61%	33%	0	0
Self-confidence – willing to try new things	6%	66%	17%	11%	0
Tolerate changes in routine	12%	44%	44%	0	0
Helping with chores around the home	6%	44%	44%	6%	0
Naivety; easily led by others	0	28%	72%	0	0
Controlling obsessive behaviours	0	18%	82%	0	0
Joining in social activities with others	11%	49%	28%	6%	6%
Contact with friends	11%	33%	44%	6%	6%
Anger outbursts; controlling their temper	13%	29%	41%	17%	0
Feelings of depression	0	24%	58%	12%	6%

Table 2: The percentage of parents reporting improvements in the behaviour of the young person (n=18).

After note:

It had been intended to collect further information from the young people and parents on the participants so as to better describe their characteristics and also to monitor any changes after taking part in the workshops.

- AQ-10 (indication of Autism symptoms)
- Strength and Difficulties Questionnaire
- Community activities and friendships

However, this information was supplied only by a minority participants with very few returning the post - workshop questionnaires. Fewer questions asked through interview with parents would have resulted in a better return.

Website for young people -
<http://www.wethinksafe.com/>



The *We Think Safe to Stay Safe* website aims to give young people the information, resources and advice they need to stay safe. They can use these to pick up some great tips about staying safe at home, in the community and online. They can also test how much they know by trying out a selection of interactive games. More importantly, the website is a place that young people can find out the information they need in a clear and understandable way.

The website has the following sections:

Home page: This gives an overview of the contents of the website.

Programmes: This describes the training programmes available for young people.

Feedback: Summarises reactions to the training workshops.

Tell your story: This section is for young people to tell their story. Here they can find out what other people's opinions on safety are and learn from other people's personal experiences. There are over 10 stories available at present.

News: As well as a newsletter and photo gallery, copies of the seven e-zines produced by the project participants on hints and tips to stay safe can be downloaded.

Resources: Young people are given basic information in a visually attractive way on the following topics:

- Emotions and relationships
- Internet safety
- Finance and money
- Law and Emergency Services
- Home and Community safety
- Autism NI Alert Card
- More information about Autism



In addition, there are interactive quizzes in which young people can test their understanding about:

- Emotional Safety
- Road Safety
- Home and Community Safety
- Internet Safety
- Emergency services and the law

Posters and 'business-card' sized information cards about the website have been distributed to all schools in Northern Ireland. It is featured on various websites and comes on the first page on a Google search with the terms 'Autism stay safe'.

Website Usage

Since its launch and up to April 2015, the website has had over 3000 hits from 101 different countries with an increasing number of hits on a monthly basis. Over one third were from the UK (35%) followed by USA (20%), Brazil (9%); Russia (7%) and Australia (2%). An average of two pages has been accessed per session although this rises to nearly four for persons in UK. The most popular pages have been those describing the programme, relationships, news, tell your story and emotions.

'We Think Safe E-zine'

A quarterly e-zine was developed and distributed with tips and quizzes about safety topics to Autism NI's database. All the e-zines can also be accessed through the news section of the 'We Think Safe' website. Each e-zine focused on a particular safety topic that was relevant, for example, coping with Christmas and getting ready to go back to school after the summer holidays. In total, seven e-zines were developed and distributed.

The Autism NI Alert Cards

The Autism NI Alert Card is a small (credit card size) plastic card that can be kept in a young person's pocket, wallet or purse. It enables the person to identify themselves to others as having Autism. If they are in a situation where they are nervous or anxious, for example, being approached by the PSNI or other Emergency Services, they can show the Alert Card. This informs other people that they might need longer to communicate and explains why they may be nervous. A poster campaign across CJS accompanied the launch of the card.



The Alert Card will also inform others if necessary, of an appropriate person who can be contacted on their behalf. The emergency contact should be someone who knows the person well and would be able to tell them more about the individual, for example, their mother or father. If they are not available, Autism NI can be contacted to give more information from a secure database.

Young people are encouraged to make a personal application for the Alert Card to Autism NI although their parents or another person can do so on their behalf. Autism NI will check to confirm that a diagnosis of Autism has been made by contacting the Health and Social Care Trust named by the applicant. In accordance with the law on the criminal age of responsibility, it is only available for children aged 10 years and over and is issued free-of-charge.

Up to 1st April, 2015, a total of 372 cards had been issued.

In Case of Emergency (ICE) wristbands



Autism NI also provides an 'In Case of Emergency' (ICE) wristband. This wristband has a space to write an emergency contact number so that the child or young person always has the telephone number of someone they trust (mostly likely their mother or father) to call if they are worried about something or feel unsafe.

Up to 1st April, 2015, a total of 78 wristbands had been issued free-of-charge along with alert cards but many more have been given out at training events and conferences. They have proved popular with younger children under 10 years of age that are too young to apply for an Alert Card.

Conclusions and recommendations

This strand of the project's work has yielded valuable insight into the provision of training and support for children and young people on topics that have to date received relatively little attention.

- The workshop content can be delivered in a variety of formats and settings. It could form part of the curriculum within special schools and units, and the special needs courses in Further Education Colleges. For children in mainstream schools, after-school workshops are one option in addition to the workshop format used here. The AQA award can continue to be available through Autism NI when young people complete the workshops in other settings.
- A stronger focus on learning outcomes for the individual participating in the workshops would be possible when the materials are used within educational settings.
- The social interactions promoted by the workshops were valued by the young people and their parents primarily as they provided a safe environment with tutors who were familiar with Autism. This reflects the lack of social opportunities open to older adolescents with ASD.
- The young people would benefit from 'refresher' training as they get older with additional topics being added such as drugs and alcohol use.
- Closer age matching of the young people within groups would be advantageous although this is not always possible to achieve in local groups.
- The workshops materials may need to be adapted further for pupils with additional cognitive and communication difficulties.
- Recruiting participants from more deprived areas is a continuing challenge that is perhaps best pursued through school-based courses.
- The engagement of parents was less than expected and perhaps greater emphasis needs to be placed by course tutors on their contribution to reinforcing learning outside of the 'classroom' and in real life settings.

The one year extension to the project will facilitate the dissemination of the learning from this strand of work. This will cover the production of a Trainer's Manual that contains the session outlines and activities. Additional training for trainers will be offered for teachers and youth leaders from across Northern Ireland to use the materials with colleagues in their own settings. Autism NI will seek to provide a consultancy, accreditation and advice service to assist trainers with issues that may arise as they use the training package.

2: S.E.L.F. (Supporting and Empowering Lives for the Future) Programme

In this strand of the project's work, individualised support was provided for young people with ASD who have come into contact with the CJS. A project worker undertook a series of 'mentoring' meetings with the young person on a one-to-one basis with the aim of increasing their confidence, self-esteem and providing them with a range of opportunities to develop their personal skills. This form of support is not available through any of the existing support services.

At any one time, 15 young people could be on the programme and in total 20 young people participated. Referrals came mainly from the Youth Justice Agency and HSC with whom a referral protocol had been negotiated. Initially a series of ten weekly sessions was proposed but the time period was flexible with no fixed number of sessions but rather they were tailored to the young person's needs and availability.

In all 20 young people were referred, all male. Their average age was 17.2 years (range 15-21 years). Five were classed as 'Looked after Children' in the care of an HSC Trust; eight lived with mother only or grandmother and three with both parents. In all, seven self-disclosed the use of drugs and alcohol.

Eleven individuals had a conviction pending three of whom previously had or were about to serve, time in prison. A further one young person had no charges brought after a voluntary interview. The four people who were uninvolved with the CJS were among the youngest and perceived to be at risk of this happening.

For most of the young people, meetings with project staff took place in community settings such as cafés or libraries with some sessions being conducted in their homes. The latter settings provided an opportunity to connect with family carers.

The focus for much of the work with the young people was on emotional regulation, such as anger management, and helping them to plan within a holistic perspective of the young person's life but addressing the issues of particular concern to them. They were also sign-posted to other agencies and assisted to access their services. Project staff involved some of the young people in the design of the website and production of e-newsletters.

Four young people left the programme without completing the sessions: one because of prison sentence, one because of mental health issues, a third did not want to miss school and the fourth became uncontactable.

Reactions to the programme

Given the individual nature of the work undertaken in this programme, the project chose to illustrate the work programme through case studies provided by the project staff and some of the young people. These illustrate the complex lives of the young people and the difficulties in bringing about lasting change in a relatively short time.

CH (14 years) was arrested for riotous behaviour although no malicious intent was intended and he had been led by other youths who took advantage of his social naivety. During the project he worked on anger management and peer pressure. CH's confidence increased dramatically over the project. His understanding of anti-social behaviour and his general awareness of risk in the community has increased and he is actively avoiding situations or negative influences that could lead him being involved in anti-social behaviour. As part of his Youth Conference he had to write a letter of apology to the PSNI for his behaviour. In return he received a letter of thanks and a badge. This experience shaped his positive attitude to the PSNI.

JS (21 years) had been put on probation and the sex register for five years because of sending and receiving inappropriate pictures of a minor. He is socially isolated with few friends or activities outside of the home. During the programme, he worked on emotional understanding and regulation, identifying positive people in his life, and attended an effective communication course. He was eager to get a job in retail and applied unsuccessfully for such a post. However he is more confident to ask for help and in answering questions. He will state his opinion more openly and talks about things that are worrying him. Now that the project is finished he has been referred to Princes Trust to complete their Fairbridge Programme.

GM (16 years) was arrested for possession of an offensive weapon which he had taken to a fishing area after having had an argument there. He had moved out of the family home due to anger and violence. On the programme the focus was on what Autism meant for him as he had been recently diagnosed. He identified volunteering in sports activities and working toward employment as targets for himself. He unfortunately broke his leg which affected his motivation for the programme and disrupted his routine of exercise and gym and made it more difficult to try out new opportunities. His time on the programme was terminated and he struggled to cope with meetings with the different agencies who were involved with him.

CA (19 years) was in the process of being diagnosed for ASD. He had been arrested several times for theft, criminal damage, violence, anti-social behaviour and cultivating cannabis. He had spent time at Hydebank young offenders centre. He found it very difficult to understand the serious consequences of his behaviour. He regularly misused drugs and was in debt because of it. Although possible courses and support groups were identified for him, he regularly postponed appointments or delayed starting these groups. Some work was completed on budgeting and organisational skills. He became more motivated to stop using drugs and

no longer had contact with the paramilitary group in his hometown. His involvement ended prematurely following hospital admission after two suicide attempts.

MN (14 years) was arrested on three occasions for domestic abuse in the family home. On five occasions the police had brought him home for disorderly conduct and anti-social behaviour and latterly he had been arrested for stealing. He refuses to attend school, he uses cannabis and has severe sleep problems. He was generally unmotivated and seemed very dis-engaged from trying anything new or receiving any help. He would show some interest initially but this decreased quickly and he would miss appointments in order to see friends or take part in other activities. After he left the programme he was arrested and cautioned for attempted theft.

DA (15 years) had been referred to the Youth Justice Agency because of an alleged sexual assault on a younger boy in a school taxi. This incident was put down to a misinterpretation of relationships and his own sexuality and he was not assessed as a danger to others. The focus of the programme with him was on developing his confidence, self-esteem and social skills and practicing these in community settings. He enjoyed the exercises and his anxiety has lessened when in community and social settings. His time of the project was complete when he restarted school after the summer break. His teaching assistant reported that he was less anxious and more confident.

The young people's reactions

'When I joined the project I was living in care and finding it difficult to cope with my emotions and anger. We talked about what different emotions are and how I can cope with my feelings. I think I understand anger more and how to deal with it in a good way – like leaving the room to calm down. I made a website resource about this to help other young people like me. The other big topic is getting to know others and communicating. I completed a course with another person from the SELF project. I enjoyed getting to know him and working with him. I think this has helped me to understand more and be more confident with giving my opinion' **(AC: 16 years)**

'I started with the project because I got in trouble with the police and I had to go to the Youth Justice Agency. I started working with the staff member every week on different things that I wanted to achieve. It wasn't easy achieving them as I was having a hard time in my life. I was moved to a new house in another town but the mentoring didn't have to stop. I started to take drugs and alcohol. I got into more trouble with the police and was sent to a young offender's institute. When I got out, the staff

member was still there to work with me. I didn't want to go back there and he helped me to make sure that it did not happen. We talk a lot about things and consequences. This helps me to make decisions. We also meet up in the community. I like this because it gets me out. I think that working with staff has given me new ways to deal with things when I get angry.' **(LS: 18 years)**

'I only found out that I had Asperger's Syndrome a few years ago. I wasn't given any support and I didn't know how it was affecting me. I first started on the Skills for Staying Safe programme. I enjoyed it because it was a place that I could go to that was safe and I knew I wouldn't get angry there. I learned new things about myself and strategies to keep me safe. I also enjoyed helping the other boys. I made some friends and went on the radio to talk about the project. I joined the SELF programme as it gave me the chance to work on my anger more. The staff member has helped me through loads of things; like dealing with problems in relationships and working out what to do with my future, he knows me well now and I trust him. It has helped me to grow up and take more responsibility for myself and to think a bit more about the future and other people rather than just doing what I want now.' **(JC 18 years).**

Conclusions and Recommendations

The main learning from this strand of work can be summarised as follows:

- Many of the young people had extremely profound and complex needs which the project had not anticipated to be referred and which challenged the project. The referrals illustrated the gap within the system for ongoing personal support from a trusted mentor or buddy and the lack of continuity in service supports available to young people with ASD who had offended.
- The main contribution the project brought was a deep understanding of Autism that enabled the project workers to communicate more effectively and build relationships with the young people. In due course, this knowledge needs to be shared with existing staff in agencies such as Social Services and Youth Justice.
- The case for preventative work is strengthened by this strand of work, especially focusing on those young people at risk of offending or first offenders. However, statutory services tend to become involved when a crisis arises rather than in preventing it. There may be a particular role for the voluntary and community sector in preventative work with teenagers with ASD.
- The cross-sector steering group convened for the project could be continued albeit under the auspices of another lead body in order to develop better co-ordinated responses to this group of complex teenagers and young adults. The cost-effectiveness of novel support services such as that trialled in this project could be established.

3: Training for personnel in PSNI and across the CJS.

In the period October 2012 through to March 2015, a total of 37 workshops were held for the following groups of personnel with over 700 persons attending.

Table 3: The numbers of personnel participating in training workshops

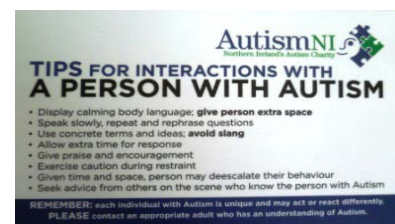
Organisation	Numbers attending
PSNI – Division officers	374
PSNI – New recruits	63
Youth Justice	75
Probation Board	122
Department of Justice	99
Total	733

The Autism Awareness to Aid First Response workshops took different forms. Some were presented as a 45 minute session (e.g. PSNI recruits) and formed one part of wider training programme that personnel took on that day. Other workshops were stand alone and lasted up to three or six hours.

In all formats the main topics covered were: recognising people with ASD, communication and interview skills, behavioural triggers and sources of information and advice.

Teaching methods included PowerPoint presentations, video, individual and group activities, plus question and answer sessions.

All participants at every workshop were given a wallet size card that provided Top Tips for Interactions with a person with Autism, and on the reverse identifiers of ASD in terms of communication and behaviour plus the implications in Criminal Justice situations.



Reactions to the workshops

At each of the workshops, participants were asked to self-complete anonymously an evaluation sheet. This asked them to rate their knowledge of Autism prior to coming on the training so that the most common gaps in their knowledge could be ascertained. Secondly they were asked to rate the workshop and also to comment on what they found most helpful; anything they did not like or would change; the new knowledge about Autism gained from the workshop; how the workshop might change their way of working with young people and other topics on which they would like to have training. Thirdly, we obtained details of their past contact with people who have Autism; their gender, age group and job title.

Evaluation forms were analysed for a sample of 550 participants, of whom 43% were from the PSNI; 28% from Probation, Youth Justice and Social Work, and 29% from the Department of Justice.

Contact with people who have Autism

Figures 1 and 2 present the proportion of participants who had previous contact with a person who had Autism in their personal as well as professional lives. In both settings, only a minority of participants had regular contact with a person with Autism and this occurred more in their personal rather than professional lives.

Personnel working for the Probation, Youth Justice or Social Work were more likely than other participants to report regular contact with people who had Autism in both their personal (31%) and professional lives (29%). By contrast PSNI officers were the most likely to have no contact in their professional lives (68%) but less so in their personal lives (50%).

Gaps in knowledge

Table 4 summarises the ratings of familiarity given by participants about the aspects of Autism listed. The majority of participants had only a vague idea or no idea on all the items; however, they were least familiar with making people with Autism less anxious during interviews and more familiar with identifying people with Autism.

Table 4: Percentages of participants rating their familiarity with aspects of Autism prior to training workshop (N=455)

Item	Very Familiar	Familiar	Vague Idea	No Idea
I know how to identify a person with Autism	4%	21%	57%	18%
I know how best to communicate with people who have Autism	3%	15%	51%	31%
I am able to recognise and deal with the unusual behaviours associated with Autism	3%	15%	47%	35%
I know how to help people with Autism to be less anxious when being interviewed	2%	11%	43%	44%
I know who to contact to get advice about dealing with a person who has Autism	5%	17%	37%	41%
I know the various triggers that can be upsetting for people with Autism.	4%	16%	40%	40%

A summary score could be calculated across these six items with higher scores indicating less knowledge of Autism. On this measure, PSNI and Department of Justice personnel had higher scores than those working in Probation Youth Justice and Social Work. Those who reported least contact with people who have Autism in either their personal and private lives also had higher scores. There were no differences based on age group or gender, however, a regression analysis identified personal contact as the

best predictor of participant’s knowledge of Autism with an additional contribution from professional contact.

Reaction to the workshops

Participants’ reactions to the workshops are summarised in *Table 5*. The trainer received the highest ratings followed by expectations being met, the training materials used and the practical activities that were included in the workshops.

Table 5: Percentage of responses on ratings given to features of the workshops (N=455)

	1 Poor	2 Fair	3 Average	4 Good	5 Excellent
How relevant was the workshop to your work?		1%	7%	43%	49%
How helpful were the training materials, presentation slides etc?			2%	37%	61%
How well did the trainer communicate with the group?				16%	84%
How well did the workshop content meet your expectations?			1%	37%	62%
How would you rate the practical activities and tasks you did?			2%	40%	58%
How well did people contribute to the group sessions?			7%	48%	45%

Overall participants from the Probation Board, Youth Justice Agency, Social Work and PSNI tended to rate the workshops more highly than personnel from the Department of Justice but the differences were marginal.

Personal account

A PSNI Officer provided this account of how his training had translated into practice.

'We attended a call to a youth club on Saturday as a young male with Autism and mental health problems - David - was refusing to leave and had become violent to staff. Although calm on our arrival, he didn't want to leave as he wished to continue to play on the Play Station. During the training we had been told about fixations – in this case the PlayStation. We spent a great deal of time talking to David so as to find a trigger that would allow him to leave. I also recalled an exercise that we did on the training on background noise so we asked some people to leave as I could see that David was finding it overbearing with the number of new faces. In the end we talked about his family and found out that he was close to his sister. When we asked what his sister would think of his behaviour, he immediately decided to leave as he didn't want his sister to be upset with him.'

I found the training had really helped me to understand how David was feeling and it gave me the understanding to communicate with him effectively. It also helped that the group's leader had a son with autism. She commented to us that she was impressed and grateful that we had some understanding of autism and our handling of the incident. For me every officer would benefit from this training. I'm fairly sure that some officers who hadn't been trained may have tried to remove David far more quickly which could have led to the situation escalating.'

Mobile Response Website (App).

The project also developed a mobile response website that can be downloaded to a smart phone (similar to an 'app') to provide information about Autism that PSNI, first responders or other personnel can access anywhere and at any time.

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

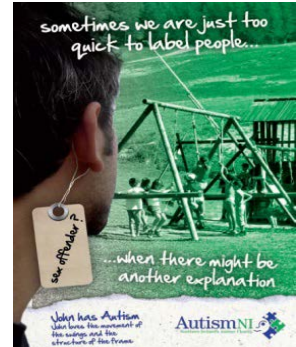
The content of the website is structured as follows:

- What is Autism?
- Autism Challenges
- Autism sensory overload
- What's the Difference?
- Top Tips for Autism
- Autism NI Alert card (see above)
- Autism NI website and resources.

Up to the end of April 2015, there were 2,417 hits with the majority coming from UK (65%) but also from 47 other countries including the USA (13%), Russia (9%) and Ireland (2%). The most popular pages were 'What's the Difference', 'Top Tips' and 'What is Autism?'

'Take a Second Look' poster campaign.

At a very early stage in the project, in order to promote Autism awareness within the PSNI and Youth Justice, Autism NI agreed an inter-agency targeted poster campaign. Autism NI created and distributed "Take a Second Look - sometimes we are too quick to label people", posters and flyers to every PSNI station in Northern Ireland. These resources not only raise awareness but also reinforce the learning from the training course 'Understanding Autism: Strategies to Support an Individual with Autism'. An outcome from this initiative was the opportunity to influence a screening tool (being developed by the Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists in partnership with the Department of Justice) to include a section targeted at identification of ASD titled "Does this person show social difficulties?" This tool is available to PSNI Custody Sergeants to activate contact with an appropriate adult.



Conference for professionals

An introductory project launch conference was held in December 2012 entitled: "Autism Spectrum Disorder: Supporting Individuals within the Criminal Justice System", with invited speakers from England and Northern Ireland. It was attended by 120 professionals from a range of services and agencies. Ratings for the conference in terms of presentations, relevance and content ranged from good to excellent. Sample comments were:

'Better awareness of types of offending behaviour associated with ASD.'

'Gave a good insight into the CJS for people with ASD in the SW of England.'

'Information re new initiatives/legislation current placements/provision for young people with an ASD.'

'The presentations from Ian Ensum & Matt Terise both excellent, their examples of patients brilliant!'

In addition, social skills workshops for parents and professionals with Alex Kelly were held in November 2014. These workshops were highly rated by delegates who attended with comments such as:

'The very clear outline of how to assess, teach and develop social skills.'

'Very informative and will be useful when I get back into classroom – approach to social skills hierarchy.'

'The most important this for me was the information about assessing social skills and the guidance for social skills group, also resources that could be photocopied. All was good, well explained, good examples.'



A 'Young People, Autism & Justice' Conference for practitioners and parents was held on 10th June 2015. This was attended by 116 delegates from the following agencies: PSNI, Youth Justice Agencies, Social Work, Clinical Speech and Language Therapists, Victim & Witness Care Units along with parents who themselves or their young people had participated in the project. The key speaker was Dennis Debbaudt from the USA (a former police officer, parent of a young man with ASD and internationally acknowledged authority on ASD and the CJS). He shared his many years of experience in training law enforcement personnel and showed examples of training videos his company had produced. Project personnel summarised the work of the project and the main findings from the evaluation were presented. The

conference was opened by Minister David Ford MLA, Department of Justice (NI). He commended the innovative work undertaken and pledged his support for sustaining and extending it in the years to come. <http://www.autismni.org/news/2015/06/15/conference-celebrates-our-young-people-autism-and-criminal-justice-project.html>

Conclusions and recommendations

The main learning from this strand of work was as follows:

- The offer of training on Autism Awareness was readily accepted by PSNI and other CJS agencies including Probation, Youth Justice, Prison Service, Court Services and Police Ombudsman. The training needs to be extended beyond the greater Belfast area where it has been concentrated to date. Additionally it should be available on an ongoing basis so that new recruits to the various agencies will receive the training.
- Both of the foregoing objectives will be met by the proposed 'Training for Trainers' that will be undertaken during the one year extension to the project. Nominated personnel from various statutory and voluntary agencies will be contracted (to ensure reciprocity regarding agency commitment and quality) and trained to deliver the suite of training courses that have been developed by the project and provided with the necessary resources. Trainers will receive an AQA qualification for the training they undertake. In this way, the training will potentially become integrated into the pre-service and in-service training programmes of the different agencies.
- These training opportunities need to be linked with the other courses provided to staff in CJS agencies such as 'The Box': an e-learning package, associated face-to-face training and a screening tool designed by the Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists to help people working in the Criminal Justice System recognise speech, language and communication needs among the people they engage with.

4: Workshops for Parents

Parental involvement in the project was encouraged through different activities.

Skills for Staying Safe Workshops

As part of the Skills for Staying Safe workshops, an introductory meeting was held for parents whose young people were attending the workshops. This provided an opportunity to talk through the aims of the workshops with parents and the contribution they could make at home to reinforcing their young people's learning. If parents were unable to attend this meeting, they were telephoned or visited at home. On completion of the workshop, a review meeting was also held to recap on the main outcomes, share experiences and identify follow-up activities. Parents' reactions to the workshops were also obtained.

Parent conferences

A one-day conference was organised in December 2013 attended by 36 parents. This was dramatically reduced in numbers due to snow and power cuts. Two young people who had attended the Skills for Staying Safe programme made a short video to launch the 'We think safe to stay safe' website. Presentations were given by the project staff about their work and by a mother on parenting a teen or young adult with Asperger's Syndrome. An interactive session was also held after lunch on social skills for staying safe.

The conference was rated highly by parents (30 feedback sheets were completed) with two-thirds or more rating the helpfulness of the conference, the presentations and the speakers, as excellent. Individual comments included:

'Great to see the young people speaking about the benefits of the SELF project.'

'Plenty of tips and information. Very enjoyable experience.'

'Good speakers with lots of knowledge and enthusiasm.'

'I helped me refocus my thoughts on how to understand my sons (teenage years). All very eye-opening.'

'I heard about a variety of facts and strategies that I can apply/adapt according to my children's needs and situation.'

'Reinforced that I am thinking the right way and taking the right approach with my son.'

Parent workshops

A parent workshop on social skills was presented by Alex Kelly on 12 Nov 2014 with the www.autismtoptips.com mobile responsive website also being launched. This workshop was highly rated by the delegates who provided feedback and comments:

'Why teaching skills are so important. The course was informative and well facilitated.'

'The fact that I can help my child to overcome her difficulties.'

'The assessment process very useful - will use it.'

'Got me re-thinking about how we teach social skills for each individual child. Great strategies.'

Towards the end of the project, four one-day training courses were developed in response to parental requests on the topics below, each led by a trained facilitator with expertise in that area such as OT, speech and language therapist and special needs teacher. Each had between 10 – 22 parents attending and all have been rated highly by participants. Sample comments are included for each workshop. The workshops were held on Saturdays from 10.00 am to 3.00 pm to facilitate parents attending:

- **Understanding & Promoting Positive Behaviours**

'Identifying triggers. Looking at things from the child's point of view!'

'Personal experiences from the tutor. New strategies for managing behaviour.'

'Interaction with other parents. Real life examples from parents & trainer.'

'I now feel more able to identify why some things may happen with behaviour.'

- **Sensory Processing & ASD**

'Finding out a lot more about sensory issues – all new to me, also very competent trainer, very knowledgeable & approachable.'

'Learned so much about how the senses affect my child. Wider knowledge of sensory issues, connection to behaviour, managed hopefully into a wide range of practical solutions.'

'Confidence that appropriate strategies will impact on my child's coping mechanisms.'

'Today's course has been by far the most well taken and informative of any course I've been on.'

- **Social Skills & ASD**

'Body language, personal space. I am more aware of how he feels and can use my information I have learned today to help him.'

'A lot – my son suffers from high social anxiety; course has been hugely beneficial.'

'Practical skills discussed and relaxation at end. Understanding the social skills from bucket to cup.'

- **Social Stories and Comic Strip Conversations & ASD**

'Practical details of how to do social stories & comic strips, chatting to other people attending.'

'Importance of positivity. All information was very good and useful.'

'Less anxious about using this resource & making mistakes.'

'How to do social stories and breaking down daily routines for easier understanding.'

Resources

All the resources produced by the project such as the 'We Think Safe' website and 'Autism Top Tips' mobile responsive website are also available to parents although it is not possible to identify the numbers of parents using these within the statistics provided earlier. Likewise, the Autism NI Alert Card and the ICE wristbands offered the parents some strategies and reassurance that their son or daughter can get help with when they are away from home.

Conclusions and recommendations

Experiences in this strand of the project's work include:

- Parents often feel exhausted and helpless in dealing with teenagers who have ASD and they view the transition from school with some trepidation. Hence group meetings can provide much needed emotional support as well as providing information and advice. Autism NI recognises its ongoing role in this area and intends to continue to meet the demand across Northern Ireland.
- Parents living in more deprived settings have proved harder to reach along with fathers in general. Although there are no easy solutions, recognising the issue is a step towards resolving it.
- Parents alone cannot assist their young people to become safely independent of families. Rather their efforts need to be matched by supports provided directly and indirectly to young people as the project has attempted to do in its other strands of work. These will need to be further consolidated across Northern Ireland and hopefully engagement with parents will remain an important part of these efforts.

Overall Conclusions and Recommendations

This project has successfully met all the targets set in the funding application. More importantly, it has identified practical ways in which young people with ASD can be taught and supported to keep themselves safe. A number of valuable resources have been developed in readily accessible formats and plans are in hand to further disseminate the learning in tangible ways, particularly across Northern Ireland, but also internationally.

The project has highlighted a number of issues that will continue to resonate in future years:

- The project has generated greater awareness of ASD within the PSNI and other CJS agencies and as such provides a good example of targeted educational initiatives accompanied by accessible resources. These have national and international applicability.
- Young people with ASD are extremely vulnerable in society and may be at a greater risk of coming into contact with the PSNI and other CJS agencies. Preventative actions are preferable to crisis responses as present systems seem inadequate to provide the holistic and continuous support needed by offenders with ASD and associated difficulties.
- Schools need to be informed about the educational resources devised and produced by the project so that they can include them into the school curricula.
- It has proven harder to recruit young people and their families living in more deprived areas to take part in project activities. Strategies for engaging with them need to be devised.
- Other voluntary, community and statutory agencies regionally could be engaged in more specific and specialised work with teenagers and young adults who have ASD. To date, there has been little opportunity for contact among them and yet there are likely to be future possibilities for mutual learning and co-operation. A cross sector steering group is needed to co-ordinate and guide the further development of innovative support services for young people with ASD and their complex needs. Autism NI intends to concentrate on two specific areas in the future, they would now like to regionalize elements of the project throughout all of Northern Ireland.

1. To deliver a programme of training regionally to PSNI officers and other Criminal Justice Agencies throughout all of Northern Ireland

The 'Autism Awareness Training' was well received in the Greater Belfast area, it is now essential that it is regionalised to all of Northern Ireland PSNI officers and other Criminal Justice Agencies.

2. The second specific area that Autism NI would like to develop is to deliver training through a 'Training for Trainers' process to a range of youth and voluntary organisations regarding the programme and resources to enable local voluntary, community groups and statutory agencies to deliver the package regionally to young people with Autism.

- During the existing project Autism NI developed a range of resources which have been tried and tested by users of the following age groups 8-12, 13-15 and 16-18 years of age. The Skills for Staying Safe programme for young people has been extremely well received in the Belfast Area, now it is important to reach as many young people as possible liaising with a range of partners and organisations. The resources have been specifically designed for individuals with Autism and their particular learning styles. At present there are no equivalent resources in Northern Ireland and using the 'Training the Trainer' initiative it would be possible to reach substantially more young people in their local areas. Autism NI will quality assure this process as the resources will be developed into a trainer manual format backed up by the existing website www.wethinksafe.com and mobile response website www.autismtoptips.com which have been designed during the project. Young people will complete an external AQA award which will be quality assured by Autism NI.
- The sustainability of the Northern Ireland wide training courses for personnel in the PSNI and CJS agencies proposed under the 'Training for Trainers' initiative in the coming 12 months needs to be monitored, as it is potentially a powerful means of ensuring that the resources developed by the project continue to be used, are available nationally and are integrated within key agencies as normal practice.

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MISSION ...

Autism NI exists to support individuals with Autism and their families and campaigns to raise awareness of Autism within the wider society.

VISION ...

Our vision is an equal society in Northern Ireland where barriers to those living with Autism are removed and equality of access to rights and opportunities protected and enforced.