Autism Cymru

Wales' National Charity for Autism
Elusen Genedlaethol Cymru ar gyfer Awtistiaeth

CHILDREN AND FAMILIES ORGANISATION GRANT REPORT 2009

IMPACT OF AUTISM CYMRU'S 'INCLUSIVE SCHOOLS AND WHOLE SCHOOL TRAINING AND RESEARCH PROJECT' 2005-9

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SUMMARY

Autism Cymru's successful Inclusive Schools and Whole School Training and Research Project has been offered to Local Education Authorities since 2005. Nearly 300 schools in Wales have received autism training to date as a part of a highly successful and continuing partnership between Welsh LEAs and Autism Cymru. This Report gives an overview of how the training is commissioned and delivered by Maggie Bowen and Lynn Plimley of Autism Cymru. The pedagogy and rationale for the content and activities of participants in the Project is examined in the light of recent research and initiatives. The research component of the Project is highlighted in the short, medium and long term impact data collected from the key stakeholders. The Project is dynamic and changing as well as sensitive to the needs of each Local Authority and the concluding section looks to new and innovative ways of sustaining its high reputation and successful outcomes.

1. BACKGROUND TO PROJECT

The bilingual Inclusive Schools and Whole School Training and Research Project was developed in 2005 by Maggie Bowen and Lynn Plimley at Autism Cymru in response to requests from Local Authority officers. These officers wanted a training programme to raise awareness of autistic spectrum

disorders (ASDs) within mainstream schools, to promote understanding of the condition and to consider adaptation of the whole school ethos to effectively include children on the spectrum.

In 2006, Batten, Corbett, Rosenblatt, Withers and Yuille found that one in five children with ASD, and one in four children with Asperger Syndrome, had been excluded from school). Many parents report that the reasons for these exclusions are that the child has not been understood and their needs have not been met.

Using expertise from lecturing in Higher Education and their experience as practitioners in school settings, Maggie and Lynn devised a 2 day continuing professional development (CPD) programme that addresses current basic factual information for school staff, as well as looking at the life and school experiences of the individual with ASDs. Although the Project is delivered through the medium of English, all of the supporting handout materials are also available in Welsh. The Inclusive Schools and Whole School Training and Research Project has 2 principal aims:

- To make all staff aware of the issues relating to pupils with ASD in all aspects of school life
- To ensure that pupils with ASDs can live and work in an inclusive and ASD friendly environment

The content of the 2 attendance training days are dealt with in the next section but, unusually for a training programme of this type, it was the firm intention of Maggie and Lynn that participants should return to their schools after the 2 days and disseminate what they had learnt in order to reach their whole school staff team. This strand of accountability expects that participants are ±spreading the wordqabout understanding ASD but they are also charged with 2 associated tasks of building up a range of ASD friendly resources and auditing school ethos and practice for its ±ASD friendlinessq Participants return to report back to their peers and the Project trainers on what they have done with these tasks around 1 term later.

2. <u>CONTEXT OF INCLUSION</u>

Current educational trends have been moving steadily towards more mainstream inclusion for children on the autistic spectrum (DfES, 2001, WAG, 2002, Audit Scotland/HMIe, 2003). The catalyst for children with disabilities to be included was identified by the Salamanca statement (1994). Earlier trends had supported 'integration'into mainstream schools for those children in special schools who could rise to the curricular and/or social demands on offer. However the difference between integration (in the same location) and inclusion (a right to the same educational and social opportunities) is defined by one of its key proponents Mary Warnock (2008) as :

> Inclusion.....namely the feeling that you are part of a school, the feeling that you belong, that's what I mean by inclusion, and I think to suppose that because a child is under the same roof as all his peers he is included, is a terrible delusion'p. 16

The demands of the Disability Discrimination Acts (1995 &2005) and the Disability Equality Duty (2006) have put into place the rights of the disabled child to be included within their local schools. Many local authorities have interpreted these laws by making physical adaptations to their environments . such as lifts, ramps and disabled WCs. These are a necessity to including more people with disabilities. Public perception is that disability is something that is visible and obvious. However, for individuals with ASD the most obvious manifestation of their disability is when something is seriously wrong and anxieties rise to the surface. The response of schools to those with disabilities that entail an interpretation of responses, reactions and more 'invisible'needs may not be a physical adaptation but rather developing a whole supportive ethos that allows us all to be different.

Vaughan and Schumm (1995), cited in Hornby (1999), found that for inclusion to be effective in schools, management needs to :

- Continually monitor and evaluate the organisation of provision in order to ensure the pupils needs are being met
- Ensure ongoing professional development for all staff

- Encourage the development of alternative teaching strategies and means of adapting the curriculum
- Develop an agreed philosophy and policy on inclusion which provides guidance to everyone

Many mainstream schools have responded to the challenge of inclusion by increasing the numbers of support staff employed as more and more pupils with disabilities are included. Research by Vincett, Thomas and Cremin (2005) tracks the exponential rise in the numbers of support staff in mainstream schools. Their study in one county indicates a two-fold increase overall of support assistants from 1997 to 2003. In Secondary schools alone from 1997-2003 the increase in numbers of employed support staff was three-fold. It is vital that this workforce is also included in CPD opportunities to acknowledge their skills and experience and help them to better support those who need it.

The heart of Inclusion is allowing for, and respecting, the right to be different. This can go against the grain in schools where pupils are told %ou are not different to anyone else+. A supportive school will have dealt with difference, disability and personal strengths through its curriculum. Inclusion is a %hearts and minds+ issue. It challenges us to change our attitudes and expectations towards anyone with a disability.

The focus on providing truly inclusive provision for children with ASDs in schools around Wales has been sharpened considerably by the publication of the Strategic Action Plan for Wales . autistic spectrum disorders (WAG, 2008). The initial implementation of the Plan has asked LAs to map their population of individuals with ASDs and to look at their local provisions. LAs have been given funding for their Action planning and several have used some of this funding to commission Project training.

3. **PROJECT FEATURES**

The Project is booked with Maggie and Lynn via discussions with the Local Authority (LA) officer responsible for inclusion and additional learning

needs/language and communication or a professional, such as an educational psychologist with specific LA responsibility for ASD. As there are only 2 presenters of the Project then it often entails a juggling of days, dates and other commitments. The LA officer is responsible for selecting mainstream schools to take part in the training, sometimes nominating key school members of staff. They also publicise the training and select the training venue. It is common for the LA officer to be present throughout each training day and also the feedback session later on in the school year.

The training is divided into 2 days - Day 1 has 4 sessions and Day 2 has 3 sessions. Maggie and Lynn use a variety of teaching and learning strategies to ensure that the focus is lively, interesting and varied. Use of storytelling, discussion in pairs, group work, use of DVD clips and a quiz help to maintain attention and interest of the participants.

Day 1 covers current factual information about ASDs, sensory differences and behaviours and the impact of having ASD in a school setting, particularly on whole school issues and curriculum input. The day begins however with a sharp focus on the experience of someone with an ASD and a story chapter highlights the (fictional) experience of a boy with Asperger syndrome in his classroom. This leads onto other real quotations from a range of adults with ASD reflecting on their differences and their qualities. Day 1 includes DVD clips of an adult with ASD; a cartoon about sensory differences and a dramatisation of a family with 3 children with ASD.

Day 2 begins with a review of points from the previous day, using reflection upon learning and participation, both important factors in the learning experience. The 20 item True or False quiz, which participants complete by themselves, is reviewed by everyone joining in discussion on more contentious topics, like the rise in the prevalence of ASD being due to our use of technological gadgets.

The True and False quiz often gives rise to interesting questions and discussion and is a device that not only tests retention of facts but also examines attitudes towards disability in general. Moran (2009) says

> ±Teacher development ... cannot be confined to a focus on standards or competences. It is without question a value-laden endeavour in which (teachers) should be encouraged to explore, share and confront both personally held and alternative value perspectives and positions. Only in this way can meaningful consideration be devoted to developing inclusive attitudes and practices. ±pp47-8

The session on whole school issues looks the important information about ASD that needs a wider dissemination in school . topics such as reward systems; length of time given for pupils to process questions; ways of working with different learning styles and expectations around pupil conformity are covered. Looking at making the school environment more ±ASD friendlyq examines some of the features that appear to enable most individuals with ASDs. This is followed by a DVD of 3 brothers with ASD talking about their school experiences. A survey by McRobbie (2005) found that Headteachers rated the biggest barrier to inclusion was the negative attitudes of mainstream teachers. Often negative attitudes arise from ignorance about ASDs and a feeling of lack of support. Plimley and Bowen (2006) say :

> ±the differences manifest in the child with ASDs may baffle your colleagues. They may feel deskilled and demoralized because the usual strategies in managing a class have failed. ±p.76

This quotation provides the rationale for the final taught session on different approaches/interventions which focuses on TEACCH (Treatment and Education of Autistic and Communications handicapped CHildren); PECS (Picture Exchange Communication System) and using Social stories. These 3 approaches can have a universal application in both Primary and Secondary schools and have been found (Brown, 2007) to be the 3 most frequently cited approaches used in schools.

The final session of Day 2 is the preparation for the participants to go back into their schools and disseminate some of the important messages from the 2 day training. The 3 Research expectations of the training Project are that :

1. Participants disseminate the training in some format to their colleagues and that they attempt to reach the widest possible audience. As Amaladoss (2006) says:

"If schools are to manage the learning environment and facilitate the child, they must understand and have knowledge of the condition and what to do. It is crucial that *all* (her italics) staff, including dinner supervisors and office staff, in a school have basic training in ASD so that the needs of the child can be supported throughout the school day." (p 113)

2. Participants begin to assemble a resource collection on ASDs for whole school access and use. Recommendations of DVDs, handouts and other resources are given throughout the 2 days and many participants use the handout materials e.g. Autism Cymru Attention card; True and false quiz; books by Maggie and Lynn; the Autism Northern Ireland Toolkit DVD and the ASD Unfriendly school poster.

3. Participants are given a school self audit tool and participants are encouraged to canvass the views of their wider staff group in schools to assess their school's readiness to include individuals with ASD and the quality of their enabling strategies and supportive ethos. The self audit tool will in due course be the forthcoming Quality Standards for ASD (WAG, in consultation), which Autism Cymru were commissioned to write. More recent publications (Autism Education Trust, 2008, cited Archer 2008 & Inclusion Development Programme, 2009) point to the importance of auditing inclusive practices and ASD enabling environments. The 'Inclusive Schools and Whole School Training and Research Project' was designed to incorporate this important component some 3 years in advance of these recent English initiatives.

4. <u>LOCAL AUTHORITIES INVOLVED</u>

The 'Inclusive Schools and Whole School Training and Research Project' has now been running for 4 years. The 2 trainers aim to commit to one training project per month and will also schedule feedback sessions 1 or 2 times per month. In the intervening 4 years, some LAs have commissioned 1 cohort of training and others, like Rhondda Cynon Taf have had a rolling programme of the Project until the majority of their mainstream Primary and Secondary schools have received the training.

TABLE 1 – Number of Local Authority training programmes 2005-9

Local authority	Number of programmes
Rhondda Cynon Taf	6
Bridgend	3
Conwy	2
Wrexham	2
Swansea	2
Flintshire	2
Powys	2
Ceredigion	1
Gwynedd & Ynys Mon	1
Monmouthshire	1

Already there are calendarised plans for the following LAs in the coming academic year, 2009-10.

- ˝ Merthyr Tydfil
- ˝ Denbighshire x 2
- ˝ Powys
- ˝ Wrexham

Recent communication with some LAs point to their commitment to instigate a rolling programme of training, in the model first adopted by Rhondda Cynon Taf. Some LAs have not yet committed time and funding to the Project, but for many the catalyst has been the Strategic Action Plan for ASDs (WAG, 2008)

5. **SCHOOLS TRAINED**

As has already been stated, LAs have charge of how many schools they put forward for the training Project and also who they nominate within each school. Some LAs have nominated teachers who are also Additional Learning Needs co-ordinators and senior managers. Others have opened the invitation

to people in support roles and also other professionals, like Speech and Language Therapists (SALT) or their assistants. Most LAs nominate a minimum of 10 schools per training programme but Maggie and Lynn do not have an upper limit on participants. As the training materials are bi-lingual, the needs of Welsh speaking participants are addressed.

Since 2005, we estimate that nearly 300 schools around Wales have received this training. This is broken down as follows

TABLE 2 – Number of schools trained

Local authority	Number of programmes	Years	Number of schools
Rhondda Cynon Taf	6	2005-9	104
Bridgend	3	2006-9	30
Conwy	2	2005-7	38
Wrexham	2	2007-9	24
Swansea	2	2007-9	13
Flintshire	2	2008-9	27
Powys	2	2008-9	22
Ceredigion	1	2009	7
Gwynedd & Ynys Mon	1	2006	Unknown
Monmouthshire	1	2006	Unknown
10 LAs	**22 programmes**		**265+**

6. **IMMEDIATE IMPACTS**

After every 2 day Project, impact measures are taken from post-training LA evaluation forms. This gives the commissioning LA officer an idea of how well the training has been received. In the 4 years of the Project these positive evaluations have been consistently good to excellent and where constructive

criticism has been received, it is addressed by Maggie and Lynn. This has resulted in changes to some of the programme format and the inclusion of more opportunities for discussion or the opportunity to see more DVD materials. Some examples of LA evaluation feedbacks are :

In answer to What has been useful ?

±the sensory information and understanding from their perspectiveq

±I have been on courses and studied ASD at University but most donq help you to understand how it feels- they (Maggie and Lynn) deal more in factsq

±All of itq

±Ideas for preparing pupils going into mainstream to reduce anxiety and stressq

±I can give some information to a friend who has 2 children with ASDq

±A better understanding of how to deal with things so I can pass my understanding onto other colleaguesq

Verbal feedback is also elicited throughout the Programme and participants are encouraged to question their practices and reflect upon how their schools provide for children with ASDs. One strong message within the Project is that the responses of an individual with ASD are part of our human repertoire and participants are encouraged to identify their own reactions, routines and foibles.

7. MEDIUM TERM IMPACTS

These are measured by the responses of participants when they return for their feedback session, around a term after they have taken part in the 2 day Project. The feedback session is structured around reporting back on the fulfilment of the 3 Research components of the Project :

  i. Disseminating the training to their colleagues
  ii. Building up a resources bank
  iii. Using the self evaluation tool to assess quality of whole school inclusive practice

Verbatim accounts of feedback are recorded at this session and shared with the LA officer to add to their own impact measures. Here are some examples :

i. <u>Disseminating the training to their colleagues</u>
   - ˝ Powerpoint presentation with ±A is for autismq& ±Blue bottle mysteryq for leadership team
   - ˝ Welsh schools had an autism week- parents evening; night for staff to raise awareness ; audit questionnaire; 2 assemblies held; used ±Gwernqon Powerpoint for younger children; empathy fans; stickers
   - ˝ DVD ±Magnificent sevenqleft out for people to access; staff meeting to disseminate the course with notes.
   - ˝ Staff have looked at ASD characteristics to identify amongst their class groups; toolkit used; ±Snowcakeqtaped off TV; ±Sparkleboxq used for visual cues/timetables
   - ˝ Staff meeting with DVD of ±Magnificent sevenq introduction to ASDs using information from the course; sheets for teachers to keep;
   - ˝ Short presentation for staff- discussed first person quotes; TAs working with children with ASDs have been looking at resources/information;
   - ˝ Possible GTCW funding to make an ASD specialist school visit
   - ˝ 3 staff meetings . Film of ±Snowcakeq discussion on ASDs and true or false quiz; looking at producing visual timetables for all classrooms

And some outcomes

   - ˝ Friday Award celebration needed toning down
   - ˝ Clearer and more consistent explanations of whatq happening given to child
   - ˝ Greater awareness of sensory issues in assembly
   - ˝ Identified inconsistency of the school timetable
   - ˝ Importance of transition between classes for many children
   - ˝ Being fair is about treating all pupils according to their needs, not treating them the same

- ˝ Examined learning and teaching practices- has encouraged more innovation
- ˝ Teachers are adapting visual information- clocks displayed in segments showing time to choose activity and children can see what is next; books available and kept in one place
- ˝ ±Structure for Successqwas found in the school ! Big learning curve for resource base teachers; recognise structures needed for staff !; recognition of individual needs and stress their vast potential
- ˝ Pupil passports for each child and a copy for teachers
- ˝ Safe haven for vulnerable students, also acts a resource base

ii. <u>Building up a resources bank</u>
- ˝ Social stories . how have I lived without them ?
- ˝ Rules done visually in Welsh e.g. personal space; anger management; walking in pairs;
- ˝ Books from ASD support kit purchased
- ˝ DVDs; ±Martian in the playgroundq PAPA Toolkit; Powerpoint presentation copy from training, located in every classroom in Welsh schools
- ˝ Resources for children with Speech & Language difficulties are useful for children with ASDs
- ˝ Social story in Sparklebox about nose picking
- ˝ Chat box for instigating particular paired discussions- part of effective learning strategies
- ˝ Visual timetable used a reference of KS 2 child; discussion box for Circle time
- ˝ Visual timetables produced for the level of understanding of the child
- ˝ Use of Post . it note with targets for writing task
- ˝ Visual Communication checklist for individual pupil . reward scheme

- ˝ More focus on visual supports in KS 2; workshop held; turn taking daily schedule for places in the line; visual timetable very helpful for staff, including supply teachers too !; spin off for other children

And some outcomes

- ˝ I_ve reversed my thinking . how can WE fit into their way of thinking, instead of how can they fit into our class; A wake up moment for me
- ˝ Checklist of strategies to employ; adapted my teaching to suit needs of every child
- ˝ Giving processing time
- ˝ Teachers are adapting visual information- clocks displayed in segments showing time to choose activity and children can see what is next; books available and kept in one place
- ˝ Picture cues throughout school; golden time introduced
- ˝ Choice making introduced . choose a friend; schedules and golden time reward system for Year 6 children next year; big class visual timetable and timetables for all children; Staff more aware;
- ˝ Social story for child to take part in a school trip to zoo

iii. <u>Using the self evaluation tool to assess quality of whole school inclusive practice</u>

- ˝ Staff meeting and file set up; Inset day planned for all staff and inviting Junior school too; information leaflet to be created for teaching and other students; Picture cues throughout school; golden time introduced
- ˝ Staff have changed the way they think about the children and changed the way they teach them
- ˝ Look at policies
- ˝ PECs training being undertaken which can be disseminated too
- ˝ Policy for working with children with ASD needs formalising
- ˝ Fabric of building - no carpets can give rise to sensory intolerances in the environment which needs addressing
- ˝ Down time between activities needs looking at . transition marker
- ˝ Stress levels of children . traffic light systems needed

- Our whole perception has changed; now able to advise teaching staff (TA speaking)
- Act on concerns of staff teams about certain children and their need for more knowledge/information
- Review policies
- Staff have had their knowledge refreshed and reinforced

And some outcomes
- Identified inconsistency of the school timetable
- Importance of transition between classes for many children
- Undiagnosed children in mainstream . using ASD friendly strategies for all
- Making an ±Aware wallqin the staff room
- Being fair is about treating all pupils according to their needs, not treating them the same
- Examined learning and teaching practices- has encouraged more innovation
- More preparation for transitions
- Spin offs of strategies that suited one child now extended to other classes
- Made quiet area for one pupil and strategies disseminated for how best to deal with meltdowns
- Colour coded equipment for each child . towel, workspace, cup etc

The feedback sessions are always very positive and affirming events. The participants welcome the opportunity to meet again with each other, as well as the Project presenters to share their experiences and positive impacts from the training.

8. **LONG TERM IMPACTS**

The ASD training policy and framework (Forum for Regional Educational Development Autism, 2006) identify a range of features associated with

comprehensive and effective CPD programmes. They give a tiered model of ASD training opportunities:

Pre-foundation . knowledge and skills centred around basic features of ASD
Foundation . as above, also with knowledge and skills centred around
                   implications of ASDs and home school and other environments
                   and useful strategies
Core - as above, also with knowledge and skills centred around theories,
          policy making, provision and multi agency working
Extension . as above, also with knowledge and skills centred around
diagnosis issues, support systems and therapies

Again this is a measure of quality in training in ASDs that came after the inception of the Inclusion and ASDs Whole School Training and Research Project. The expertise and experience of both presenters, especially in CPD and Higher education are testament to their vision and knowledge in developing the Project in advance of some of these published tools. The Project content and delivery lends itself to the Foundation part of the FREDA framework

 Local Authority Impacts

In July 2009, the LA officers who had been involved in commissioning the Project (past, present and future) were invited to a feedback day to reflect upon the impacts that the Project had made upon their LA provision for children with ASD. As preparation for more global feedback the officers were asked to complete a pre-meeting questionnaire. Their responses were collated and fed back at the meeting. Although the response rate was poor - n= 5 out of 12 (41.6%), some of the LA officers who did not return their questionnaires contributed verbally during the presentation.

The questionnaire probed the reasons for initially commissioning the ±nclusive Schools and Whole School Training and Research Projectq how the Project had been funded (mainly through the 2008 Strategic Action Plan allocation)

and how many LAs had an interest in providing CPD opportunities in ASD training for staff.

TABLE 3 INITIAL QUESTIONNAIRE RESPONSES FOR COMMISSIONING FUNDING

> ˝ <u>Reasons for running Project</u> . Strategic Action Plan; rise in identification; long term aims; many staff in school have experience, but not formal training; inclusion agenda; pressure from parents
> ˝ <u>Interest in furthering CPD of staff</u> . 100% responses

The questionnaire asked for the reasons behind commissioning the Project and what training/learning outcomes were envisaged by the officers.

TABLE 4 REASONS FOR PROJECT AND DESIRED OUTCOMES

- More trained and knowledgeable staff teams (100%)
- More inclusive schooling (100%)
- Opportunity to set up a specialist team/resource base/s (66%)
- Beginning a rolling programme (66%)

<u>Other Reasons</u>

- To collate existing skills levels across county

LA officers were asked to identify which components of the training content were the most valued and successful for participants

TABLE 5 SUCCESSFUL PROJECT CONTENT

- Quiz
- Video and DVD clips
- Audit & project
- Practical suggestions
- User friendly
- Practitioner focus is good

Finally LA officers were asked to identify the positive outcomes that had been achieved by running the Project.

TABLE 6 REPORTED LA OUTCOMES

- Greater ASD awareness raising
- Staff confidence and positivity
- Making adaptations in a small way
- Better meeting of individual needs
- Audit identifies medium/long term goals
- Impacts upon policy making
- More understanding and empathy for parents
- Impact records for LA being kept

The feedback day also held discussions and group work exercises to elicit what officers could identify/suggest to improve and modify that would keep the Project as current and as successful and to preserve its future value and reputation. This appears in the final section of this Report.

9. FUTURE DEVELOPMENT AND SUSTAINABILITY

The 'Inclusive Schools and Whole School Training and Research Project'has been running successfully for 4 years and depends heavily upon the availability, expertise and presentation skills of its 2 presenters, Maggie and Lynn. They have identified several current development and sustainability issues for the future of the Project :

- Content
- Capacity & Use of other professionals
- More interaction with participants

The content of the Project is starting to show its age, given that it was devised in 2004-5. Feedback from LA officers suggests that although the factual information is vital to the understanding of ASDs, there needs to be more opportunity for group work or workshops to enable problem solving activities and enhance the learning experience.

TABLE 7 LA PERCEIVED OMISSIONS IN PROJECT

- More discussion
- Sharing ideas and strategies
- Staff who have been trained talking to the new cohort about changes they have implemented

Potential improvements

- Paying extra for a guest speaker with ASD
- Staff to be released to talk to participants

The content will be overhauled during August 2009, to reflect recent knowledge and understanding of ASDs; use of more recent DVD and website materials; more interactive use of clips and audio materials and more innovative ways to engage participants to use what they have learnt to propose real-life solutions to their own issues.

Capacity for offering the training and being able to respond to LA requests rests on timing and the other commitments of the 2 presenters. Maggie and Lynn have suggestions for how to stretch the capacity for the Project and this involves the idea of using the existing expertise of practitioners within each LA. The advent of the Strategic Action Plan (WAG, 2008) has given both a sharpened focus and a structure to how LA organise their school provision, with the emphasis being on inclusion in mainstream where possible. The 22 LAs around Wales have appointed an ASD specialist a named person who is charged with co-ordinating provision across the whole age range to identify gaps in services and need for CPD. This works to the advantage of the Project in using known LA experienced practitioners who could become involved in the more practical aspects of the Project. Where LAs have commissioned a rolling programme of training, Maggie and Lynn will schedule the second morning sessions to coincide with a feedback session from the previous cohort. The teaching of the second morning could then become a vehicle for a LA practitioner to give practical ideas and strategies used in their own schools, whilst Maggie and Lynn coordinate the feedback session in another room. Maggie and Lynn have also proposed the option of having a

ᴇguest speakerᴑwith ASD to present the second morning session, but this will involve a further cost to the LA.

Where the two options for the second morning of training are not viable, then Maggie and Lynn are planning a workshop approach for participants to work together to solve issues and suggest strategies that may tap into some of the interventions that were formerly part of the taught sessions. This will help to address a perceived imbalance between presentation and interaction with participants. All of these 3 options hopefully will encourage more participation and interaction with participants.

The sustainability of the Project will also be helped by looking at its applicability to other audiences and practitioners. The basic training content of Day 1 has a universal application to a range of other disciplines and practitioners working with individuals outside the school age range (both pre-school and adults). Maggie and Lynn asked the LA officers what other content would be needed to be included in the project if it was being run for the following audiences :

- Older secondary/high school pupils
- Post school providers e.g. FE colleges & Universities
- Careers services
- Potential employers
- Social services
- Early years/foundation stage
- Leisure centre & local community resources

Their suggestions and the expertise and experience of Maggie and Lynn could sustain the Project indefinitely if different versions of the Project could be developed to fulfil the CPD needs of other professionals. However, the issue of capacity and availability for training would need to be addressed for long-term planning. In respect to the first 4 audiences named above, Autism Cymru and the Irish Society for Autism submitted a joint bid for a 3 year European Regional Development funded project in 2008. They have been successful in securing funding from 2009-2012 to trial, refine and deliver

Project to professionals working with older secondary pupils, school leavers and adult providers in areas of Wales and the Irish Republic. This will enable the development of the Project materials and the publication of the research underpinning the ERDF Project, as well finding new capacity in professionals who will have credibility in training new audiences.

One other very positive development with the Project that has been gained through negotiation with Dr Shirley Egley, MA Course Leader at the University of Newport, Wales. The Project materials, delivery and outcomes will fit into a range of further CPD opportunities offered by Newport. For those practitioners taking part in the Project who wish to gain accreditation for their learning then the framework of delivery and the pedagogic model of the Project meshes with other courses and awards within a wider CPD structure at Newport. If participants wished to submit a reflective piece of work for assessment, based upon their teaching, learning and feedback experience of the Project, then credits would be accrued which could be transferred to the Newport framework leading to Post graduate qualifications up to a level of Masters degree. This will enhance the sustainability of the Project as many practitioners are looking for ways in which they can further enhance their learning.

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