

research snapshot

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Investigating the Successful Inclusion of Children With ASD in Community Groups

What is this research about?

Children with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) are often not included in community recreational activities. This study explored staff experiences from community groups that worked with youth with special needs. It also evaluated the usefulness of a short ASD training session.

What did the researchers do?

The study was conducted in Northern Ireland and consisted of two parts. First, a survey was sent out to all community groups in the area to gain understanding on staff's experiences working with youth with special needs. They also surveyed staff on their feelings about including youth with ASD in their programs. In the second part of the study, interested staff attended a two hour training session about working with youth with ASD. After the session, participants were asked to complete brief evaluation forms

What did the researchers find?

The researchers found that over 60% of survey respondents currently had children with special needs enrolled in their programs. About 50% of the staff surveyed was eager to include youth with ASD in their programs. However, many

What you need to know:

Mainstream leisure activities may be more inclusive to youth with ASD if more education and training resources are given to staff.

reported that they needed more education and training to better include youth with ASD.

The short training session was generally well received. It focused on raising awareness of the needs of youth with ASD. After the training session, the majority of participants reported changes in their attitudes and perceptions about working with youth with ASD. However, the project had difficulties attracting novice staff that worked with youth with ASD. Over 40% of the participants had work experience with youth with ASD, including 25% of participants whose family members had ASD.

Legislation in the UK is putting more pressure on the community and voluntary sector to include youth with ASD in meaningful recreational activities. However, neither sector demonstrated a strong response to this voluntary opportunity.

How can you use this research?

This research reveals a need to improve training for recreational leaders to build more inclusion

for children with ASD in mainstream leisure activities. Training sessions should incorporate an ASD-specific component for community groups. They should also include concrete examples on how to include children with ASD in programming.

About the Researchers

Roy McConkey is a Professor of Developmental Disabilities at the University of Ulster.

Audrey Mullan is a Project Officer with AutismNI, the autism charity of Northern Ireland. Jackie Addis is a Project Officer with AutismNI.

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Keywords

Autism, ASD, Social Inclusion, Training Courses, Leisure, Community Groups, Children

This research summary was written by Evguenia Ignatova for the Chair in Autism Spectrum Disorders Treatment and Care Research. This research summary, along with other summaries, can be found on our [blog](http://blog.asdmentalhealth.ca) and at asdmentalhealth.ca/research-summaries

About the Chair

The Chair in Autism Spectrum Disorders Treatment and Care Research is dedicated to studying ways to improve the mental health and well-being of people with Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD) and their families in Canada.

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