



Disability Awareness

(Exploring the inclusion of children with Autism)

Training Package
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Competencies/Elements addressed in this training kit

National Competencies - Children's services

CHCIC11A

Implement and promote inclusive policies and practices

Element 3. *Support the development of inclusive practices in the service*

Underpinning Knowledge/Skills.

Cultural practices, beliefs and expectations and impact on childcare delivery

Ability to develop appropriate educational activities

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- Present competencies that are to be addressed in this training
- Talk through the aims of the session with the group using OHT 1.

- Use the introduction to as an introduction to the first group exercise.
- Allow for discussion throughout the introduction encouraging participants to make comments and ideas.

Disability Awareness - (Exploring the inclusion of children with Autism)

Aims:

- To explore the characteristics of specific disabilities (Autism) in children.
- To provide additional information and resources on these specific disabilities.
- To identify the impact of these disabilities within the inclusion process.
- To identify areas of concern, for the careprovider, in caring for children with these specific disabilities.
- To acknowledge and utilise the existing skills of careproviders.

Introduction

Exploring the Characteristics

As care providers we know that the best way to develop children's skills is through natural and everyday experiences. This will assist children in becoming independent and valued members of the community. However before we can positively include a child with a disability we need to:

- Explode the myths
- Gain a clearer understanding of specific disabilities



- Group exercise 1. Brainstorm in a large group placing the information on white board or butcher paper

- Provide basic information and characteristics using OHT 2

Exploding the Myths

All disabilities come with their own myths and/or wives tales. These have been passed down through the years, from genuine research which is constantly changing, or through 'folklore' from our own upbringing and environmental experiences.

Group Exercise 1

What are some of the things that you know about Autism? What do you see as Myth or Fact?

Understanding Autism

Knowledge and Information about Autism has changed dramatically over the years as research, as well as human rights, has identified a more positive approach.

There are a number of issues that need to be understood when discussing children with Autism.

Autism

The word Autism is derived from the Greek word 'autos' meaning self and used to define the withdrawal from the fabric of social life into ones self.

Leo Kanner in 1943 described Autism as:

"A fundamental disorder in a child's inability to relate themselves in the ordinary way to people and situations from the beginning of life. There is from the start, an extreme autistic aloneness that, whenever possible, disregards, ignores, and shuts out anything that comes to the child from the outside."

Hans Asperger, a Viennese paediatrician in 1944 described Autism in children as *"poverty of social interaction, failure of communication and the development of special interests."*

Asperger spoke of children with autism as: *"never being on the same wave length as their normal peers in any group activity."* It is not the same as shyness, rejection or avoidance of human contact although autistic behaviour has sometimes been interpreted in this way. Autistic aloneness has nothing to do with being alone physically, but it does have to do with being alone mentally.



- Use overheads to talk through characteristics of Autism. Utilise participants own knowledge and experience about Autism reminding them to think about the characteristics and what kind of impact will they have on the inclusion of a child into their care.



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A Clearer Understanding about Autism

Children with Autism may display:

- Lack of empathy
- Naive, inappropriate one sided interaction
- Little or no ability to form relationships
- Pedantic, repetitive speech (Echolalic)
- Poor non verbal communication
- Intense absorption in certain subjects
- Clumsy and ill co-ordinated movements and odd postures
(Lorna Wing Burgoine and Wing 1983)

Social

- Have difficulty with social interaction
- May not join in with other children and may panic if forced to.
- Appear contented with their own company.
- Actions can often appear selfish however research finds that they are more self centred rather than selfish.
- When they do interact it is on their terms and the child appears to be a controller. The child will only include other children as long as it is on their terms.
- May be intent on enforcing the rules, at times to the detriment of her/his peers.



- Use overheads to talk through characteristics of Autism. Utilise participants own knowledge and experience about Autism reminding them to think about the characteristics and what kind of impact will they have on the inclusion of a child into their care.

- May have limited or no eye contact. Clinical observation indicates that eye contact breaks concentration.
- Body language is an area, which is not readily understood by the child with Autism and can often appear that the child is being rude or disrespectful to the adult.
- A child with Autism may have no understanding about emotions and appear to have a lack of ability to care for others. This child then may use inappropriate actions.

Language

- Delayed development
- Superficially perfect, expressive language
- Formal pedantic, language
- Odd prosody, peculiar voice characteristics
- Impairments in comprehension, including misinterpretations of literal/implied meaning

Motor clumsiness

- Walking with limited co-ordination
- Limited co-ordination for ball skills-catching and throwing
- Difficulty in balancing
- Difficulty using both hands to do a task e.g. tying shoelaces, bike riding
- Limited co-ordination skills in handwriting
- Problems copying various rhythms



- Use overheads to talk through characteristics of Autism. Utilise participants own knowledge and experience about Autism reminding them to think about the characteristics and what kind of impact will they have on the inclusion of a child into their care.

- Tendency to imitate the posture, gesture and movements of other people

Cognition

- Difficulty in conceptualising thoughts and feelings of other people
- Leans to books that are factual rather than fictional
- Profound long term memory
- Thinking tends to be rigid and not adaptable to change or failure
- Difficulty in learning from mistakes
- Can fail to transfer learning from one experience to another
- Show a propensity for imaginative but solitary games

Sensitivity

- Sensitive to sounds and forms of touch
- Some sensory systems are affected and become unbearably intense including common senses such as sounds, touch, taste, light intensity, colours and aromas
- Sensitivity will vary from child to child
- Sensitivity will not appear to be in a pattern e.g. the ringing of the phone may be unbearable but the child will be insensitive to another sound

The Impact on Inclusion

As careproviders we have a task of providing quality childcare for all children so that each child will not only feel a part of the group but also have the opportunity to explore and experiment in a safe and secure environment.

Now we know that all children go through stages of development in a similar way however some develop more quickly than others. It is still important to remember the child's chronological age as well as developmental stage e.g. a four year old will have four years of life experience irrespective of their disability or other needs therefore play experiences will need to suit the child's skills in all areas. Activities designed for younger children will often not be suitable for the older child with a disability.

Group Exercise 2

Looking at this specific disability what kind of impact would Autism have on the provision of a service?

As a group brainstorm the areas where Autism can cause an impact that creates concern and issues in the delivery of an inclusive program.



- Use overheads to talk through characteristics of Autism. Utilise participants own knowledge and experience about Autism reminding them to think about the characteristics and what kind of impact will they have on the inclusion of a child into their care.



- This group exercise can be undertaken utilising the information about Autism and placed in the context of a child of a particular age within a children's services setting. Encourage group to provide very specific strategies e.g. provide a more "fact telling" story in story telling time to assist with the inclusion of a child with Autism or identify a resource which may assist in the inclusion process.

Developing Strategies for Inclusion

Having identified impact and concerns for the inclusion of children with this specific disability our final and ongoing strategy is to ascertain what resources and skills we already have and what else we need.

What skills and knowledge do you as childcare workers already know and utilise?

Where are the gaps?

Where do we go from here to rectify these gaps?



- Present as OHT re-inforcing information of characteristics of Autism. Ensure that you emphasize that each child will be different and childcare workers need to observe each child on an individual basis.

Inclusion Strategies

As each and every child is different, so too is the child with Autism. Including that child into your care is also based on past experience, developmental skills the child already has, interests and expectations of the adult. Looking at what experiences you already provide for the children in your care is the first step in developing strategies to include the child with Autism.

- ❖ Beware of confusion due to a literal interpretation e.g. cry your eyes out.
- ❖ Echolalia should not necessarily be discouraged
- ❖ Use manual signs, symbols and pictures
- ❖ Use simple material with no distracting or irrelevant details and repeat the activity with a variety of examples
- ❖ Provide activities which predominantly use one sense such as posting boxes or shape lotto
- ❖ Provide prompts of what to do next
- ❖ Use real objects not imaginative or highly representational toys
- ❖ Have good consistent communication between caregivers
- ❖ Observe and note activities that the child enjoys
- ❖ Choose activities that provide some form of achievement
- ❖ Allow time for child to think before responding
- ❖ Minimise distractions of sound and movement



- Present this exercise on an individual or small group basis, based on a particular child with particular characteristics, needs and interests, likes and dislikes as well as age group. Utilise existing activities and encourage participants to develop ideas and strategies to modify to meet the needs of all children in the group.
- Present summary on OHT to group
- Encourage participants for final comments and/or questions

Group Exercise 3

Provide an example of an activity that could be provided to a small group of children which includes the child with Autism.

Summary

- Characteristics of specific disabilities are just that. Each child is an individual and will display characteristics differently.
- It is important to clarify what is myth and what is fact about children with specific disabilities.
- As careproviders we already have a wide range of knowledge and skills to be able to include the child with a specific disability.
- Activities and experiences we already provide for children may only need to be modified slightly to meet the needs of all children.

- To explore the characteristics of specific disabilities (Autism) in children.
- To provide additional information and resources on these specific disabilities.
- To identify the impact of these disabilities within the inclusion process.
- To identify areas of concern for the careprovider in caring with children with Autism.
- To acknowledge and utilise the existing skills of careproviders.



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OHT 1 Summary

Children with Autism may display:

- Lack of empathy
- Naive, inappropriate one sided interaction
- Little or no ability to form relationships
- Pedantic, repetitive speech
- Poor non verbal communication
- Intense absorption in certain subjects
- Clumsy and ill co-ordinated movements and odd postures

(Lorna Wing (Burgoine and Wing 1983))



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OHT 2 - Characteristics

Social

- Have difficulty with social interaction
- May not want to join in with other children and panic if forced to.
- Appear contented with their own company.
- Actions can often appear selfish however research finds that they are more self centred rather than selfish.
- When they do interact it is on their terms and the child appears to be a controller. The child will only include other children as long as it is on their terms.
- The child with Autism may be intent on enforcing the rules much at times to the detriment of her/his peers.
- Eye contact is often not used by a child with Autism. Clinical observation indicates that eye contact breaks concentration.
- Body language is an area which is not readily understood by the child with Autism and can often appear that the child is being rude or disrespectful to the adult.
- A child with Autism may have no understanding about emotions and appear to have a lack of ability to care for others. This child then may use inappropriate actions.



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OHT 3 Social Characteristics

Language

Characteristics of language development of a child with Autism

- Delayed development
- Superficially perfect expressive language
- Formal pedantic, language
- Odd prosody, peculiar voice characteristics
- Impairments in comprehension, including misinterpretations of literal/implied meaning



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OHT 4 Language Characteristics

Motor clumsiness

- Walking with limited co-ordination
- Limited co-ordination for ball skills - catching and throwing
- Difficulty in balancing
- Difficulty using both hands to do a task e.g. tying shoelaces, bike riding
- Limited co-ordination skills in handwriting
- Problems copying various rhythms
- Tendency to imitate the posture, gesture and movements of other people



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OHT 5 Motor Characteristics

Cognition

- Difficulty in conceptualising thoughts and feelings of other people.
- Leans to books that are factual rather than fictional
- Profound long term memory
- Thinking tends to be rigid and not to adapt to change or failure
- Difficulty in learning from mistakes
- Can fail to transfer learning from one experience to another
- Show a propensity for imaginative games but solitary



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OHT 6 Cognitive Characteristics

Sensitivity

- Sensitive to sounds and forms of touch
- Some sensory systems affected as unbearably intense
- Common senses such as sounds, touch, taste light intensity colours and aromas
- Sensitivity will vary from child to child
- Will not appear to be in a pattern e.g. unbearable ringing of the phone but insensitive to another sound



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OHT 7 Sensitivity Characteristics

Inclusion Strategies

- Beware of confusion due to a literal interpretation e.g. cry your eyes out.
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- Use manual signs, symbols and pictures
- Use simple material with no distracting or irrelevant details and repeat the activity with a variety of examples
- Provide activities which predominantly use one sense such as posting boxes or shape lotto
- Provide prompts of what to do next
- Use real objects not imaginative or highly representational toys
- Have good consistent communication between caregivers
- Observe and note activities that child enjoys
- Choose activities that provide some form of achievement
- Allow time for child to think before responding
- Minimise distractions of sound and movement



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OHT 8 Inclusion Strategies

Summary

- Characteristics of specific disabilities are just that. Each child is an individual and will display characteristics differently.
- It is important to clarify what is myth and what is fact about children with specific disabilities.
- As careproviders we already have a wide range of knowledge and skills to be able to include the child with a specific disability
- Activities and experiences we already provide for children may only need to be modified slightly to meet the needs of all children.



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OHT 9 Summary

Autism

The word Autism is derived from the Greek word autos meaning self and used to define the withdrawal from the fabric of social life into self.

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"A fundamental disorder in a child's inability to relate themselves in the ordinary way to people and situations from the beginning of life. There is from the start an extreme autistic aloneness that, whenever possible, disregards, ignores, and shuts out anything that comes to the child from the outside."

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"Children with poverty of social interaction, failure of communication and the development of special interests."

Asperger spoke of children with autism as:

"Never being on the same wave length as their normal peers in any group activity."

It is not the same as shyness, rejection or avoidance of human contact although autistic behaviour has sometimes been interpreted in this way. Autistic aloneness has nothing to do with being alone physically, but it does have to do with being alone mentally.



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Handout 1 Autism

Characteristics

Children with Autism may display:

- ❖ Lack of empathy
- ❖ Naive, inappropriate one sided interaction
- ❖ Little or no ability to form relationships
- ❖ Pedantic, repetitive speech
- ❖ Poor non verbal communication
- ❖ Intense absorption in certain subjects
- ❖ Clumsy and ill co-ordinated movements and odd postures

(Lorna Wing (Burgoine and Wing 1983))

Social

- ❖ Have difficulty with social interaction
- ❖ May not join in with other children and may panic if forced to.
- ❖ Appear contented with their own company.
- ❖ Actions can often appear selfish however research finds that they are more self centred rather than selfish.
- ❖ When they do interact it is on their terms and the child appears to be a controller. The child will only include other children as long as it is on their terms.
- ❖ The child with Aspergers is intent on enforcing the rules much at times to the detriment of her/his peers.
- ❖ Eye contact is often not used by a child with Aspergers.
- ❖ Clinical observation indicates that eye contact breaks concentration.
- ❖ Body language is an area, which is not readily understood by the child with Aspergers and can often appear that the child is being rude or disrespectful to the adult.
- ❖ A child with Aspergers may have no understanding about emotions and appear to have a lack of ability to care for others. This child then may use inappropriate actions.

Language

- ❖ Delayed development
- ❖ Superficially perfect expressive language
- ❖ Formal pedantic ,language
- ❖ Odd prosody, peculiar voice characteristics
- ❖ Impairments in comprehension, including misinterpretations of literal/implied meaning



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Handout 2 Characteristics

Motor clumsiness

- ❖ Walking with limited co-ordination
- ❖ Limited co-ordination for ball skills- catching and throwing
- ❖ Difficulty in balancing
- ❖ Difficulty using both hands to do a task e.g. tying shoelaces, bike riding
- ❖ Limited co-ordination skills in handwriting
- ❖ Problems copying various rhythms
- ❖ Tendency to imitate the posture , gesture and movements of other people

Cognition

- ❖ Difficulty in conceptualising thoughts and feelings of other people.
- ❖ Leans to books that are factual rather than fictional
- ❖ Profound long term memory
- ❖ Thinking tends to be rigid and not to adapt to change or failure
- ❖ Difficulty in learning from mistakes
- ❖ Can fail to transfer learning from one experience to another
- ❖ Show a propensity for imaginative games but solitary

Sensitivity

- ❖ Sensitive to sounds and forms of touch
- ❖ Some sensory systems affected as unbearably intense
- ❖ Common senses such as sounds, touch, taste light intensity colours and aromas
- ❖ Sensitivity will vary from child to child
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Handout 2 Characteristics

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Handout 3 References