

Background

Neurodevelopmental Differences can impact an individual across their lifespan (Scottish Intercollegiate Guidelines Network [SIGN], 2016 and National Institute for Health and Care Excellence [NICE], 2017). The earlier we can provide the support for each child or young person, the better their physical, mental and social health outcomes will be.

In 2019 a business case was submitted to NES AHP Careers Fellowship Scheme following the identification that there was a need to deliver a project which specifically focused on improving the health and wellbeing of children and young people with Neurodevelopmental Differences, by empowering families in co-production with local support providers by March 2021. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the original project start date of April 2020 was deferred until July 2020. An extension of the project was granted until June 2021.

Description

Initially this project intended to use training to empower families and promote partnership working to achieve its aim. However, through conversations with Shetland's Engagement Officer for Healthcare Improvement Scotland it quickly became clear that the project had not engaged in true co-production with its target audience. With help from Healthcare Improvement Scotland this project redesigned its engagement stage of the project. What felt like going back a step actually meant that the project really benefited the target audience. Sixteen families provided direct feedback on how we could improve the health and wellbeing of children and young people with Neurodevelopmental Differences. A further one hundred and forty two individuals completed a public survey which informed our project outcomes. The project outcomes included; online training, information pages and All Ability Rugby.

Online Training

Although training was something that families wanted, families were now partners in decisions regarding training. Six online training sessions were delivered in partnership with Dyslexia Scotland, Tourette Scotland, Scottish Women's Autism Network and NHS Fife.

Over 100
People attended at least one online training session.

93%
Felt that the Dyslexia and ADHD training was useful.

77%
Increased their confidence supporting children and young people with ADHD post training.

75 %
Felt that the training increased their knowledge of ADHD.

74%
Reported that they were now confident supporting children and young people with Autism and Tourette syndrome.

71%
Rated their knowledge of Tourette Syndrome between 4 out of 5 or higher post training.

Information Pages

The project lead liaised with different professionals and third sector organisations to gather information together on resources and support available to families both locally and nationally. A link to the three information pages can be found below.

<https://prezi.com/i/cimr-nxhh5kb/neurodiversity/>

<https://prezi.com/i/lfocom2sr05/useful-resources/>

<https://prezi.com/i/xwbnqipiqu04/health-and-social-care-services/>

All Ability Rugby

In response to feedback, this project piloted All Ability rugby sessions which aimed to break down the barriers currently stopping some families engaging in sports, including sports sessions being too busy or even the demand in a session being too high.

In partnership with Ability Shetland, Active School and Shetland Rugby Club, children and young people received sensory boxes funded by the project which contained social stories, a ball and other items to remove any barriers before attending the sessions. From May 2021 until June 2021 five rugby taster sessions were delivered in Shetland. Over twenty children and young people engaged in rugby.



"Lovely to have people giving the training who had experience both professionally and personally."
~Online Training

"He loved interacting with everyone".
~All Ability Rugby

"Wish I'd had the training sooner."
~Online Training

"..absolutely loved the rugby sessions, it fits better with his needs and ability than usual clubs would."
~All Ability Rugby

"What did you like?
All of it.
What did you not like?
Nothing.
Would you play rugby again?
Yes."
~Feedback from two young people

Conclusion

Through co-production this project was able to expand beyond focusing on just training and support children and young people in ways that training could not. Creating an information page allowed people to share their knowledge of the support available to families locally and nationally instead of different people knowing small pockets of information and families having to seek this out. The All Ability Rugby group will continue beyond the project as it is encouraging inclusivity within sports and is providing support for coaches to have the confidence to meet the needs of children and young people with Neurodevelopmental Differences within their groups.

Reflection

For any project aiming to improve the health and wellbeing of service users it is essential that co-production continues throughout. It is so easy as a professional to jump to conclusions. Sometimes taking a step back and ensuring that we are working in true co-production with our services users will mean that the outcomes we are working to achieve truly benefit the service user.

The AHP Careers Fellowship Scheme allowed the project lead to learn a range of new skills in project development. Everything from having a budget to engaging stakeholders. These project management skills will be essential for future career progression.