

Shape Project

Supporting adults with High functioning Autism and
asPergers syndromE

The Shape Project

Supporting adults with high functioning autism
and Asperger syndrome

Mapping and evaluating specialist autism team
service models

The shape project is funded by the Department of Health

It is a joint project between the University of York
Social Policy Research Unit
and the National Autistic Society

The research team includes social scientists, health economists, statisticians, a psychiatrist from the University of York and the London School of Economics, and senior staff from the National Autistic Society

The research team will be closely advised by a group of adults with HFA/AS

I am part of this group of ten adults with HFA/AS

Background

The Autism Strategy requires localities to improve support for adults with HFA/AS. It recommends specialist community based, multi-disciplinary teams are set up to provide, coordinate and oversee services.

Recent national guidance for the management of autism in adults called these teams 'Specialist Autism Teams' (SATs)

However, no evidence exists about the staffing of these teams and how they should operate. As a result, a number of different service models have emerged among the small number of localities which have developed a SAT. For example, some SATs only serve adults with HFA and AS whereas others support adults across the autistic spectrum.

Equally, some SATs primarily support other professionals in their work with adults with HFA/AS whereas others engage in a lot of direct work with individuals.

Project Aims

This project will investigate the different SAT service models which currently exist. It will compare them in terms of their impact on the lives of adults accessing their services; their cost; and service user experiences.

Methods

There are two stages to the study

1. Establishing the different types of SATs which have been set up across England

2. Selecting examples of the different types and exploring whether they are making a difference to users' lives. We will also investigate whether a particular type(s) of SAT works better than other types of SAT

Service users in our research sites will be invited to take part in the project over a 12 month period.

Data on users' well being, psychosocial and economic outcomes will be collected at assessment and 3,6 and 12 months later.

We will also interview a sub-sample of service users and family members, as well as professionals working in, or with, the SATs.

The interviews will explore how SATs do/do not support the achievement of positive changes in the lives of adults with HFA/AS, and whether experiences differ between different SAT service models.

Finally, we will estimate the costs of the different SAT models and investigate whether the cost of providing particular services (e.g. diagnosis, social support) between teams.

Policy and Practice Aims

Once complete, a range of reports and guidelines for the different audiences who will find the research findings useful will be written.

We will also present the research findings at conferences and other events.

The study will contribute to understanding of how to support adults with HFA/AS and in the decision-making by commissioners and those involved in service/practice development.

Project Timescale

The project will run for 45 months

Projected completion date 3rd Quarter 2018