

Autism Network Scotland Activity Overview



The Network has continued to develop its range of Knowledge Exchange activities at the University of Strathclyde, the place for useful learning. Most recently we have focused on improving outcomes in relation to employability and sexual health. We have also continued to work with a range of local authorities to build capacity and understanding in relation to autism and transition and autism in the early years.

Last week saw the delivery of the 4th annual conference for the ANS Employability Network, chaired by Richard Ibbotson. The day included presentations from a range of stakeholders including employers Scottish Widows and autistic speakers who provided insight into their own experiences of identifying their chosen career and looking for work. The event also highlighted the specific issues faced by women on the spectrum; the challenge surrounding the disclosure of a diagnosis in the work place and highlighted examples of good practice regarding the support for autistic people in employment settings. Delegates, representing Supported Employment Services, Employers, autistic people, local authorities and advocacy groups, took part in workshops which considered the importance of inclusive practice and practical strategies for supporting positive outcomes, including sustained paid employment. Details from the discussions will be disseminated to support learning and development and highlight innovative practice across Scotland.

A further example of an innovative approach to building capacity can be seen in the knowledge exchange event delivered as part of the Keep Safe, Have Fun, Stay out of Trouble project. The project, produced in partnership with Scottish Drugs Forum, aims to support young people on the autistic spectrum to have good sexual health and to address the over-representation of autistic people in the criminal justice system due to lack of support in this area. Young people will be supported to make appropriate decisions through the development of an app. which is being created through consultation with young people, parents and practitioners. The national event provided delegates with information on current legislation and supported them to recognise the consequence of poor decision making by the people they support. In addition to the sharing of examples of good and innovative practice, the event presented opportunities for experienced practitioners to network and provide peer support. Practical resources created on the day will be collated and made available to our contacts. Future plans for the project include a range of similar events across Scotland and partnership working with Centre for Youth Criminal Justice.

Out on the road, the team has been working with the Association for Real Change to build capacity in relation to supporting families of children with autism through transition. The training programme *Transitions and Autism: Understanding your Role* provides practitioners and parents with insight into the specific challenges that families with autism might face and a range of practical strategies and supports. Practitioners also leave with an up-to-date knowledge of current legislation in relation to autism and transitions, how this affects their role and the information they specifically need to be able to carry out a successful transition. Parents leave with an up-to-date knowledge of what they should expect from a transition, empowering them to engage with a range of agencies. They will also be better able to ensure a positive transition for their child by having been provided with key legislation and information about their rights during a transition. Ongoing consultation with parents and practitioners throughout the training provides an evidence base for local strategy groups and commissioning bodies who are invited to shape plans in response to local intelligence.

