

# Understanding and meeting the need of Autistic Individuals

Robyn Darby (Mental Health Liaison Nurse for Learning Disability and Autism – Reasonable Adjustment Service). Robyn.darby@oxfordhealth.nhs.uk

28.01.2021

### Introduction

One third of Autistic Individuals also have a diagnosis of a learning disabiltiy, of which they can access support from their local Community Learning Disabiltiy Team (CLDT)(National Autistic Society, 2021). This also means that two thirds of this population do not have a learning disability, In Oxfordshire, and many parts of England, adults are able to access a diagnosis of autism and can attend a set of post diagnostic workshops. However, there is not an equivalent of the CLDT for this population. This leaves a gap in service for this population. This leads to autistic people presenting to mental health services (Adult Mental Health Team and Inpatient Services) in a crisis situation, of which these professionals are not provided autism training. This lack of understanding and confidence affects the care and support for the indiviudal and increases the risk of diagnostic overshadowing.

# Improvement methodology

PDSA Cycle 1: Facilitating a discussion with professionals and autistic people on topics to be covered

PDSA Cycle 2: Trialling content and length of webinars PSDA Cycle 3: Rolling out webinars within the Trust

# The approach

#### What we were trying to accomplish

The aim is to make mental health services more accessible for autistic people by improving professionals knowledge and understanding of their needs through a series of webinar training sessions.

# What we measured to understand if our change was an improvement

Asking both professionals and autistic people using mental health services to complete a seoerate questionnaire before and after the autism webinar series is rolled out.

If the change was an improvement, the professionals would feel more confident and have a better understanding after the webinar series. If the change was an improvement, the autistic people would report an improvement in the support and care they receive as a result of improved understanding.

#### What changes we made / are making

- Increasing awareness and understanding of the needs of autistic people to professionals in mental health services
  Asking professionals and the autisitic population what is needed/
- Offering resources and guidance of different ways of working e.g. communication, reasonable adjustments and assessing

# The impact

By increasing the understanding of professionals that work in the adult mental health team, they are more likely to feel confident and have an increased understanding of the needs of the autistic population, and how to adjust their communication appropriately. They will be more familiar with what a reasonable adjustment is, and how to make their service more accessible. They will be more familiar with e.g. sensory needs, comobitidies etc, reducing the risk of diagnostic overshadowing.

By involving the autisitc population in this work, they can shape this project and have a voice.



# Leadership learning

- Collaboration is key
- Importance of delegating and sharing tasks when planning and implementing a quality improvement project
- Change management: recognising and responding to changes to vision of plan

# Next steps

- To roll out the Webinars in March 2021
- Add to number of webinars and content covered
- Sharing these wider than mental health services e.g. GPs, physical health services and emergency services.
- Tying this work into the Tier 2 Autism training within the trust