

CHAPTER 8

Emergency Services



Emergency Services

Background

The Emergency Services film was created in conjunction with Emergency Services in Wales and the filming company, Injan, in April 2018. The training involves: showing the film and presenting case studies.



Precedent cases nationally and internationally had highlighted the vulnerability of autistic people and their risk of involvement within the Emergency Services.

Initial consultation was carried out in July 2017 following requests for autism training from Emergency Services partners to develop a better understanding of autism and to influence practice. The National ASD Development Team undertook a scoping exercise to ascertain the current provision and needs across Wales.



As part of this work, an online survey for Emergency Services employees was created. In addition, the Regional ASD Development Officers contacted 3 Fire and Rescue Service, 4 Police Services and the Welsh Ambulance Service to further the scoping work.

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This work identified a real need for autism training in emergency services throughout Wales, in order to develop a good understanding of autism. Respondents felt that training would be useful to their role, and that they would be committed to undertaking training.

Description

This scheme will be run as a “train the trainer” form of training, where members of the National ASD Development Team will train a few people, who will then take the training out more widely across Emergency Services in Wales. The training will be adapted and specific to the kind of cases the different areas of emergency services are involved with.

So far, the train the trainer sessions and the training package for the Police and Fire and Rescue services are being used as pilots, with a vision to disseminate to all emergency services across Wales in 2020/21.

- The Police have a complex, more front facing contact with autistic people. This training was rolled out in November 2018 to Dyfed Powys Police.
- Fire and Rescue services training will be rolled out in the Summer 2019 to South Wales Fire and Rescue Service.
- The Ambulance and Coast Guard training will be completed in the Autumn 2019.

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South Wales Fire and Rescue Services

The goal is for the Fire and Rescue services in South Wales to all undertake the train the trainer sessions during the Summer/Autumn 2019.



Ashley Collins, Sally Chapman, Sara Harvey, Tony Jackson and Huw Jakeway QFSM



Huw Jakeway QFSM, Rebecca Meredith and Vaughan Gething AM

Dyfed Powys Police (DPP)

The DPP piloted the Emergency Services train the trainer sessions during November 2018.



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Here is an overview of the feedback that Dyfed Powys Police received from the community (before and after the Train the Trainer scheme):

The individual in question is autistic and agoraphobic. At a time where they were threatening to self-harm, a particular police officer showed understanding and respect towards them. The following message was received by the Force:

“Hello, I just wanted to write to say many thanks to the Police Officer who attended the minor car incident yesterday morning, where another driver drove into the back of my car. I'm afraid I didn't get their name, but they made an unpleasant experience much easier. I particularly wanted to write because I have autism, which made the influx of interactions especially taxing. Your officer was friendly, clear and they told me what would happen step by step, which was enormously helpful when processing what had happened. Your officer didn't know that I have autism, so it was pleasing to see that the procedures you have in place are neurodiversity-friendly. Whilst it will still take a few days for my over-taxed brain to bounce back fully, your officer's demeanour helped me put off a possible period of "shutdown". Thank you for your time.”

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“Today we visited a carnival in the DPP area, there were two officers there. I just wanted to say a huge thank you for making my child's day. My child has autism and is utterly obsessed with policemen (ambulance/firemen too) and these two took time to explain everything; what they wore and why etc. My child can be very “in your face” and doesn't know boundaries and I never know whether to explain about their condition or not. I chose not to as I thought they were being bugged enough haha but these two really touched my child's heart and so I wanted to just say thank you!”

An employee of a mental health charity wishes to praise both officers' conduct while undertaking a recent interview with a person suffering with Asperger's syndrome, who is on the autistic spectrum, and who also has paranoia and ADHD.

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A member of the public wanted to pass on a thank you to the officer currently dealing with their child's case. The caller was the parent of an assaulted victim and they advised the officer that their child was autistic, but the officer wasn't patronising. They stated that the officer was polite, courteous and very professional.

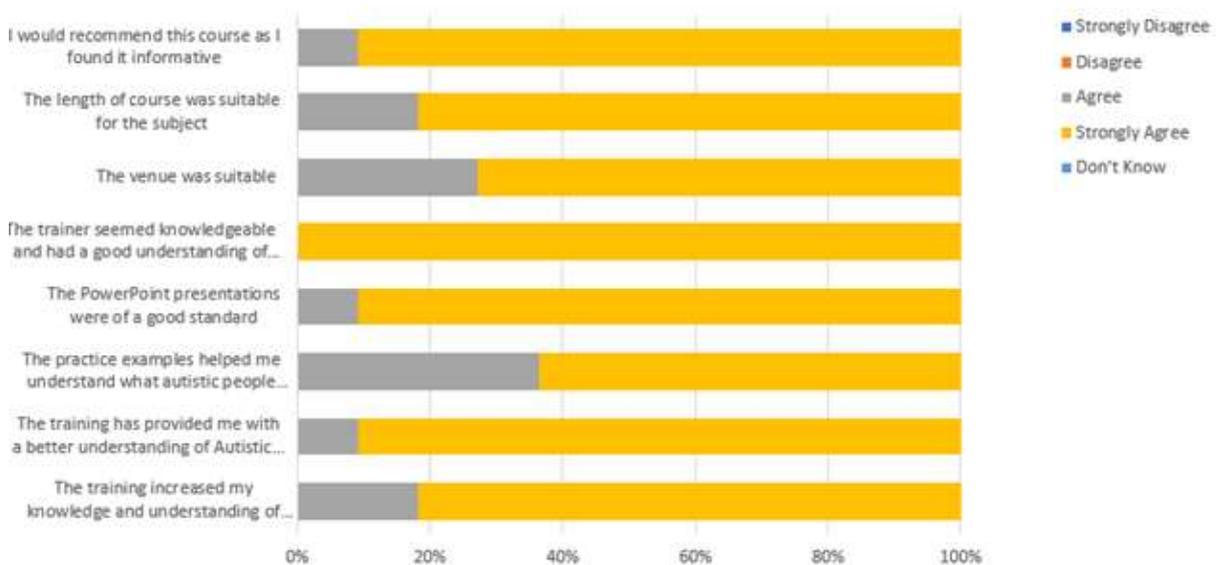
The caller explained that their child is autistic and had come out of a shop after buying a cake, when a police car drove past, and their child was staring at the officers in the car. The caller explained that their child was wearing tracksuit bottoms and their hand in their pocket. The officers stopped the car and approached the caller's child. The caller stated how their child was so pleased with the officers' attitude towards them, stating they were very cheerful, friendly, nice and professional. The caller also stated that their child was extremely pleased the officers didn't ask them to take their hands out of their pocket.

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Statistics

The National ASD Development Team delivered two pilot Train the Trainer sessions for DPP. The following response was received from the evaluation sheets following the training.

Emergency Services Pilot DPP



As can be seen from the graph, 100% of participants agreed or strongly agreed that the training increased their knowledge and understanding of autism, 100% of participants agreed or strongly agreed that the training provided them with a better understanding of autistic people's needs and a 100% agreed or strongly agreed that they would recommend the course as they found it informative.

Quotes received following the sessions include:

"Really needed within the service and other emergency services."

"Excellent summary, engaging, well worth attending."