

Report on DISCO Training Course Completion

Introduction

As a Child and Adolescent Psychiatrist working in the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS), I recently participated in the DISCO training organized by the National Autistic Society in the UK. The training was held on November 12-13, 2025, and March 4-5, 2026, at the Lorna Wing Centre in Bromley, Kent. This report summarizes the training experience, including insights gained and how the course has improved my knowledge and practice regarding Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD).

Course Overview

The DISCO (Diagnostic Interview for Social and Communication Disorders) was developed by Dr. Lorna Wing and Dr. Judith Gould to serve as both a clinical and research tool for diagnosing autism across all age groups. It is a semi-structured interview that systematically gathers information about various aspects of a person's skills, deficits, and atypical behaviors.

The training consisted of two main parts:

1. **Concept Review and Practical Application:** The initial sessions concentrated on reviewing core concepts of autism and applying the DISCO scale practically. Participants participated in hands-on activities to score and develop diagnoses using the DISCO framework, culminating in preparing a detailed report based on a specific case. This exercise highlighted the importance of thorough history-taking and understanding the individual's developmental path to create an accurate diagnosis.
2. **Case Presentation and Feedback:** The second part of the training involved presenting the cases and receiving feedback from peers and trainers. We closely analyzed interview styles, case formulations, and the DISCO's algorithms. This collaborative environment promoted constructive discussions, helping us refine our skills and learn from each other's experiences.

Impact on Knowledge and Practice

The DISCO training has greatly deepened my understanding of ASD and the complexities involved in its diagnosis. As a clinician in CAMHS, using this tool supports my commitment to providing personalized care. The dimensional approach highlighted in the DISCO enables a thorough assessment that reflects each individual's unique profile, rather than simply categorizing them into diagnoses. This understanding is vital, especially when developing tailored interventions to meet each child's specific needs.

The hands-on parts of the training were especially helpful, improving my skills in using the DISCO effectively. By actively participating in case formulation and getting feedback, I've gained a better understanding of the subtleties involved in assessing social communication disorders. Additionally, this experience has influenced my clinical judgment, particularly when working with cases where developmental history might be incomplete or when other conditions, like ADHD or tics, are present alongside ASD.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the DISCO training offered by the National Autistic Society is invaluable for professionals working within CAMHS. It advances clinical skills, deepens understanding of autism, and promotes effective diagnostic practices. The training experience has not only equipped me with the necessary tools to employ the DISCO more effectively but has also reinforced the importance of a comprehensive, person-centered approach when working with children and adolescents on the autism spectrum.

I look forward to applying the insights gained from this training in my future practice and contributing positively to the care of my patients within the autism spectrum.