

Combined ADOS-2 and ADI-R Training

Provider: Autism Services Group

Grant awarded: £1,075

Overview of the activity

The FPSA grant supported my participation in the five-day combined Autism Diagnostic Observation Schedule, Second Edition (ADOS-2) and Autism Diagnostic Interview-Revised (ADI-R) training delivered by Autism Services Group. This specialist training formed part of my continuing professional development as an Occupational Therapist working predominantly with adolescents and young people with neurodevelopmental and mental health needs. The course provided comprehensive training in both observational and developmental-history assessment methods and strengthened my understanding of autism assessment across a wide range of presentations. The training was highly relevant to my current role, where many of the young people referred for occupational therapy support present with anxiety, emotional dysregulation, school avoidance, executive functioning difficulties and social challenges that may be linked to underlying neurodevelopmental differences.

Learning gained

A significant learning point from the course was developing a deeper understanding of how autism presents in adolescents, particularly those whose needs may have been overlooked due to masking, compensatory strategies or co-occurring conditions such as ADHD and anxiety. The ADI-R training strengthened my understanding of developmental history and the importance of exploring lifelong patterns of behaviour, communication and social interaction. The ADOS-2 training enhanced my observational skills and ability to identify subtle autistic characteristics within structured assessment contexts. The course consistently linked assessment findings to real-world functioning and reinforced the importance of understanding how neurodevelopmental differences affect participation in education, relationships, emotional wellbeing, daily routines and independence. The training also highlighted the close overlap between ADHD and autism and reinforced how important it is for clinicians to consider both pathways when supporting young people with complex presentations.

Impact on my practice

This training has strengthened my clinical reasoning and increased my confidence when supporting neurodivergent adolescents. I am better able to recognise autistic presentations that may previously have been attributed solely to anxiety, emotional dysregulation, low mood, school avoidance or behavioural concerns. The learning has enhanced my ability to contribute meaningfully within multidisciplinary discussions and has improved my understanding of how assessment findings can be translated into practical, occupation-focused recommendations. It has also strengthened my ability to identify strengths alongside areas of difficulty, ensuring recommendations remain person-centred and focused on improving participation in meaningful activities.

Impact on service users and carers

The direct beneficiaries of this training are the adolescents and families accessing occupational therapy services. Earlier recognition and improved understanding of autism can have a significant impact on a young person's mental health, self-esteem and overall wellbeing. Many young people experience years of feeling misunderstood before their neurodevelopmental needs are recognised. Through this training I am better equipped to contribute to assessments that provide a more accurate understanding of a young person's profile and support needs. Families and carers benefit from clearer explanations and recommendations that are meaningful, practical and relevant to everyday life. This helps reduce uncertainty, supports informed decision-making and enables more effective advocacy for appropriate support and adjustments.

Wider impact and future development

The training has reinforced the important contribution occupational therapists can make within neurodevelopmental assessment pathways. Occupational therapists bring a unique perspective by considering how neurodevelopmental differences affect participation, routines, sensory processing, emotional regulation, relationships and quality of life. The course complements my previous ADHD Assessor training and has strengthened my understanding of how autism and ADHD frequently overlap. Together, these areas of learning support a more holistic approach to assessment and intervention. I intend to share learning with colleagues through professional discussions, case formulation and service development activities to improve understanding of neurodevelopmental presentations across services.

Reflection on FPSA funding

The FPSA grant was instrumental in enabling me to access this specialist training. As a solo parent, self-funding opportunities of this scale can be challenging, and the support provided by FPSA removed a significant financial barrier to professional development. The training has had a direct impact on my practice and will continue to influence the quality of support I provide to adolescents and families. I am extremely grateful for the Foundation's investment in my professional development. The knowledge and skills gained through this course will support better understanding, earlier identification and more effective support for young people experiencing neurodevelopmental and mental health challenges.