

CASE STUDY: ADD-VANCE

Evaluating the long-term benefits of supporting children and families with ADHD and ASD

87%

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course

Katherine has three young boys; two children with ASD and one son has ADHD. Not unlike many parents the emotional and physical pressures of looking after the boys impacted both on her home life and social life. Excursions to playgrounds became impossible, her children stopped being invited to parties and many of her friends distanced themselves from her, many attributing her sons' behaviour to poor parenting skills. As well as feeling isolated Katherine began to lose all belief in herself.

Thankfully Katherine made contact with ADD-vance, a charity based in Hertfordshire that supports adults, children and families with ASD and ADHD. They have been working with parents since 1996, delivering a range of training and support programmes to help parents learn and build on existing skills to support their children. ADD-vance work with hundreds of parents like Katherine every year and the feedback they receive is overwhelming positive.

However, the team at ADD-vance wanted to evaluate their services further to look at the long term impact of their training courses and to identify where further intervention may be required. Using the Innovation and Sustainability grant programme to fund the project the team developed an evaluation framework that would

assess the impact of their 6-week course called Time out for ADHD and ASD.

The ADD-vance researcher collected responses from parents immediately after each course and then at 3-months and 6 months through a combination of questionnaire and face-to-face interviews. The resulting data has provided an incredible insight into how to best support parent carers.

In carrying out an in-depth evaluation of their programme deliver they wanted to achieve the following:

Knowledge - identify how knowledge from the training is used and where gaps in knowledge occur.

Attitudes - identify if attitudes towards children and young people have changed following training.

Behaviour - identify where behaviour has changed, both in parent carers and professionals, and in disabled children and their siblings.

Practice - identify areas to develop the organisation's practice and to continue improving outcomes for disabled children and their families.

Outcomes:

93%

of parent carers felt less isolated after the course

- The evaluation showed that key elements of the training course had a positive impact sustained over a period of time. For example, 90% of parent carers responded that they felt better able to deal with other professionals working with their family immediately after the training course and this was maintained at 3 – months and 6-months after the intervention. However, there were other areas where impact did reduce over time suggesting further intervention was required. For example, 93% of parent carers reported that they felt less isolated immediately post course, dropping to 88% at 6 months post course.
- The results of the evaluation informed changes and development of the programme of training and support offered by ADD-vance which included, reducing the number of participants to better facilitate group discussions, introducing an evening course for 'Dads only' and separate dedicated sessions on ASD and ADHD to enable parents to have in-depth discussions.
- The evaluation also indicated where further services or interventions are needed. For example, targeted behaviour intervention, such as workshops or short courses focusing purely on challenging behaviour.

"I could never express the full extent to which this course has pulled our family out of a downward spiral. Personally I have hope and strategies instead of total despair and frustration. I have stopped waiting for the mythical 'someone else' to save us and am turning things around myself."

REFLECTIONS AND KEY LEARNING



As evaluation was only a very small part of ADD-vance's focus, carrying out this project has been a huge learning curve for the organisation and staff involved. As an organisation ADD-Vance is now in a position to consistently collect and manage data which will be of huge benefit going forward



The project also highlighted the importance of being proactive rather than reactive. This new momentum in pursuing programme development opportunities has been beneficial not just for the families ADD-vance work with but also for the sustainability of the organisation.



The findings will be used to enhance workshops delivered to professionals, with the aim that ADD-vance can improve partnerships between parents carers and professionals and improve the experiences of children in schools and with other public services.