

ASD Technical Information Service

Newsletter Two

March 2009

Kia ora tautou,

Firstly, can I wish everyone in the ASD community a happy New Year. I totally agree with the Ministry of Health newsletter when they say that 2009 will be an exciting year for the ASD Community.

Much is happening of interest in the ASD community and with the Implementation Advisory Group (IAG) and the Technical Implementation Service. Remember that the Technical Implementation Service is a group comprising the New Zealand Guidelines Group (NZGG), Acqumen Ltd, and yours truly.

The IAG met on the 3rd of December and major progress is occurring in the areas of:

- Evaluation of the SPELL programme and determining the feasibility of ASD-specific behavioural support services
- Specific work in areas of behaviour support and family and whanau outreach in Auckland.
- Assessment and diagnosis.
- Respite.
- 'The Living Guideline'

Evaluation of the SPELL programme and of ASD specific behavioural support services

The Ministry of Health has selected providers to review the SPELL programme, and to establish how feasible it would be to set up ASD-specific behaviour support services in New Zealand. Kiwikiwi Research and Evaluation Services Ltd is performing the evaluation of SPELL. Bennett and Bijoux Ltd are conducting the review to establish whether or not it is feasible to establish ASD-specific behavioural support services.

Both pieces of work will be completed prior to June. Bennett & Bijoux are supported by a group of advisors expert in ASD behavioural support. The Implementation Advisory Group will consider the draft findings from the paper at its next meeting in April.

Tenders in areas of behaviour support and communication and family/whanau outreach in Auckland.

You will probably be aware that two tenders were released by the Ministry of Health just before Christmas. These tenders relate to the provision of behaviour support and family/whanau outreach, and are in line with the wish to further develop existing proven programmes and services. Tenders were received by the Technical Implementation Service, who are running the tenders for the Ministry, on 10th February. The Ministry has indicated that it wishes to have the services established by July 2009.

Assessment and Diagnosis Resources.

Progress is also occurring in the area of developing assessment and diagnosis resources. The Werry Centre is developing a training resource for specialists (paediatricians, psychiatrists, clinical psychologists & educational psychologists) in the assessment, treatment and clinical management of ASD for young people aged between 0 and 19. NZGG is developing content for a 'Handbook for professionals in the recognition, referral and diagnosis of Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD) in people of all ages'. NZGG and the Werry Centre are working cooperatively to ensure that the documents are compatible and consistent. Tanya Breen has been contracted to do this work, and she will be advised by a group which has a mix of professional and personal experience in the ASD area.

Respite.

The IAG is focusing on respite and behaviour support services at the moment. These are key areas of priority for the implementation of the New Zealand Autism Spectrum Disorder Guidelines. As noted above, they will consider the findings from Bennett and Bijoux Ltd on behaviour support services at their April meeting. They are now considering a paper pulled together by Acqumen Ltd and NZGG (with the support of an IAG sub-group) on the principles that should underpin ASD-specific respite services. The paper also describes the sorts of things that should occur in a respite service to best meet the needs of people with lived experience of ASD, their families and whanau. It also contains considerations about models of ASD-specific respite care.

The work builds on the ASD Guideline, feedback from the IAG at its last meeting, a literature review, and the input from an advisory group. Thank you to everyone who has provided input.

If accepted by the Ministry, then it will lead to a request for proposals for setting up these services later this year.

The Living Guideline.

You'll remember that it was agreed that it was important that the Guideline's recommendations and findings be kept as up to date as possible. The process agreed on to do this was that of a 'Living Guideline' process. This process involves prioritising the key areas of the guideline that should be kept up-to-date, and then putting in place a research programme. The Ministry of Education has agreed to sponsor this process, which is great news. The first task of the group (which is yet to be set up) will be to consider the findings of the independent review on ABA.

So you'll see I'm sure that lots of progress is being made towards implementing the Guideline of which we are all so proud. I'm really thrilled as I talk to people with ASD and their families from around the country to hear about the real difference which the Guideline is making to their lives. Please contact me or any member of the Implementation Advisory Group if you have any ideas or comments on Guideline Implementation.

Best wishes,

Matt Frost

Chair, New Zealand ASD Guideline Implementation Advisory Group.