

## Developing a user-informed mentoring programme for adults on the autism spectrum

Research on mentoring for adults on the autism spectrum is rare. UK schemes have not been subject to good quality evaluation. Student mentoring schemes have begun to gain interest from researchers. Gelbar et al (2014) conducted a systematic review of research on support schemes for people on the autism spectrum at university. The review only found 20 articles referring to 69 people in total, many of which were individual case studies. Such a scarcity of research indicates a real need for the current study. The research is being carried out in line with principles of 'emancipatory research', using mixed methods. This enables the generation of in-depth qualitative data (gathered through interviews and journals) facilitating an understanding of participants' views on the value of mentoring. Quantitative data is being gathered using the PWI-A (2006) and Salmon Line goal setting (Salmon 2003). 12 mentors and mentees are participating in the study. Mentors have received specialist training on mentoring people on the autism spectrum prior to mentoring for 6 months. The training has been developed and delivered. Mentors and mentees have been matched and the mentoring period is underway. Data collection will be complete by March 2016, enabling preliminary findings to be presented. User-involvement began at the 2007 forum 'Successful Futures for Adults with Autism', where people on the autism spectrum said they needed time-limited, goal-oriented mentoring. An advisory board of adults on the autism spectrum has been involved throughout, contributing to the development and delivery of training, and one of the researchers is on the spectrum. The qualitative element of the study will enable us to develop the programme based on participants' experiences. Working with further and higher education and workplaces could be an important direction for occupational therapists. Skills in client-centred working and goal-setting make OTs well-placed to deliver mentoring services.

### References

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### Keywords

Long term conditions, Research, Interdisciplinary practice, Voluntary/third sector services