case study

E-learning supports adults with autism to live fulfilling and rewarding lives

In 2010 the British Psychological Society (BPS) began work with Nelson Croom to develop e-learning modules to raise awareness of adult autism. In 2012 the project won the gold award for ‘Excellence in the production of learning content’ at the E-Learning Awards.

Background

Many people know something about autism, but don’t necessarily have a deep understanding of how autism affects people or how to adapt the way they work with adults with autism.

The Autism Act (2009) and the subsequent strategy, Fulfilling and Rewarding Lives, make it clear that the best way to improve services for adults with autism is to increase awareness and understanding across public services and the wider public.

The BPS wanted to reach a wide, diverse audience. The solution needed to deliver more than just knowledge. It needed to genuinely change people’s attitudes and behaviour when meeting and working with adults with autism.

They wanted to help psychologists, other front line staff and the general public to understand how to adapt the way they work and communicate to better meet the needs of the client.

The solution

The Society worked with Nelson Croom to develop three modules. Module 1: Building awareness of adult autism explains what autism is and how to recognise it. Module 2: Supporting adults with autism helps learners support adults with autism more effectively. Module 3: Working with adults with autism deals with adapting interventions and is aimed at psychologists and other health professionals.

We realised that some of the best advice on how to adapt behaviours to better interact and communicate with people with autism, would come from the adults with autism themselves, so we included them in the development process.

Not only has taking part in this course raised individual awareness of autism, but it also has impacted on the wider provision of autism training, being taken up in Health Authorities and Schools.

These courses have been a great success in terms of their impact on wider society. They clearly fulfil our Royal Charter objectives…and the Society is proud to have on offer such provision that is to benefit so many in this country.

Peter Banister, BPS President

Through groups that the experts work with on a daily basis, people with autism were involved by generating ideas, feedback, and sharing real life stories. These stories became the core of the course, providing authenticity.

The results

How did learners rate the course?

91% rated the course overall as good or excellent.

91% rated the content as good or excellent.

88% rated the quality of delivery as good or excellent.

81% said that the course was relevant to their needs

Hundreds of learners told us what they thought, which was overwhelmingly positive. Here are just a few of their comments.

5 star course! Comprehensive knowledge of Autism provided, with a user-friendly website and plenty of interactive tasks to keep you absorbed! I had a very good experience …

I thought the interactive parts to the course were well designed. I found it interesting to not only get a chance to think for myself about the questions, but also see what other people wrote.

The scenarios where I was asked to put myself ‘in the shoes’ of someone with autism or their carer were particularly helpful in gaining understanding.

I have a teenage son with autism who can be very challenging at times. In the past I would have confronted his ‘behaviour’ with little tolerance of it. However this has changed and I now find myself trying to help him resolve whatever the issue is so that it does not impact on either of us in a negative way. This has also been utilised by my other family members and has
helped them have a more settled and fulfilling relationship with my son.