

London Borough Richmond upon Thames

# ‘Putting myself into words:’ A film about living with autism in the community

London Borough Richmond upon Thames (LBRuT) Adult and Community Services includes social care services for adults and older people, housing, accessible transport, public health services, corporate services including community planning, safety, engagement, performance management and procurement.

## Background

Current estimates on the prevalence of autism in adults in England indicate that around 1% of people have autism. There are an estimated 1452 people in Richmond with autism.

The Richmond Joint Autism Strategy is a partnership between multi agencies, health, police, education, social care and community services. The learning and development subgroup of the Richmond Joint Autism Strategy is tasked with raising awareness and ensuring staff in social care and wider community services have an understanding of Autism.

It was this subgroup that recognised partner agencies in health, police and the wider community services can struggle to attend direct training.

Therefore, to support their understanding of autism, a number of films were commissioned to assist training.

The files would provide essential, accessible, targeted information to those in their workplace and address specific service and professional training needs.

## What we wanted to achieve

The aim of the film was to develop a learning resource that can be used by a range of autism awareness training across agencies, to show the diversity of the autism spectrum and how a diagnosis impacts on people’s lives, looking from the perspective of the person themselves and their families.

The films aim to explore the experiences of people on the autistic spectrum, their family members and carers, in a range of community settings. The goal of the film is to highlight how people’s needs and experiences differ and identify good practice examples of how to support a person with autism spectrum condition (ASC).

The outcomes of this project will be an increased level of knowledge and understanding of ASC across a range of community, health and social care services that have previously struggled to address this learning gap due to increasing work priorities and decreasing financial resources. It will address priorities set out in the Autism Strategy by increasing awareness and knowledge.

The development of this idea is a collaborative project within our multi-agency project group and this will ensure that the areas addressed in the training address the particular context of their organisations, for example, in health care and police settings.

## What we did

The Richmond Joint Autism Strategy learning and development subgroup was tasked with overseeing the project. The project group met regularly to oversee the project milestones.

This project was developed in close partnership with local 'experts by experience' parents of children with ASC, to find creative ways to involve people with a diagnosis of autism in developing training who aren't currently involved in classroom based training sessions. Due to the skills required in order to present to a training course, participation in training is often restricted to people with good communication skills and does not allow us to directly represent the wider community of people with complex needs and ASC who are often hard to reach and unfortunately ignored.

The project group also recognised that partner agencies in health, police, leisure centres and wider community settings can struggle to attend direct training and this resource can provide essential, accessible, targeted information to those in their workplace and address their specific service and professional training needs.

The project was divided into 3 milestones as follows:

### **Pre-production phase 1**

To work with partner agencies in the project group to identify key staff to be involved in the DVD, working with service users, families and carers

to identify suitable candidates with ASC to be involved in the film and to explore filming locations. To identify a suitable film company to progress the project who can demonstrate the right skills and knowledge to work with vulnerable adults.

### **Filming Stage Phase 2**

For all 3 films to be completed, edited and previewed by the core project team and agreed.

### **Launch and evaluation Phase 3**

For the films to be showcased to partner agencies and an evaluation report completed on the Skills for Care Template.

To achieve these milestones the following actions were taken:

**What we did - Phase 1:** In order to complete the first phase of the project, 'Your healthcare', who are experts in Autism were commissioned to support participants in the project and provide expert advice on the film content.

The next step was to procure a film company. Four film companies were approached to put in a tender for the project. Loaded Productions who had extensive experience producing films for social care were successfully appointed to the project.

**What we did - Phase 2:** This led to the development of the film itself. The film has a core spine that looks at key themes, e.g. what is ASC and how it may affect people and communication. The film then explores 2 different service areas showing best practice in supporting a person with ASC in a GP/health setting, and a police setting.

The film highlights the needs of people across the autistic spectrum in a range of settings and provides a valuable and accessible learning tool demonstrating good practice guidance.

“ ‘Putting myself into words’ is very inspirational and gives us good insight into the lives of people with Autism ”

Roz Angier  
YourHealthcare

**What we did - Phase 3:** The film preview was held at the Twickenham Training Centre and was attended by partner organisations including Mencap, the police, and health representatives, representatives from the department of education, local people with ASD, their parents and carers.

The initial evaluation of the project was done through feedback from participants in the film; the project group; local experts on ASD and representatives who attended the film preview. The feedback regarding the project so far has been overwhelmingly positive.

## What we achieved

The project has delivered 3 films about autism. The first film can be watched on its own and identifies some of key issues people should be aware of when dealing with a person who has autism spectrum condition (ASC); the second film deals with autism in a GP setting and the third film deals with autism in a police setting.

These films have been made available to Skills for Care to host on their webpages. You can click on the links below to view the videos.

[‘Putting myself into words – A film about living with autism in the community](#)

[‘Putting myself into words – A film about living with autism in the community + practical information for GPs’](#)

[‘Putting myself into words – A film about living with autism in the community + practical information for Police’](#)

Please note that the initial 16 minutes in the same content for all videos.

## What we learnt

The partnership working approach has given the project a strong sense of ownership by local services including police and local healthcare providers. By involving local people with ASC it has given the project real credibility and has enabled people with ASC who would not otherwise be able to attend classroom based training an opportunity to be involved in training.

The most successful parts of the project include:

- Partnership working with police and local health services in the planning, filming, content and evaluation of the project
- Involving people with service users and their families in the planning, filming, content and evaluation of the project

Most challenging parts of the project

- Delays in procurement of a film company because of the lengthy processes involved. This in turn had an impact on the overall timing of the project.

☺ I thought the film was good, the experience was easy and fun, and it was down to the professionalism of the two guys at the film company that made it so easy ☺☺

Chris Holland  
Participant in film

## Applying for funding

If you're interested in applying for funding for a project you are involved in, you could apply for the **Workforce Development Innovation Fund**. To find out more click [here](#).

Please note applications open each spring. Sign up to our enews to be kept informed [here](#).

Adult social care employers can also claim back the costs of learning and development of their staff through the Workforce Development Fund. To find out more click [here](#).

## For more information please contact

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## Skills for Care Recommends

Skills for Care has helped to develop a range of resources that directly help employers and those caring for people with autism. In addition, we produce and promote a range of videos covering various areas of adult social care.

### Autism Skills and Knowledge List

This enables individual workers, or services and teams, to work out whether they have the knowledge and skills needed to provide a good service to people who have autism.

[www.skillsforcare.org.uk/Autism](http://www.skillsforcare.org.uk/Autism)

### Autism qualifications

Two new autism qualifications were launched in September 2014. These are a Level 3 Award and a Level 3 Certificate in Supporting Individuals on the Autistic Spectrum.

[www.skillsforcare.org.uk/Autism](http://www.skillsforcare.org.uk/Autism)

### Skills for Care films

We have produced over 100 films to help employers around a range of subjects from end of life care, recruitment and retention, apprenticeships, people who employ their own care and support etc.

[www.vimeo.com/skillsforcare/videos](http://www.vimeo.com/skillsforcare/videos)

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