

Autism Diagnostic Interview (ADI) training.

As a clinician, I was struggling to confidently contribute to the specific assessment of teenagers with complex mental health problems, where there had been a question of whether they would meet the criteria of Autism Spectrum Disorder.

Answering this assessment question is inherently tricky, given the consideration of co-morbidity and that children have often developed coping strategies with age, so may be able to mask their vulnerabilities or there may have been other events that had happened in their lives that could possibly account for some of the difficulties (e.g. trauma).

I therefore felt I needed some more specialist training, which allowed me to sensitively tease apart subtle distinctions between difficulties and thus improve my formulation skills. The ADI is an objective measure, which helps with validity and reliability of diagnosis, but also a flexible qualitative clinical tool that can really capture and honour complexity and person-centeredness.

The training was particularly informative about how to identify autistic spectrum traits and specifically how to differentiate these behaviours from that of another cause. I now feel more self-assured about how to focus my assessments to capture the information I need. The measure compliments other assessments I utilise and I feel I have more ideas about how to strengthen my formulations so they are more accurate and relevant to the young person. I feel this is of benefit not only to my clinical skills but for my patients and team also.

I am able to be more helpful to the young person supporting them in really making sense of themselves and I have found this is particularly validating and accepting for them. I am also able to help their network around them develop an understanding, which often generates new empathy and willingness to be more flexible to meet their needs.

I plan to share some of my new learning with my multi-disciplinary team in a training day soon. I hope they will also benefit from the new research and resources too.

Thank you to the Foundation for making this possible. I really appreciate the opportunity to been offered a chance to attend such an interesting and creative thinking space to learn something that I will value and use for years to come.

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