

eLearning and web resources for healthcare best practice

Public Services Delivery
Scotland

Formerly NHS Education for Scotland (NES)

Setting the Scene

NHS Education for Scotland (NES) - which has since merged with NHS National Services Scotland to form Public Service Delivery Scotland - developed and delivered education and training to support NHS services. NES worked with the Scottish Government to produce a Training Framework to assist the implementation of The Scottish Strategy for Autism (2011). This strategy was put in place to ensure that Scotland is delivering quality services for people with autism and their families.

Early in 2014 NES commissioned eCom Scotland to develop

an eLearning course based on their existing web-based learning resource for Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD) and, subsequently, to redesign the website.

The Challenge

The initial challenge was to take content from the extensive ASD website and create an eLearning course. The course had to incorporate easy tracking and reporting of learner usage, as well as an assessment and certificate of successful completion.

The eLearning was aimed at any professional working in the healthcare system at the

primary care level: GPs and practice nurses; allied health professionals including dietitians, occupational therapists, physiotherapists, podiatrists, and speech and language therapists; dentists and dental nurses; opticians, public health nurses; and district nurses.

The course was to focus on practical strategies to help health professionals adapt their practice - and develop best practice - to accommodate the needs of patients with ASD, and to enable the patient to relax in a clinical setting.

NES Autism Spectrum Disorders
Practical Strategies for the Primary Care Practitioner

Impact on daily life

ASD is a spectrum disorder and individuals will be affected differently depending on their level of cognitive ability and their age and stage of development.

Select the buttons which will give information on the core areas of difficulty across the spectrum:

Communication Understanding Flexibility Sensory processing

Communication

In ASD both verbal and non-verbal communication skills may be affected. It can be difficult for a person with ASD to use language to communicate with others and to understand how other people use language. Some individuals with ASD will be non-verbal, others have more subtle difficulties with communication. This can present as:

- no apparent interest or attempt in communicating
- unusual pattern of language use: stereotyped, formal or repetitive
- lack of understanding as to the reason for communication
- difficulty with understanding what intonation conveys
- difficulty engaging in conversations and processing verbal information
- language is interpreted literally and the individual finds it difficult to go beyond the actual words to understand what the speaker may have meant
- facial expressions and communicative gestures can be confusing for the individual to interpret
- difficulty with appreciating the reciprocal (give and take) nature of communication e.g. talking excessively about own interests.

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The Solution

eCom's instructional designers worked with NES's subject matter experts to develop learning objectives and identify appropriate content from the wealth of resources available.

At the storyboard stage, a rigorous instructional design process ensured that the subject matter was well-structured and presented clearly, concisely and interactively, and that the learning objectives were met.

Once the storyboard (the blueprint for course content and design) was signed off, the multimedia designers brought their creative and technical skills to building the course. Challenges included ensuring that the technical solution was compatible with the diverse IT infrastructure in place across the NHS. A high standard of accessibility was a major requirement of the project along with usability of the course.

Neither was to be compromised by technical variables such as connectivity, bandwidth or software.

The course, Autism Spectrum Disorders: Practical Strategies for the Primary Care Practitioner, presents a complex and comprehensive topic clearly and concisely. It includes a range of interactivities to engage the user, and features a series of case studies to highlight and illustrate the learning points. There are knowledge checks to re-inforce key messages, and a glossary and links to further resources.

The course is available throughout the NHS via their Learning Management System.

During the development of the eLearning it was decided to update parts of the ASD website to reflect current terminology and design. Following on from the eLearning project, eCom updated and restructured the website content, and rebranded

the site to align with the eLearning course design. The up-to-date website provides a comprehensive reference resource to complement the eLearning.

The Benefits

There is easy access to the eLearning in the workplace and learners can complete at times convenient to them.

Health professionals who have completed the course now have the knowledge to implement practical strategies for adapting their routine practice for people with ASD, and their family and carers. Signs of ASD can be identified and recognised and patients with ASD are provided with the support they need.

Use of the course can be tracked and reported on, providing statistics to inform and support quality improvement in service provision and health outcomes.



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