

Promoting positive attitudes towards disability

Friday 26th April 2013

Attended by: Megan MacMillan (PhD student), Antonia East (parent), Kim Antonio (parent), Tricia Stone (parent), Alena Benson (parent), Anna (parent), Camilla McHugh (PenCRU).

This was an exciting discussion to develop Megan's programme of work around promoting positive attitudes towards disability. We covered a broad range of topics including:

1. Update of the systematic review

We discussed the finding that contact can improve children's attitudes towards disabled people. A draft of a plain English summary was sent around to the group and some comments were made about editing the technical jargon. Overall, the feeling was the summary was clear and easy to understand. Some members of the group would like to view the full version of the review; however, the review has been sent for publication and it is the journals decision as to whether it can be forwarded onwards.

Action: Megan will make edits to the summary and will explore whether the full version of the review can be sent around.

2. Update of the survey

A cross sectional survey was conducted across Devon measuring children's attitudes towards disability. 20 schools have taken part and over 1500 children. The main findings were discussed including the change in attitudes at the start of secondary school and how contact with disabled people can improve children's attitudes. The survey is currently being written up for publication and a plain English summary will be produced.

Action: Megan to finish writing up the survey and then produce a plain English summary

3. Future project development

We discussed the differences between a feasibility study and a proof of concept study. A feasibility study tests whether an intervention would be effective in schools, for example making sure children were engaged in the intervention and teachers were happy to run the intervention. A proof of concept study focused on whether the intervention worked. Everyone agreed that a feasibility study would be the best starting point.

We then discussed what this intervention might involve. Some suggestions are below:

- Fitting into a lesson plan at schools e.g., Drama, P.E., R.E., History or PSHE
- Another suggestion was to have the intervention at a club such as 'rainbows' or 'brownies' – where children would be offered a badge or reward for helping a disabled child.
- It was suggested it might be worth exploring organisations and charities such as SCOPE to see what they are already doing to promote positive attitudes.
- An active activity as the content of the intervention might be better than books or video clips
- Activities could include wheelchair sports (e.g., basketball or dancing) or other activities that involve increasing awareness of the difficulties different disabilities might cause.
- The suggestion as to use materials for the intervention that are already out there e.g., video clips or books.

We then discussed whether the intervention should be aimed at improving attitudes towards all disabilities or a particular type of disability e.g., physical. It was agreed it would be best to try and improve attitudes towards all disabilities if feasible. We discussed what age would be best to target the intervention to; however, it is still undecided and may be something we explore within the next study i.e., by conducting the study at secondary and primary schools and seeing where it works best.

Action: Megan will explore the different ideas discussed to see what can be done; this will involve discussion with teachers. Additionally, Megan will get in contact with the various charities to see what they are doing to promote positive attitudes.