



Team Therapy Outcome Report 2024

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Introduction



The Team Therapy Project, which was Funded by The JBDB Fund at Community Foundation Ireland, aimed to provide comprehensive and continuous therapeutic support for autistic children and teenagers in the Louth and Meath areas. This project set out to address the critical need for coordinated therapeutic services that is currently very difficult to receive for autistic children.

The programme integrated various therapeutic disciplines—Occupational Therapy, Speech and Language Therapy, Play Therapy, Art Therapy, and Music Therapy—into a cohesive support framework within the Drogheda ABACAS Special School, Saturday club, and summer programmes. Key components included collaboration among therapists, families, teachers, special needs assistants, and youth club staff to create therapeutic plans linked to the children's education and development plans, scalability to adjust participant numbers and therapy combinations, and participation of teachers and staff to ensure effective integration of activities.

The goals of this project were improved therapeutic support for attending children, enhanced engagement and development through consistent activities and supports as well as positive feedback from families and staff.

Who we are...

Drogheda Abacas Special School

Autism Support Louth & Meath

Our mission is to support autistic individuals and families affected by autism.

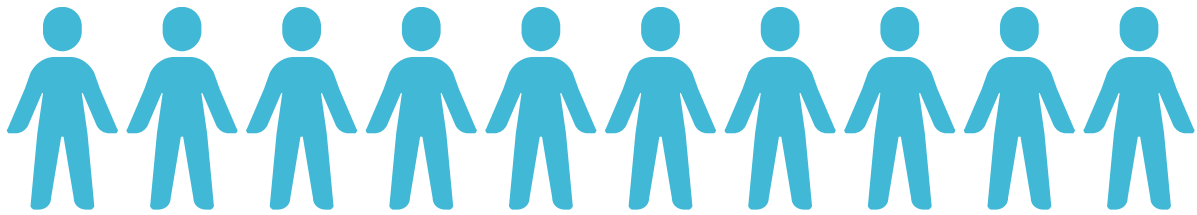
We do this by facilitating and promoting education for Autistic people, providing support, information and advocacy for families and individuals, promoting a greater awareness of autism, liaising with government bodies in the pursuit of appropriate education and all support services for Autistic children and adults and providing and facilitating social activities and activity based respite for children and families affected by autism.

Drogheda ABACAS Special School for Children with Autism and Complex Needs was founded by a group of Parents from Autism Support Louth&Meath in 2003. Drogheda ABACAS School delivers a specialist autism specific individualised education to over 30 autistic children with complex needs aged between 3 and 18 following the National Curriculum using a variety of evidence based methods including Positive Behaviour Support (PBS), PECS, TEACCH and Floortime amongst many others depending on the needs of each student.



Team Therapy Key Findings

over 220 individuals took part in Team Therapy



children + staff + parents + professionals

Team Therapy consisted of 9 different therapies



physiotherapy



music therapy



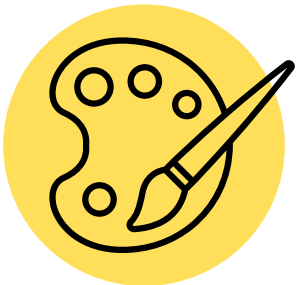
reflexology



occupational
therapy



parent & staff
training



art therapy



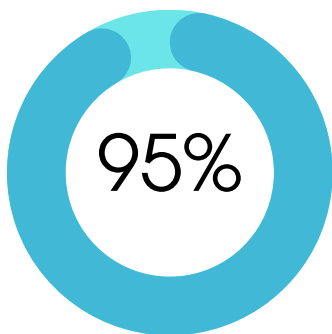
speech and
language therapy



yoga

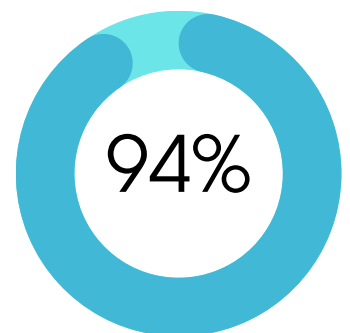
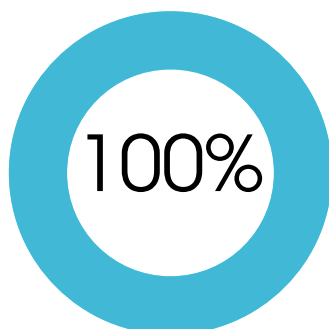


sensory food
play



95% of staff believe this training will enhance their practice going forward

100% of staff and parents felt that the Team Therapy Project was useful for the children



94% of parents and staff thought that it was beneficial for parents and staff to avail of the same training

Art Therapy



Sensory Food Play





Music Therapy



Sensory Play Therapy



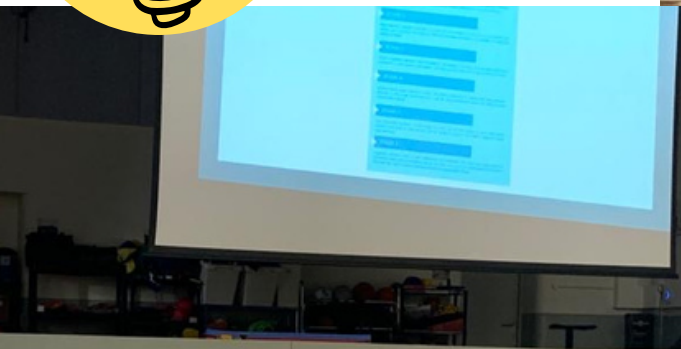
Parent Training



Reflexology



Staff Training



“

“I found the team therapy project to be hugely beneficial for all students as it catered for individual needs and likes”

“I thought the therapists were excellent, very helpful and I learnt a lot”

“I think it's a great idea, everything is so limited to non existing at the moment. To have extra supports through the school is amazing and I am thankful for it”

“If it could be continued would be brilliant”

“I learnt a lot from the speech and language therapist. The content was very relatable and practical”

“I found the team approach of therapists working with the staff in the school setting helpful to my daughter ”

”

Responses from parents and staff

OUTCOMES



Delivery of Diverse and Quality Therapies

As a result of this project all children attending the ABACAS school and ASLM youth clubs received high quality therapy, varying in styles and goals. All the therapies benefitted the children in different ways, for example, in OT children were able to regulate sensory needs through physical activity and reflexology. Through SLT children were given improved supports and techniques to promote communication. In food and sensory play therapy children were exposed to new foods they may not otherwise try as well as being able to enjoy the sensory experience of touching, smelling and tasting new foods. Finally, in yoga classes children were given the opportunity to be in a quiet space and stretch or meditate which benefited their relaxation and ability to engage throughout the rest of the day.

There were also new therapies introduced to staff and children such as physiotherapy, art therapy and music therapy. In physiotherapy children received comprehensive support to improve the regulation of their sensory needs through moving their bodies. In music therapy, attendees were able to express themselves through playing different instruments and performed a concert for staff and parents at the end of the programme, an invaluable experience for those individuals. In art therapy children learned to express and think about feelings through a variety of artistic mediums.



"I think exposing the children to new sounds, different environments in our group work drumming and percussion sessions allows them to learn how to engage with the creative world. Continually moving forward but a pace set by themselves."-Music Therapist



"It expanded the children's experiences in the arts subjects and wellbeing as it was hosted by professionals in each area."-Art Therapist



“Yes very useful we get to know what works best with the children their likes and dislikes and also how to help the children better themselves”-Member of Staff



“The array of therapies my child has received would not be possible to achieve time wise or financially, the parent courses were also amazing”-Parent



Shared Understanding between Staff and Parents

Another important goal of this project was to provide professional training to both staff and parents. The reason for giving this training to staff and parents together was to ensure that interventions and supports were as consistent as possible at home and at school. This means that children who were a part of this programme now have a higher quality of support and care in the two major locations of their lives.

For staff and parents, this training provided them with shared goals for their children and it will be easier to create and deliver individualised plans now that all parties have a better understanding of the techniques and language surrounding these therapies.





Learning to Work and Play in Groups

As a result of this programme the children were given the opportunity to take part in organised group activities. This was of huge benefit to the children because they were able to take part in new activities as well as developing social skills and relationships amongst other children participating, all at their own pace and in an accepting environment.

In music therapy the children learned to play music together and learned patience and teamwork. In art therapy children began to regularly compare drawings and working on pieces of art together. In cooking and sensory play there was valuable time put into learning to take turns mixing and chopping and many children enjoyed seeing each other's reactions to new foods.

These examples are only a few that show that alongside the implemented therapy, this programme has allowed the children to take part in organised group activities and develop new skills and dynamics amongst each other.

“Children benefited from the different therapies available to them. Variety allowed something for everyone to enjoy”-Member of Staff

“They got to learn through play and experience, touch, taste and smell. It was nice to have group sessions outside of the classroom.”- Member of Staff



Conclusion

In conclusion, we believe that the Team Therapy project was a resounding success. We set out to create a programme with the help of a team of professionals that would deliver a variety of therapies to autistic children and teenagers as well as deliver training to staff and parents within the ABACAS school and Autism Support Louth and Meath youth clubs and summer programmes.

The main goals of this project were to provide improved therapeutic support for the attending children, create enhanced engagement and development through consistent group activities and supports and positive feedback from parents and staff.



Based on the quotes from our satisfaction survey, seen throughout this report, it is clear that these goals were achieved to a high level.

The attending children received consistent and varied forms of therapy while having the opportunity to take part in recreational group activities. As well as this parents and staff received high quality training from professionals so that there is a consistent level of understanding and awareness of the children's needs both at school and at home.





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Louth&Meath

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