

International review of the literature of evidence of best practice provision in the education of persons with Autistic Spectrum Disorders

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Abstract

Commissioned by the National Council for Special Education (NCSE) in Ireland to inform educational policy and provision, this literature review had two main evidence strands: 'empirical' and 'expert'. The *empirical strand* involved systematic searching of electronic databases featuring peer reviewed empirical studies; from 499 articles identified, 100 articles were retained for review. The *expert strand* included key selected reports or policy guidelines regarding best practice for children and adults on the autism spectrum, from the UK and Ireland only.

Findings highlighted the importance of maintaining a range of educational provision to cater appropriately for a wide diversity of need; one type of approach or intervention is unlikely to be effective for all. Behaviourally based intervention approaches from North America, especially for children under five years, dominated the empirical evidence. The corollary of this was significant gaps in the evidence base, especially with regard to educational provision more widely (as distinct from a specific type of *intervention* or *learning approach*); provision for, and experiences of, older children and adults; qualitative exploration of educational contexts and young people's views; Irish-specific evidence; objective, independent evaluation of interventions and effectiveness of multiagency collaboration. There is a need for greater collaboration between researchers and practitioners to establish what 'works best' for children and young people on the autism spectrum in real-world classrooms and education generally.

Dr. Sarah Parsons (BSc. (Hons) Psychology; PhD) is a Senior Research Fellow in the School of Education, University of Birmingham. She has significant research experience in disability related projects and has particular interests in the use of innovative technologies for children with autism and the views and experiences of disabled children and their families.

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