PATHS TO TEACH CHILDREN WITH AUTISM ABOUT EMOTIONS AND EMOTIONAL REGULATION: CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES IN IMPLEMENTATION

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Why do what we did?

- engaging children through their special interests (e.g. southeastern trains)
- PATHS curriculum providing a structure to teach and make explicit knowledge and skill that may often be left implicit
- strong visual component
- use of puppets engaging and at what fits with the wider ‘developmental pitch’ for the children (e.g. Tree Foo Tom)
- exposes ‘Hidden Curriculum’
Background and context

- PATHS and SCERTS and quality standards approach to implementation

- Premium placed on review and evaluation of effectiveness

- Curiosity about the degree of adaptation needed and when does an approach lose it’s ‘active ingredients’

- Our questions: which factors affect the implementation of PATHS for children with ASC in our community context; and how?

- We knew there were challenges with the mainstream teacher’s implementation of PATHS - would that be similar (and with the same factors influencing the work) in the resource base?
SCERTS

SCERTS: social communication, emotional regulation, transactional support

- Development of spontaneous functional emotional regulatory capacities which supports independence are of the highest priority

- Developmentally appropriate and functional

- A child’s emotional regulation and its effect on communication, social interaction and learning are always considered and arousal states monitored

Prizant et al., 2006, p. 2-3
What we did

Intervention aims
• Children recognise the key features of basic emotions both in themselves and others
• Children can label their own emotions and with support find a regulatory strategy

Key changes
• Children in the base needed a motivation and a structure to the sessions
• Children in the base needed to have explicit strategies shown to them
What we did

Visual Structure

1. Breathing or stretching
2. Talk about a feeling
3. Do a feelings activity
4. Finished get ready for maths
What we did

Makaton Signing

Teacher: and all of those feelings are ok

Twiggle: But surely not everyone has feeling? What do you think children, does everyone have feelings?

Teacher: Yes twiggle everyone has feelings shall we look at some pictures? [Use pictures from book]
Teacher: Now who is this? How do they feel?
Practical strategies
Activities
Challenges – focus on the details
What next?

• we know that expecting perfect or near-perfect implementation is unrealistic; and that interventions can still be effective even when they have been adapted
• remain curious about the relative weight of the various factors we have identified affected implementation in our case - more rigorous investigation? similar independent of the intervention or organisational factors?