

Parent Peer Support Pilot Project

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Aim and Objectives: This pilot study aims to examine the impact of parent peer support, for parents of children with complex needs and disabilities. The key objectives are to:

- Evaluate the impact (if any) of being a recipient of peer support for parents of children with complex needs and disabilities.
- Explore the motivation to participate and the impact of participation (if any) for support parents.
- Ascertain the views and experiences of staff members involved in the Parent Peer Support Pilot Project, concerning its impact (if any).

Design/Methods: This study adopted a mixed methods design employing both quantitative methods in the form of questionnaires (pre- and post-pilot), focus groups and one-to-one interviews. In partnership with Enable Ireland a national disability support provider, we recruited parents of children with complex needs and disabilities (20) to participate our pilot peer support project. Enable Ireland staff members (13) were recruited to participate and deliver supervision sessions, to parents providing peer support.

Public Patient Involvement: Parent participants were recruited via our partner organisation Enable Ireland who acted as gatekeepers and invited parents assigned to one of their Children's Disability Network Teams (CDNTs), to take part voluntarily. Parents in both groups (recipient parents and support parents) bring a wealth of lived experience and expertise as caregivers for children with a broad range of complex needs and disabilities, including: autism, intellectual disability and Down Syndrome. Parent's voices, insights and unique perspectives were fundamental in the creation, delivery and subsequent evaluation of this pilot project.

Results: It is hoped that results will communicate the impact of peer support on parents of children with complex needs and disabilities and consequently, establish the significance of the peer support approach in meeting the unique support needs of this group.

Dissemination: The core output of this study will be a project report presenting key actions, outcomes and recommendations.

Knowledge Translation: Key findings and recommendations will be disseminated via the project report (both hard copy and online), via seminar sessions for both parents and professionals, and via conference and journal article publications. Training materials, recruitment information and stages of project development and delivery will be shared with staff in our partner organisation, to inform future iterations of parent peer support initiatives.