

'True Colours' Autism Support Service:

Pilot Project on Strengthening Support for Persons with High-functioning Autism (HFA) and their Parents/Carers



Wing Yan Fan and Chi Yan Wong, Ph.D.

Email: tcass@sahk1963.org.hk

ASD Consultation Hotline: 2336 8855

Background

SAHK developed the first pioneer project for people with high-functioning autism (HFA; 「吾懂人情計劃」高能力自閉症人士支援服務) in 2009. In April 2016, SAHK launched another Pilot Project on Strengthening Support for Persons with Autism and their Parents/Carers as commissioned by the Social Welfare Department (SWD). The Pilot Project covers a period of 30 months serving 220 adults with HFA on a territory-wide basis. As the Pilot Project will be completed in October 2018, and further to its regularization as announced in the Chief Executive's 2017 Policy Address, it is time to review the user profile and look for areas for service improvement.

Objectives

- To review the user profile of the Pilot Project
- To explore the presenting concerns and service needs of the service users
- To give suggestions to the government on service improvement upon regularization of the Pilot Project

Methods

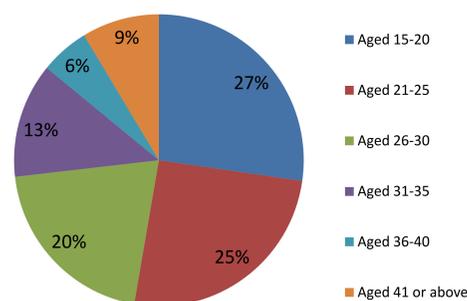
All 220 cases of adults with HFA were admitted to the Pilot Project at the time of the poster preparation. Descriptive statistics was used to explore the user profile.

Results

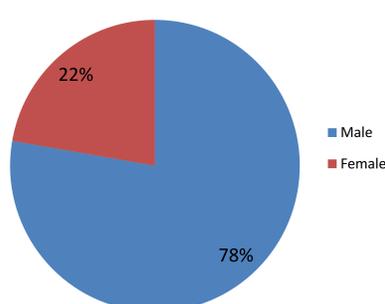
Graphs 1 to 5 show the **demographic characteristics** of the users. Specifically, 72% of the 220 users aged between 15 to 30 at the time of case entry. The other 28% are 31 years old or above. 78% of the sample are male while 22% are female. 39% of the sample are either currently in or have completed secondary school education. The other 61% have attained undergraduate or postgraduate qualifications. Among those who are ready to work (N=136), 68% are employed and the occupations are diverse. Table 1 shows the sample's major occupation categories. Regarding marital status, 94% of the sample are single, whereas 6% are married.

Graph 6 shows the **presenting concerns** of the users. The top three major concerns are mental health, social competence and employment support. 5% of the sample have concerns on couple relationship. In the Pilot Project, each of the case is taken care of by a Case Manager who is a social worker. In addition to social work service, 30% of the users need **specialist intervention** including clinical psychological service, speech therapy and occupational therapy.

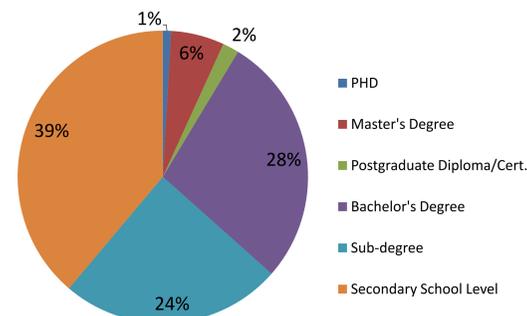
Graph 1: Age



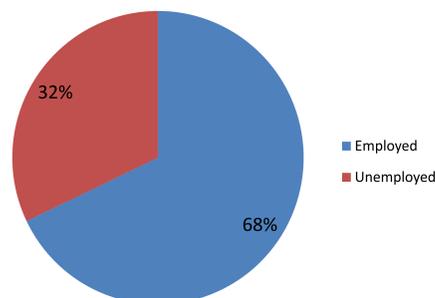
Graph 2: Gender



Graph 3: Education level



Graph 4: Employment status



Graph 5: Marital status

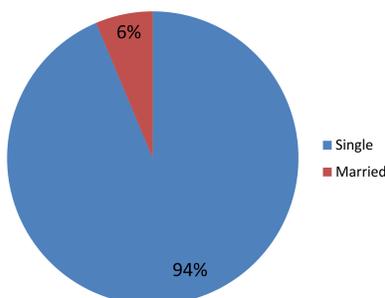
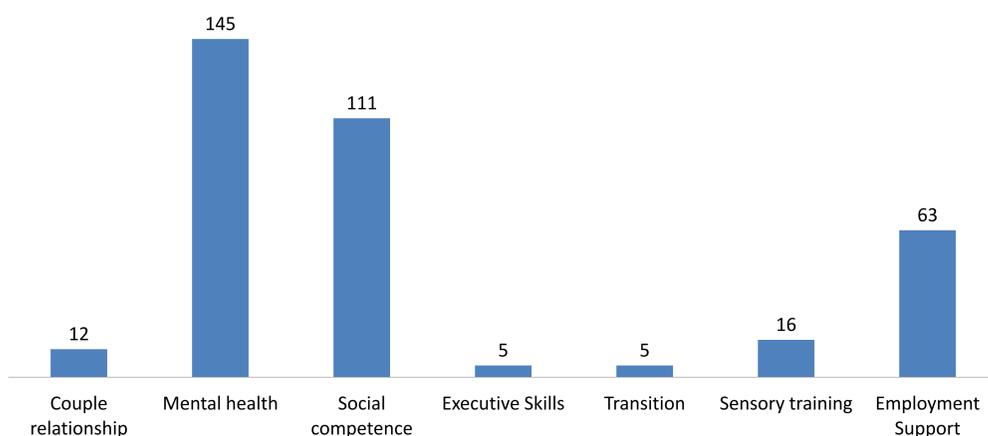


Table 1: Occupations

Clerical Work	20%
IT	10%
Teaching	9%
R&D	8%
Assistant	8%
Catering	8%
Customer service	6%
Engineering	5%
Research assistant	5%
Business Management	4%
Social Worker	4%
Accounting	4%
Security	3%
Others	6%

Graph 6: Presenting Concerns



Discussion

The user profile shows that most service users are young single adult males. However, we do see an increasing number of females, older adults, and couples coming to the Project for service. Most of the users have attained post-secondary qualifications. Some even have a master's degree or a Ph.D. Office work, information technology, and engineering are the three most common jobs taken up by the users. Contrary to popular belief, quite a number of users work well in jobs that require lots of social interaction such as customer service, teaching and social work. It seems that people with HFA can have good performance in diverse occupations when they find the right fit. The profile also shows that many users requested specialist intervention on concerns related to mental health, social competence and employment.

In conclusion, the present findings show that HFA is a diverse population. While the Pilot Project focuses on the young adults with HFA, older adults present a very different profile. Their concerns and needs are also different. The present findings provide important information to the SWD to refine the service to cater for the diverse needs of the HFA population.