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 The Hong Kong Jockey Club Charities Trust  
 同心同步同進 RIDING HIGH TOGETHER

主辦院校 Host Institution:



Faculty of  
**Social Sciences**  
 The University of Hong Kong  
 香港大學社會科學學院

合作夥伴 Partners:



香港聖公會福利協會有限公司  
 HONG KONG SHENG KUNG HUI WELFARE COUNCIL LIMITED



東華三院  
 Tung Wah Group of Hospitals



教育局  
 Education Bureau

# PROJECT EXTENSION



To accelerate social inclusion amid the increasing number of students with autism spectrum disorder (ASD), The Hong Kong Jockey Club Charities Trust has further donated \$243 million to support JC A-Connect.



- Extend service scope for students with ASD in **500** mainstream primary and secondary schools
- Provide resource package training to school personnel covering a range of skills essential for students with ASD

## SCHOOL SUPPORT

## FAMILY SUPPORT

- Provide community-based parent education and support services through **18** district centres
- Introduce The World Health Organization Caregiver Skills Training Programme for Families of Children with Developmental Disorders or Delays



- Raise awareness and understanding of people with ASD
- Promote social inclusion

## PUBLIC EDUCATION



# FAMILY SUPPORT

To enhance the knowledge, acceptance and skills of families with members with ASD, structured parent sharing/training sessions were delivered to stakeholders through 18 centres in different districts. The 'A-POWER' Family Support Framework was developed to support the parents of children newly diagnosed with ASD.



> 30,000 parents

> 9,000 sharing / training sessions



## 'A-POWER' Family Support Framework



61 events

18,600 beneficiaries



6 publications



33 media coverage

> 3,000,000 audiences

# PUBLIC EDUCATION

To promote the positive dimension and better understanding of ASD in the society, public education events such as exhibitions and family fun day were held for the general public, while professional events like academic conferences and seminars were organised to empower professionals, peers and caregivers. In addition, the ASD cause was promoted through media coverage and publications.



IMPACTS and ACHIEVEMENTS in 2015-18

## SCHOOL SUPPORT

To enhance support for students with ASD in Hong Kong, school-based coaching programmes were conducted for more than 50% of students with ASD in the mainstream primary and secondary schools on skills that are essential for social and school adjustment, with marked improvement of students and endorsements from teachers and parents. The Resource Package for Conducting Group Training for Students with ASD was developed to sustain and promote good practices.



425 schools

> 5,000 students



> 15,000 professionals



> 2,600 training programmes



RESOURCE PACKAGE for Conducting Group Training for Students with ASD

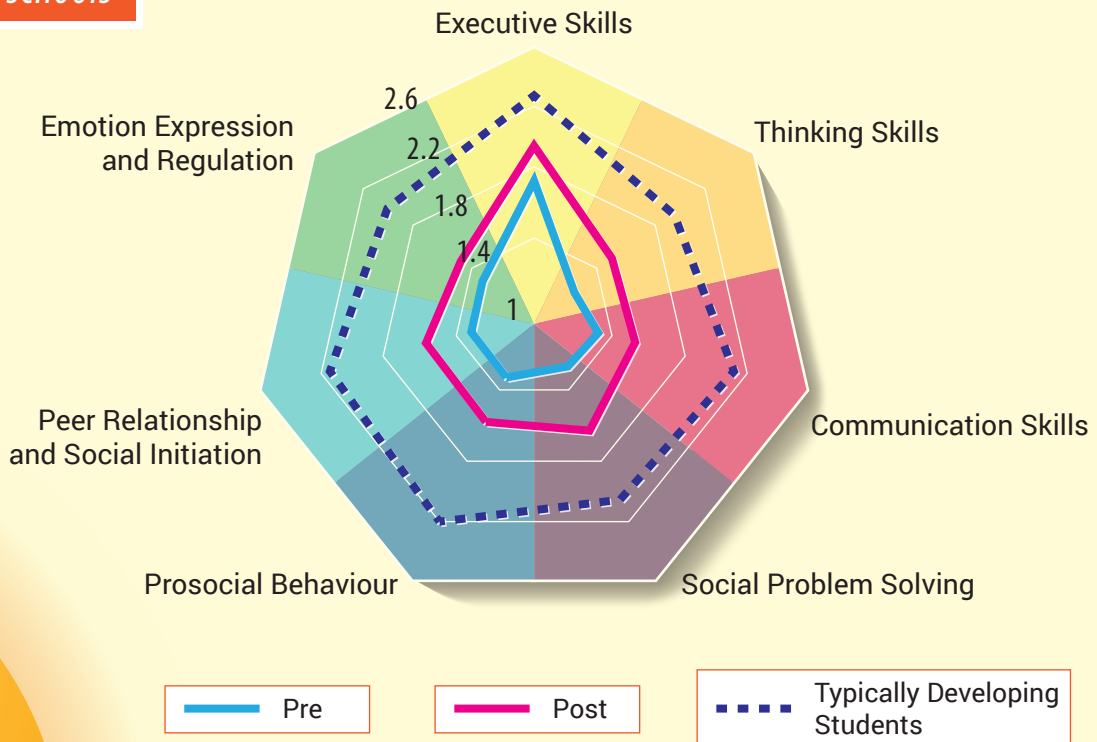


PRINCIPALS' feedback



The information is from a survey conducted in November 2017. The survey successfully collected feedback from 299 principals of participating schools.

## STUDENTS' adaptability in mainstream schools



### PARENTS' feedback

After attending the programme, my child now takes the initiative to meet new friends and get along with classmates.

My child has improved in emotional management, has become more stable even after losing a game, and has learnt to be polite to others.

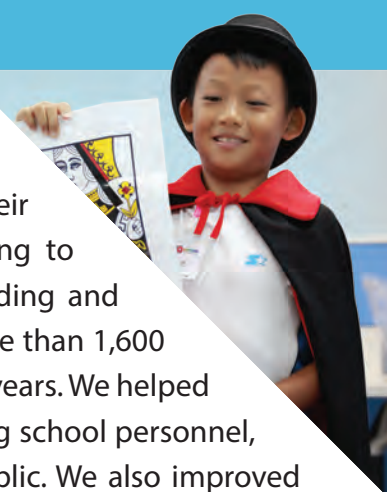
My child's self-confidence was enhanced, and self-care and communication skills with others improved.

### TEACHERS' feedback

The plan is comprehensive... It helps students to adapt to school life and get along with their families... Management of emotions has improved.

Students can use vocabulary about emotions to express their immediate feelings.

Parents, along with their children with ASD in primary five and six are given relevant information so that they are well-prepared for the promotion to secondary schools.



'Inclusion' is the social realisation that everyone can fully live their life in society. To truly participate in school and in their community, students with ASD have two needs: a need for coaching to improve their own social skills, and a need for community's understanding and support. Through JC A-Connect, Caritas Rehabilitation Service served more than 1,600 students with ASD and contacted more than 800 families in the past three years. We helped to promote general knowledge on the needs of students with ASD among school personnel, educational and rehabilitation practitioners, parents and the general public. We also improved students' social and communication skills through individual counselling, group coaching, parent/teacher training, peer activities, etc. Furthermore, we promoted positive thinking to parents, improved their effectiveness of parenting and established support networks through our family support service. Finally, we strived to promote a caring and inclusive society through our community education programme.



It is widely known that students with ASD experience different levels of difficulty in social communication and learning. They are often rejected or excluded in class discussions and group studies because they have difficulties in organising arguments, interacting/discussing with classmates and speaking politely. To this end, the professional team of Heep Hong Society has designed a coaching group for students with the following learning objectives:



1. Speak with proper attitudes, eye/ facial expressions and body movements
  - Distinguish proper and improper attitudes, eye/ facial expressions and body movements during discussion
  - Use proper attitudes, eye/ facial expressions and body movements during discussion
2. Plan and organise arguments and justifications with graphic organisers
  - Recognise different types of visual-thinking tools, discussion questions and answering requirements
  - Express one's opinions in an organised manner
3. Discuss with interaction/communication
  - Understand the flow of group discussion
  - Learn to use related words and sentence formats to discuss



We provided the above coaching groups for primary and secondary school students with ASD. Gladly, parents believe that students have made significant improvements in speaking skills after participating in the coaching group. The children also became active in learning and were able to get along with their classmates. Together with HKU, we are consolidating the coaching materials and strategies into a resource package for dissemination and the use of the sector.



Through JC A-Connect, NLPRA served 55 mainstream primary and secondary schools by conducting 246 coaching programmes for students with ASD within the last three years with 1,168 attendances.

Our coaching programmes focused on improving students' social cognition, emotional regulation and behaviour management by adopting the locally-developed-and-validated Cognitive Behavioral Therapy-Context-Based Social Competence Training for ASD (CBT-CSCA). With diverse school cultures and developmental needs of students in mind, a wide range of elective topics was provided. In the final year of the programme, students were encouraged to complete a 'graduation assignment' to showcase their strengths and abilities.

NLPRA provided training and consultancy services to 1,573 school personnel to enhance their understanding and inclusion of students with ASD. Part of this training was to allow the students with ASD to practice social skills through joint activities or workshops. Family support services were provided to parents to strengthen their abilities to support their children at home with 1,017 attendances. Parents also developed a mutual support network to assist each other. Peers activities or workshops for inclusion were also held with 2,399 attendances.



In the past three years, SAHK provided on-site group training for more than 1,100 students with ASD in about 90 secondary and primary schools, with the goal of enhancing their overall learning and social skills. Our coaches arranged different interactive activities and role play for students, hoping that they can practice what they have learnt in school and daily living. SAHK also provided consultation, as well as training for parents and teaching staff.



On a community level, our family support service provided a wide range of services to children, students and adolescents who are suspected, have shown inclination or have been diagnosed to be affected by ASD, as well as their families. Participants reflected that all these activities enhanced their family relationships as well as the confidence and competence in accompanying their children.



Three years have passed quickly. In the eyes of the instructors, the students have gradually improved, and their teachers, families and classmates also feel gratified.

In order to provide effective support for the students, The Salvation Army implemented its services through evidence-based practices, the '4MAT Social Training-Learning Cycle' and the 'SKY Interest-based Social Training Model'. 'Teen's Club' was one of our key pilot projects, through which students' interest in learning enhanced, and they were encouraged to apply the learnt skills in daily life and to develop their strengths.

Through the programme, peers showed appreciation and respect towards the students; teachers and parents could witness their potential and enhance acceptance during the preparation and implementation of the programme. In addition to supporting students, we actively engaged stakeholders to promote inclusion in schools.

Parent support is another focus, since parents would extend children's learning beyond schools, apply knowledge and skills to family and community settings and walk with them. Facing the challenges in parenting, we provided extra resources for psychological support and counselling services in order to alleviate parental pressure.



In the past three years, the professional team of the Tung Wah Group of Hospitals regularly visited schools, providing group coaching for more than 400 students with ASD in mainstream primary and secondary schools.

Positive changes of the students were easily recognised after the programme. These changes included opening communication without fear, increases in empathy, raising hands in class before speaking and coping with agitation by expressing their emotions. Our group coaching provided a platform for students to interact with each other and enabled them to nurture friendships. Many students have made friends during the two years of group coaching. They have lunch at school together and communicate with each other through instant messaging software.

Of course, schools and parents' cooperation was critical. Teachers and parents guided students to apply social skills outside the group, posted 'visual cues' in the classroom and at home, and arranged classmates to remind students in the class. Their coordination made it easier for students to engage in school life.

JC A-Connect not only benefitted students with ASD in mainstream primary and secondary schools but also educated parents and teachers on the difficulties and needs of the students. As every student with ASD is unique, we hope that the public pays more attention to their needs and discover more talents and strengths in them.




東華三院

Tung Wah Group of Hospitals








With a grant from The Hong Kong Jockey Club Charities Trust, Hong Kong Sheng Kung Hui Welfare Council launched the three-year project JC A-Connect in collaboration with the Education Bureau, The University of Hong Kong and seven NGOs. With a multi-disciplinary team to support schools and families, we provide a wide range of services to students with ASD attending primary and secondary schools in Hong Kong, and their parents. The project also focuses on public education to minimise misunderstanding on autism which promotes social inclusion.

Major services include:

- Student Support: provide tailor-made, school-based coaching programmes for students to help them improve their social communication, adaptation and emotional management
- Peer Support: organise peer-to-peer activities and build a harmonious and caring culture in campus
- School Support: enhance the effectiveness of supporting students with ASD through professional consultation, seminars and workshops
- Parent Support: allow parents to relieve their stress through mindfulness programmes and consultation



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The Hong Kong Young Women's Christian Association adheres to the principle of 'Enhancement of Life' to provide comprehensive, interdisciplinary and cross-system support services for students with ASD and their families. Schools, families and communities can effectively collaborate to strengthen resilience of students with ASD and improve the quality of their mental and social life. Focusing on individual differences, our professional training groups strive to enhance students' self-proprioception, emotional management and expression, social cognition and central coherence.

This project serves students with ASD and their related systems through a series of programmes including:

- Coaching groups on social communication competence, emotional regulation and learning abilities
- Individual intervention, school and teacher support services, parent empowerment and community education
- Home-based Life Skill Guidance Service



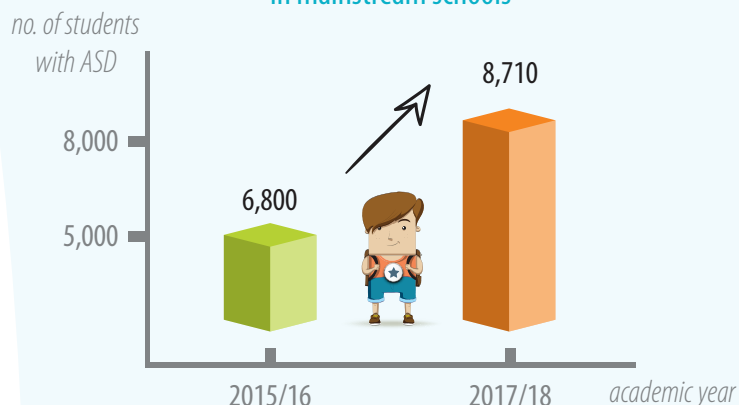
# Autism in Hong Kong

## Trend, Conditions and Support Policies

### Increasing trend of autism prevalence

Based on epidemiological studies conducted over the past 50 years, the global prevalence of ASD appears to be on the rise. It is estimated that one out of every 160 children in the world has ASD. There are many explanations for the significant increase in prevalence, including improved awareness, expansion of diagnostic criteria, better diagnostic tools and improved reporting. Comorbidities of autism include mental retardation and hyperactivity. According to a general household survey conducted by the Census and Statistics Department in 2013, about 578,600 people in Hong Kong were physically challenged. Among them, 10,200 were affected with autism and 17,700 with special learning difficulties; and 12,800 had Attention Deficit and/or Hyperactivity Disorder. According to the Education Bureau, there are 6,800 students with autism in 2015/16 and 8,710 in the 2017/18 school year. With reference to the Mental Health Review Report (2017), the caseload of Hospital Authority's Child and Adolescent Psychiatric Services for ASD alone increased from 5,000 in 2011/12 to 9,000 in 2015/16. Besides, the report also showed that there was a higher incidence rate of ASD at the Services in early and middle childhood, 60.2% for children aged 0-5 years and 32.1% for those aged 6-11 years, in the year of 2015/16. With better understanding of ASD in the community and more sophisticated assessments for ASD, it is also important to have adequate services to cope with the demand in order not to miss the golden treatment period to help these children and their caregivers.

Trend of ASD prevalence in mainstream schools



### Conditions of Hong Kong people with autism, their families and caregivers

Caregivers of people with ASD are more likely to suffer from mental health issues than other caregivers of children with no disabilities (Dabrowska & Pisula, 2010). According to our previous study in the first phase of JC A-Connect on around 750 parents of children with autism, parent respondents with children at different functional levels and at different stages of the life span mostly identified 'Professional Support for Child Needs' as their most important need. Parents with older children reported greater salience of 'Government and Community Support Needs'. 'Parent Psychosocial Support Needs' was perceived by most parents as the least important. This is understandable because parents always put the children at a higher priority than their own needs.

Autism is a persistent developmental disorder. The family members not only need to take care of their children for years but also bear social discrimination. It is because the cause of ASD is yet to be discovered, many people mistakenly believe the problem stems from the parenting styles. Studies have shown that these families have a higher rate of divorce, child abuse, and siblings are more likely to be neglected. Because of the public's poor understanding of autism, parents in Hong Kong are often criticised by others as 'not knowing how to teach their



children well! Hong Kong has a crowded living environment, and it is not easy for people with autism to go to public places. In the academic performance-oriented social environment, parents' helplessness and hopelessness about the children's performance are not difficult to be imagined.

However, the overburdened stress arising from parenting the children with special education needs cannot be ignored. There have been couples of tragedies over the overwhelming stress of caretaking these children in the past few years. In 2014, a full-time father slashed his autistic teenage son to death as a result of feeling burden and tough for the family (Lee & Tsang, 2016). Another tragedy was about a grandmother, as the primary caregiver, strangled her six-year-old suspected ADHD boy in March this year. It was believed that the grandmother was at the blink of burnout (Su & Leung, 2018). Worse still, the mean waiting time for the consultation at the public hospitals is between 18 months to three years while the consultation at the private practice can be costly to the grass-roots families (Tsang, 2017).

### **Policy to support people with autism and their families in Hong Kong**

In May 2014, the 67<sup>th</sup> World Health Assembly adopted a resolution entitled 'Comprehensive and coordinated efforts for the management of ASD,' which was supported by more than 60 countries. The resolution urges the World Health Organization (WHO) to collaborate with Member States and partner agencies to strengthen national capacities to address ASD and other developmental disorders. WHO and its partners recognise the need to strengthen countries' abilities to promote optimal health and the well-being of all persons with ASD. Efforts are focusing on: (1) contributing to enhancing commitment of governments and international advocacy on autism; (2) providing guidance on creating policies and action plans that address ASD within the broader framework of mental health and disabilities; (3) contributing to the development of evidence on effective and scalable strategies for the assessment and treatment of ASD and other developmental disorders; (4) WHO, in consultation with experts, parents' associations and civil society organisations developed a parent skills training programme which is currently undergoing field-testing.

According to a discussion paper of the Legislative Council Welfare Panel at the end of 2017, the Government has commissioned the Rehabilitation Advisory Committee to carry out the work of formulating a new 'Hong Kong Rehabilitation Programme Plan'. The 2017/18 Budget also mentions that the government will set up a dedicated office to provide trust service to parents with special needs of their children. The pilot project on strengthening support for people with ASD and their caregivers will be regularised. We are excited to learn about these planned initiatives proposed by the Hong Kong SAR government, and we look forward to reading more concrete plans in the coming review of the rehabilitation programme plan so that many of the people with ASD can be mainstreamed into systems of services and potentially lead a happy and productive life with the right services and community support.

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### **Dr Andy Shih**

Senior Vice President, Autism Speaks

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## EVENT HIGHLIGHTS 活動花絮

# Hong Kong ASD Conference 2018 Autism and Education: What Works

July 5, 2018 | Hong Kong



The Hong Kong ASD Conference 2018: Autism and Education: What Works, the third international conference of JC A-Connect held in July 2018, brought together more than 800 stakeholders from NGOs, universities, secondary and primary schools, government and the healthcare sector to facilitate knowledge exchange and professional sharing. The conference and pre/post-conference workshops invited renowned ASD experts Professor Jacqueline Roberts of Griffith University and Professor Samuel L Odom of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill to deliver keynotes on 'Autism and Education: Current Practice, Issues and Emerging Trends' and 'Preparing Students with ASD for the Future: Good Practices in Secondary Schools' respectively. Also, Dr. Irene Ho, Project Director (School Support) of JC A-Connect, together with representatives of partner NGOs and teacher/parent beneficiaries of the project, shared the impacts and achievements of the school-based coaching programmes. Along with 34 poster presentations, the participants, mostly persons or professionals serving children and youth with ASD, expressed that they were considerably inspired and impressed.

*The speakers provided insightful sharing and professional knowledge.*

演講者的分享和專業知識甚有見地。

A school personnel 一名學校人員

*Thank you for making this conference happen for sharing of knowledge and wisdom.*

感謝您們令本次會議成真，讓行內的知識和智慧得以傳承。

A clinical psychologist 一名臨床心理學家

香港自閉症研討會2018主題為「自閉症和教育：甚麼是可行」，是「賽馬會喜伴同行計劃」的第三次國際會議，於2018年7月舉行，讓800多名來自非政府組織、高等院校、中小學、政府和醫療保健界的持份者聚首一堂，交流知識和專業分享。為期三日的會議及工作坊邀得兩位全球知名的自閉症專家：格里菲斯大學的 Jacqueline Roberts 教授和北卡羅來納大學教堂山分校的 Samuel L Odom 教授分別就「自閉症和教育：當前實踐、問題和趨勢」及「為自閉症學生的將來做好準備」發表主題演講。「賽馬會喜伴同行計劃」學校支援的項目總監何德芳博士，連同合作夥伴的代表及計劃的教師/家長受益人，則分享了校本訓練小組的成果。此外，會議展出了34張海報，與會者（主要是為患有自閉症的兒童和青少年服務的人士或專業人員）均表示受到極大啟發，並對會議留下深刻印象。

## PROFESSIONAL TRAINING 專業培訓



### Professional Training Seminar 2018 睿智研討會 2018

August 23, 2018



**Teacher Training Course:**  
**Module 2 Session 4 – Workshop**  
**學校教職員培訓課程 單元二 第四節**  
**《一切從框框開始：  
在學業上支援有自閉症的學生》**  
January 5 & 15, 2018

*Understood the limitations and difficulties of the students on reading comprehension, and the ways to assist them.*

明白學生在閱讀理解上的限制和困難，以及如何針對這些困難作出支援。

Attending teacher 出席教師

*I learnt the strategies of taking care of individual differences from this seminar.*

是次研討會讓我認識了照顧個別差異的策略。

Attending NGO colleague 出席機構同工

## PUBLIC EDUCATION 公眾教育



**Public Talk of SciFest 2018:**  
**The Unique Brains of People with ASD**  
**2018 香港科學節公開講座：自閉人士與別不同的腦袋**  
April 15, 2018

*Simple and easy to understand.*  
簡單易明，深入淺出。

Participant 參與者

自閉人士與別不同的腦袋  
The Unique Brains of People with ASD