

Innovation in Autism Practice: The Future is Calling

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SWAN: Scottish Women's Autism Network
Peer Support Information Empowerment



The Under Our Wing Peer Mentoring Project



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SWAN founded 2012 in response to research study (Stewart 2011, 2012)

Key drivers for methodology and innovative methods:

- facilitation of the authentic voices of Asperger's girls with anxiety
- lived experience
- narrative qualitative enquiry
- hermeneutical phenomenological enquiry

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Aim: improve the lives of autistic women and girls

- providing peer-support, recognition and community
- improving awareness
- increasing knowledge-base and understanding within wider society through research + knowledge mobilisation

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Participatory Action Research in practice?

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SWAN enquiries across UK and beyond:

underpinning ethos

conditions of engagement

theoretical scaffolding - PAR?

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Autism and gender stereotyping intersect to make autistic females 'invisible' within society and to themselves.

The 'swan' analogy describes a process of self-denial as coping strategy, stigma, disrupted self-identity, poor self-esteem

Internalised pain and disabling beliefs = individual's mental health, life choices and life trajectory (Stewart 2011, 2012; Snow 2014, Humphrey + Huws 2008)

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Participatory Action Research (PAR), is defined as “community-based and co-operative enquiry, used for improving conditions and practices... with an explicit value basis, founded on partnerships between researchers and participants”. and ‘study of a social situation carried out by those involved in that situation in order to improve both their practice and the quality of their understanding’ (Winter and Munn-Giddings 2001)

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SWAN founded 2012 to improve the lives of autistic women and girls
6 women in a room in Strathclyde Uni

NOW:

- SWAN holds peer-led monthly groups in 3 cities in Scotland
- reaches 100s of women online
- members input into conferences, consultations and advisory bodies,
- increased confidence, self-esteem reported - described as 'life changing' and 'sanity saving'.

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Right Click 2015 - 2018 in response to research study (Stewart 2011, 2012)

The study was also the inspiration behind Scottish Autism online resource Right Click for Women and Girls

The SWAN network has contributed to Right Click research and development in many ways, as survey respondents, interviewees, in focus groups and as reviewers.

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Right Click 2015 - 2018 in response to ongoing research

2 years' funding
work in progress

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Under Our Wing 2018-19 pilot

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Ongoing, participatory, iterative....

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