

## Bernadette Roe, University Certificate in Autistic Spectrum Disorders (ASDs)

This online course was suggested to me by my Line Manager and the course content was relevant to my work. Also others within my Organisation had or were completing the course and I had spoken to colleagues who were doing the course and they noted that the course helped them to understand the children they served.

Other factors which influenced my decision include the content, which looked at an eclectic approach to understanding and supporting a person who has Autism. Another factor was that I could share the knowledge gained with families and preschool staff and others in the community to raise their awareness and strive for real inclusion for children who have Autism.

I gained confidence doing this course; it improved my computer skills, especially e-mail. I learned such a lot about Autism which is still invaluable in my work practice and I gained promotion in my work place. I gained research skills, learned about Netiquette and I learned about the function of Behaviour (invaluable knowledge).

The on-line resources such as WebCT were great once I mastered the technique and we were encouraged to learn from each other, to use the discussion boards and to research materials. We met with our regional tutor weekly in year two as it was online. In year one it was more often as she worked in the same organisation then as I still do. I found doing a web-based distance education course tough to begin with, but on completion I missed the discussions and chats with others in the same line of work. I missed their support around problem solving.

I would highly recommend this course to people who are computer literate and if they work it is a really great way to learn. You can study at times that suit your schedule, but you have to be focused and make time. Also the discussion boards, chat rooms are great as words spoken are transient but the written word is visual and you can go back to check you have read it correctly. I lived in Birmingham before I returned to live in Ireland and did not realise I could have done a course on-line!!!

Since I have completed the course I have been promoted and I am currently undertaking more study to get my degree, again an online course. My online course with Birmingham University helped me with further online studying. My advice to anyone thinking of coming to study at the university of Birmingham is just go for it. I found the resources and supports so beneficial in my work practice; it definitely helped me to make a difference in people's life. I now feel I am more professional in my approach, a more knowledgeable and confident employee and better equipped to serve and advocate for the children who need support.