

Impact of Social Stories on social and emotional health of autism spectrum primary school children: the ASSSIST2 RCT with economic evaluation

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Plain language summary

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Plain language summary

Autism affects the way children experience the world, and some children find social situations stressful. We wanted to know whether Social Stories™, developed by Carol Gray, helped children with their social skills and behaviour in school and whether they offered value for money.

A randomised controlled trial design was used, which gave schools an equal chance of being asked to deliver Social Stories or to continue providing care as usual.

Two hundred and forty-nine children from 87 schools took part and we trained school staff and parents to write and deliver Social Stories. We agreed with teachers and parents, what each child needed help with and wrote stories with this in mind. Trained staff read the Social Story with the child at least six times over 4 weeks. Follow-up information was collected from parents and school staff at the start of the study, after 6 weeks and 6 months.

After 6 months, teachers completed a questionnaire called the Social Responsiveness Scale-2 which measures the child's social skills.

Using these measures, the results suggest that Social Stories do not lead to any significant changes in social skills, mental health, parent stress, general health or quality of life but children in schools allocated to Social Stories met their goal more frequently and incurred less costs than children who did not. Parents and educational professionals found the Social Stories intervention and training beneficial.

Based on our findings, Social Stories do not appear to improve general social skills in primary-aged autistic children. Benefits were observed for specific goals, and school-based costs were reduced.

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This article

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