



# RESEARCH JOURNAL

MIDDLETOWN CENTRE  
FOR AUTISM

## Description

Across Ireland, up to 5% of school age children have a diagnosis of autism (DOH, 2021; Boilson et al, 2016). With the significant rise in the number of autistic young people diagnosed over the past decade (DOH, 2021) and considering the complexity of challenges that can occur with autism, services can struggle to support their needs (Roberts and Webster, 2020). As such, many young autistic people do not obtain the support they require and are unable to participate effectively in school (White et al, 2009) or to achieve their academic potential (Ashburner et al, 2010; Keen et al, 2016).

In recognition of the growing need for research, training and guidance on autism, the Department of Education and Skills Ireland and the Department of Education Northern Ireland established Middletown Centre for Autism (MCA). Since its creation in 2007, MCA has been one of the main providers of training for parents and educational professionals in Ireland and Northern Ireland, providing over 100,000 training places. Successive inspections from cross border inspection teams (2012; 2016) have deemed the centre's training to be outstanding. In addition to training, the centre also provides a one year, transdisciplinary support service to children and schools throughout Ireland and Northern Ireland, as well as an active research and information service.

The Department of Education and Skills Ireland and the Department of Education Northern Ireland recommend that teachers are both knowledgeable of and able to provide evidence-based practices to support autistic children and young people to succeed in school. Evidence based practice involves utilising best available evidence (which has been identified as scientifically effective and robust), for decision-making and providing best available support for autistic students (Odom et al., 2010). Employing evidence-based practices is seen as best practice as these practices have undergone significant scientific testing and review by multiple research teams and have been identified as effective and confirmed as undergoing ethical review (Steinbrenner et al., 2020).

Selecting evidence-based practices is particularly important, given the significant quality of life implications for autistic children and young people and the economic and logistical constraints faced by schools. Additionally, of equal importance is the application of evidence-based practices, which depend on the experience and skills of teachers in selecting, interpreting, individualising and applying appropriate practices (Steinbrenner et al., 2020). MCA Research Journal has been created to fill growing need to share autism research and therefore impact current practices across schools in Ireland. This journal will focus on examples of current best autism practices and novel applications and studies conducted primarily across Ireland. It is hoped this journal will inform everyday practices across schools in Ireland.

## Aims & Scope

*MCA Research Journal* publishes high-quality research and scholarship concerning autistic children, young people and adults. Consistent with the remit of MCA, the journal seeks (primarily) to publish articles which:

- **Have the potential to impact and improve the educational outcomes, opportunities and services for autistic people across Ireland**

## Editorial Board

Dr Fiona McCaffrey

Dr Rachel Ferguson

Dr Cat Hughes

Dr Catherine Latimer

Joan McDonald

Jill McCanney

Edel Quinn

## Submission Guidelines

The aim of the *MCA Research Journal* is to publish examples of good practice in working with or supporting autistic people from across Ireland. We want to share the novel and interesting research studies that are carried out (primarily across Ireland) to positively impact the lives of autistic people.

It should be noted that evidence-based practices can only be formed from what type of research is currently being conducted. To date, most research, and therefore most evidence-based practices, focus on changes within the autistic person (Bottema-Beutel et al., 2021), suggesting autistic people need to change to 'fit in' to a non-autistic world (den Houting, 2018). Research exploring how environments and people around the autistic person can change and adapt to better suit the needs and promote the strengths of autistic people are welcomed by the journal.

## Types of Papers/ Manuscripts

*MCA Research Journal* welcomes the submission of:

- Research articles (maximum 3000 words)
  - Data-based manuscripts reporting original research that aims to improve the educational outcomes, opportunities and services for autistic people (primarily across Ireland).
- Executive Summary of Literature Reviews (maximum 3000 words)
  - Selected on the content's importance to the field of autism and good autism practice, executive summaries should report the main elements of the review in a condensed format which emphasizes the implications for practice.
- A Special Series or Section (Contact Editorial Board in the first instance)
  - Contains several different articles by various authors on a given topic. A lead author with extensive experience and expertise in a specific area conceptualizes and

coordinates it with support from the Editorial Board. Individuals who wish to guest edit a special series should first contact the journal editorial office to ascertain interest in the topic.

- Letters to the editor (maximum 300 words)
  - Involving reaction to material appearing in the MCA Research Journal or to an issue in the field of LD are encouraged and are published as space permits.
- Perspectives Article (maximum 2000 words)
  - Perspective articles are intended to provide a forum for authors to discuss models and ideas from a personal viewpoint. They are more forward looking and/or speculative than Reviews and may take a narrower field of view. They may be opinionated but should remain balanced and are intended to stimulate discussion.
- Notices of Recruitment for Research (maximum 200 words)
  - Short synopsis of research study, ethical approval and who to contact if interested in participating. Only studies meeting the aims of the journal and with ethical approval will be considered for 'Notices of Recruitment for Research' section.

## Criteria

Initial consideration of a manuscript will depend upon:

- Content relevance and usefulness to the readership
- How it compares to other articles dealing with similar content on pertinent variables (e.g., sample size, research design, research quality, literature review)
- Clarity of writing style
- Use of strengths based, autism affirming language and terminology i.e. identity first (e.g. autistic people).
- Autistic co – production / inclusion in research e.g. design, methodology, results & interpretation of findings (Joan email)
- Adherence to Harvard Style referencing guidelines (see here for details: <https://www.citethisforme.com/uk/referencing-generator/harvard> )
- Adherence to the journal formatting guide

## Formatting Guide

### 1. Title Page

- Submit a separate title page with (a) article title; (b) names of authors; (c) author affiliations and full contact details for the lead author and e-mail addresses of all authors; (d) any acknowledgments; and (e) conflict of interest (or 'The author has declared no conflict of interest'); and source of funding (or 'This research did not receive any funding').

### 2. The Manuscript

- The paper itself with no title pages. Please number the pages (not the title pages). This document will also include the references and any appendices. Papers can include photographs (as long as the author has ensured that these do not infringe copyright laws), diagrams and tables. Please ensure that all images are supplied at least 300dpi at the size they are to be used. As a rough guide, a file of approximately 1MB is at a resolution of high enough quality for print. Tiff or EPS files are ideal, but PDF or jpeg files are also acceptable. GIF or PNG image files cannot be used.

### 3. Format

- Titles and section headings should be clear and brief with a maximum of three orders of heading.
- Font used should be 'arial' or 'New Times Roman'. Font size (12).
- Please use as little formatting as possible within your article as all formatting (bold, italics, styles etc.) will need to be removed and reset in the MCA style when the document is imported for typesetting. Text and tables must be word documents; no PDF'S.
- Abbreviations should only be used on rare occasions. Please avoid, if possible, using initials to describe people or groups (Person A; Family A). Abbreviations that are common enough to be in the dictionary (e.g. IQ and USA) are acceptable.
- Language and terminology: please avoid using jargon or unnecessarily technical language. Use non-discriminatory language. Use of strengths based, autism affirming language and terminology i.e. identity first (e.g. autistic people).

#### 4. Content

- The following order should be followed:
  - Abstract
  - Background
  - Aims
  - Method
  - Outcome Measures
  - Data Analyses
  - Results
  - Discussion
  - Implications for Practice
  - References

#### 5. Tables & Figures

- Each table should start on a new page. Please use Word's table functions and save as text not as a PDF or Picture.
- Figures. Figures should be separate files—with each figure on a new page
- or file Acceptable electronic formats include: TIFF, EPS, Word, or Excel.

#### 6. Permissions

- The author is responsible for obtaining written permission for material (e.g., figures, tables, extensive quotes) taken directly or adapted from another source.

### Publication

MCA publish the MCA Research Journal on a bi-annual basis. This means we publish two journals a year. (one in April and one in October). All publications are available via the MCA Website.

### Submission

Please submit your manuscript to:

[MCAResearchJournal@middletownautism.com](mailto:MCAResearchJournal@middletownautism.com)

Deadlines for submission of manuscript:

The 1<sup>st</sup> February and 1<sup>st</sup> August (to allow roughly 2 months for review , edits and publishing).