



SIMPLE STEPS – Developing Multimedia Support Pack for Parents

Simple Steps is a Belfast based social enterprise offering a pioneering, parent-led, interactive online teaching-tool that makes support affordable for parents coping with Autism. Building on the experiences of real families, Simple Steps unites the worlds of science, academia, charity, health, creativity and innovation.

Simple Steps helps parents to take the first steps to become a parent therapist through this self-help teaching tool, introducing parents to Applied Behaviour Analysis (ABA) – a science with a proven track record for the treatment of Autism. Delivered through an Online Platform, it offers parents and professionals access via the internet 24/7. Supporting tools include animated tutorials, video materials, practical resources, real life stories, professional advice and regular updates.

Combining the technology of web, multimedia and animation through an online teaching platform is an innovative new way of bridging the current void in services available to parents/professionals. In designing the tool, Simple Steps however needed to develop a mechanism which would correctly and individually record and measure behaviours online and provide evaluation reports to users through the online platform. In this way the science of ABA could be truly applied in a practical setting.

Having secured support from Invest Northern Ireland through an Innovation Voucher, Simple Steps partnered with the Ulster University to access support. Dr Stephen Gallagher and Dr Mickey Keenan from the School of Psychology used their dedicated expertise in the area of ABA and autism to offer the expert knowledge.

The University team alongside Manleys creative skills scripted and storyboarded animations with the Simple Steps creative team presented the materials in a scientifically accurate yet parent friendly manner and then implemented changes as highlighted through a focus group of users. Having outlined the requirements to effectively record and measure behaviour, Dr Gallagher and Dr Keenan made recommendations for adopting it to an online environment.

Professor Lester Manley, Chairman of Simple Steps, said: *“Thanks to the unique expertise in ABA available from the Ulster University, we at Simple Steps have been able to assist parents who are desperate for help.”*

“Significantly, also, this is a good example of a project that has been developed in Northern Ireland by Northern Irish people which is making a growing impact in Europe.”