Track 1: The Course of Life / IDD across the lifespan

**Title:** Development of positive attitudes in mainstream teaching staff towards autistic students

**Aim**: The aim was to investigate the impact of autism awareness training on attitudes of mainstream teaching staff. The inclusion of autistic students in mainstream has become pertinent following changes to inclusion policy, however review of practice indicates that outcomes are dependent on positive attitudes of teachers.

**Method**: A repeated measures design was used to evaluate the impact of an autism awareness training based on the SPELL framework. Participants (n=42) were recruited from mainstream schools in Kent and South East England. Standardised measures were used to explore whether positive attitudes increased in relation to openness towards autistic students, attitudes towards inclusion, self-efficacy, perceived knowledge, and actual knowledge.

**Results**: Participants had high levels of openness and positive attitudes towards inclusion. Perceived knowledge and self-efficacy both increased significantly following the training and value was placed upon having the opportunity for training which gave an insight into autistic perspectives in relation to education.

**Conclusions**: As a pilot study, the results provide evidence of the importance of autism awareness training both in increasing positive attitudes and the value of having the SPELL framework to inform good practice. Further research is required to demonstrate generalisation and to establish consistent measures for attitudes.