Digital Bubbles 7: Survey of participants' responses

14/19 responses (74%) 11 self-identified as researchers, 3 as practitioners

Q1 WHAT technologies should we be researching in the field of technology for autism?

4 cited making specific designs, 1 cited universal design. Some noted it may be a false dichotomy e.g. we need to make technologies that enable communication between the 'two worlds', so this will be both specific and universal. 'Specific is a better starting point as it will then be useful for universal'.

Other caveats: we need better ways of measuring the impact of a technology, we need to involve people with autism in what's designed, we need to know more about the technology people already use and why – we may be surprised if we look: people may not use technology as it's intended. We need to understand the market ('autistic pound'), we need to change and monitor environments (an 'autism-smart' home).

Q2 HOW do we encourage people to participate more fully in the design and evaluation of technologies for autism?

Many suggestions: ask people with ASC, have a better balance of power, no 'token involvement', involvement is distinct from research participation, bring research into schools and homes, make more global partnerships not tied to a specific project, but have a shared agenda. Understand that there will not be a single 'autistic view'. We need more communication options for non-speaking participation. Questions about what counts as success need to be open ended and various. The role of market forces. People with ASC should be offered training to gain co-production skills. Pay people to participate.

Q3 WHO should be involved in the research?

A majority cited the urgent need to include people with ASC and no verbal communication, and/ or learning disabilities – a greatly neglected issue. Several also urged work with adults with ASC, including later life, and the need for working over a longer time-period, beyond small scale and context bound work. We need to consider people in communities, e.g. residential homes, and also the wider community – training for police, healthcare, hairdressers, general public.

Q4 What did you hear or think about as a result of participating in Digital Bubbles that may inform or change your thinking or practice?

A range of answers, with little commonality: realising creativity that exists among people with ASC, stepping out of one's own disciplinary bubble, networking, inclusion and participation, the power of altering environments to change opportunity, space to discover unexpected insights, the strength of combining academic and practical approaches, the potential role of companies/ market, the similarity of some of the challenges identified.

Q5 What would you like to see happen next?

Joint projects and position papers were mentioned by 9 people. A wish to continue collaboration, maintain momentum, widen to other disabilities (breaking out of an 'autism bubble'), handing the agenda to stakeholders as to how we want to work together (brings us back to Q1 skill development). All expressed a wish to continue some link with DB.