Educators’ attitudes and experiences of using technology with autistic pupils in special education

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Background
- Children with autism are frequent users of technology (1)
- Technology can support a range of educational and clinical outcomes for pupils with autism, in both mainstream and specialist schools (2,3)
- Parents and professionals have reported concerns about using technology in practice (4)

Objective: To explore the experience and attitudes of education professionals working with children with autism and using technology

Methods
An online survey gathered practitioners responses (N = 186) to questions about
- Individual and occupational demographics
- The training/guidance received about technology implementation
- Devices and software used with supported pupils
- The function and impact of technology use in the classroom
- Attitudes to technology use with children in general, and with autistic children

Results
1. Technology-related training
There was relatively little formal training reported. 80% of respondents said they would like more training. Over 70% said that the training offered was useful to them.

2. Impact of technology
85% of respondents reported that technology generally had a positive impact in the classroom.

3. Function of technology
The ranking of technology uses was largely consistent among respondents

4. Attitudes to technology
Attitudes were very similar in both a general- and autism-specific context. This might be explained by most respondents having limited experience in non-SEN settings. Attitudes towards technology were not predicted by participant age, current job role, time spent working in similar roles, or pupils’ intellectual ability.

Conclusions
Technology is widely used to support autistic students. Whilst there are some concerns, there are also clear reported benefits to using technology. Staff would like more technology-related training in the workplace.

References