Visual supports at home and in the community for individuals with autism spectrum disorders: A scoping review

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Visual supports are often used in schools, together with other individualised supports for children with autism. When used appropriately, they can reduce anxiety, increase predictability and support communication. In turn, these can improve motivation, engagement and participation. They are less commonly available and used by families at home or in community settings. This article provides new information about the different types of visual supports used to support autistic individuals at home and in the community. We report evidence from a review of previously published research and from information gathered through consultation with parents and professionals about their experiences. The research reports on factors which enabled or prevented the use of visual supports at home, such as 1) access to supports, 2) having visual supports which help the individual to participate in activities which are meaningful and motivating 3) individualisation so that they are relevant to the individual and match their developmental stage 4) the way they are taught to those using visual supports and to their family, 5) consistency between supports used in different settings and 6) information and training or coaching to ensure families have timely and relevant information. Recommendations are given based on this evidence, which could support the development of a model for home visual supports.