

Secret Agent Society Small Group Program Implementation Guide



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SECRET AGENT SOCIETY (SAS)

Secret Agent Society (SAS) is a breakthrough approach for empowering children's social and emotional skills. SAS Providers have been offering this evidence-based approach for over 10 years.

The focus of this guide is the SAS Small Group Program, however the evidence-based framework (see Appendix A) is available for services to use with three different variants:

SAS Small Group Program – The professional delivery team complete the SAS Facilitator Training Course and services subscribe as an SAS Provider to begin using this specialised, award-winning program. SAS Small Group Program aims to empower children aged 8 to 12 with identified social and emotional challenges, such as autism, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), and anxiety disorders.



SAS Stand-Alone Resources - Purchase stand-alone SAS resources at any time to use flexibly with teaching specific skills or supplement your current social skills groups, teaching or counselling, with no professional SAS training required.

SAS Whole-Of-Class - For building resilience for all students aged 8 to 12 within classrooms. Use the SAS Stand-Alone resources for whole class activities to teach general resilience and social skills aligned to the Australian Curriculum (General Capabilities and HPE subject area for years 4 and 5). Combine this mainstream classroom approach with the SAS Small Group Program, for children with identified social and emotional challenges, to create shared social resilience language and skills across all students providing an ideal inclusive education model.

SAS Small Group Program

The SAS Small Group Program consists of small group child sessions (club meetings), parent group meetings, teacher information sessions and Teacher Tip Sheets, paired with real-life practice missions and a system to monitor and reward skill development at home and at school. Combining family and facilitator resources, the content and program structure is accessed through an intuitive and engaging software package that streamlines program delivery and participation for all child and adults users in **face-to-face** or **telehealth sessions** and between session activities.

The evidence-based curriculum captivates children with its espionage-themed games and activities including: multi-level gamified learning through the SAS Digital Headquarters (SAS Digital HQ); a virtual Helpful Thought Zapper; role-playing through the SAS Challenger Board Game; finding smart solutions with the D.E.C.O.D.E.R problem solving formula; and deciphering emotions through Secret Message Transmission Device Game.

The program was originally developed for children aged 8-12 years with Autism by its author Clinical

Psychologist, Dr Renae Beaumont, through the University of Queensland who is now based at Weill Cornell Medicine, New York Presbyterian Hospital. The SAS framework combines theories of cognitive function and behaviour change.

However, current research and clinical/educational use supports its effectiveness with children who have other social and emotional challenges, including ADHD, anxiety disorders, and other diagnoses or social difficulties without formal diagnosis. The program teaches children how to:

- Recognise emotions in themselves and others;
- Express their feelings in appropriate ways;
- Cope with feelings of anger and anxiety;
- Communicate and play with others;
- Cope with mistakes, transitions and challenges;
- Build and maintain friendships;
- Solve social problems;
- Prevent and manage bullying and teasing and
- Acknowledge their personal strengths.



Allied health, education and disability professionals typically deliver the SAS Small Group Program. Professionals learn to deliver the program aligned with evidence-based and clinical best practice in a flexible fourteen (14) hour SAS Facilitator Training Course.

Since its inception thousands of SAS Cadets have graduated as SAS Junior Detectives with the program receiving numerous awards.

- 2010 the SAS Computer Game was a finalist in the 16th Annual Australian Interactive Media Industry Association (AIMIA) Educational Game of the Year Award.
- 2014 SAS was awarded the Autism Spectrum Australia National Recognition Award for advancement to acknowledge the significant, positive impact the program has on children's and families' lives.
- 2014 the SAS Family Kit won the United States' Learning Magazine Teacher's Choice Award for the Family.
- 2018 the Autism CRC was awarded the CRC Association Award for Excellence in Innovation for its positive impact SAS has on children's lives across the world

SAS Small Group Program Components

SAS Small Group is a multi-component program that up-skills and empowers not only children with social and emotional challenges, but also the parents and teachers who support them. The program includes:

Child Group Meetings: delivered as 11-22 sessions of either 45 or 90 minutes, which includes 2-4 booster sessions.

- The first 9-18 sessions are typically delivered weekly with the following 2-4 boosters sessions spread over a six month period.

- Ideally the program is co-facilitated by two SAS Facilitators with a group of four to six children (maximum of three children with one SAS Facilitator). If this is not possible, a single SAS Facilitator may deliver the program with three to four children.

Parent Group Sessions: commence with a 2-hour parent information session, followed by 11-22 group meetings of 30-45 minutes, or 4 x 2-hour sessions, over the course of the program.

- Parent group meetings are held throughout the program to advise and support parents on the content of child group meetings and how to help their children apply their SAS skills in real life.
- It is optimal if parents have the opportunity for networking and facilitated discussion on the successes and challenges they have faced in supporting their children to use their newly learnt social skills.
- Parent meetings are typically held after each child meeting and without children present.
- If the program is being co-facilitated, one SAS Facilitator typically delivers the Parent Meetings while the other helps children to use their social-emotional skills during informal play activities.
- If a service has multiple SAS Facilitators they have the options for holding the parent meetings concurrent to the child group meetings.
- If the program is being delivered by a sole facilitator, children may be supervised by an appropriate adult during the parent sessions. Alternatively, the parent meeting content can be delivered at a different time/day.

School Support: Classroom teachers are updated on the skills and content children are learning through SAS and how they can support the application of skills in the classroom and playground. This occurs through a combination of providing a series of SAS Teacher Tip Sheets, the Skill Tracker, teacher consultation, school visits, and an optional school staff presentation.

- SAS is often written into children's individual learning plans to assist teachers to meet the social-emotional goals of their students.
- The SAS Small Group Program is mapped to the Australian National Curriculum.

Missions and Mission Journal: Between child group meetings, children participate in weekly tasks, including playing 4 levels of online gamified learning, skills practice activities in day-to-day life and completion of a reflection journal.

Skill Tracker System: A short-term daily motivation tool is used to encourage children to practice specific skills at home and school, aligned with progression through each module of the program.

Assessment Measures: A combination of questionnaire booklets, an observational assessment tool, computer game performance and Skill Tracker progress, provide valuable information to guide areas of focus for each individual child as well as providing easy and comprehensive outcome reporting.

SAS Digital Headquarters: The online gateway for children to access their club meeting activities, four levels of gamified learning, digital gadget pack, a Mission Journal for self-reflection on real life practice tasks, a multi-user Skill Tracker system, and other tools. [Watch the game trailer online!](#)

SAS Small Group Program Structure

This diagram provides an overview of the structure and timeline of SAS Small Group Program.

PROGRAM OVERVIEW



GROUP MEETINGS:

■ Parent Meetings
 ■ Child Meetings
 ■ Optional Teacher Session

BETWEEN MEETING ACTIVITIES:

■ Digital HQ
 ■ Missions
 ■ Skill Tracker
 ■ Teacher Tip Sheets
 ■ Graduation
 ■ Phone Check-in



SAS Group Session Content

Over the course of the SAS Small Group program children and parents learn a range of skills through various secret agent activities. *A brief summary of the content of the SAS Small Group program is shown below.*

Meetings	Content
Club Meeting 1a+b	Bionic Powers; detecting emotions in others from face, body and voice clues.
Club Meeting 2a+b	Detecting emotions in yourself from body clues; the 'Emotionometer' (emotion thermometer); Relaxation 'gadgets': Slow breathing (the O2 Regulator).
Club Meeting 3a+b:	Relaxation 'gadgets': Doing a physical activity (the Fire Engine), thinking in helpful ways (the Helpful Thought Zapper), noticing and letting thoughts go (Thought Tracker.)
Club Meeting 4a+b:	Relaxation 'gadgets': focusing your senses (the Enviro-Body Scan); 'Friendship Formula' of good friends; 'Friend Profiling'; 'Friendometer' measuring friendship.
Club Meeting 5a+b	D.E.C.O.D.E.R problem-solving formula; conversation skills.
Club Meeting 6a+b:	Conversation skills; playing with others.
Club Meeting 7a+b:	Coping with mistakes and losing; Play SAS Challenger Board Game to practice skills; detecting the difference between accidents, jokes and nasty deeds.
Club Meeting 8a+b:	Understanding and managing bullying (Bully-Guard Body Armor); continue playing SAS Board Game.
Club Meeting 9a+b:	Coping with confusion; aim to finish SAS Board Game, review game; solving future social problems.
Follow-up Meeting 1a+b:	Progress update review activities; self-esteem activity; solving future social problems.
Follow-up Meeting 2a+b:	Progress update; SAS Stars activity; solving future social problems; graduation ceremony.
Parents, teachers and children complete follow-up assessment measures and children are awarded graduation certificates and medals to celebrate their achievements.	

SAS Program Software

The SAS Small Group Program is delivered and coordinated through a software package that provides separate access to children, parents, teachers, and SAS Facilitators. All participants and facilitators will need access to a compatible computer or device at certain times, with some components requiring the user to be online and some components accessible offline.

SAS Facilitator Dashboard

SAS Facilitators initially commence their SAS journey by completing the SAS Facilitator Training Course, accessing their SAS Facilitator instructions via the SAS Facilitator Dashboard. Once linked with a subscribed SAS Provider service, the Facilitator Dashboard opens up functionality to:

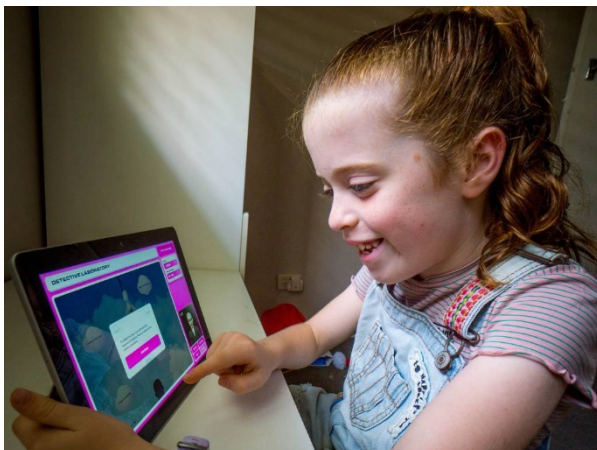
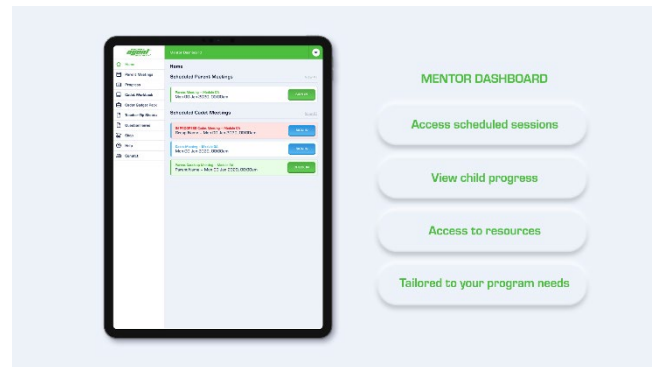
- establish groups and allocate mentors to each child;
- review materials and prepare session process in advance;
- facilitate live SAS Small Group meetings for children and parents;
- access just-in-time program instructions;
- monitor group progress between sessions;
- send automated links to the group's teachers and parents; and
- access additional program resources and ongoing review the SAS Facilitator Training Course materials.



SAS Mentor Portal

Each child in the SAS Small Group Program will have identified SAS Mentors (usually parents and teachers, and occasionally SAS Facilitators themselves). These mentors will be provided with a login to their Mentor Portal. Depending on the type of mentor and desired program input, each adult may have access to different SAS components such as:

- live Parent Group Meetings;
- Parent Meeting Notes ;
- Teacher Tip Sheets;
- Cadet progress overview;
- Cadet Club Meeting Journal and Gadgets;
- Questionnaire booklets, or
- the child's Skill Tracker rewards system.



SAS Digital Headquarters

SAS Digital Headquarters (Digital HQ) is specifically for children to access the program components. Digital HQ supports facilitators in teaching children how to recognise emotions in themselves and others, how to cope with unpleasant feelings and how to manage social challenges. Each child enters the International Secret Agent Society Headquarters, where they complete a secret agent training course to become specialist mind readers.

Firstly, children are introduced to the secret agent theme, and enter the 'control room' where they are prompted to start playing some initial learning games. Then week-by-week they access their live SAS Club Meetings together with their SAS Facilitator and fellow club members. Between group meetings children login to Digital HQ to:

- review the content from club meetings in their Club Journal;
- review and refer to their Gadget Pack items for everyday life prompts to use skills;
- play the four levels of learning games and quizzes;
- complete Mission Journal entries; and
- log their skills practise in the Skill Tracker.

Organisational Planning



It is recommended that organisations, decision makers and prospective facilitators of the SAS Small Group Program work collaboratively to explore their SAS options and progress using the following process:

1. Review this SAS Implementation Guide;
2. Explore [SAS Provider package](#) options;
3. Collaboratively review the planning checklists that also form part of the SAS Facilitator Training Course application process (see Appendix C) ;
4. Enrol individual team members in the SAS Facilitator Training Course utilising individual or pre-paid group purchase options;
5. Subscribe to an [SAS Provider package](#) and nominate an administrator;
6. Link your trained SAS Facilitator/s to your SAS Provider account; and
7. Start delivering SAS to children and families!

Prior to delivering SAS to children and families, SAS providers are encouraged to develop a service model that considers the following:

- Staff hour allocations for:
 - Program intake & assessment (pre & post)
 - Program coordination (pre, during and post-delivery)
 - Program delivery (see Appendix B)
- Team supervision and reflective practise;
- Subscription management;
- Coordinated allocation of available cadet places;
- Protocols for ordering of additional cadet places;
- Identification and training of SAS Assistants;
- Funding sources for families and or services;
- Referral pathways and promotional opportunities;
- Cash flow requirements;
- Software and device access for team members and families; and
- Group meeting space and equipment.

SAS Facilitators and organisations need to cater for the increased time that will initially be required for program planning, administration and session preparation. As SAS Facilitators gain experience, preparation time will reduce considerably. Initially, a newly trained SAS facilitator is likely to need 2 hours per 90 minute session for preparation and debrief with their co-facilitator.

If delivering the SAS Small Group Program in a face-to-face setting, a room with minimum 3.5m x 5.5m dimensions is recommended for child sessions and a separate area with seating for parents with consideration of access to a data projector (or equivalent).

SAS PROVIDER OPTIONS

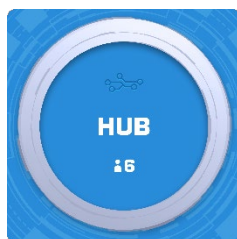
Improving the resilience and social competence of children with social-emotional learning challenges establishes a strong foundation for their personal wellbeing and academic success. A trained SAS Provider can offer a reputable evidence-based Small Group program that kids love!

To offer the SAS Small Group Program in your clinic or school, select the SAS Provider package that suits your service size, link trained SAS Facilitators to your provider account, and start empowering child resilience. A variety of subscription-based SAS Provider packages are available for services of three different sizes as well as a flexible/starter option. Provider packages include a number of cadet places in the small group program and unlock pricing levels for the purchase of additional cadet places. Options are also in place for facilitators to allow direct family payment for the software access separate to their broader service delivery to assist with specific funding or rebate requirements.

SAS Provider packages have been designed to support a variety of different organisations as well as individual professionals working on their own. The Hub, Bureau and Network subscription packages are based on the number of groups being delivered in a year while the Starter package is an annual access fee with no included cadet places allowing for full flexibility with a higher base rate. To explore pricing please review our [SAS Provider Pricing](#).

SAS Provider Subscriptions

The three SAS Provider subscriptions unlock annual access to the SAS Small Group software, allow unlimited SAS Facilitator links, have cadet places included each year, and require a one off establishment fee at sign up.



- Best for SAS Providers wanting to deliver the equivalent of 1-2 SAS groups per year.
- Includes 6 cadet places each year.



- Best for SAS Providers wanting to deliver the equivalent of 4-8 SAS groups per year.
- Includes 24 cadet places each year.



- Best for SAS Providers wanting to deliver the equivalent of 16-33 SAS groups per year.
- Includes 100 cadet places each year.

SAS Provider Flexi Option

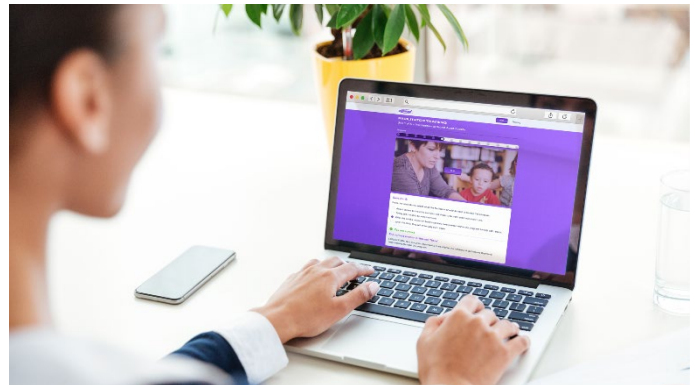


As an alternative for very infrequent SAS provision or for those new to SAS and unsure of their community need, the Starter/Flexi option is provided. The Flexi SAS Provider option involves a fee to access the SAS Small Group software for 12 months and does not include any pre-purchased cadet places. To use the software to deliver the SAS Small Group content with individuals or groups, cadet places will need to be purchased.

Establishment fees for subscriptions (or the first year Starter/Flexi Access Fee) are waived for our pre-2021 SAS Provider services transitioning to the new digital edition of the SAS Small Group Program

TRAIN YOUR SAS TEAM

To provide the SAS Small Group Program at your clinic or school, you need to have trained SAS Facilitators linked to your subscribed SAS Provider account. This allows you to have any number of SAS Facilitators working together under one SAS Provider service, or for SAS Facilitators to work across more than one provider. The model allows for flexibility for both service organisations and the individual professionals while also maximising predictable program fidelity for families' accessing services who are using the SAS software.



Each SAS Provider will need at least one trained SAS Facilitator to deliver the program to families. SAS Facilitators are the heart of SAS Small Group Program. In addition to SAS Facilitators, services may like to supplement their team with SAS Assistants who have completed a foundation short course for providing practical support to SAS Facilitators (and cadets) during sessions.

SAS providers with highly skilled or long term SAS Facilitators, may like to have particular team members demonstrate their skill in delivering the SAS small Group Program by applying to become a Senior SAS Facilitator which assist in SAS team support and supervision and unlocks further software capability.

The SAS Facilitator

SAS Facilitators will firstly meet the base eligibility criteria to enrol in the SAS Facilitator Training Course, then complete the full training experience, and link with subscribed SAS Provider services for system access to run groups with a maximum ratio of 1:4 or to be connected with an SAS Facilitator colleague for groups of ratio 2:6.

Eligibility

Eligibility requirements ensure that professionals benefit from the SAS Facilitator Training Course and have the capacity to successfully deliver the SAS Small Group program.

To apply for training, professionals need:

- A minimum of a higher education level qualification in a helping or teaching profession (including, but not limited to, psychology, social work, psychiatry, counselling, occupational therapy, speech pathology, education); and
- A minimum of six months professional experience working with children with Autism and/or other social and emotional challenges.

The Training

The self-paced online SAS Facilitator Training Course provides professionals with the knowledge and skills necessary to effectively deliver the SAS Small Group program. To offer the SAS Small Group program in the community, professionals must complete the SAS Facilitator Training Course.

During the 14 hours of flexible training, professionals gain the knowledge and skills to:

- Assess the social functioning of children with social and emotional challenges;
- Deliver a comprehensive social skills program to children with social and emotional challenges and their parents through the SAS software;
- Tailor the program content and teaching methods to meet individual child or parent needs;
- Promote the generalisation and maintenance of children's emotional regulation and friendship skills at home and at school;
- Manage common process issues that arise when facilitating group programs for children with social and emotional challenges and their parents;
- Evaluate the effectiveness of a social skills program for children with social and emotional challenges; and
- Identify indicators that a child and/or family require additional support.

The self-paced online training modules are accessed through the same SAS software that will later be used to facilitate the SAS Small Group Program with families. After completion of the course, SAS Facilitators will maintain access to the course content to allow just-in-time review when preparing for sessions in the future.

The training course will involve a combination of learning activities such as: videos providing session modelling and lecture content; gamified creative problem solving; simulation activities; review of program instructions; and assessment questions and quizzes. The course will unlock progressive assessment which is designed to assist all trainees to achieve successful completion.

The use of an online and self-paced training method allows professionals to flexibly learn about SAS via online units in their own time, to suit individual schedules and learning speeds. Coordination tips are provided for professionals wishing to complete the training together with a colleague, or for services wishing to provide a collaborative whole team training process (see Appendix D).

Other important training details include:

- Professionals are required to complete 100% of the course to fulfil training requirements;
- The course is the equivalent of fourteen (14) hours of professional development, however, due to the flexible self-paced format professionals can complete the course at their own pace, taking up to three (3) months if required;
- Once enrolled, the link to commence training will be valid for six (6) months;
- The self-paced online training units are designed to be intuitive and support online self-guided training;
- Services can choose to coordinate training dates to allow teams to collaboratively undertake training together (i.e. Two days or 4 x 4hr units);
- Professionals will require stable internet access and a compatible device with a recently updated browser;
- Once professionals commence training, they will have three (3) months to complete the course. If you don't complete within this time professionals will need to apply and pay again;
- All facilitator training materials are accessed via the SAS software by the Facilitator Dashboard;
- All program materials for running the SAS Small Group Program are accessed within the SAS software through linking with a subscribed SAS Provider; and
- Follow-up consultation is available from SST representatives to support SAS Facilitators if desired after training is complete.

SAS FACILITATOR TRAINING COURSE

- 14hrs of flexible self-paced training
- Multimedia learning activities
- Ongoing just-in-time access
- Individual or collaborative with a team

The SAS Assistant

A role for any adult planning to support an SAS Facilitator in their SAS Small Group delivery. On completion of this introductory short course, SAS Assistants may be asked to support the lead SAS Facilitator to manage the SAS group process, assist individual literacy or behaviour needs, or navigate software-based turn-taking and token giving during sessions.



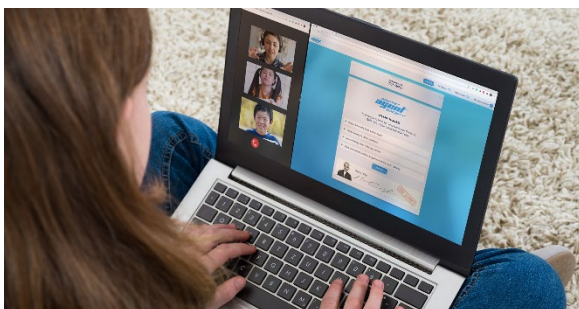
The Short Course

The SAS Assistant short course is optional for adults planning to support an SAS Facilitator in their SAS Small Group delivery. During the two (2) hr course applicants gain awareness of:

- The SAS Small Group Program framework;
- Main components of SAS group sessions;
- Basic guide to supporting SAS cadet behaviour and learning;
- Familiarity of the SAS software to assist the lead facilitator with:
 - allocating tokens;
 - supporting cadet response submission; or
 - turn-taking controls.

Eligibility

There are no eligibility requirements, any adult can enrol in the SAS Assistant Short Course. After completing the training, SAS Assistants access the SAS software and support group sessions when linked to a subscribed SAS Provider and added as an assistant to a particular SAS group.



The Senior SAS Facilitator

SAS Facilitators experienced in delivering the SAS Small Group Program, can apply to become Senior SAS Facilitators. Senior SAS Facilitators will have demonstrated their use of best practise, unlocked system functionality to run co-facilitated groups of 1:6 together with an SAS Assistant or SAS Facilitator team member, and open up pathways to SAS team leadership.

Eligibility

To apply to be a Senior SAS Facilitator, an existing SAS Facilitator needs to meet the following criteria:

1. Have a professional degree (e.g. psychology, occupational therapy, speech pathology, social worker, teacher) and at least **five years** of work experience since completing their professional degree;
2. To have delivered at least three SAS Small Groups in the past 18 months, and for at least two of these groups, led the child club meetings; *or*
To have been an active SAS Facilitator for at least three years, delivering at least one SAS Small Group per year, for at least two of these groups, and led the child club meetings.

The Application Process

After meeting the above criteria and enrolling in the Senior SAS Facilitator accreditation process, applicants are asked to:

- Submit de-identified SAS Session Checklists for 3 completed SAS Small Group Programs, including the self-evaluation commentary;
- Provide a written summary and analysis of how the applicant managed a child and a parent process issue during one of the SAS groups, for example, preventing/managing impulsivity or responding to resistance;
- Upload video footage or audio recording of leading a collaborative SAS support session with a colleague or trainee that explores a process issue and/or individualised teaching process from a past SAS Child Club Meeting and planning for a future meeting; and
- Provide a written description to accompany the video/audio file that reflects on the strategies used to support the colleague, including time point references from the video/audio file.

THE SOCIAL SKILLS TRAINING INSTITUTE

The Social Skills Training Institute (SST) is the organisation that publishes the Secret Agent Society, making it available worldwide to children, parents and professionals. Social Skills Training Pty Ltd (trading as SST) is a subsidiary of the not-for-profit Autism CRC Ltd (Cooperative Research Centre for Living with Autism; Autism CRC) which is a world-first research collaboration. SST's mission is to develop and deliver evidence-based resources for professionals and families worldwide in order to assist young people to build personal and social responsibility to find their pathway.

www.sst-institute.net

APPENDIX A

How Effective Is The Program?

Multiple University and community trials have shown SAS to be effective in improving children's emotion regulation and social skills when delivered in clinic, school and home contexts.

Autism Spectrum

Results from the initial clinic-based randomised controlled trial of the SAS Small Group program (formerly called the Junior Detective Training Program) showed 76 per cent of children aged 8 to 12 years with Asperger's Syndrome who had clinically significant delays in social functioning improved to showing social skills within the range of typically developing children⁶. Improvements in social skills and emotional regulation occurred across home and school and were maintained 5-months after the program ended. This Australian study currently holds the most clinically significant change published in the world for a social skills program for children with High-Functioning ASD.

An independent evaluation of the SAS Small Group program conducted in Autism Spectrum Australia (ASPECT) Satellite Classes across five NSW school districts showed that SAS led to improvements in the emotional regulation and social skills of students with ASD, with treatment gains maintained one year after the program ended¹⁰. Results showed that supplementing the school curriculum with SAS led to significantly greater gains in students' social-emotional functioning than the standard curriculum alone, with SAS shown to be equally effective irrespective of students' socio-economic status, verbal comprehension level, gender, or age (between 8 and 14 years). This three-year evaluation involved collaboration between ASPECT and academics from the University of Sydney, University of Queensland, Monash University, Griffith University, Westmead Children's Hospital and King's College (London).

Multiple sites across the world have conducted community implementation projects to demonstrate the benefits of using the SAS Small Group program in local hospital and school services. These include the National Educational Psychology Service in Ireland, Geneva Centre for Autism in Canada, the Children's Hospital Los Angeles¹¹ and Buffalo School Districts in USA.

A Queensland-based trial of SAS was conducted in mainstream schools comparing the effectiveness of a variant of the SAS Small Group program to the SAS Computer Game Pack. Results showed that both interventions led to improvements in the emotional regulation and social skills of students with ASD, although the small group intervention led to greater treatment gains⁴. The small group program participants also displayed reductions in child anxiety, improvements in student behaviour and enhanced parent and teacher self-efficacy.

Parent coaching variants of SAS have been evaluated through randomised control trials at the University of Queensland. Parents were supported by a trained SAS Facilitator via phone/web link, to deliver either a variant of the SAS Small Group Program or the SAS Computer Game Pack, with results showing improvements in the emotion regulation and social skills of children with ASD^{12,16,19}. The group program variant also improved children's behaviour and parents' self-efficacy.

Individual Delivery

Preliminary evaluations and RCTs of individual delivery variants of the SAS Small Group program resources in Australia¹³ and Canada^{15,17} have also shown positive findings for improving the emotion regulation and/or social skills of children with ASDs.



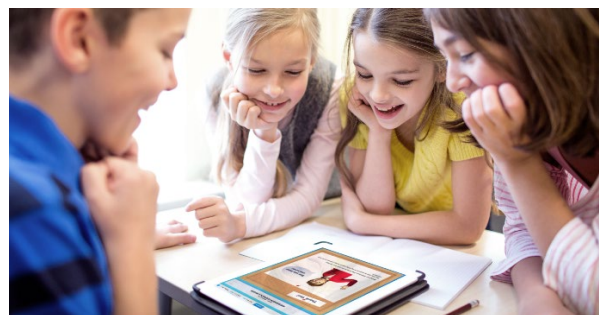
Other Social-Emotional Challenges

A pilot evaluation conducted at the University of Queensland has demonstrated the effectiveness of the SAS Small Group program for children who have social-emotional challenges, but who do not have an ASD³. This trial included students with learning difficulties, ADHD, anxiety disorders and those who had not been formally diagnosed with a psychological disorder. SAS was as effective for these children as for those with an ASD (as demonstrated in previous trials), with significant improvements in children's emotional-regulation skills, anxiety levels and social functioning shown.

Multiple applied research evaluations are currently underway or nearing completion within child mental health and developmental disability services across the globe. These studies include locations such as Dublin in Ireland, Melbourne in Australia and a multi-site randomised controlled trial through Weill Cornell Medicine and New York Presbyterian Hospital in New York USA¹⁸.

Girls Relative To Boys

Findings from several trials described above have shown SAS to be as effective for girls as it is for boys. However, the Second edition, SAS Small Group Program materials have been updated with more girl-friendly graphics, activities and specific program content in response to feedback from children, parents and professionals



Children Of Different Ages And Intelligence

Results from the ASPECT Satellite Class Trial and the initial clinic-based randomised controlled trial described previously showed SAS to be equally effective irrespective of a child's age (8-14 years in the ASPECT Trial; 8-12 years in the clinic trial) or IQ (a small number of students had mild to moderate intellectual impairments in the ASPECT Trial; all had an IQ at least within the average range in the clinic trial). The Second edition of SAS Small Group includes more simplified language and facilitator tips for tailoring to lower levels of intellectual functioning and/or learning difficulties.

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APPENDIX B

Program Delivery Preparation

The below example outlines the Small Group program flow, and staff time allocation when running a group with 6 children. Please note that the assessment and teacher check-in time is proportional to the number of children per group. It is recommended that SAS Facilitators allocate 45 minutes to 1 hour 20 minutes per child for assessment activities over the course of the program. For teacher check-ins, it is recommended that SAS Facilitators allocate 20 minutes per child (2 x 10 minute check-ins per child).

Intake and Pre-Assessment

For a group of 6 children, it is recommended that SAS Facilitators allocate 4 ½ to 8 hours for the Intake & Pre-Assessment, commonly consisting of the following:

- Registration forms / Expressions of interest from parents;
- Intake interviews with parents and children;
- School observation and teacher intake interview; and
- Scoring and interpretation of pre-program assessments.

Cadet Places

SAS Providers and Facilitators will need to ensure that they monitor the use of cadet places included in their chosen subscription package. Some services ensure their subscribed cadet places adequately cover the planned number of group participants per year. Others choose a lower level subscription and plan to purchase additional cadet places as needed, this includes where services have families that prefer to pay for software access separately to meet funding or rebate requirements. Additional cadet places can be purchased outside of any chosen SAS Provider package.

Preparation and Debrief

SAS Facilitators may allocate up to 15 hours for session preparation and debriefing/supervision with their co-facilitator and/or peers.

Staffing Requirements

The following tables provide a guide to the professional staffing requirements of the SAS Small Group Program.

Assessment: Intake process and outcome evaluation

SAS Program Activity	No of Sessions	Estimated Hours
<u>Pre Program Intake & Assessment</u> Intake interview + Q're administration, scoring and interpretation - Parent, Teacher, Child, school observation	1	1-5.5
<u>Post Program Assessment</u> Q're administration and Scoring /observational assessment / scoring and interpretation/ feedback and consultation to parents & teachers	3	1-3

Child Group Meetings (2 x delivery format options)

SAS Program Activity	No of Sessions	Minimum Contact Hours
SAS Child Group Meetings	11-22	16

Parent Group Meetings (3 x delivery format options)

SAS Program Activity	No of Sessions	Minimum Contact Hours
SAS Parent Group Meetings	6-23	8-12

School - School and/or Teacher Contact (Varies across SAS Providers)

SAS Program Activity	Minimum Contact Hours
SAS School Information Session & Teacher Check-Ins	2-9

Program Delivery Support

Research shows that post-training support within an organisation is critical for effective and sustainable program delivery.

Peer Support

- It is recommended that SAS Facilitators review program content with their co-facilitator and/or a peer support group to problem-solve obstacles to effective program delivery on an ongoing basis. Recommendation on how to do this effectively will be provided in training.

Half-hour Individual Consultation

Each training place includes a half-hour consultation with an accredited Secret Agent Society Consultant.

- Consultations are scheduled by individual SAS Facilitators, usually within the first month of program delivery. The agenda for the phone call or web link is determined by the SAS Facilitator, and typically focuses on successes and barriers to program implementation.
- Co-facilitators may elect to share their follow-up consultations with others.

Social Skills Training Institute Website

The SST Website will assist SAS Facilitators in promoting their service to the community through:

- Providing a “Find a SAS Provider” feature;
- Sharing our latest news articles through local networks; and
- Directing families to information on what to expect in the SAS Small Group program and how it will benefit their family.

Promotional support materials

Trained SAS Providers are offered a range of tools and materials to help promote their SAS service.

Additional Clinical Support Available

A number of additional clinical support options can be purchased as needed. These may include:

- Telephone/live video consultations;
- Video/audio footage review; and
- Site visits



APPENDIX C

Checklist 1 - Capacities and Resources

This checklist will help you to understand your organisation's current capacity to deliver the program, including strengths and areas that may require further attention. Please contact SST on training@sst-institute.net to discuss any questions or concerns that arise when completing the checklist.

Capacities and Resources
Are the key decision makers within your organisation informed about the program and supportive of its implementation?
Have all staff who will be completing the training course been briefed about SAS and how it meets organisational objectives?
Does your organisation have access to appropriate children to deliver the program to (i.e. 8 to 12 year-old children with social-emotional challenges, usually with IQ close to or within average range), and capacity to engage parents and teachers?
Do you meet the eligibility requirements for attending the SAS Facilitator Training Course?
Have you planned how you will recruit families to attend SAS groups?
Have you planned how many SAS groups your organisation intends to deliver and over what time frame?
Have you planned how many children will participate in each group?
Have you planned how many facilitators will need to be trained to maintain a maximum ratio of 1 facilitator per 4 children (ideally 1:3)?
Will staff have sufficient time, space and equipment available to effectively deliver SAS in the 12 or 23 session format (including booster sessions) with child, parent and teacher components via face-to-face or telehealth?
Is there a plan for supporting ongoing quality-assured SAS program delivery?
Are you aware of available funding options for your organisation to deliver SAS or families to access your services?
Are you linked with a subscribed SAS Provider and have a planned budget for using the SAS software with families?
Have you planned how families will be informed about SAS and how program intake will be managed?
Has your workplace considered workforce attrition (of trained SAS Facilitators) or increased program demand in your preparation?

APPENDIX D

Coordinating SAS Training as a Team

To assist services wishing to encourage collaborative team learning, the following provides recommendations for undertaking the self-paced online SAS Facilitator Training as a team.

Training Preparation Planning

- Where possible identify a Training Coordinator to support the communication processes leading up to the event.
- Establish the most suitable training timeline (session by dates and times) with your team. The team can complete training synchronously including; engagement in discussion when prompted by course materials, or asynchronously in their own time with strategically scheduled peer consultation meetings.
 - a. Note: A minimum of fourteen (14) hours is recommended for completion of the self-paced training units.
- Block out the time in your team's calendars:
 - a. Synchronous group training: e.g. Two days or 4 x 4hr sessions (these times include breaks). More details provided below;
 - b. Asynchronous group training: e.g. 1 x 30min Welcome meeting, 2 x 1-2hr Peer consultation meetings, and 1 x 1hr Implementation planning meeting. More details provided below; and
 - c. Note: Participants are required to complete 100% of the training modules to become SAS Facilitators.
- Provide your team with the SAS Implementation Guide.
- Ensure that the team are aware of the training and technical requirements, including tips to ensure a comfortable and successful training experience.

Recommended technical requirements

- Reliable internet access*;
- A compatible device and recently updated browser (phones are not recommended as they are too small);
- Headphones (optional);
- Paper and pens to take additional notes (optional); and
- A shared document/whiteboard/flip chart for questions or brainstorming as a team.

**If completing the training from an organisation such as a government school, it may be important to ensure that the team has the required technical/administrative permissions in place prior to accessing the SAS software.*

Additional tips and tricks

- It is suggested, where possible that participants complete training in a space with natural light and good ventilation;
- Whilst undertaking the training, it is highly recommended where possible that mobile devices are switched to silent and participants are free from external distractions; and
- Water to keep hydrated and perhaps a snack for energy between breaks.

Synchronous Team Training

- Plan a ‘*Welcome to SAS Facilitator Training*’ presentation leading into the commencement of the first training unit. This is an important step in the training process as it allows organisations to briefly:
 - Introduce their strategic vision for SAS Small Group within their service suite;
 - Set the scene for planning and expectations for SAS Small Group Program implementation;
 - Establish group training “rules” to maximise a respectful and effective training experience;
 - Provide each participant with their training coupon code to access the online units (if relevant);
 - Advise participants that all relevant training materials will be provided digitally within the training units;
 - Notify participants of any scheduled breaks or catering;
 - Discuss WHS or ‘housekeeping’ requirements (if applicable); and
 - Allow participants to commence the training at the same time.*

*If a participant is unable to complete the course within the team’s allocated training plan, they will have three (3) months to complete the course before access expires.

- Allocate a timekeeper to monitor the stages of progress and length of discussions in attempt to have all team members roughly progressing at a similar pace (and to finish within the time you have allocated).
- Team members can discuss and brainstorm together prior to submitting their answers. Note: each trainee is required to enter their own responses logged in under their own account to complete the course. Consider structuring the team into small groups or pairs and prompting a change of training team at predictable stages of the training process.
- Schedule and plan an ‘*SAS Implementation Planning Meeting*’ at the expected conclusion of the training period. Facilitate a discussion on the practical implementation of SAS Small Group at your organisation. For example:
 - When will groups start?
 - Do we need new promotional/information materials?
 - What existing procedures do we need to adapt?
 - How can we as a team be as efficient as possible with group meetings and communication with mentors?
- Consolidate any unanswered questions and submit to SST. Alternatively, schedule a meeting with an SST representative to discuss SAS implementation at your organisation.

Asynchronous Team Training

- Schedule and plan a ‘*Welcome to SAS Facilitator Training Meeting*’ prior to training period commencement. This is an important step in the training process as it allows organisations to:
 - Introduce their strategic vision for SAS Small Group within their service suite;

- Set the scene for planning and expectations for SAS Small Group Program implementation;
- Provide each participant with their training coupon code to access the online units (if relevant);
- Advise participants that all relevant training materials will be provided digitally within the training units;
- Notify participants of any recommended breaks and times;
- Discuss WHS or 'housekeeping' requirements (if applicable); and
- Allow participants to commence the training at the same time.*

**If a participant is unable to complete the course within the team's allocated training plan, they will have three (3) months to complete the course before access expires.*

- Schedule at least two (2) 'Peer Consultation Sessions' which, depending on your training timeline, can be held at the end of each day or training period throughout the training timeline.
- Provide guidance that 'Peer Consultation Sessions' are for bringing together SAS Small Group Program questions that have arisen from the training course, to find answers as a group, and to record any unanswered questions.
 - It is recommended that the peer questions be clearly identified as being either SAS Program questions or organisational implementation questions. This will ensure a balance of both types in peer discussions.
- Schedule and plan an 'SAS Implementation Planning Meeting' at the conclusion of the expected training completion period. Facilitate a discussion on the practical implementation of SAS Small Group at your organisation. For example:
 - When will groups start?
 - Do we need new promotional/information materials?
 - What existing procedures do we need to adapt?
 - How can we as a team be as efficient as possible with group meetings and communication with mentors?
- Consolidate any unanswered questions and submit to SST. Alternatively, schedule a meeting with an SST representative to discuss SAS implementation at your organisation.

Post Training

Once training is completed professionals will have continued access to review the training material through their facilitator dashboard. All program materials for running SAS groups are accessed via the SAS software when linked to a subscribed SAS Provider.

Contact Us

Email: training@sst-institute.net

Phone: +61 7 3720 8740

www.sst-institute.net

