The Experience of Individuals who stutter who have attended the Dublin Adult Stuttering (DAS) Programme

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List of Abbreviations:

   DAS    Dublin Adult Stuttering Course
   P1     Participant 1
   P2     Participant 2
   P3     Participant 3
   P4     Participant 4
   PWS    People/person who stutter(s)
   SLT    Speech & Language Therapist
Abstract

**Background:** This paper presents the results of an in-depth qualitative study designed to further our understanding of the experience of individuals who attended the Dublin Adult Stuttering (DAS) programme. Stuttering is a complex communication disorder that can affect many aspects of a speaker’s life. Many individuals who stutter engage in avoidance behaviours. A key element of the DAS programme is to gradually reduce avoidance and become more comfortable with stuttering. It is proposed that a reduction in avoidance should lead to a reduction in the stuttering, and more importantly, the impact of stuttering on individual’s lives long term.

**Aim:** To investigate the perceptions of People who Stutter (PWS) about their lives, the DAS programme and their attitudes to stuttering since completion of the course.

**Methodology:** A phenomenological approach was employed to obtain the perspectives of these individuals. Purposive sampling of 4 PWS took place and semi-structured interviews were conducted. Thematic analysis was then performed to identify common themes among the interviews.

**Results:** Key aspects identified by participants were the benefit of meeting other PWS and the comfort of being able to share experiences with others who could relate. Additionally, participants spoke of the acceptance of stuttering they gained from completing the course and the various benefits experienced in their lives from partaking in the course.

**Conclusion:** Common themes emerged regarding attitudes to the DAS course and attitudes to stuttering. Participants perceived that the DAS therapy program had positive effects on their everyday lives.

**Key Words:** Qualitative research; Life experiences; Stuttering; Adults
1. Introduction

1.1. Stuttering Background

Stuttering is a disorder of verbal communication that affects approximately 1% of the world’s population (Bloodstein and Bernstein Ratner 2007). This is a disorder of verbal fluency that is often associated with negative stereotypes such as shyness and anxiety (Hughes et al 2012). The speech of people who stutter (PWS) is often fraught with repetitions, hesitations, and stoppages in speech production (Guitar 2006).

Stuttering has been studied from a number of different perspectives. Much of the early literature on stuttering developed from personal descriptions and anecdotes from different individuals’ experiences of their own stuttering (Van Riper 1973; Sheehan 1975). Over time, research into therapy methods and studies have been focused on behavioural therapies and measuring specific goals as part of therapy (Ryan and Van Kirk Ryan 1983; Kingston et al 2003). Previous research has shown how stuttering plays an important role in shaping an individual’s personal experience (e.g. Corcoran and Stewart 1998; Crichton-Smith 2002; Daniels and Gabel 2004).

There are a number of different factors to consider when embarking on stuttering research. An important consideration is the individual experience of stuttering, and stuttering treatment programmes. Considerable research has been generated in these two areas, using both qualitative and quantitative approaches.

1.2. Avoidance and Fear

Fear and avoidance are often experienced by PWS. A study by Craig and Tran (2006) highlighted how PWS experience chronic levels of anxiety, and also discussed their subsequent fear and avoidance of social interactions. Similarly, Petrunik and Shearing’s (1983) study examined how stutterers avoid specific situations, and employ certain tactics to avoid being discovered as a PWS.
Sheehan et al (2005) proposed that a therapy approach which targets avoidance reduction, is most effective. It is proposed that in reducing avoidance behaviours, fluency will be increased (Ibid.). The DAS programme is based on these principles.

1.3. Meanings of Stuttering

Corcoran and Stewart (1995) discuss how the ‘meanings’ that stuttering has for an individual, influences how they will experience their stuttering. Additionally, these authors found that reduced stuttering does not essentially ameliorate stuttering, as the ‘meaning of stuttering’ plays such an important role, and may impact the type of strategies that the individual uses. Findings from this study suggest that a positive change in the meaning of stuttering should be an important goal of therapy.

1.4. Quantitative Research

Quantitative methods with regard to stuttering research have been extremely popular in recent years (Huber et al 2004). Measures such as questionnaires and rating scales have been used to determine how stuttering may impact attitudes, thinking and emotional states (Hayhow and Stewart 2006). A systematic review by Bothe and Andreatta (2004) noted that of 370 articles on stuttering in 3 journals, between the years 1994 and 2003, 335 of these studies used quantitative methods, 7 used purely qualitative methods and 13 used mixed methods.

Questionnaires are one of the means of obtaining quantitative data. A study by Hayhow et al (2002) used a postal questionnaire, containing closed and open questions to seek the views of PWS. This examined a number of areas including the effect of stuttering on their lives, the speech and language therapy they received and their thoughts about the future. A key theme which emerged was how stuttering was considered to be a greater problem in school and occupation, than in areas of leisure and relationships.
Quantitative methods have played a vital role in the understanding of stuttering (Finn and Felsenfeld 2004). However, there are a number of aspects where a qualitative approach is best suited (Hayhow and Stewart 2006). Quantitative studies are restricted, insofar as they provide no understanding of how changes made as part of therapy relate to the individual, or the way individuals interpret the experience after the therapy has ended. Additionally, there are rarely opportunities to follow up on any issues which may arise (Cheek et al 2004).

Furthermore, given the extremely individualised nature of stuttering (Corcoran and Stewart 1998; Crichton Smith 2002; Klompas and Ross 2004; Plexico et al 2005), a shift is necessary from quantitative to qualitative methods (Huber et al 2004) to gain an insight into the lives of these PWS.

1.5. Qualitative Research

Qualitative research approaches are important in gathering data based on client’s personal experiences, particularly given the complex and subjective nature of stuttering (Corcoran and Stewart 1998; Crichton-Smith 2002; Cheek et al 2004; Stewart and Richardson 2004; Irani et al 2012). A substantial amount of theory underpins qualitative research. Approaches such as ethnographic research, phenomenological approaches and symbolic interactionism are 3 of the most popular research methodologies emerging in qualitative research.

1.5.1 Phenomenological Research

Of greatest significance for this current research was the phenomenological approach. Bryman (1988) describes how this type of research focuses directly on people’s experiences, and their interpretations of these experiences. Phenomenological approaches have been used in studies examining stuttering (Plexico et al 2005; Irani et al 2012). In particular, Irani et al (2012) examined the experience of individuals who attended an intensive therapy programme. These authors emphasise the importance of how participants in a phenomenological study must be individuals who have experience of the phenomena being explored, and are willing to discuss their experiences.
1.5.2 Interviews

A number of studies have examined experiences of stuttering and stuttering therapy programmes (Corcoran and Stewart 1995; Corcoran and Stewart 1998; Crichton-Smith 2002; Stewart and Richardson 2004). In-depth interviews with individuals who had received stuttering therapy were carried out in these studies. Semi-structured interviews were used in some cases (Crichton-Smith 2002; Irani et al 2012) as this facilitates the use of the same questions with each individual, but takes into account that each person will have a unique story (Coolican 1990). Follow up interviews were also conducted in some studies (e.g. Corcoran and Stewart 1998), to afford participants an opportunity to comment on the researchers interpretations of the first interview.

A study by Anderson and Felsenfeld (2003) explored the experiences of individuals who reported late recovering from stuttering. Interviews were conducted, and the process of thematic analysis was then employed to determine the themes of those who have recovered from stuttering. This was a successful process, where thematic categories were developed to capture the majority of participants' responses.

1.6. Experiences of Stuttering

A number of similar themes have emerged from the qualitative research to date examining individuals’ experiences of stuttering. People who stutter may encounter disruption to their everyday life in situations involving verbal communication (Crichton-Smith 2002; Kathard et al 2004). Many people who stutter develop adaptive behaviours, including word and situation avoidance (Bloodstein 1995; Crichton-Smith 2002; Cream et al 2003).

Corcoran and Stewart (1998) found ‘suffering’ to be a key theme, with helplessness, shame, fear and avoidance being core experiences of people who stutter. Similarly, Crichton-Smith’s (2002) study observed themes such as restriction, poor self-esteem and often strong (negative) emotional reactions, which are consistent with other researcher’s findings (Kathard et al 2004; Klompas and Ross 2004).
Avoidance, also described as ‘limitation’, emerged as a theme in several research studies (Corcoran and Stewart 1998; Crichton-Smith 2002; Bricker-Katz et al 2010). In particular, Bricker-Katz et al (2010) studied older people who stutter, finding that individuals who continued to work experienced limitation by their stuttering, as their occupation often involved speaking situations with unknown people.

However, avoidance and limitation were not themes identified in a 2004 study by Klompas and Ross. Here evidence was presented on the impact stuttering had on participants’ lives, but, interestingly, not all of this was negative. Many of the participants in this study declared that stuttering has made them who they are, and expressed that they would choose to stutter again if presented with the choice.

1.7. Experiences of Therapy

A number of studies also examined specific experiences of stuttering treatment approaches (Anderson and Felsenfeld 2003; Corcoran and Stewart 1995; Crichton-Smith 2002; Stewart and Richardson 2004). Some predominant themes which emerged from these studies were the individual’s understanding of stuttering (Corcoran and Stewart 1995), sharing of stories (DiLollo et al 2002) and contact with other individuals who stutter (Stewart and Richardson 2004). Some other themes which emerged included the difficulty generalising therapy techniques outside of the clinical setting and the need for on-going support (Crichton-Smith 2002; Stewart and Richardson 2004). Interestingly, some of these findings, such as the desire for on-going support, are consistent with those determined using quantitative methods. However, qualitative research gives a greater insight as to how individuals feel about stuttering.

In a study by Plexico et al (2005), themes which helped the transition from unsuccessful to successful management of stuttering were identified. Current successful management of stuttering was thought to be due to ‘continued management’, ‘self-acceptance and fear reduction’, ‘unrestricted interactions and sense of freedom’ and ‘optimism’.
1.8. Summary

Qualitative research methods are fundamentally different than quantitative paradigms, as they sacrifice rigid experimental controls, quantifiable data, and statistical analysis for a deep understanding of the issues at hand (Maxwell 2005). However, they are essential when considering the individual experiences of stuttering and therapy.

The reports on people’s experiences of stuttering and therapy show that there is still much to learn. Taking all of these studies into consideration, it can be observed that there are a number of varying approaches which can be adopted when examining stuttering. Additionally, each study presents something new with regard to experiences of stuttering and the different stuttering programmes. As highlighted by Hayhow and Stewart (2006), the lack of homogeneity among individuals who stutter suggests that there will be variation among individuals and therapy approaches.

Additionally, the research collectively reviewed here suggests that more studies exploring the meanings of stuttering for different individuals, and more in-depth examination of the effects of different therapies, may be useful to develop further theories about this issue and the process of change.

Consequently, the purpose of this study was to describe the experiences of individuals who attended the DAS therapy programme and how it has impacted their lives. Additionally, aims of the present study were to learn more about the meanings of stuttering, and the impact it has on each individual. This research project intended to expand and build on existing research by investigating the life experiences of individuals who stutter who have specifically attended the DAS course. Furthermore, it was envisaged that this present study would yield information about what aspects of the programme participants felt were useful, to advise future therapy plans.
2. Methodology

Twelve adults who stutter, living in Dublin, were recruited to take part in a research project to examine their experiences of an adult therapy programme they attended. However, early into the project, one participant withdrew from the study, due to scheduling difficulties. Two other student SLT’s were involved in this project, with each student assigned 4 participants. Student SLT’s had no involvement in the running of the DAS programmes.

2.1. Participants & Recruitment

Four adults who had attended the DAS programme participated in the present study. This study was part of a larger study, which included 11 participants overall. These individuals were recruited from the therapy maintenance group via email (Appendix A). Criteria specified that participants had to be (a) a person who stuttered, (b) over 18 years of age and (c) a person who attended a DAS course during the past 7 years.

Table 1 shows demographic information for the 4 participants. The mean age for this sample was 40 years, with a range of 25-56 years at the time of interviews. There was 1 male and 3 female participants. Time since the course was completed varied from between 2 years to 8 years ago. No speech criteria were established for participation. That is, there was no a priori screening for stuttering frequency or any other speech behaviours.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participants:</th>
<th>Gender:</th>
<th>Education:</th>
<th>Age (at DAS course)</th>
<th>Age (at Interview)</th>
<th>Year Course Completed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>P1: DC</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>School up to 18 years</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>2011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P2: MR</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Higher Education/Post 18 Years</td>
<td>33;10</td>
<td>40;6</td>
<td>2006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P3: MS</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>School up to 16 years</td>
<td>49;2</td>
<td>56;9</td>
<td>2005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P4: NTB</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Higher Education/Post 18 Years</td>
<td>22;10</td>
<td>25;5</td>
<td>2010</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
2.2 Research Instrumentation

Interviews were used as the method of data collection in the present study, as the researchers felt that they were most suitable in terms of obtaining information regarding the personal accounts of the experiences of individuals who stutter. A copy of the interview questions are set out in Appendix B. At the time of the interviews student SLT’s had no knowledge of the DAS course, and had not completed coursework in fluency.

2.3 Measures

The study reported here represents an attempt to explore stuttering using a phenomenological based methodology. This study did not set out to prove or disprove hypotheses or to test theory; rather it sought to generate phenomenological data from which an understanding might be developed. It is a study of individual’s experience of stuttering, and their perceptions of the DAS course and life since completion of the course.

This study used thematic analysis to gain a better understanding of the experiences of individuals who attended the DAS programme. Using a semi-structured interview, 4 adults who attended the programme were asked to relate their experience of the course. The interviews were analysed, with quotes extracted, which were later placed into thematic categories.

2.4 Research Protocol

2.4.1 Data Collection

After obtaining ethical approval for the research project, arrangements were made to carry out the interviews. All participants, having read and signed a consent form (Appendix C), were interviewed. Individual interviews ranged from 40 minutes to 1 hour to complete. All 4 interviews were carried out by two students, one primary investigator and one secondary investigator. Two of the interviews were carried out in a clinical room, one was carried out in a conference room and the final was conducted using Skype. Each interview was
conducted in a quiet room, free from distraction. The interviews were audio recorded using a high quality digital audio recorder.

Each interview was designed to elicit information about participants’ experiences of the DAS course, using questions derived from published data regarding people's perceptions of stuttering courses (Corcoran & Stewart 1998). These were open-ended, semi-structured questions, which were used flexibly, being adapted or elaborated according to the demands of the individual context. Whilst trying to avoid directive or closed questions or interpretations, the interview did adopt a stance of 'talking back' to the interviewee (Griffin 1990), using prompts and requests for clarification as necessary.

Three primary topic areas were probed during the interview: (a) recollections before the course, (b) perceptions of the course and (c) perceptions since the course. Participants were also asked to describe and "define" what stuttering means to them.

**2.4.2 Data Analysis**

Preparation and analysis of the interview data generally followed guidelines outlined by Boyatzis (1998). All participants were audio-recorded. Following each interview, the student speech and language therapist transcribed the audio files verbatim. The investigator read each transcript multiple times and highlighted all quotes deemed to be information rich. Quotes selected were those that were considered to be most relevant to the topic areas being probed as part of this study.

**2.4.3 Transcription**

Each interview was transcribed verbatim from the audio recorder using a standard word processing program (See Appendix D). Interjections (such as 'um' and 'uh'), along with word or phrase repetitions, were included during transcription.
2.5 Thematic Analysis

2.5.1 Preparation and Analysis of the Interview Data

From listening to the audiotaped interviews, initial themes or codes were identified by highlighting quotes of interest. These quotes were then transferred to a new word processing document, where they were double spaced and printed on coloured pages, with one colour assigned to each participant.

2.5.2 Thematic Coding Procedures

Braun and Clarke (2006) outline how thematic analysis is a method for identifying, analysing and reporting patterns (or themes) within data. Information that appeared to be thematically related was sorted together. The original sort was done using a "bottom up" procedure, using the quotes themselves to form codes. Themes, or meaningful units, were subsequently developed by grouping similar codes, thus allowing the investigators to present the broader issues that were representative of participants’ individual responses (Maxwell 2005).

Codes were grouped together to form sub-themes, which then formed the basis for more over-arching themes. The interpretation of these themes was conducted by a process of reading and re-reading, as well as reference to relevant literature and consultation with colleagues/fellow researchers. These themes were then checked and re-checked and combined under 3 categories: ‘Recollections before the DAS programme’, ‘Perceptions of the DAS programme’ and ‘Perceptions since the DAS programme’. Within this 10 themes were established, which included three or more sub-themes.

For example, a category called 'increased confidence' was created, and included quotes such as “a lot more confident” and “I’m more confident you know about going into a situation where I usen’t to”. Each quote was placed in only one category. Categories were modified or collapsed to eliminate redundancy (e.g. ‘sliding’ and ‘eye contact’ were merged to form ‘techniques’ learned as part of the course).
2.6. Reliability

2.6.1. Transcription

Transcription reliability was confirmed by a fellow student SLT researcher. A sample of one of the audio recorded interviews was provided, and subsequently transcribed. These were then compared to verify that transcription was accurate.

2.6.2. Coding

To determine coding reliability, a professor in Speech-Language Therapy was provided with a list of codes and was asked to assign each code as she felt was most appropriate. Interrater agreement between the investigator and the reliability judge was 94% (i.e. 33 out of 35 codes were assigned to the same by both raters independently).

2.6.3. Member checking

The process of member checking was carried out to ensure credibility of the themes which emerged. This involved the student SLT contacting each participant, advising them of the themes that had emerged from interview analysis. Each participant was then asked to comment on whether or not they felt the themes were appropriate in capturing their experiences.

3. Results

This study sought to investigate the experiences of adults who stutter, who attended the DAS programme. Specifically, there were 3 aspects which were covered as part of the research: (1) Recollections before the DAS programme; (2) Experiences of the DAS programme; and (3) Perceptions since the DAS programme. Results of data collection are reported in this section. The data will be presented in tables and includes quotes made by participants. The quotes used are those which best supported each theme, and an attempt
was made to include quotes from a variety of participants. All quotes are included in Appendix E.

Data analysis revealed ten themes, and each of these themes contained sub-themes. Figure F1 (Appendix F) displays both the themes and sub-themes from the participants’ responses in a mind-map representation.

3.1. Recollections before the DAS Programme

As part of their recollection of life before completing the DAS course, participants described their early stuttering experiences and the impact this had on school, themselves and their participation in everyday activities. Participants also provided a description of what stuttering meant to them, and discussed the impact it had on them. They also discussed previous therapeutic intervention they had received for stuttering. Results of the analysis of “recollections before the DAS programme” are presented in Figure 1.

![Figure 1: Recollections before DAS Programme](image)

3.1.1. Early Stuttering Experiences: Attitudes

All 4 participants reported feelings of disappointment that their stuttering wasn't targeted when they were a child, and expressed concern for children who stutter now. Examples are as follows:
**P1**: if I had of learned that when I was a kid you know I mean it would have been a lot more easier

**P2**: would be much better if I started working on that when I was a child

**P3**: I hope that children now who have it, I hope they’re not getting a bad time with speech

**P4**: early intervention would mean that eh...would mean that you would get those techniques and those kind of ways of thinking about a stammer at an early age

### 3.1.2. Early stuttering experiences: School

One participant acknowledged that school was a difficult experience, describing how a classmate who also stuttered “was laughed at in school and I was as well” (P1). Two participants identified oral reading in front of a class as a difficult experience of stuttering in school. For example, P3 reported:

**P3**: other times you know, I just, to stand up in class to read, in front of the rest of the class you know, it left things worse

Similar to this, P4 remarked that:

**P4**: reading out in English class, a stress, it was a real stress

### 3.1.3. Early stuttering experiences: Therapeutic Involvement

Three out of the four participants in the study responded that they had received some formal intervention for stuttering at some point during their lifetimes. The remaining participant expressed sentiments that she would have liked to have had therapy, but it was never considered. The participants' perceptions of therapy, as well as the type and duration of treatment varied across all participants. Examples from participants include:
P1: done one or two speech and language, but they didn’t work

P2: I wanted but I didn’t know where and who and it was different then

P3: I attended therapy for years

P3: then I didn’t think there was much point

P4: I had done Speech therapy before

P4: I did some speech therapy when I was younger

3.1.4. Insights to stuttering: Description of stuttering

In general, participants in the present study described their past stuttering in quite negative terms. P1, for example, described his stuttering in the following way: “frustrating, makes you angry” and “it’s just annoying, head-wrecking and you know just it blows your head up at times”. P2 described her past stuttering behaviours by noting that it was “like a disease” or “like an enemy”. She also described it as a “horrible situation”. Similarly, P3 described her stuttering by saying that “it was horrific”, “tough” and “just like a monster”. One participant, P4, provided a more clinical description of stuttering: “an inexplicable, uncurable, em, yeah, eh, impediment on your speech” and “something like that stops you from communicating in a way that you want to”. She also added that “at times it’s so annoying and so frustrating”.

3.1.5. Insights to stuttering: Perceptions of stuttering

All 4 participants reported different ways which stuttering impacted them. Many participants reported feelings of shame and low self-esteem. Examples include:

P1: I think I’m harder on me than anyone else is that’s how I’ve always been

P2: would rather um like that people think there is something wrong with me rather than anybody realise that I stammered
P2: I was ashamed to go to anybody and to admit that I stammered
P2: I had a huge iceberg

P3: I didn’t know much
P3: I just had a stammer and that was it

P4: it didn’t stop me doing kind of practically everything that I wanted to do but it was and still is a big part of my life

3.1.6. Psychological Impact: Lonely

Three out of the four participants in the study described feeling lonely, and experiences of isolation, as a result of stuttering. P1 reported that he would “always hide in the corner” and that “I wasn’t outspoken enough because and all I have a stammer”. P2 expressed that “it was mostly that it was a lonely experience” and “I didn’t talk to anybody”. Similarly, P3 said “it was very lonely” and that she “didn’t mix with anyone”. Furthermore she reported “I had no friends”, “I just had family” and “when I was with somebody and I met someone they’d speak to that person”, “it was like I had no voice”.

3.1.7. Psychological Impact: Emotional

In terms of perceptions of emotional impact, most participants revealed stuttering was very emotional for them. For example:

P1: got really emotional

P2: I was very emotional

P2: I was so upset about it

P4: before it probably would have been a more emotional response

P4: I think a lot of people underestimate the effects a stammer has
3.1.8. Limitations of stuttering: Avoidance

All participants reported avoidance in some form. P1 described that he “always just stood actually you know a way a bit, just worked away”. P2 expressed that “it was a huge thing for me it was uh it prevented me from many things”. She further outlined “I kind of tried to avoid” and “I used tricks”. One of the examples of her tricks was to “pretend I don’t know how in English to say something”. P3 is self-described as “the best avoider”. She explained that “I used to get the children to make the phone calls” and “if I had to go somewhere I’d bring one of them with me, they’d do the talking for me”. P4 recognised that “there were certain kinds of limitations” and specifically she reported “I asked the teacher if she could not call on me to read out”.

3.1.9. Limitations of stuttering: Words

Each of the participants experienced some difficulty with words as a result of their stutter. 3 out of the 4 participants all reported trouble saying their name:

P1: I couldn’t say my name

P2: saying my name and address were the most difficult

P2: these are things that you can’t really pretend or hide

P4: the words that you can’t avoid saying so for example my name

P4: it’s the words you can’t avoid not saying that often kind of have the most fear and that leads to them being difficult to say

Additionally, P2 reported avoiding saying words when she felt she might stutter: “I was just not even trying to say when I feel that it is going to come out”. Similarly P3 recalled: “I used to go into places, you know, and if I couldn’t say, I’d ask for a pen and paper and I’d write down”.
3.1.10 Limitations of stuttering: Situations

All 4 participants indicated situations that they either avoided, or where their stutter would have had a greater impact. 3 out of the 4 participants remarked about their experience when making purchases. For instance, P1: “I wouldn’t walk up to a till and I’d walk out”; P2: “I would never buy a ticket before” and avoided “asking anything on the street or in the shop”; and P3 reported: “I’d em go to the supermarket you know where I could pick up what I needed you know without having to ask”.

Two participants acknowledged specific situations where their stutter caused limitation: P2 spoke of her job, and how a “promotion involved a presentation” and how she “postponed it that presentation for a few years”. Similarly P4 recalled: there “was a play in school that I wish I had the courage to do even though I had my stammer” and that “I didn’t join the debating team when I wish that I had”.

Three participants also described how stuttering can affect situations. Examples are:

- **P2**: definitely I would stammer more in these, unfamiliar situations
- **P2**: any kind of speaking in front of the people
- **P3**: when I’m at home I don’t stammer as much as I’m stammering now
- **P3**: I can talk about different stuff I mightn’t stammer but as soon as the stammering is mentioned you get the stammer
- **P4**: the fear about hiding it and the stress about you know trying to keep hiding it is often what causes me to stammer a lot

3.2. Experience of the DAS programme

Considering their experiences of the DAS programme, participants spoke of the other group members on the course, and what they gained from meeting these other individuals. Participants also discussed the activities they could recall from the course, and the
techniques they learned. Finally, participants’ interpretation of the course was described, and they also detailed the positive feelings they had from attending the course. Results of the analysis of “experience of the DAS programme” are presented in Figure 2.

![Figure 2: Experience of the DAS Programme](image)

### 3.2.1. Group members: Feelings towards group

Three out of the four participants described the benefits of meeting others who stuttered:

- **P1:** meeting you know others who stammered as well like I mean you know its yeah it was good like

- **P2:** was all great to meet all these people and listen to their stories and talk to them

- **P4:** the relaxed and kind of open nature of group in fact meant that I eh didn’t find that my stammer was an issue

- **P4:** I felt very comfortable in the group in a way that I wouldn’t necessarily find myself

### 3.2.2. Group members: Support

Key for 2 of the participants was the staff. P2 considered “all three of them were a great combination” and similarly P3 felt “we got great support” and “if something was bothering you know you could speak to them”.

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3.2.3. Group members: Comparing lives

All participants reported finding it useful to meet others, and compare lives. P1: “one of them’s this one of them is that so you know yeah it’s interesting”. Similarly P2: “you learn there are other people who are doing different jobs, even jobs that involve a lot of speaking”. P3 considered it helpful to see “there was other people that had this as well” and P4 remarked how it was “very interesting to see how eh you know how eh it did or did not affect people more or how people handled it”.

3.2.4. Group members: Shared understanding

Two participants expressed the benefits of meeting others who stammered; P3: “they knew what I was feeling” and P4: “there’s explaining the experience to the person who doesn’t stammer and then there’s sharing with people who do”.

3.2.5. Structure: Techniques

All 4 participants considered the techniques taught as part of the programme to be useful.

- **P1**: the best invention ever was the sliding
- **P2**: I was given the tools to use if I need them
- **P3**: they are useful when you use them
- **P4**: putting in that voluntary slide or stammer it takes that fear of being found out away and kind of admit it as much to the other person as much to yourself
3.2.6. **Structure: Video-recording**

Two of the participants recalled memories of being filmed as challenging aspects of the programme. P2 described the experience: “they put the camera in the room and I just thought that I’m going to collapse”. P4 expressed how it “was challenging to kind of really face up to it you now in a way that you wouldn’t in everyday life”.

3.2.7. **Structure: Public Speaking**

An aspect of the course discussed by 3 participants was speaking in front of the group. P1 recalls “standing up a lot”. P2 outlined “it was the first time that I read something aloud” and “I just remember the feeling of being allowed to do something that I was most fearful about”. P3 reported “that used to be my downfall because I hated speaking you know in front of people”.

3.2.8. **Attitudes towards the experience: Positive feelings**

All of the participants described positive attitudes towards the DAS programme. Examples include:

**P1**: I enjoyed it, was really good

**P2**: I think it’s one of the best things that I ever did

**P3**: the best thing I’ve ever done
**P3**: it has changed the way I feel about stammering

**P4**: very positive, very positive
**P4**: it has made life easier, without doubt
3.2.9. Attitudes towards the experience: Interpretation of the course

Each of the 4 participants provided a different interpretation of the course, and what they felt they gained from it. Examples include:

**P1:** I learned actually a lot on the course about stammering, slidding and myself as well

**P2:** I have learned so many things

**P2:** just doing your exercises and talk about stammering and everything is about stammering and it just, great

**P3:** they were done in a different way, more relaxed

**P4:** there was a sense of kind of progress over the three and a half months

3.3. Perceptions since DAS Programme

Finally, describing their perceptions since completing the DAS programme, participants discussed their experiences since attending the course. They also outlined how they remain conscious about the stuttering, and described the positive changes which have occurred in their life as a result of the programme. Results of the analysis of “perceptions since DAS programme” are presented in Figure 3.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Experiences since group</th>
<th>Remaining Conscious</th>
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**Figure 3: Perceptions since DAS Programme**
3.3.1 Experiences since group: Initial Responses

One participant expressed her insights to her initial experience after completion of the course. P2 reported: “it was difficult after a few weeks when you realised that, that feeling is not going to last, that you need to work hard, that it’s not magic”.

3.3.2. Experiences since group: Follow up Groups

All 4 participants reported that they attended at least one follow up group, and that they found these beneficial.

- **P1**: I’m going to head to the course every month still
- **P2**: it was great, great help
- **P3**: great yeah, it kind of, got you back into the techniques
- **P4**: often it’s good to get a reminder

3.3.3. Experiences since group: Future Considerations

Two out of the four participants revealed that they felt the future would be difficult. P1 commented that “it’ll be hard” and P4 expressed that “new challenges will come”.

3.3.4. Remaining Conscious: Not absolute fluency

All 4 participants were under no illusions that the DAS course had ‘cured’ them, and all remarked that they still stutter:

- **P1**: I’ll always have it you know, you know it won’t ever go
- **P2**: I do stammer and I have, I have problems
- **P3**: I still have you know bouts of stammering
P4: it’s absolutely not that I have no longer have any trouble or problem with my stammer I very much do

3.3.5. Remaining Conscious: Something to work on

P2 and P4 both expressed that the stutter is something they need to work on, with P2 saying “I think I should work on it” and P4 commenting “my stammer is something certainly that I continually work on”.

3.3.6. Remaining Conscious: Coping mechanisms

Three out of the four participants reported that they continue to use coping mechanisms. P2 expressed “I use tricks I use them more than half times”. P3 outlined that “I still do what I have to do” and P4 outlined using coping mechanisms learned from the course when she finds certain words or sounds difficult: “I actually have very little trouble with them then because I know how to get out of a block that I may have”.

3.3.7. Remaining Conscious: Attitudes towards others

All 4 participants commented on the attitudes of other people, and how this affects their lives.

P1: I’ll just have to explain look it I have a stammer

P2: people don’t think it’s a huge problem as they are not aware of the iceberg and of the negative feelings that you have

P3: I used to worry about what people thought
P3: if they don’t like it that’s tough

P4: I think that there is still a real lack of understanding
P4: I think people still kind of have that impression of stammering that it’s yeah it’s because you’re nervous.

P4: sometimes when I stammer you know let’s say, they laugh and it’s not that they’re laughing in a mean way it’s just because they don’t understand what’s happening.

3.3.8. Positive Changes: Acceptance

Three of the four participants described more accepting of their stammer. P1 remarked “I stammer it’s not the end of the world” and similarly P2 said “it’s not the end of the world”. She continued to say “it’s just something that you, that you accept, which is not perfect but it is fine”. P3 revealed that “a stammer for me it’s not as big as things used to” and how “I don’t let it stop me from doing stuff now”.

3.3.9. Positive Changes: Open-ness

Three participants all reported feeling more open about stuttering since partaking in the DAS programme.

P1: never been outspoken about me stammer before
P1: I’m a lot more open about it now

P2: I like to tell everybody that I stammer
P2: I would like more to stammer openly than to pretend

P4: I think I’m more open with my stammer than I was before
3.3.10. Positive Changes: Reduction in fear

Three participants commented how they are less afraid having now completed the course. P1 outlined he “could learn not to be scared of things”. P2 expressed that “it was just a release of all the fear, all the negative feelings” and that “my fear has reduced a lot”. Similarly P4 remarked “I’m less afraid to stammer”.

3.3.11. Positive Changes: Increased confidence

Two participants described feeling more confident as a result of the programme:

**P3:** I’m more confident you know about going into a situation where I usedn’t to

**P4:** I feel more calmer about it and I kind of feel more able to feel with it in a way that I didn’t before

3.3.12. Positive Changes: Improved feelings toward stuttering

Finally, all 4 participants reported that the DAS course had ameliorated their attitudes towards stuttering.

**P1:** before it would have been a lot more harder on myself
**P1:** I feel happier in myself about it

**P2:** I’m in much better shape and I’m not as ashamed of it as I was

**P3:** it doesn’t bother me, you know, the stammer
**P3:** it’s been, been a lot better

**P4:** it isn’t so much the case that my speech itself has improved since the course it’s more a case of my feelings about my speech have
4. Discussion

This study explores the experiences of individuals who have attended a specific therapy programme – the DAS course. The aim of this research project was to conduct an in-depth exploration the experiences of individuals who attended this programme. Of particular interest were the changes perceived by individuals having completed the course.

4.1. What could participants recall before the DAS programme?

The participants in this study expressed opinions about childhood stuttering, asserting that they wished that stuttering had been targeted when they were younger, as they felt it would have made life easier. Some participants outlined how school was a difficult experience. One participant reported being laughed at, and another participant used the term 'hate' to describe school. 2 participants acknowledged reading aloud as being very stressful. This is consistent with findings from Klompas and Ross (2004), who found that participants in their study experienced negative emotions in the classroom.

Early therapeutic involvement was also raised. It appeared that early speech intervention focused mainly on production of speech, and less so on the psychosocial aspects of stuttering. Some participants reported that speech therapy was not effective for them, and recalled unpleasant memories of their previous intervention. This is in line with Louw’s assertion that ‘many adults who stutter report negative experiences associated with speech therapy’ (1996, p. 46).

Unexpected descriptions of stuttering also arose, with participants considering it to be like a ‘disease’, ‘enemy’ or a ‘monster’. Additionally, this study found that stuttering was considered to be a lonely, emotional and frustrating experience. It has been found that people who stutter exhibit complex psychological and emotional reactions (Bennett 2006; Guitar 2006).
Limitations of stuttering emerged, with participants providing descriptions of avoidance, and outlining words and situations they found difficult. In addition to describing limitations experienced in school, many participants also acknowledged difficulties during college, job interviews and their careers. P1 reported difficulty communicating during his job interviews, and P2 described postponing a presentation required to gain a promotion in work. These experiences appear consistent with previous research, which has found that stuttering often influences a person’s employment experiences (Gabel et al 2004; Klompas & Ross 2004).

4.2. What were participants’ experiences of the DAS programme?

Results here revealed themes related to attitudes towards the other group members who were on the course, the structure of the programme and attitudes towards the overall experience.

A common theme experienced by participants was the benefit of meeting other PWS. In particular, participants considered it beneficial to compare lives, learning about what other PWS do for a living, and also how their stutter did, or did not, affect them. Participants also discussed the comfort of being able to share experiences of stuttering with others who could relate.

In particular when discussing aspects of the course considered most memorable, participants identified how speaking in front of the group was initially a difficult experience. Additionally, participants described being filmed as a particularly challenging experience. One participant described this experience in vivid terms, outlining how she was certain she was ‘going to collapse’. These findings appear to be consistent with the literature on stuttering and anxiety (Menzies et al 1999; Ezrati-Vinacour & Levin 2004; Messenger et al 2004).

All participants reported positive feelings about having taken part in the programme. With regard to their interpretation of the course, participants spoke positively of the skills they learned. They all considered techniques such as 'sliding' to be very useful. Additionally, one
participant felt it helpful to learn more about maintaining eye contact with conversation partners. A general sense was that the course was well designed, with support from the speech therapists as necessary, and fellow group members.

4.3. What were these individuals’ perceptions of life since the DAS programme?

It was of particular interest to learn more about the lives of individuals who had completed the programme, to determine whether changes had occurred. 1 participant described mixed initial reactions to having completed the course, highlighting that it was difficult to be back in the 'normal world' and realised that the course wasn’t ‘magic’. However, all participants indicated that they had attended at least one of the follow up groups, which they felt were beneficial.

In terms of social interactions, individuals clearly made the point that their fluency had not necessarily gone away, but they were more comfortable with themselves and how they felt about it. In turn, this had a positive impact on their social relationships. Some participants acknowledged that their stutter is something they feel the need to continue to work on, and at times that they still use coping mechanisms.

Another interesting aspect which emerged as part of this study were the comments by participants about those who do not stutter. According to the participants, there is a lack of understanding - both with PWS and those who do not. This is consistent with findings from the Klompas & Ross (2004) study, where participants also identified a lack of understanding by those who do not stutter. Having completed the DAS course, participants felt less insecure about their stuttering, and what others thought. They developed a sense of acceptance, and were more at ease speaking openly about their stutter.

Additionally, they described a reduction in fear, where they no longer felt the need to avoid words or situations. An increase in confidence was also experienced, where participants indicated feeling calmer entering new situations.
An important finding which emerged from thematic analysis of the data was the improved feeling towards stuttering reported by all participants as a result of attending the course. All of the participants mentioned in some detail how the DAS course had improved their attitudes to stuttering, and in turn, positively affected their lives. These affects tended to be favourable changes in career and social interactions.

### 4.4. Implications for therapy

From the information yielded in this study, it appears essential that future adult therapy approaches are established based on the lived experiences of PWS. Additionally it is important to consider that there is not a ‘one size fits all’ approach, and that each individual will have different goals, expectations and make progress at differing rates (Sheehan et al 2005).

### 4.5. Limitations

Qualitative research is a useful approach to gain insights to participants' individual experiences. However, as with all research, there are limitations which must be acknowledged.

One of the limitations is the fact that this study can be considered retrospective, as it looked to gain information about participants’ memories of their lives and the DAS course. However, the range in participants' ages and time that they completed the course may compensate for this factor, along with the fact that the interview questions and probes were designed to extract further details about participants' experiences.

An additional limitation may have been the presence of the researcher during the face-to-face interviews, which could have influenced the information given by participants since they may have provided answers that they thought the researcher wished to hear.
A final limitation relates to the small sample size of this study, which prevents generalisation of results to the broader population of individuals who stutter. As Patton and Westby assert, “qualitative methods typically produce a wealth of detailed information about a much smaller number of people and cases. This increases understanding of the cases and situations studied, but reduces generalizability” (1992, p. 4). It was indeed found that from this sample, rich information was generated.

4.6. Future Directions

While qualitative research approaches may have limitations, they have been beneficial in many other stuttering studies (Corcoran & Stewart 1998; Crichton-Smith 2002; Klompas & Ross 2004; Plexico et al 2004). This present study has yielded some extremely useful insights into the experience of PWS.

This study lays the foundation for future explorative studies into the DAS programme, and experiences of individuals who have attended these courses. Future research in this area may include collating results from examining responses from all 11 participants who participated in the overall study.

4.7. Summary

The phenomenological study presented here provides important insights into the way individuals' internal worlds are constructed and how their stuttering identities are formed and interpreted. It clarifies the way in which stuttering can only be understood through a 'phenomenological analysis' of its dynamic nature.

The findings from this present study are similar to previous research conducted in this area (Corcoran & Stewart 1998; Crichton-Smith 2002). This suggests that the experiences of stuttering and therapy programmes described by the participants in this study are not specific to this group of individuals, nor too heavily influenced by the expectations of the investigators. This study supports the notion that stuttering is a multi-faceted, highly individualised phenomena, as evidenced by the variety of responses from participants. The results show that stuttering has a profound impact on individuals.
5. Conclusion

This qualitative research project aimed to examine the experiences of adults who stutter, and in particular – before, during and after they took part in the DAS programme. A phenomenological approach was used to gain insight into the lives of 4 participants. Individual, semi-structured interviews were conducted as the means of data collection. Thematic analysis was later performed, based on quotes from these interviews, where a number of themes and sub-themes were generated.

Some of the pertinent points found were how stuttering is a highly individualised phenomenon. As part of this present study it was learned that stuttering had a profound impact on the lives of individuals who took part in these interviews. The finding that stuttering could be likened to a ‘disease’ as one participant indicated, or a 'monster' as another described, is a sobering thought.

However, despite any previous negative descriptions of stuttering, all participants in this study emphasised the numerous benefits they achieved from having taken part in the DAS programme, and how their attitudes toward stuttering had improved. This is an important finding, with implications for future intervention and research, as it highlights the need to reduce the adverse impact stuttering can have for individuals. Additionally from this research, it seems imperative that intervention is tailored to each individual, and that each person’s experiences are given consideration. Further investigation is warranted, using a larger group of participants, to determine whether the findings that emerged from this research are consistent with a larger population.
6. Acknowledgements

- I would like to express my appreciation and thanks to the participants who took part in this study.

- Special thanks to my fellow student SLT researchers, Sarah Fox & Rebecca Mullen, for their assistance, advice and support throughout the project.

- I gratefully acknowledge Jonathon Linklater’s involvement in this study, particularly for his encouragement, guidance and help with the recruitment of participants.

- I also would like to extend my sincere gratitude to Professor Sue Franklin for her invaluable advice during the project, assistance with inter-rater reliability and for providing comments on a draft of this paper.

- A final thanks to those who reviewed this paper, for dedicating their time and for their helpful suggestions.

This research study has received Ethics approval from the Education and Health Sciences Research Ethics Committee, University of Limerick.
References


Appendices

- **Appendix A** - Participant Recruitment Email
- **Appendix B** – Interview Questions
- **Appendix C** – Participant Information & Consent Form
- **Appendix D** – Interview Transcripts
- **Appendix E** – Participant Quotes
- **Appendix F** – Thematic Analysis MindMap Representation
Appendix A

Participant Recruitment Email
Appendix A - Participant Recruitment Email

Dear DAS course participant,

As part of a Final Year MSc Project at the University of Limerick, Student Speech and Language Therapists are investigating the experience of individuals who stutter who have attended the Dublin Adult Stuttering (DAS) speech and language therapy course.

The project will involve hour-long semi-structured interviews for individuals. This data will be transcribed and shorter follow up meeting will take place with you to check the transcribed findings of the initial interview. The data will then be analysed and written up. All data will be used anonymously in the project.

Findings from this study, it is hoped, will provide further information to speech and language therapists on the exact nature of stuttering, how it presents and changes and how it can be treated more effectively.

If you would like to take part and contribute to the research please email us on info@stuttering.ie

Thank you.

This research study has received Ethics approval from the Education and Health Sciences Research Ethics Committee. If you have any concerns about this study and wish to contact someone independent you may contact:

Chairman Education and Health Sciences Research ethics Committee
EHS Faculty Office
University of Limerick
Tel (061) 234101
Email: ehsresearchethics@ul.ie
Appendix B

Interview Questions
Appendix B – Interview Questions

1. Tell me about your life before the course?
2. What was your speech like before the course?
3. Would you have avoided situations? Did it have much of an impact?
4. What is your speech like now?
5. Do you feel stammering has less of an impact now?
6. What does stammering mean to you?
7. What did it mean to you before?
8. How long has it been since you completed the course?
9. Tell me about the therapy course you attended?
10. What has your life been like since the course?
11. How do you feel your speech has been since the course?
12. What do you remember about the course?
13. Did you attend follow up group(s)?
14. How long after you finished the therapy course did you attend the follow up group(s)?
15. Why did you attend the follow up group(s)?
16. What was your experience of that?
17. What are your thoughts about the future?
18. What are your feelings about stammering now?
Appendix C

Participant Information & Consent Form
Appendix C – Participant Information & Consent Form

Client Information Leaflet: Adults who stutter

The experience of individuals who stutter who have attended the Dublin Adult Stuttering (DAS) speech and language therapy course.

Introduction: This information sheet tells you the reason for this study and what will happen to you if you take part. Please take time to read the following information carefully. Ask us if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information.

Why is the study being done?
This study looks at the experience of participants of a specific therapy course for adults who stutter. One theory suggests that stuttering is based on avoidance, e.g. of certain sounds or words or situations. The more that people try to avoid stuttering: the more that they will stutter. The therapy is designed for people who stutter to gradually reduce avoidance and become more comfortable with stuttering. A reduction in avoidance should lead to a reduction in stuttering and the impact of stuttering in their lives in the long term. Findings from this study, it is hoped, will provide further information to speech and language therapists on the exact nature of stuttering, how it presents and changes and how it can be treated more effectively.

Why have I been chosen?
Your speech and language therapist referred you to me as being a suitable candidate for my study.

Do I have to take part?
No. It is up to you to decide whether or not to take part. If you do, you will be given this information sheet to keep and be asked to sign a consent form. You are still free to withdraw at any time and without giving a reason. A decision to withdraw at any time, or a decision not to take part, will not affect the standard of care you receive.

What will the study involve?
You will be asked about your experiences of stuttering since attending the Dublin Adult Stuttering course through an informal interview and questionnaire. A Student Speech and Language Therapist will carry out the interview. The findings for each participant will be checked with that participant in a brief follow-up visit by the interviewer lasting up to 30 minutes.
What if there is a problem?
If you experience any difficulties during the study please use contact details below.

Will my taking part in the study be kept confidential?
Yes. All information which is collected about you during the course of the research will be kept strictly confidential.

Contact details: Clinical Therapies, University of Limerick, Tel: (061)202700

This research study has received Ethics approval from the Education and Health Sciences Research Ethics Committee. If you have any concerns about this study and wish to contact someone independent you may contact:

Chairman Education and Health Sciences Research ethics Committee
EHS Faculty Office
University of Limerick
Tel (061) 234101
Email: ehsresearchethics@ul.ie
CONSENT FORM

Research title: The experience of individuals who stutter who have attended the Dublin Adult Stuttering (DAS) speech and language therapy course.

Researcher:

Please initial each line after the following:

1. I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet dated ...................... for the above study. I have had the opportunity to consider the information, ask questions and have had these answered satisfactorily.

2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving any reason, without my medical care or legal rights being affected.

3. I give my permission for the audio/video recording of me to be used in part or in whole for the purpose of research. I understand that my anonymity will be ensured.

4. Do you wish the results of the assessments to be made available to your speech and language therapist? Yes ☐ No ☐ (Tick as appropriate)

I agree to take part in the above study

-----------------------------------------  ----------------------  ----------------------
Name of subject                       Date                                Signature

-----------------------------------------  ----------------------  ----------------------
Name of researcher                    Date                                Signature
Appendix D

Interview Transcripts
Appendix D – Interview Transcripts

Interview with DC 25/02/13:

A: We first wanted to ask you about your life before the course?

D: Ok, eh, stammered since I was about probably 5, eh, in school stammered away through school done one or two speech and language, but they didn’t work, only lasted about maybe a month in them because I just wasn’t happy with eh heading into a room with about 8 other people like so I just said look it wasn’t what I wanted so left that eh worked away I’m actually at the moment I’ve been a chef now about 9 or 10 years so I’ve worked in hotels but I’d always hide in the corner because you know I wasn’t outspoken enough because and all I have a stammer so I always just stood actually you know a way a bit, just worked away and then I had a job interview about 2 and a half years ago I stammered all the way through and the lady who was interviewing me starting laughing so yeah, I got really emotional and I left em, I hopped off the bus in town and it dropped me out at FAS so I went in and said look I want a better job I have a stammer blah blah blah and I got the name and number for a here like DAS and I rang up and got a call I think about a week after and that was it you know yeah

A: And was that group therapy that you did as a child when you were very young?

D: No I’d say I was probably about 15, yeah around that

A: And was it with other people who had a stammer?

D: Yeah it was with 5 others I think, yeah around that yeah

A: And it wasn’t for you at the time?

D: No it wasn’t, it was just like in a room with like you know and everyone says you hello like I’m Stephen and I’ve stammered and I just wasn’t ready you know but that’s hindsight if I had of known back then what I know now, but it’s like that’s life

A: And you were saying before that you kind of avoided situations, and it had an impact…

D: Yeah I worked in an place in town em, and em, we had to do, em, eh what you call it, a talk to all the heads of the departments and so I was doing em, making break, so I would have to speak to the head chef, the manager, the HR, blah blah blah, and all of us had to had to actually go up so I had to speak about bread and I wasn’t able to, I even said look it, I can’t, I stammer, I’m nervous and he said look it, you have to, and I said look it I can’t so I just walked out of the you know the talk like and I was in the office with the head chef and I explained I said look it I have a stammer, I’ve always had it and but there’ve been loads of other you know other instances which are like that but it was just you know like it can be really annoying like you know especially if you know like my words years back were actually c’s and my name is David Cxxxxx and for years I couldn’t say my name or even if I’m ordering anything worst of all was when I had to order breasts of chickens I’d sweat and I’d be you know but now it’s strangely enough it’s s’s

A: Oh ok

D: But that’s probably only in the last month and a half or maybe a bit more
A: Right
D: Why I don’t know

A: Mmm
D: It’s just crazy like I’m great you know on my other words but s’s just don’t know why, it’s just strange

A: Well that was going to be my next question…what do you feel your speech is like now?

D: it’s just I’m a lot more open about it now where I started here like I was a bit apprehensive I mean it might be just one of those things where I walk in and it’s only on for like 8 weeks and then that’s it it’s over but it wasn’t I mean like I know there’ll never be a cure, I know that, I’ve always known that ever since I was small, but I’m more open about me stammer now where before years back everyone would know I had a stammer but I wouldn’t have mentioned it but now everywhere I go I say look it I have a stammer because I work for an agency so every day or every week I’m in a new place so I just say look it you’ll have to excuse me at times because I do have a stammer, well it’s not only if I’m nervous but it does happen just out of the blue like and I’ll have a day where I’m like perfect and then I’ll have a day where every word is like d-d-d and you know but but I’m happy I done the course, I’m a lot more open about me stammer now and I feel happier in myself about it yeah so it’s been you know worthwhile, very worthwhile

A: Yeah, and then, what would stammering mean to you?

D: Ahh, that’s a good question actually, em, see, good question, it means…hmm, see, good question, it means being annoyed with words and like it might be any word, I could speak how I am now and I’d be grand and then I have to keep on thinking like 8 steps ahead because I know if there’s a word I can’t you know, here we go, s’s already, I know if there’s a word I can’t say, I have to think about it, so yeah it’s just annoying, head-wrecking and you know just it blows your head up at times, it really does like, that’s actually only me like, that’s what I have in my head about stammering, just annoying, you know frustrating, makes you angry, makes just you know, your head explode, it’s just everything

A: And has it always been that way for you?

D: Yeah, yeah, I mean I have weeks where I’m grand and then I could have weeks where it’s just d-d-d all the time you know and

A: And that hasn’t changed since the course?

D: No, no

A: How long has it been since you completed the course?

D: About a year now, I think, around that yeah, about a year actually, yeah

A: What’s the course about…can you tell us a bit more about it?

D: Yeah it’s, I think it’s actually about, in yourself, I mean when I was there, I think there were about 8 or 9 in the class and we had to stand up and say who you are, how long you had a stammer, what you work as but em, yeah, I think it’s all about in yourself like you know it’s good because I’ve never
been outspoken about me stammer before and then meeting other 8 or 9 people who say actually had a stammer, I mean I’ve always known I wasn’t the only one who actually had a stammer

A: Yeah

D: you know, I met with others before, but it’s just, I think it’s all about, you know, myself I think, it wasn’t about the group, well it was about the group we done a lot of stuff in the group you know we’d head out to shops and ask for you know where’s this place and where’s that place you know, hop on a bus, that way like it was good because you could learn not to be scared of things, I mean at the end of the day like if you ask a question it’s not the end of the world, the stammer like, but in my head it was always about me me me, but then when I went into the course it was like it’s about the group, but also about yourself like so

A: And you said it was 8 weeks it lasted?

D: Yeah I think it was about 8 weeks alright, it might have even been more because I swear I’ve a memory like a goldfish, I do, I’ve a very bad memory probably 8 weeks or more

A: And it was once a week?

D: Yeah actually no it wasn’t 8 weeks probably a few months actually

A: Was it an hour at a time you’d meet for?

D: Eh it was probably more than that, we’d start at about 7 and wouldn’t be out until about 9

A: And so you’d be doing different activities?

D: Yeah yeah we’d have actually say eh how was last week, or you know, last month, and you’d say well I had a bad month, or I had a bad day and then all of us would go around and then we’d have to do say a game like, a word game, you’d start with A, B, C and then because then all of us would have had words which we weren’t able to say so in that way it was good because we all knew oh s**t here’s my word so we’d be like, uh uh, so in that way it was good because it wasn’t only like we’d speak about stammering, it was also learning other stuff which was good, I enjoyed it, was really good

A: That’s good, and how has life been since the course?

D: It’s been up and down, well, you know every day like I stammer, every day I say, but I think the best I learned out of the course was sliding I thought that was like a revelation and I mean it’s so easy it’s just that if I had of learned that when I was a kid you know I mean it would have been a lot more easier, yeah I have me up days and me down days, like earlier on in work I was stammering all day because work earlier on was busy you know but I’m actually there you know and they say that’s Dave he stammers you know so yeah it’s good

A: Ok

D: Well it’s better than what it was years ago because I’m more happy about myself and more open about me stammer yeah so it’s whereas before it would have been a lot more harder on myself you know but now I just don’t care you know

A: And in terms of your speech, you mentioned the sliding, do you feel has your speech improved?
D: Well it is with the words I can’t say like I could slide on say a’s, or b’s, or c’s, and s’s but I’d be blocked but learning that like is good because it’s like well it can be at times a bit stupid because you’re there going like you know and you’re blocking and blocking and blocking until you have you know the word out, but if you’re say in a shop like and you’re asking for something and you’re like you know I want eh you know sss you know sssssweets and they’re there staring at you, but yeah it’s like in work, in work it works because all them in there know me and I do use it at times when I’m out but I wouldn’t use it a lot because I used to always have an s on my hand for sliding but because I’m a chef I have to keep washing my hands and then I’d lose it so I started wearing a band last week but I had to have that off me again because of work so I only wear it when I’m really not in work so then at least I have it on my hand or you know I slide and slide and slide so it’s good but yeah I thought I’d say that was you know the best invention ever was the sliding because it was just so easy you know and just so easing you know it’s crazy like you know just slide on a word and it’s amazing like you know but I thought that but I don’t know about anyone else but yeah I just thought it was a great invention you know sliding words, it’s good.

A: I wanted to ask, what do you remember most about the course? Would that be one of the things?

D: yeah it would be, and standing up a lot you know em, like I wouldn’t be a big speaker, well I never was but now I stand up and you know say look it hello my name is and that’s over and the course because we’d have to stand up I think probably every month and say look it I had a bad week or you know blah blah blah and that way like it was good because I remember when I was here a few months ago we had em a mock em interview like form and myself so it was yeah it was good so it was but you have to like you know in your head you have to you know think a lot because em when you have a stammer the words you can’t say like you have to be you know thinking about you know if I can’t say a word I have to use a different word or you know slide on words or so it’s yeah but it was good like yeah I learned actually a lot on the course about stammering, sliding and myself as well like so I mean it was yeah

A: So before you did the course you were kind of avoiding situations...

D: Yeah I was yeah

A: so would it have less of an impact now?

D: Yeah well now I wouldn’t care

A: Ok

D: Where back actually then I’d be I wouldn’t have even asked for say sweets or something in a shop I just you know walk in and look and walk around and around and around and I wouldn’t walk up to a till and I’d walk out so now if I stammer I stammer like it’s not the end of the world

A: Right

D: So I mean it’s you know it’s only a minute and it’s gone you know so he won’t care you know and I might go a bit red but you know

A: Yeah
D: Because I mean I remember when we had the course last year we had to head into a shop and ask about whatever it was like and I was stammering bad and a guy was like here in here and ask me a question so I went in and I stammered and I asked him and he said look it it’s only I think it was a course for doing em the eh what was it again the course for whatever it was and he said look it a hundred euros that’s it he didn’t care he was just after the money but in my head I was like stammering bad stammering bad but he didn’t he just said look it it’s cold out stand in here ask me the question I asked him and then that was like ok he didn’t care I cared more than he cared so I was like and that just hit you know a nerve then because I was like he doesn’t care I’m asking about you know a course he’ll earn money off me you know so it’s and that was it like and so that just hit you know a nerve then but I was like ok it’s actually me who it’s in my head that you know everyone’s staring at me which and they are but you always get that like if you just stare and smile or laugh but yeah

A: And did you go to any of the follow up groups?

D: Yeah I went every month

A: And are they only run monthly?

D: Yeah yeah

A: How long after you finished the DAS course would you have gone to the groups?

D: I think it was straight after, I think I only missed 2 I think it was yeah there was only 1 or 2 I missed

A: And was it the same group who would go to the follow ups?

D: No it was actually there was only me and I think there was 1 other guy from the original group and then there was a few from the other groups so it was others who had a stammer but who weren’t in our you know course, but they were in for a talk in our group you know so you’d have one in one month and then one in you know a month after and then those who were in we met them you know after a few months like so it was good

A: So it was a bit of a mix?

D: Yeah yeah it was good it was yeah, I mean yeah meeting you know others who stammered as well like I mean you know its yeah it was good like you know because all of us you know I was a chef, one was a banker, one of them’s this, one of them is that so you know it’s yeah it’s interesting it’s good

A: That’s good, so it was a good experience?

D: Yeah I enjoyed it, I mean I’m happy I actually done it

A: That’s great, and so what are your thoughts about the future?

D: Em, it, it’ll be hard and I know that, and it’s just you know like I think I’m the I think I’m harder on me than anyone else is that’s how I’ve always been you know it’s just em but I’m going to head to the courses every month still I think they’re on in town once a month but I missed the last one there last month but there’s one on Wednesday or Thursday this week so I’ll be at that one alright, so yeah it’s just about keeping on doing what I’m doing and you know hopefully, I know like that I’ll always have it you know, you know it won’t ever go but that’s just you know everywhere I go or work I’ll
just have to explain look it I have a stammer, I’m a lot more open about it now but I don’t maybe care now but yeah it’s just like you being who I am and that’s basically it you know, I don’t think I’ve stammered once yet I think have I, no I haven’t actually, but that means I’m actually relaxed you know

A: That’s good, well that was most of my questions so was there anything else you wanted to tell us

D: Em, I don’t think so, I mean like when you stammer and the person is trying to answer your questions or no, you’re trying to say what we’re saying, don’t do it, it annoys us to hell, just don’t try and finish our words or sentences because it’s the worst thing you can ever do, just let us say the word, if we’re blocking or we’re stammering, just leave it and keep eye to eye but it’s the worst thing of all, and it would always happen me in school and it was just the most annoying thing, or even if you’re in work and you’d have a person who’d be you know asking a question, and you’re trying to answer and they’d be what are you trying to say, what are you trying to say, always just let us stammer away and we’ll eventually get it you know but that’s always the worst you know, it’s just, let us flow you know, but that’s it I think

A: Ok

D: Yeah it’s just the most annoying thing you could ever do to anyone who stammers it’s just don’t finish their sentences, you know what we’re trying to say but it just takes a bit more longer and just always have eye to eye like when I was here first, I would always look away but now it’s just eye to eye which is good, but you’ll, I stammer still and if I stammer I will still look away but it’s just eye to eye you know and don’t laugh, that’s it, like no matter how bad it is, the stammer, just don’t laugh because I’ve seen a few you know, like I’ve got a friend of mine who stammers bad as well, he was laughed at in school and I was as well, and even when I had my, my eh interview a few years ago, even that was the low point I think I ever had, you know, but happens you know, if it’s out there you know but I think that’s it

A: Well, I think that was all of the questions I had...thanks so much for talking to us about your experiences, we really appreciate it
Interview with MR 25/02/13:

A: The first question we wanted to ask you was just about your life before the course? Can you tell us about it?
M: You’re mostly interested in the stammering effect? And the focus on that?
A: Yeah, well whatever you feel would be interesting to tell us
M: Well, before the course, I have not been talking to anyone about my stammering, and I am a covert type, you probably know the difference so I was hiding it, not very successfully in all the situations but in many situations I did, so I would rather um like that people think there is something wrong with me rather than anybody realise that I stammered, I don’t know why, how I can explain, but it’s probably built up from very early age when you are ashamed of something and don’t talk to anybody you see that are different and try to hide it or whatever so it was a huge part of my life, it still is, but before that there were maybe a few people that I told, but nobody understood really, and I didn’t realise that I have to explain in the same way that I know now after DAS, I still find that people are not don’t understand very well what I’m in much better shape and I’m not as ashamed of it as I was I think it’s uh like either it was a huge thing for me it was uh it prevented me from many things I would not be able to say my name anything I was very emotional and I had a huge iceberg, and it was very very, uh, very huge part of my life, I mean it still is, but in a different way as it were, was

A: Did you stammer as a child?
M: Yes I did but I was hiding it, I, I don’t know how and why and it hurt me a lot, but I uh, I started very late, or I was aware very late, I know that I was near my teenage years and there was the first time when I stand up in the school and I needed to explain something and I just couldn’t and then the next time when I was asking something in the shop, and I couldn’t, and then I kind of tried to avoid and blah blah blah and all so built up, and then through secondary school and then through university most of my exams were written so that was a great help for me and the ones that were oral I got lower marks because the professor thought that I don’t know a subject very well as I would do ‘Um…um…I’m thinking’ and things like that so

A: And did you find that there were any particular sounds that were difficult?
M: I think saying my name and address were the most difficult because these are things that you can’t really pretend or hide, these are things which you need to say straight away and then it was more fear of these kind of situations but then after DAS I was starting thinking which words are and then I realised it was words that begin with my name so M, as my name is Mirjana, and before I wouldn’t be able to say to you now ‘my name is Mirjana’ and now I can so it’s mostly psychological that I was so upset about it but I do stammer and I have, I have problems, the least is now when I talk about stammering and I’m allowed and there is nothing to be ashamed about so it’s a lot of psychological so

A: And did you go to any therapy when you were younger?
M: No, no, I wanted but I didn’t know where and who and it was different then, and Serbia was much in the state, I guess Ireland was similar then I was reading about it, I know there are those kind of verbal oral exercises and I thought it’s more like I need to psychologist but I was ashamed to go to anybody and to admit that I stammered for whatever reason, I thought it’s somebody is going to leave the room and think that oh my god, it was just, I didn’t talk to anybody and I was just building it and building as a huge thing
A: And so was the DAS course the first time you attended therapy?
M: Yes, yes it was the first time that I, that I went and talked to somebody about it.

A: And how did you find out about it?
M: I found on the web, I have, I had a problem that I was proposed to do a promotion at work, and that promotion involved a presentation, and then I postponed it that presentation for a few years, I was just saying like I could do that next time but because there were two rounds every year, and I know there is no way that I’m going to stand up and give a presentation to anybody, it was so huge thing to me. And then when I couldn’t escape it oh my god, it was so difficult, we had kind of mock presentation to a few people that I worked with, I think they thought that I had some social phobia, or that I’m not normal, I was just standing there I had all the slides and everything and I just couldn’t say, it was like ‘mmm’ I don’t know, but it was like weird or something, I was so ashamed and I cried after it, they didn’t have a clue what’s wrong, they, I don’t know, some people have social anxiety or what problems, but then I went my manager and I told him, that it’s because I stammer, but I don’t think he really understood, to me it sounds so stupid, or somebody, as people connect stammering repetitions or whatever, trying to say something and my way of stammering was not saying anything and uh, and then I just realise that I have to do something and I went to the web and I found McGuire and DAS, but DAS sounded better for whatever reason, so then I sent the email to Noreen or Jonathon, there were 3 of them, you probably know, and then they got back, and then I had the interview with Jonathon and we had a course in Balbriggan, and it was all great experience for me.

A: Just to go back to what you mentioned there a few minutes ago, your speech before the course, it doesn’t sound like you got stuck on sounds...were there blocks?
M: There were blocks, but I never allowed myself to stammer, but when I tried, it, there were kind of repetitions, no no pattern, but something like repetitions and if I didn’t have that huge fear, it would probably pass, let’s say with people that I’m very comfortable with then it was like a few repetitions and nothing but in any kind of uncertain situation it was just nothing, I was just not even trying to say when I feel that it is going to come out, I wouldn’t I wouldn’t attempt to get any sound but um, maybe there were combination of blocks and uh, repetitions, but I never pay attention to what it is as I was so afraid.

A: Were there situations you might have avoided or did it have a big impact?
M: Yes, any kind of speaking in front of the people, then asking anything on the street or in the shop or whatever those kind of situations then at school anything which involved oral exams where I need to talk for certain amount of time, I used tricks, but there were situations where you just can’t like when somebody ask where your parents were or I don’t know, those situations where you can’t pretend you don’t remember or you think about something and that was.

A: And what kind of tricks would you have used?
M: Like ‘um’ I don’t know what I want to say or when I arrived in Ireland it was a great thing that I pretend I don’t know how in English how to say something like ‘oh what’s the word for that’ and just talking about something, just to avoid that word because I can’t say it and then somehow put it away and it sounds horrible because it’s not natural it’s uh words instead of that one, strange.

A: And what would you feel your speech is like now?
M: Uh I think my speech is much better physically because my fear has reduced a lot, uh first I allowed myself to approach many situations that I wouldn’t before, I know it’s not the end of the world if I stammer, I like to tell everybody that I stammer, but I have difficulty to explain because people are not interested, people don’t think it’s a huge problem as they are not aware of the iceberg and of the negative feelings that you have and uh I’m not typical because I think I still use...
tricks as they are part of me and uh, building them for so many years it’s very difficult to get rid of them and I’m not really voluntary stammering, I know that I should and it really helps me, but it can’t help when I’m in a difficult situation, I need to practice and uh, sometimes when I’m in an easy situation say meeting at work, I think great, I’m now going to voluntary stammer and then I just don’t bother because there is something more important I want to say something and all but it’s all the time that I am lazy or whatever but there are still situations which are difficult and there are situations where I completely blocked and then still embarrassed, but it cannot compare, it’s very small what it was before so it’s a huge impact and it’s one of the best things that I ever did and I’m very happy, I’m very happy

A: And you were saying about the voluntary stammering…that you think ‘sometimes I should put it in now’ do you ever find that if you are getting stuck, that you might use it?
M: I would use it but when I try, I found that it doesn’t help when I need it urgently
A: Ok
M: It has to be done before, in order to build up your confidence because I found if I try to voluntary stammer in a difficult situation I’m really going to stammer and I’m not going to be able to get out of that word I probably do to somebody who is listening but for me it’s like an ages and I can’t say what I want and so it’s not volunteering, voluntary anymore, it becomes un-voluntary, a block or a repetition, so definitely you have to practice in easy situations, there is no way when you need it I voluntary stammer and this is great, you need to become friendly with that way of talking and you can’t just not voluntary stammer for ages and now I need uh, it doesn’t work like that, I found

A: Would you have practiced the voluntary stammering in the course?
M: Oh yes, oh yes, in the course it was great, it was the first time when I stammered and I wanted to do that, and I was not ashamed and I feel good about it and I looked somebody in the eye and I stammered and I don’t know but all those things that I was um, that that were so difficult to me, that I was preventing myself from being what I really am and how I really talk and suddenly like somebody told me, it’s fine, you can do it and everybody else stammered, I first found it awkward to be in the room with 10 or more different people who stammered, but then it was great, but the first few days I even felt ashamed for somebody else when they stammered, I don’t know how to explain but I was projecting my own feelings of guilt and shame and all to somebody else but then it all become all became positive from negative, but I think the whole concept that we were there the whole day doing different kind of exercises in the very structured way, they started in a very kind of games for kids, or I don’t know, but it was all defined very well, the fear has just melted and after two days, it felt like you were on the top of the world, after that I know I went from balbriggan to Dublin and I went straight to the gym, because I had wanted to go for ages to ask about exercises and all, and no way I could do it with my stammer and all, and I went there I put voluntary stammers I felt like I discovered a miracle now I can talk and also uh, the day after, what I never did is when I go to the cinema, I would never buy a ticket before, now it sounds horrible, but I never did, I was always going with somebody else, and I really needed, it was horrible situation I just stand out in front of that ticket box and then I was I want a ticket, then I like search for my wallet, and then I was allowed to go there and even if I stammered it’s ok, and I even now don’t remember did I stammer or not as it was not important just the thing that I can do it and it’s not the end of the world if I stammer so it was, it was really great

A: So do you think the stammer has less of an impact now?
M: Yes, yes it still has...as you feel that top of the world, and then it starts going down because you’re not in that safe environment anymore, you’re still going to meetings but then less frequently you have your own life, you’re not the whole time in that situations so uh, it kind of mm melted but I have learned so many things and the most important I realise that I’m not the only one, I was given the tools to use if I need them, and uh I think a few years I was going regularly to DAS meetings so
that was a great help with kind of reminding me of everything, I probably, probably I would still benefit a lot if I continue going but I was just lazy or I don’t know, the difficult part is that I sometimes say, I don’t need it, but then I realise I actually do, there are still situations when I can’t speak or um, or I wouldn’t, I would like to say something but I wouldn’t because I know that I’ll stammer and maybe they will think, so it’s still there but it has significantly less impact at least I can do all the small things, uh, the big things like presentations and whatever, they are still a little bit of problem but I can buy cinema tickets, I can go to shops, I can talk to strangers, I allow myself to stammer and that’s fine

A: And those situations that you would still find difficult, are they unfamiliar situations or presentations...
M: Let’s say presentations and talking to uh, authority figures, let’s say a manager or something, or some kind of somebody who is on a higher level in the hierarchy, and then there are a lot of people who are important and then I feel like, uh, I’m going to stammer now so it’s better to say nothing, maybe I am just covering some other fears and social anxieties that I have with stammering, I don’t know but uh, there is no rule but definitely I would stammer more in these, unfamiliar situations

A: And, what does stammering mean to you?
M: Do you mean now or before..?
A: Well, I suppose now, what would you say it means?
M: It’s more, it’s different now, before it was like an enemy, something that I have like a disease, I don’t know, now I cannot say that it’s a friend but it’s something that I’m familiar with, it’s part of me, and uh, I’m, I think I should work on it and I’m kind of angry that I don’t and um, it’s not negative, well it is negative, but not as negative as it used to be, it’s just something that you, that you accept which is not perfect but it is fine, it is ok, to have, I think

A: So I know you mentioned that you are covert, and that you wouldn’t stammer, but it was something that you felt was a problem?
M: It was a problem, the reason why I wouldn’t stammer so often is because I would avoid situations or if I am in the situation, I would say nothing and then like, that presentation, it would just be me standing there not saying a word, and there are slides, and then I try to say something and then I say, starting sound, and then nothing, so it was better that they think I’m not normal than to try to stammer, but I just, it were just my way of dealing with it, so I maybe now stammer more because I’m talking, I’m doing things, that I didn’t before

A: And how long has it been since you first started the DAS course?
M: I think it was in 2005, so it was DAS 4, or was it 2005 I can’t remember

A: And you said you found it online, and it was in Balbriggan, were there many people in the group?
M: Yes, there were um, 6 or 8 people, 8 people in the group, like uh participants, there were 3 therapists, and we had the guests, during the course, so there were different people who stammered or people who did a previous courses and it was all great to meet all these people and listen to their stories and talk to them

A: And so can you tell us more about it, in terms of what kind of things did you do?
M: Well the most difficult thing for me, the first evening, when we arrived, we have I don’t know, some kind of introductory session or whatever, with games and things and then, suddenly, they put the camera in the room, and I just thought that I’m going to collapse, I remember that I needed to go to the toilet, and I came back I think I was the last one, I thought that my heart is going to explode,
well my heart would explode let’s say I’m waiting in the queue for a sandwich and I couldn’t say, I want chicken and tomato and lettuce, but this was that waiting for the sandwich, multiple of 5 or 10, and um, I don’t know how I have survived that, I know that I was crying, after and thinking oh my god, why I have put myself into this torture, but then after, after a few days when we watched that video, when you look in your own fear, in your own eyes, there are so many things that you get from it, and you realise how it’s not that huge thing, how it’s less significant when you’re looking from objective perspective, so for me, it was mostly that it was a lonely experience and that I met so many other people who stammer, and uh, and all of that group situation and um, that you learn there are other people who are doing different jobs, even jobs that involve a lot of speaking, even therapy, like Jonathon, it was great that Jonathon stammered, I think all three of them were great combination, because Noreen she was older, and I really respected her, I first thought that she was the most important one but then Jonathon became it when you realised but it’s all after, um, the whole structure of it were great, because we were outside of the normal life you were just doing your exercises and talk about stammering and everything is about stammering and it just, great, that um, you’re so focused and um, all day you are into that, so from that fear, it just reduced, reduced, and then at the end, you felt like you were cured

A: And you mentioned about the camera…were you asked questions or was it just...
M: They ask you what your name is and what your address is and I think why did you come to the course, something like this, just the normal thing
A: mm-hmm
M: that uh, that normal people would say without any problems, but for me it was the most difficult thing to say, and I thought I am the worst everybody else were able to say, and I wasn’t, and I’m I don’t know, uncurable case and I’m never going to do anything about it and I was just overloaded with the fear, uh, suddenly something that I was hiding and I would never say, or say with pretending, I was kind of forced to say in front of that camera, because there was no point of pretending as I’m there to show that I stammer, so all that psychological pressure in me and my whole life of avoiding and hiding and pretending, it’s like you’re naked or something like you have a scar and you’re hiding it and now you are showing that to the whole world, so, that was, but it was very emotional and after to see that face and that fear, why I mean, like a child, if someone told me it’s fine, you can stammer, it’s not the end of the world, it just my own way of building it and also I realise that I’m not the only one there are other people who are covert as well for whatever reasons, so that was
A: Did you attend the course for a couple of weeks or was it
M: No, it was residential
A: Oh ok
M: It was for 5 days, we were in balbriggan and we were doing exercises the whole day and I think it’s much better approach, I think HSE didn’t have money to pay after a few years they have stopped, so then there were weekly courses, I still think they’re great, but I think it’s different when you are doing it intensively and then you’re outside of the normal life and family and work and all, I think it’s stronger, it’s better
A: And so they were full days?
M: Yes they were, they would start in the morning and were full days
A: And the exercises you mentioned, what kind of things would you be doing?
M: different exercises, some of them were related to speech, but some of them were kind of team building and group exercises like games, but not really games, they all had a purpose, we watched a lot of videos about stammering, we were reading the articles about stammering and I don’t know we were writing, let’s say every day you would read, um, a kind of, what did you learn yesterday, what went well, what didn’t went well and what you are planning to do that day, and I know the first day
is I didn’t allow myself to read aloud in front of the group since primary school, because I couldn’t, I couldn’t use tricks, I know um, we have a Serbian language in the school, and I was good in writing essays, and when you get top marks you would read aloud, so I did everything, I even tried to make it less so I got the lower mark, or if I got the top mark I knew she would call people to read, so I would be sick on that day or I would go to the toilet, I was inviting so many stupid ways to avoid that, and I really didn’t read, I cannot remember, and it was the first time that I read something aloud, it was so difficult to me, I, it’s probably nothing to somebody who listened but I just couldn’t, and then after a few days, I just found myself, I looked forward and I now can read and even if I stammer, it’s not that big deal, so it was, it was great, great help, I, I think it’s one of the best things that I ever did

A: So it was a very positive experience?
M: It was extremely positive, it was extremely positive

A: You mentioned it being like you were in your own world when you were taking part in the course for the week, was it difficult then when you had to leave?
M: Uh, the first few days or weeks, you’d really feel you can do everything, you’re so full of energy, you’re so feed, by all these people and everything that you’ve learned, so I was really brave and all, and then after that, when you realise that you’re back in the normal world and you find that the shame is coming back and all the negative feelings are coming back, you feel kind of insecure, but much less, much less, you know, you know it happened to me, I phoned Jonathon a few times or Noreen, when I had some difficult situation, I don’t know I was going to DAS meetings so it was a great help, I could talk about the few different things, we were doing exercises there as well, and uh, it was difficult after a few weeks when you realised that, that feeling is not going to last, that you need to work hard, that it’s not magic, magic now I stammered and I tried to avoid, but so it’s, it was kind of on the very top, and then you are down, and then it starts to feel some normal pace, which is much better, I think in everybody’s case, but in my case it was huge improvement, it was really positive

A: And were there any sort of specific activities that they would have had you do in the course?
M: Not really, not really, uh, the main thing was that I, uh, that I kind of accepted that it’s not uh, it’s not that bad, or it’s not the end of the world, or I allowed myself to stammer, so um, uh, I felt much less ashamed, now I don’t think, I think shame is very very small, it’s more now it’s more shame of the tricks that I used and that I look weird I would like more to stammer openly than to pretend, but it’s very difficult to explain

A: You were saying that after the course you left on a high, that you felt brave, but it went down over time, what is life like for you now?
M: It is good, from stammering point of view, it is uh, it is fine, I um, I like to talk to people about stammering and I’m very happy that you are doing this, I like to tell everybody that I stammer, and I use situations but I am very, I’m not very tactical person, so it’s like in some situations which is not very relevant you know that I stammer and they would like oh really I would never notice you are really great in covering that, continue doing that, and I just find so difficult to educate them, you can’t really draw the iceberg picture and explain about feelings and different types, even if you can and you do, people don’t understand maybe I cannot explain very well or they have their own problems and they’re not bothered, and I think people who stammer are not going out to explain what it is, it is difficult and it’s not kind of life threatening illness like uh, I don’t know cancer or diabetes or something, but even about them people don’t know enough, but I think it’s a combination of our own fault that we’re not advertising it, and um, whatever, showing it more maybe
A: And did you say at the start that you found years ago, that people didn’t know what stammering was?
M: Oh I think they were much less educated, now let’s say, you can see King’s speech, so you can learn what it is, but uh, I think before people identified stammering with just repetitions or um, blocks, I think still is difficult for them to understand that you can pretend, you can cover it, doing tricks and things, so that would be great if people could understand that stammering has many ways, and also explaining about the iceberg and also that would be

A: And do you think people do understand more now?
M: I think yes because uh, all the, I can’t say mental illnesses but different problems are more explained, and also the communication channels are now much better than they used to be, so let’s say there is the king’s speech, there is the web, there is everything in the past, um, people didn’t have all those resources, and I think therapy improved, I know that in Serbia, before they were using the old ways like here, but not they are more advanced, nobody focused before on the psychological part, everybody were just on the physical part and just trying to fix that, but now, I think uh, there is much more research done and it’s much better

A: And you were saying about your speech, do you still find that you would still use tricks?
M: I use tricks, I use them more than half times, when I speak, the reasons are first that it’s a habit, it’s very difficult to break, as I’m not very old, but old enough to build them and it’s very difficult to break, and secondly, there is still amount of fear and shame inside me, and sometimes it’s just easier, I can’t be bothered to stammer if I can use a different word, I’ll stammer next time, I’ll slide or do voluntary stammering next time, or I will write email, I won’t talk or something, so it’s a combination of things

A: And what do you remember most about the course?
M: I just remember that feeling of being allowed to do something that I was most fearful about, like relief, I cannot explain, like something that was maybe the most important, like something that I was wrapped up with and then it was just a release of all the fear, all the negative feelings, all the, I don’t know, just that, just that I don’t need to pretend, that I can be me, I don’t know how to explain

A: And did you go to any follow up meetings?
M: I did yes, I was going a lot in first few years, but then I just stopped, I first I was working in Sandyford and they were in the Dublin 7 where that Carmichael house is, so I don’t know, combination of things, so I just stopped

A: And are they run monthly?
M: The follow ups were I think every 2 weeks

A: So you would have gone...
M: Oh no, monthly, sorry yes, it was every last Tuesday/Wednesday, yes I was going regularly, at least for a year, after that, but then it was every 2 weeks so I just stopped for the commuting reasons and then I don’t know, just life went like that, and it’s not that I don’t need them, but I kind of got out of that routine or something

A: You wouldn’t go anymore?
M: I was not for ages

A: And did you find the groups were useful?
M: Oh yes, definitely, because you remind yourself where you were, you talk to other people who stammered, you practice voluntary stammering as well, you I don’t know talk about some difficult situation you have, or I don’t know, anything like coming back in the mini-DAS course
A: And was it different people every time?
M: There were people from all groups, so there were people who were regularly there so that was kind of core group, but you also meet some new faces everytime and also I were going a few times to new groups, first they were in Balbriggan and then they were having that as weekly meetings, I think it was somewhere near Mountjoy square there and they were having them, that was also great because I felt so happy that I could help somebody else, so I was, I would talk about stammering and all, and that was all great

A: That’s great...so what are your thoughts about the future?
M: I think definitely, I said that a few times, that was one of the best things that I ever did, I would like to voluntary stammer more, I know that it’s not possible to be completely free of stammering, but I don’t want to, I just want to accept that completely and to stammer whenever I feel like, it would be much better if I started working on that when I was a child, or when I was very young, that’s why it’s so important to have the most awareness in schools and parents, or if parents are whatever, at least the teacher to notice and to point out to some therapists because at that age, if you are starting to be familiar with it, there is no way that you are going to build up this problem as I would, other people have, there are still people who were psychological worse than I was and physically have much less problems, and they think it’s huge and prevent themselves from many things

A: I asked you earlier what stammering meant to you, so what are your feelings about stammering now?
M: I think it’s a part of me, it’s still not, uh, I’m never going to be completely, uh, how to say, um, I will never completely accept and be completely ok, but it’s fine, it’s just like you have a curly hair and you like straight hair more, but ok, it’s not the end of the world, or I don’t know, you are short and you want to be tall, something like that, it is fine, it’s not near where it was before, so for me, it was a huge improvement, it was first starting from the small things, like that buying a ticket in the cinema, I completely forgot about it now when you ask me, and now when I remember going to the gym, I then remember that going to the cinema and asking for the ticket, it might sound like nothing to you, but for me it was like I’m discovering America! Now I’m buying the ticket and asking for it

A: So overall it was a great experience?
M: Oh it was definitely, one of the most positive experiences that I ever have, in the whole structure of it, all three of them were great, and the combination of them were great, Jonathon who stammers himself, then Noreen who is kind of senior level and then Dawn who is similar to Jonathon, and all the people there were great, and all the guests that they invited, and people who stammered, and people who stammered severely, like Jonathon had one friend from England and for me, it was such a discovery that I listened to someone, he was sliding all the way, but he was very smart and everything that he said had a lot of value in it, and he was funny and all, and before that I would have avoided people who stammer, and felt like, um, projecting my own feelings and all, and suddenly, I liked to be in the company of other people who stammer and we watched videos about stammering, the whole idea, the whole structure and combination of different games and videos and uh, and even the reading out and the camera and everything had a purpose and everything was done perfectly, if you write in theory how something should be done, that is the way definitely, and even, in the evening we would go to the pub and um, we were talking and all, and though I’m not drinking much, maybe I have one or two, but then I would stay until 3am because suddenly I can talk as much as I can and all of that was great

A: That sounds brilliant, well that’s all my questions, so thanks so much again for telling us all about it, we really appreciate it.
Interview with MS 27/02/13:

A: So I have a few questions here to ask you if that’s ok...and the first one is that we were hoping you could tell us a bit about your life before the DAS course?

M: It was horrific, I never, I didn’t mix with anyone, I had no friends well you know I just had family that was it, I didn’t em, take part in conversations, I didn’t, if I went to the shop I’d em go to the supermarket you know where I could pick up what I needed you know without having to ask you know...em what else will I tell you?

A: Did you stammer as a child, very early on?

M: Yes from...from when I started speaking yeah, I always had a stammer

A: Did you find that people didn’t really know much about stammering at the time?

M: Well I didn’t know much either you know...I just had a stammer and that was it you know...but em people used to, if there was, when I was with somebody and I met someone they’d speak to that person you know it was like I had no voice you know, you know it was very lonely you know, mm

A: And did you ever attend any therapy as a child?

M: Yes I attended therapy for years you know...and then I didn’t think there was much point you know because I didn’t seem to be getting any better with it you know, and then when I was younger I think I was about 9 I was sent to a person em who said she was a speech and language therapist but she wasn’t, she used to slap me across the knuckles you know if I stuttered you know so that was it, and then I stopped for a long time, and I was like the McGuire course that didn’t work and then I was at the, eh the uh, the open day, you know the stammering open day in Dublin and I met Jonathon and you know he talked about the DAS and I signed up and eh that was it

A: Did you research the McGuire program yourself before that?

M: I had heard about it and, I thought I’d give it a try, but it wasn’t, you know, I didn’t, I couldn’t cope with it you know, you know it was...so

A: Would you have found that you avoided situations because of your stammer?

M: Oh yes, I was the best avoider

A: Oh yeah?

M: Yeah the best avoider, you know, I used to go into places, you know, and if I couldn’t say, I’d ask for a pen and paper and I’d write down, you know, but em...yeah it was, was tough, you know

A: And how do you feel your speech is now since doing the DAS course?

M: Great, I still have you know bouts of stammering, but I feel different towards it...I used to worry about what people thought you know but now I don’t, if they don’t like it that’s tough you know, for them you know and it has changed the way I feel about stammering you know and how I’m more confident you know about going into a situation where I usen’t to you know, yeah
A: Can I ask...what would stammering mean to you?

M: Em...what do you mean, you know, do you mean the way I speak or the way people think?

A: I suppose kind of both, what would you say about it, what it mean to you?

M: I think a stammer, for me, it’s not as big as things used to...you know, you know, I still do what I have to do you know and I don’t let it stop me from doing stuff now you know, you just, you have a speech problem and that’s it...some people have different things, you know

A: Would it have meant something different to you, before you did the DAS course?

M: It was just like a monster, you know, I felt that everyone saw my stammer as me, you know, but now it’s different, you know, you know, it doesn’t...it’s not, it’s a nature thing now you know

A: Would you feel it has less of an impact now?

M: Yeah

A: How long has it been since you did the DAS course now?

M: I think it was...Oh I can’t think...it was the second one...1995 or something...it was about 7 or 8 years ago

A: And you said you found out about it through Jonathon, at the open day?

M: That’s right yeah

A: And were there many of you on the course at the time?

M: There was about 7 of us, yes, 7 or 9 of us you know...but it was, it was the best, the best thing I’ve ever done you know, the DAS course, yeah

A: Can you tell us a bit more about it, and what exactly you did on it?

M: Well it was held in the Bracken Court in Balbriggan, and we were, we had eh, the day it started out, we had to talk about something you know and that was really, really, really hard you know, that was, there was other people that had this as well, that was you know, tough you know, but eh that was, it was residential you know, and we got great support from Jonathon and Noreen

A: And it ran for a week?

M: Yes

A: And were they full days?

M: They were full, but you know, it was, well the speech therapists were very supportive, you know and you know if something was bothering you know, you could speak to them you know, about the things as well, it was good

A: And what kind of things did they have you do? Were there activities?
M: Eh...You used to sit in a big circle you know and you’d have to talk about something, you know something to take away, you know and that used to be my downfall because I hated speaking you know, in front of people, you know, it was good, you know

A: So you found it was a positive experience overall?

M: Yeah absolutely

A: And what do you remember most about it? Is there anything that stands out?

M: Just I felt I had somebody that knew what it felt like it was like to have a stammer you know... We all had a stammer you know, so they knew what I was feeling, you know

A: And what was it do you think that made the DAS course better than the McGuire program?

M: It wasn’t as regimental as the McGuire program, you know, it was much, em, it was much more relaxing you know and it wasn’t you know...on the McGuire program you’d start at 7 in the morning and keep going until 10 or 11 at night you know and you’d be speaking the whole time, practicing techniques and all that you know

A: And were they different techniques that they used in the DAS course?

M: There was, they weren’t different, but they were done in a different way, more relaxed

A: And what kind of things did they have you do as part of the DAS course?

M: Just eh, practicing sliding and all that you know, yeah

A: And what has your life been like since you’ve done the course?

M: It’s been, been a lot better, a lot more confident, you know, but I, do when I’m at home I don’t stammer as much as I’m stammering now you know, because you know what I can talk about different stuff I mightn’t stammer but as soon as the stammering is mentioned you get the stammer you know

A: And do you feel your speech has improved since you did the course?

M: It has yeah, definitely

A: And did you attend the follow up groups after the course?

M: Yes I did yeah

A: How long after you finished the course was it before you went to the follow up groups?

M: I would say, two months I think, you know, could, just can’t remember, you know

A: Would they have been on fairly regularly?
M: They were, then there was the eh, the support groups, you know for people who did the DAS, the DAS course and then every so often you’d get a, get questionnaires you know to fill in you know about how your speech has gone you know, since you know

A: Did you find the groups after the DAS course were useful?

M: Great yeah, it kind of, got you back into the techniques you know again, you know, yeah

A: I know you mentioned before that you did the residential course in Balbriggan...was that better than if it had been one day a week over a longer period of time?

M: Em...I think it was better because you know you just concentrated on the course for the time that you were there, you know, and the, the week was just about the DAS, the DAS course

A: So you thought it was good?

M: Yeah

A: And what are your thoughts about the future now?

M: My speech doesn’t bother me, it won’t be such a major block, you know, I can, because I can do stuff you know

A: I know you mentioned earlier how you were a great ‘avoider’, do you feel you’re avoiding things less now?

M: Oh yeah absolutely I mean, I used to get the children to make the phone calls and do, or if I had to go somewhere I’d bring one of them with me, they’d do the talking for me

A: And what are your feelings about stammering now?

M: it doesn’t bother me, you know, the stammer, the stammer, you know, it’s a pity the DAS course wasn’t set up years ago, you know, it would have been great, you know, and I hope that children know who have it, I hope they’re not getting a bad time with speech you know, because I don’t think teachers you know or even doctors, I don’t think they understood you know how someone felt, you know, you know

A: And would you have found school difficult?

M: Yes, I hated school, you know, I felt I was there was a lot of times if I was if I knew something I couldn’t, I wasn’t asked, you know, if I knew it, and other times you know, I just, to stand up in class to read, in front of the rest of the class you know, it left things worse, you know

A: And to go back to something you mentioned earlier...the techniques from the DAS course, such as the sliding, would you still use them now?

M: When I think of them, but not eh, put under pressure, you know, yeah

A: Would you say that they were useful techniques taught in DAS?

M: They are, when you use them, you know
A: I think that’s all the questions I had, was there anything you wanted to add? Or was there anything that I haven’t asked that you feel we should know?

M: No, I think you have it well thought out with those questions!

A: Well, that’s great...thanks so much for telling us all about it.
Interview with NTB 28/02/13:

A: We just have a few questions…

N: Go ahead, go ahead yeah

A: The first thing we wanted to know is if you can tell us a bit about your life before you did the course?

N: Ok, eh well I did the course in 2010, September 2010, and I had done Speech therapy before, so I stammered forever, I don’t remember when I didn’t stammer. And I did some speech therapy when I was younger...when I was eh was a child and then in school I did I did eh smaller groups I think how it worked was for younger children or teenagers kind of smaller groups then larger groups the older you are so I did some work with em in Roselawn eh Roselawn shopping centre, there’s a HSE centre there, so I did some sessions there, once per week and it was through those that I met Jonathon. And my main speech therapist there was a lady called Fiona who now works in Ballymun I don’t know if you know her but I in fact kept in touch with her a bit because I worked in a café near to where she worked so she would come in for lunch every once in a while so I would see her and we would have a chat and I would tell her how I was getting on and then I remember there was one time it was Summer 2010 I wasn’t having a very good time with my stammer then and she kind of suggested that I get in touch with Jonathon who was working with adults so in fact I Hadn’t done anything since I was 16 and then I went and did the eh DAS course when I was eh 23 I think yeah 23. Is that the kind of thing you’re looking for..?

A: And can you tell us what was your speech like before you did the course?

My speech had kind of em changed…I mean it had gone through bad periods and it had gone through good periods and those Bad periods could last a couple of days or weeks or months and then the good periods would kind of be the same but I’ve always been like well My main thing is less to do with the severity of my stammer and more to do with my feelings about it you know and kind of how I look at my stammer and how I look at myself because of my stammer and of course that feeds into it you know there’s a circle the more upset and frustrated I would feel about my stammer often the worse the stammer would physically become em so I mean for all intents and purposes, my speech was fine It didn’t stop me doing kind of practically everything that I wanted to do but it was and still is a big part of my life but the thing that the das course with Jonathon did was really kind of helping to not be so emotional about it you know and that has...it isn’t so much the case that my speech itself has improved since the course it’s more a case of My feelings about my speech have and as a result I mean...In fact I don’t know if I could say my speech has improved per se but my feelings about my speech have...eh hugely So I suppose that has improved my speech as well

A: Would you have found were there certain sounds or were there feared words you had?

N: Yeah I mean again it goes through phases so kind of at the you know...certain sounds and certain letters and certain words might be more of a problem at some point and then for whatever reason it changes to other words but at the moment in fact what I’m finding is that I eh...due to the techniques that we kind of learned or practiced as part of the DAS course we did a lot of sliding or Voluntary stammering and I find now that in fact the sounds that I can slide on I have or that can slide easily on I actually have very little trouble with them then because I know how to get out of a block that I may have but sounds like harder sounds so words beginning with b or p or d at these now...and like I say it kind of changes all the time but now are tricky for me because they’re kind of
difficult to slide on and so I find I block a lot more on those harder sounds and then when it comes to Words...I mean eh Jonathon has probably spoken to you about this but you know the Words that you can’t avoid saying so for example my name, Nora, or you know if someone asks me my address or in fact I have I nearly always have problems saying that I’m from Ireland you know so especially living abroad living in France I get asked that all the time and it’s a real feared word for me you know so it’s the words you can’t avoid not saying that often kind of have the most fear and that leads them to being difficult to say

A: So has the course helped you to not fear those words as much?

N: Yeah I think I’m more open with my stammer than I was before I’m less afraid to stammer although I still hate you know the uncontrol of stammering on the blocks on the words but you know one of the techniques that we were doing with sliding and voluntary stammering was putting in a slide or a voluntary stammer at the very beginning so right in the first sentence if you have to give a presentation or right in the first few sentences when you meet someone so kind of doing that releases the fear of trying to hide it so I think I don’t try to hide it as much as before and also I try to talk about it more you know I wouldn’t talk about it with someone who I’ve just met or I feel very uncomfortable talking about it with someone I’ve just met but I do kind of with some friends I would try to talk about it more to normalise it for myself not have it as such a big deal and a feared thing to talk about

A: Would you have tried to hide it when you were younger? Would you avoid situations or anything to do with it?

Oh definitely definitely I mean for example in English class in secondary school I asked the teacher if she could not call on me to read out we’d be reading things and it would go around the class and everyone would have to read and I asked her could I not read out and I still do avoid situations although I try not to and fear it less now but I mean little things like you know trying things on rather than going into a shop or I know I certainly do that a bit still now and it’s something that I’m still working on but I did it a lot more when I was younger

A: Do you still feel the stammer has an impact?

Without doubt without a doubt and I feel, I feel that it couldn’t not you know and eh I know one girl who I know who I was in school with who has a stammer and we talk about it and she says how it doesn’t bother her at all and I she just...I find that hard to believe you know I think that’s I think that’s a question of denial as much as anything like I don’t think that it couldn’t ever have an impact on your life about not letting it control you know and having some control about the extent which it does have an impact on your life

A: and you mentioned about school...teachers not calling on you...was school difficult for you? Did people have an awareness?

N: I mean school wasn’t great...like you know I mean it wasn’t like I was the quiet girl sitting in the corner who no-one spoke to I was I was very social and you know I had a really good time in school but certainly my stammer made things hard like and for example there was a play in school that I wish I had the courage to do even though I had my stammer and there were certain things you know I didn’t join the debating team when I wish that I had so there were certain kind of limitations and like reading out in English class, a stress, it was a real stress but in terms in kind of social relationships and in terms of doing well in exams, it really didn’t didn’t affect me that much
A: after having done the course would it have less an impact but you be less likely to avoid things nowadays than when you were younger?

N: I suppose em eh by impact I don’t necessarily mean that as negatively you know so I think that having done the das course it’s Less of a negative impact you know and So...again it’s not that the das course has reduced my stammer or made my stammer go away and that was never what I was there for and that was never what it was meant to be but it has helped my opinions of it and my feelings behind it so I am more equipped both emotionally and kind of physically with some of the techniques to Not let it have it controlling impact or such an impact that it did before

A: What does stammering mean to you?

N: Oh...oh Jesus...eh what does stammering mean to you...an inexplicable, in explainable...hmm let me think about that for a second...yeah an inexplicable, uncurable, em, yeah eh, impediment on your speech

A: Would you have felt that way before the course? Or has it changed it all?

N: I suppose it’s changed in that I now have a kind of a more of a clinical way of looking at it you know so before it probably would have been a more emotional response in terms of you know it kind of would have been something like that stops you from communicating in a way that you want to you know and while that is still certainly and is regularly for me a...something that still happens that wouldn’t be now my kind of definition of what stammering is I suppose like I was saying now what DAS really gave me was the ability to control it you know and not so much have it feel like it was controlling me and I think that before doing the course yeah I would have thought of or explained a stammer as a far more kind of controlling thing whereas now I have the kind of skills to work with it and have some control over it but Certainly not all the time but like I feel like I can have some control over it now

A: How long has it been since you did the course did you say?

I did DAS in September to December 2010, so about 2 years now

A: And you found out about it through your local speech therapist was it?

Yeah Exactly, the speech therapist who I was seeing when I was 16  well I had seen her when I was younger and it was...I had met Jonathon since then but it was her who later on kind of told me that and I... actually now that I think about it for example yeah in 2006 I helped out with a stammering day, or stammering awareness day, ok so I had kept in touch a bit with Fiona who was my speech therapist when I was a teenager so I’d kind of kept in touch a little bit with her, and kind of not her personally, but professionally and she was Aware of some of the stuff that was happening But for example I didn’t know that the das course was happening until she had specifically said it to me to get in touch with Jonathon then

A: Did she recommend it to you or were you seeking something at the time?

N: She recommended it to me because when we were kind of having a chat  I was really saying I could do with something more and I was struggling at that time and she then recommended it to me
A: And had you done any research on the other courses around that time?

N: Em, I don’t think so, I mean I certainly knew of the eh the one...I can’t remember the name, what’s the name of the famous one?

A: McGuire program?

N: Yes, I was certainly aware of that and in fact I knew someone who had done that but I really didn’t want to do that because I really don’t agree with how they do things so but beyond that em...No I don’t think I had

A: And then can you tell us about the course? What kind of things you did?

N: So we met up weekly em on a Tuesday evening for about 3 hours or so and we were I think we were about 8 people, but 3 speech therapists including Jonathon and we would begin the sessions by going around the room and kind of just talking about the week before and kind of any highlights or kind or em lowlights or you know anything that we kind of wanted to share that was of course speech related and so that would usually take around an hour and a half and then...and you know it was really nice because Someone would say something and it was a very open group so someone else would respond to what they said maybe with their own experience, or with advice or words of encouragement or you know and so yeah that would take about an hour and a half and then the Second half would be I suppose what you would call the action part, where we would talk about another technique or we would watch a video about you know some sort of speech therapy and talk about that or in one case you know so we would meet in a hotel on eh Parnell square in Dublin city centre, so one evening we left and went in little groups to shops around the area and the idea was that we had to ask, you know, ask questions and slide a lot and voluntary stammer and so sort of put in into practice in the safety in the Encouraging and supportive environment of the group and so that was...it was over 3 months

A: Did you find it challenging going out in groups to shops around the area?

N: Em not really, I have to say I felt very I felt very comfortable in the group in a way that I wouldn’t necessarily find myself if I was going into a shop and asking something and so I found that in fact I stammered a lot less than normal in the group when we were speaking because again there is No fear about like hiding your stammer and that is really what You know the fear about hiding it and the stress about you know trying to keep hiding it is often What causes me to stammer a lot so the Relaxed and kind of open nature of group in fact meant that I eh Didn’t find that my stammer was an issue at all But no, then there were things that were challenging like for example One of the things we did was that Jonathon filmed us, filmed us speaking in front of the group and then the next week took us out individually to look at the tape and I hate seeing myself on camera and I hate hearing my voice on eh any recording so the...And I mean that was the first time I had seen myself like that in a long long time you know that was challenging to kind of really face up to it you know in a way that you wouldn’t in everyday life

A: What would you remember most about the course? What stands out for you?

N: Em I suppose eh meeting other people who stammer and talking about different experiences with stammering and seeing how people handle it differently and how it impacts people’s lives differently and While I mean we all shared something and there were certainly a lot of similarities I think there were in common with our experiences it was Also very interesting to see how eh...you know how eh it did or did not affect people more or How people handled it and I mean eh It’s not like I’m eh I’m
still...I'm still in touch from time to time with some of the people on the course so it wasn't necessarily a question of you know making new friends kind of but it was a question of kind of sharing those experiences that you...that I hadn't really shared with anyone else before I mean in the way that shared with people who Knew what I was talking about you know there's explaining the experience to the person who doesn't stammer and then there's sharing with people who do Especially in that medium size group it was just em I think that’s what I took the most from it

A: I know you said you did the course once a week...do you think it was better to have it spaced out over a longer period of time compared to a week intensive course?

N: I think it was definitely definitely better to have it over the course of 3 and a half months. I think there are 2 reasons why I think that is because one Doing it over time, you can speak about a technique for example voluntary sliding and go away and you know put it into your everyday life and come back the next week and talk about it how... and we Set ourselves challenges and it could be as small as you know Making that phone call that you need to make but you had been putting off you know or Making a speech or whatever reason so we set ourselves challenges so there was a sense of kind of progress over the three and a half months which I eh... I think would be lost if it was over a certain period of time like a week and the second reason why I think it’s a lot better to have it over 3 months is because when it’s a week I can imagine that it’s very intensive where it’s really single little else other than your stammer and I think that While that may be great for someone who really needs a push and a breakthrough eh I can imagine leaving after the week on a real high and then trying to apply those things and those feelings and techniques every day in life and seeing how it’s not as easy as it was when you were living for a week with other stammerers and you know so I can imagine that there would be a real high and then a bit of crash back down to reality

A: What has your life been like since the course?

N: Em...Great! I moved to France and I’m in France studying my masters now, I’ve got my final semester eh I went back to the eh monthly meetings so kind of everyone who had done the DAS group was welcome to come back for a monthly meeting so because I wasn’t living at home I was only able to go to a couple of those monthly meetings when I was home because they happened to fall at that time eh and they were always a great to just you know remind myself I mean every so often it’s good to get a reminder you know and eh I mean absolutely not that my speech is perfect and it’s absolutely not that I have no longer have any trouble or problem with my stammer I very much do but I feel more calmer about it and I kind of feel more able to feel with it in a way that I didn’t before but I’m glad to have kept that little bit in touch and for example keeping in touch with Jonathon and he’d to do an Interview for his PhD research you know and that Little bit of contact every once in awhile to remind myself that kind of so yeah the way of thinking was so great when I first left the course

A: Do you think having done the course it gave you encouragement to do things like moving to France and doing the masters?

N: No, eh I think I would have done those things anyway but it eh it has made life easier, without doubt you know it’s so...It’s not necessarily a question of not doing something but if there’s a question of doing it and it being easier and it being less stressful

A: How long after you did the DAS course did you go to the follow up groups? Was it instantly after or was there some time before you went back?
N: No, well I finished the DAS course in December and then I went to France it had lasted about three and a half months and then I came back and I was home for 2 months so I must have been Maybe eh maybe 3 or 4 months after I finished DAS that I went to those monthly groups

A: Would have you practiced the techniques at the group, or talked about feelings, or was it a combination?

N: Well I mean when you would talk about your week and about you know the things that had happened you would be using the techniques at the same time so you would kind of not only where you were sharing with the group but you were also thinking about the opportunity for public speaking to practice techniques so it kind of It all kind of tied in

A: Would you say you had a positive experience overall doing the DAS course?

N: Very positive, very positive yeah

A: What are your thoughts about the future?

N: Em…my thoughts about the future…em well I so, em my masters is in European ? and I hope to go work for the European commission or some large European organisation and I did an internship last year with the Strasbourg bureau in France and that was an eye opener in terms of seeing kind of international diplomacy and seeing international politics and seeing how carefully you need to phrase what you’re saying and how carefully you need to deliver what you’re saying so kind of now in my studies and I’m taking you know hopefully to get into the workforce doing a new phase of my speech you know and new challenges will come through in terms of eh you known doing job interviews and you know being a professional in that environment and giving presentations etc. and you know certainly New challenges that are coming soon and that eh So it might be that in fact this time next year I might look for something else and eh like a DAS group As I say remind myself and you know get on that way of thinking again as I begin this kind of new phase

A: Taking all of that into consideration can I ask, what does stammering mean to you now?

N: Eh…it’s something that I need to continuously work on and so at times it’s so annoying and so tiring and so frustrating eh you know a thing to need to work on but My stammer is something certainly that I continually work on And make sure that it eh doesn’t have the negative impact that it could do

A: Rebecca, did you have any questions?

R: I just wanted to ask about your therapy as a child…you mentioned doing group therapy with other children who stammered…

N: I did, sorry yeah I actually made a mistake, I remember now first it was individual and then actually it was actually the case that there was another girl who was doing individual therapy at the same time and she was my age and so they kind of put us into a you know two person group for a small while but in fact now that I remember it was far more individual when I was doing it when I was 15/16

R: Just to compare maybe, so you did that then you went and did the DAS course, would you feel that it was important to be ready? Because I know you mentioned there was an emotional aspect, and would you feel it’s necessary to be ready to work on it?
N: definitely and you know I think that if the 15 year old me had gone into the Das group I wouldn’t have got nearly half as much out of it as I did when I was 22/23 and I think it makes a lot of sense that kind of childhood teenage therapy speech therapy is on an individual 1:1 smaller group basis and kind of adult is in a group to share your experiences and open up in a way that would be very difficult when your 15/16 and still trying to kind of figure out what this stammer thing is you know

A: Can I ask you what you think about early intervention, and do you think it’s very important to work with children who present with a stammer at an early age?

N: Eh I mean I agree completely…I suppose it’s kind of like two sides to it…early intervention would mean that eh…would mean that you would get those techniques and those kind of ways of thinking about a stammer at an early age so again it’s not about curing it It’s about kind of getting them to understand that it’s not that big a deal and that you can live your life and that it doesn’t need to Control you and can have some control over it and so absolutely I think that’s important to it and I actually think that speech therapists in schools would be a very very eh beneficial thing but then again I think that there’s something to be said about adult group and you can kind of look at it in a reflective way you know and you can see how it does affect your life and you know you live with it for a long time and see how it does affect your life and you wouldn’t change and think about how you do that so I think that both are very beneficial but I think that of course early intervention and particularly in schools is eh would be…is a very important thing

A: You mentioned earlier that you attending the stammering awareness day, do you think that awareness of stammering has improved overall?

N: Eh I think it has…I mean I think things like the King’s Speech the film that was out recently and I think things like that do help to improve awareness of stammering I mean I think that there is still a real lack of understanding but I think there is still lack of understanding within people who stammer themselves and it’s not something people do understand And I mean it’s still I still get funny looks all the time Like you know it’s not I would go to someone and a view that they probably don’t know you know because Most people don’t know would be my reading of things but I I do think that there is more of awareness about stammering and an open-ness

A: And how do you find people react when you tell them you have a stammer?

N: It wouldn’t…so like I said I wouldn’t tell someone who I just met oh by the way I have a stammer, it’s something they can hear themselves but people’s reactions…I mean I guess sometimes when I stammer you know Let’s say, they laugh and it’s not that they’re laughing in a mean way it’s just because they don’t understand what’s happening so they just go ah ha ha or I mean eh…or people would like…I think a lot of people underestimate the effects a stammer has you know and so like you know they wouldn’t understand why you can’t just take a deep breath in and then not stammer so I think People still kind of associate it with being nervous and while of course for me and a lot of people who stammer would be work harder when we are nervous it’s not always the case we all stammer when you’re nervous so I think people still kind of have that impression of stammering that Its yeah it’s because you’re nervous

A: And you mentioned the techniques sliding and voluntary stammering, what was your reaction when you heard about them?

N: I mean…em… I think I know what to say but a lot of people in the group were horrified when they heard because they thought why would you stammer when you don’t have to, but eh I think it’s an
incredibly beneficial technique, it helps to like relax your jaw and to me sliding is all about not struggling about your stammer and it’s about not struggling against the block you might get and it’s that kind of off slide and more than that it’s about not struggling about the fact you have a stammer in the first place to so Voluntary...putting in that voluntary slide or stammer it takes that fear of being found out away and kind of admit it as much to the other person as much to yourself and I found that its relaxes the situation for me.

A: I think that’s all of our questions, thank you so much for telling us about your experience Nora, we really appreciate it!
Appendix E

Participant Quotes
Appendix E – Participant Quotes

Recollections before DAS programme

Early Stuttering Experiences

Attitudes

P1: if I had of learned that when I was a kid you know I mean it would have been a lot more easier

P2: would be much better if I started working on that when I was a child

P2: like a child, if someone told me it’s fine, you can stammer, it’s not the end of the world

P3: I hope that children now who have it, I hope they’re not getting a bad time with speech

P4: early intervention would mean that eh...would mean that you would get those techniques and those kind of ways of thinking about a stammer at an early age

School

P1: was laughed at in school and I was as well

P3: I hated school

P3: other times you know, I just, to stand up in class to read, in front of the rest of the class you know, it left things worse

P4: reading out in English class, a stress, it was a real stress

P4: school wasn’t great

Therapeutic Involvement

P1: done one or two speech and language, but they didn’t work

P1: only lasted about maybe a month in them

P1: because I just wasn’t happy

P2: I wanted but I didn’t know where and who and it was different then

P2: I thought it’s more like I need to psychologist but I was ashamed to go to anybody and to admit that I stammered

P3: I attended therapy for years

P3: then I didn’t think there was much point
Recollections before DAS programme

P3: because I didn’t seem to be getting any better

P3: was sent to a person em who said she was a speech and language therapist but she wasn’t, she used to slap me across the knuckles you know if I stuttered

P3: the McGuire course that didn’t work

P3: I couldn’t cope with it

P4: I had done Speech therapy before

P4: I did some speech therapy when I was younger

P4: when I was eh was a child and then in school I did I did eh smaller groups

P4: I think how it worked was for younger children or teenagers kind of smaller groups

Experiences of Stuttering

Description of Stuttering

P1: frustrating, makes you angry

P1: it’s just annoying, head-wrecking and you know just it blows your head up at times

P1: it can be really annoying

P1: being annoyed with words

P2: like a disease

P2: before it was like an enemy

P2: it was horrible situation

P3: it was horrific

P3: it was, was tough

P3: it was just like a monster

P4: an inexplicable, uncurable, em, yeah, eh, impediment on your speech

P4: something like that stops you from communicating in a way that you want to

P4: at times it’s so annoying and so frustrating

P4: certainly my stammer made things hard
Recollections before DAS programme

P4: before doing the course yeah I would have thought of or explained a stammer as a far more kind of controlling thing

Perceptions/Reactions

P1: keep on thinking like 8 steps ahead

P1: I was stammering bad

P1: just wasn’t happy

P1: I think I’m harder on me than anyone else is that’s how I’ve always been

P1: in my head it was always about me me me

P2: I was aware very late

P2: it just my own way of building it

P2: would rather um like that people think there is something wrong with me rather than anybody realise that I stammered

P2: I thought I am the worst

P2: I’m I don’t know, un-curable case

P2: or that I’m not normal

P2: it hurt me a lot

P2: I am a covert type

P2: I was hiding it, not very successfully in all the situations but in many situations I did

P2: for me it was the most difficult thing

P2: built up from very early age when you are ashamed of something and don’t talk to anybody

P2: maybe I am just covering some other fears and social anxieties that I have with stammering

P2: was just building it and building as a huge thing

P2: I couldn’t escape it

P2: I was ashamed to go to anybody and to admit that I stammered

P2: I was preventing myself from being what I really am and how I really talk
Recollections before DAS programme

P2: I had a huge iceberg

P2: I was projecting my own feelings of guilt and shame and all to somebody else

P2: you see that you are different and try to hide it

P3: I felt that everyone saw my stammer as me

P3: I don’t think teachers you know or even doctors, I don’t think they understood you know how someone felt

P3: I didn’t know much

P3: I just had a stammer and that was it

P4: it didn’t stop me doing kind of practically everything that I wanted to do but it was and still is a big part of my life

P4: gone through bad periods and it had gone through good periods

**Psychological Impact**

*Lonely*

P1: always hide in the corner

P1: I wasn’t outspoken enough because and all I have a stammer

P2: it was mostly that it was a lonely experience

P2: I didn’t talk to anybody

P3: it was very lonely

P3: I didn’t mix with anyone

P3: I had no friends

P3: I just had family

P3: when I was with somebody and I met someone they’d speak to that person

P3: it was like I had no voice

P3: there was a lot of times if I was if I knew something I couldn’t, I wasn’t asked
Recollections before DAS programme

Emotional

P1: got really emotional

P2: it was very emotional

P2: I was very emotional

P2: I was so upset about it

P2: I was so afraid

P4: before it probably would have been a more emotional response

P4: I think a lot of people underestimate the effects a stammer has

P4: there’s a circle the more upset and frustrated I would feel about my stammer often the worse the stammer would physically become

Limitations of Stuttering

Avoidance

P1: I always just stood actually you know a way a bit, just worked away

P2: it was a huge thing for me it was uh it prevented me from many things

P2: I kind of tried to avoid

P2: I used tricks

P2: pretend I don’t know how in English to say something

P2: it’s a habit, it’s very difficult to break

P3: I was the best avoider

P3: yeah the best avoider

P3: I used to get the children to make the phone calls

P3: if I had to go somewhere I’d bring one of them with me, they’d do the talking for me

P4: there were certain kinds of limitations

P4: I asked the teacher if she could not call on me to read out
Recollections before DAS programme

**Words**

P1: I couldn’t say my name

P2: I was just not even trying to say when I feel that it is going to come out

P2: I would not be able to say my name anything

P2: saying my name and address were the most difficult

P2: these are things that you can’t really pretend or hide

P2: I realised it was words that begin with my name so M

P3: I didn’t em, take part in conversations

P3: I used to go into places, you know, and if I couldn’t say, I’d ask for a pen and paper and I’d write down

P4: it’s the words you can’t avoid not saying that often kind of have the most fear and that leads to them being difficult to say

P4: the words that you can’t avoid saying so for example my name

P4: or you know if someone asks me my address

P4: I nearly always have problems saying that I’m from Ireland

**Situations**

P1: I wouldn’t walk up to a till and I’d walk out

P2: I never allowed myself to stammer

P2: I would never buy a ticket before

P2: definitely I would stammer more in these, unfamiliar situations

P2: any kind of speaking in front of the people

P2: asking anything on the street or in the shop

P2: promotion involved a presentation

P2: postponed it that presentation for a few years

P3: I’d em go to the supermarket you know where I could pick up what I needed you know without having to ask
Recollections before DAS programme

P3: when I’m at home I don’t stammer as much as I’m stammering now

P3: I can talk about different stuff I mightn’t stammer but as soon as the stammering is mentioned you get the stammer

P4: was a play in school that I wish I had the courage to do even though I had my stammer

P4: I didn’t join the debating team when I wish that I had

P4: the fear about hiding it and the stress about you know trying to keep hiding it is often what causes me to stammer a lot

Perceptions of DAS programme

Group Members

Attitudes to the group

P1: meeting you know others who stammered as well like I mean you know its yeah it was good like

P1: always known I wasn’t the only one who actually had a stammer

P2: the most important I realise that I’m not the only one

P2: all the people there were great

P2: before that I would have avoided people who stammer

P2: I met so many other people who stammer

P2: I first found it so awkward to be in the room with 10 or more different people who stammered

P2: suddenly, I liked to be in the company of other people who stammer

P2: was all great to meet all these people and listen to their stories and talk to them

P4: the relaxed and kind of open nature of group in fact meant that I eh didn’t find that my stammer was an issue

P4: I felt very comfortable in the group in a way that I wouldn’t necessarily find myself

P4: I stammered a lot less than normal in the group when we were speaking because again there is no fear about like hiding your stammer
Perceptions of DAS programme

Support

P2: all three of them were great combination

P3: the speech therapists were very supportive

P3: we got great support

P3: if something was bothering you know, you could speak to them

Comparing lives

P1: one of them’s this, one of them is that so you know it’s yeah it’s interesting

P2: you learn there are other people who are doing different jobs, even jobs that involve a lot of speaking

P2: there are still people who were psychological worse than I was

P3: there was other people that had this as well

Perceptions of DAS programme

P4: seeing how people handle it differently and how it impacts people’s lives differently

P4: very interesting to see how eh you know how eh it did or did not affect people more or how people handled it

Shared understanding

P3: we all had a stammer

P3: they knew what I was feeling

P3: just I felt I had somebody that knew what it felt like it was like to have a stammer

P4: we all shared something and there were certainly a lot of similarities

P4: I hadn’t really shared with anyone else before I mean in the way that shared with people who knew what I was talking about

P4: there’s explaining the experience to the person who doesn’t stammer and then there’s sharing with people who do

P4: someone would say something and it was a very open group so someone else would respond to what they said maybe with their own experience or with advice or words of encouragement
Perceptions of DAS programme

Structure

Techniques

P1: best I learned out of the course was sliding

P1: the best invention ever was the sliding

P1: thought that was like a revelation

P1: it can be at times a bit stupid

P1: in work it works

P2: I was given the tools to use if I need them

P2: in the course it was great

P3: they are useful when you use them

P4: one of the techniques we were doing with sliding and voluntary stammering was putting in a slide or a voluntary stammer at the very beginning

P4: I think it’s an incredibly beneficial technique

P4: putting in that voluntary slide or stammer it takes that fear of being found out away and kind of admit it as much to the other person as much to yourself

P4: I found that it relaxes the situation for me

P4: but a lot of people in the group were horrified when they heard because they thought why would you stammer when you don’t have to

P4: can speak about a technique for example voluntary sliding and go away and you know put it into your everyday life

P4: to me sliding is all about not struggling about your stammer and it’s about not struggling against the block you might get

Video-recording

P2: they put the camera in the room and I just thought that I’m going to collapse

P2: I thought that my heart is going to explode

P2: thinking oh my god, why I have put myself into this torture

P2: I don’t know how I have survived that, I know that I was crying
Perceptions of DAS programme

P2: was kind of forced to say in front of that camera

P2: it was so difficult to me

P2: after a few days when we watched that video, when you look in your own fear, in your own eyes, there are so many things that you get from it

P4: things that were challenging

P4: for example one of the things we did was that Jonathon filmed us

P4: was challenging to kind of really face up to it you know in a way that you wouldn’t in everyday life

P4: was the first time I had seen myself like that in a long long time

Public speaking

P1: standing up a lot

P2: the first day is I didn’t allow myself to read aloud in front of the group

P2: it was the first time that I read something aloud

P2: don’t remember did I stammer or not as it was not important just the thing that I can do it

P2: I just remember the feeling of being allowed to do something that I was most fearful about

P2: like you have a scar and you’re hiding it and now you are showing that to the whole world

P2: all that psychological pressure in me and my whole life of avoiding and hiding and pretending, it’s like you’re naked or something

P2: you realise how it’s not that huge thing

P3: the day it started out, we had to talk about something

P3: that used to be my downfall because I hated speaking you know, in front of people

P3: that was really really really hard
Perceptions of DAS programme

Attitudes toward the Experience

Positive feelings

P1: I enjoyed it, was really good
P1: I’m happy I done the course
P1: it was good
P2: it was all great experience for me
P2: it’s a huge impact and it’s one of the best things that I ever did
P2: I’m very happy, I’m very happy
P2: I think it’s one of the best things that I ever did
P2: in my case it was huge improvement, it was really positive
P2: it was extremely positive, it was extremely positive
P2: I felt like I discovered a miracle now I can talk
P2: was one of the best things that I ever did
P2: was definitely, one of the most positive experiences that I ever have
P2: you’d really feel you can do everything, you’re so full of energy
P3: it was the best
P3: the best thing I’ve ever done
P3: it has changed the way I feel about stammering
P3: it’s a pity the DAS course wasn’t set up years ago
P3: it would have been great
P4: very positive, very positive
P4: it has made life easier, without doubt
P4: having done the DAS course it’s less of a negative impact
P4: it was really nice
Perceptions of DAS programme

Interpretation of course

P1: the course it was like it’s about the group, but also about yourself

P1: it’s all about in yourself

P1: was good because it wasn’t only like we’d speak about stammering

P1: also learning other stuff which was good

P1: I learned actually a lot on the course about stammering, sliding and myself as well

P1: when I was here first, I would always look away

P1: not it’s just eye to eye which is good

P2: was the first time that I, that I went and talked to somebody about it

P2: before the course I have not been talking to anyone about my stammering

P2: then I just realise that I have to do something and I went to the web

P2: was no point of pretending as I’m there to show that I stammer

P2: was the first time when I stammered and I wanted to do that

P2: I have learned so many things

P2: different when you are doing it intensively and then you’re outside of the normal life

P2: we were outside of the normal life

P2: just doing your exercises and talk about stammering and everything is about stammering and it just, great

P2: you’re so focused

P3: you just concentrated on the course for the time that you were there, you know, and the week was just about the DAS

P3: it was much more relaxing

P3: they were done in a different way, more relaxed

P4: there was a sense of kind of progress over the three and a half months

P4: I think that there’s something to be said about adult group and you can kind of look at it in a reflective way
Perceptions of DAS programme

P4: you can see how it does affect your life and you know you live with it for a long time

P4: it wasn’t necessarily a question of you know making new friends

P4: I think that if the 15 year old me had gone into the DAS group I wouldn’t have got nearly half as much out of it as I did when I was 22/23

Perceptions since DAS Programme

Experiences since group

Initial Responses

P2: You feel that top of the world, and then it starts going down because you’re not in that safe environment anymore

P2: after that, when you realise that you’re back in the normal world and you find that the shame is coming back and all the negative feelings are coming back, you feel kind of insecure

P2: it was difficult after a few weeks when you realised that, that feeling is not going to last, that you need to work hard, that it’s not magic

P2: then it starts to feel some normal place, which is much better

Follow up groups

P1: I’m going to head to the course every month still

P2: it was great, great help

P2: I felt so happy that I could help somebody else

P3: it was good, you know

P3: great yeah, it kind of, got you back into the techniques

P4: great to just you know remind myself

P4: often it’s good to get a reminder

P4: I’m glad to have kept that little bit in touch

Future considerations

P1: it’ll be hard

P4: new challenges will come
Perceptions since DAS Programme

P4: next year I might look for something else and eh like a DAS course

P4: certainly new challenges that are coming soon

Perceptions since DAS Programme

Remaining conscious

Not absolute fluency

P1: I’ll always have it you know, you know it won’t ever go

P1: I know there’ll never be a cure

P2: there are still situations which are difficult

P2: there are still situations when I can’t speak

P2: I do stammer and I have, I have problems

P2: very huge part of my life, it still is

P2: so it was a huge part of my life, it still is

P3: I still have you know bouts of stammering

P4: it’s not that the DAS course has reduced my stammer or made my stammer go away

P4: it’s absolutely not that I have no longer have any trouble or problem with my stammer I very much do

P4: I don’t think that it couldn’t ever not have an impact on your life

Something to work on

P2: I think I should work on it

P2: I’m kind of angry that I don’t

P4: my stammer is something certainly that in continually work on

P4: it’s something that I need to continuously work on

P4: a thing to need to work on
Perceptions since DAS Programme

Coping mechanisms

P2: I use tricks, I use them more than half times

P2: so I maybe stammer more because I’m talking, I’m doing things that I didn’t before

P3: I still do what I have to do

P4: I find I block a lot more on those harder sounds and then when it comes to words

P4: I actually have very little trouble with them then because I know how to get out of a block that I may have

Other considerations

P1: I’ll just have to explain look it I have a stammer

P1: I cared more than he cared

P1: just hit you know a nerve then because I was like he doesn’t care

P2: people don’t understand

P2: still find that people are not don’t understand very well

P2: I just find so difficult to educate them

P2: would be great if people could understand that stammering has many ways

P2: it’s so important to have the most awareness in schools and parents

P2: I have difficulty to explain because people are not interested

P2: people don’t think it’s a huge problem as they are not aware of the iceberg and of the negative feelings that you have

P3: I used to worry about what people thought

P3: if they don’t like it that’s tough

P4: I think that there is still a real lack of understanding

P4: I think there is still lack of understanding within people who stammer themselves

P4: it’s not something people do understand

P4: they wouldn’t understand why you can’t just take a deep breath in and then not stammer
Perceptions since DAS Programme

P4: I think people still kind of have that impression of stammering that its yeah it’s because you’re nervous

P4: it’s not always the case we all stammer when you’re nervous

P4: people still kind of associate it with being nervous

P4: And I mean it’s still I still get funny looks all the time

P4: sometimes when I stammer you know let’s say, they laugh and it’s not that they’re laughing in a mean way it’s just because they don’t understand what’s happening

Acceptance

P1: stammer I stammer like it’s not the end of the world

P2: it’s not the end of the world

P2: I’m never going to be completely, uh, how to say, um, I will never completely accept and be completely ok, but it’s fine

P2: so it’s still there but it has significantly less impact

P2: it is negative, but not as negative as it used to be

P2: it’s not near where it was before

P2: it’s just something that you, that you accept, which is not perfect but it is fine

P2: I know that it’s not possible to be completely free of stammering

P2: I just want to accept that completely and to stammer whenever I feel like

P2: I kind of accepted that it’s not uh, it’s not that bad, or it’s not the end of the world

P2: I know it’s not the end of the world if I stammer

P2: now when I talk about stammering and I’m allowed and there is nothing to be ashamed about so it’s a lot of psychological

P3: a stammer, for me, it’s not as big as things used to

P3: you have a speech problem and that’s it

P3: I don’t let it stop me from doing stuff now
Perceptions since DAS Programme

Positive Changes

Open-ness

P1: I wouldn’t have mentioned it
P1: never been outspoken about me stammer before
P1: I’m a lot more open about it now
P1: just I’m a lot more open about it now
P1: I’m more happy about myself and more open about me stammer
P2: I like to tell everybody that I stammer
P2: I like to tell everybody that I stammer
P2: I would like more to stammer openly than to pretend
P4: I think I’m more open with my stammer than I was before
P4: I wouldn’t tell someone who I just met oh by the way I have a stammer
P4: it’s something they can hear themselves
P4: I try to talk about it more you know I wouldn’t talk about it with someone who I’ve just met or I feel very uncomfortable talking about it with someone I’ve just met but I do kind of with some friends
P4: I do think that there is more awareness about stammering and an open-ness

Reduction in fear

P1: could learn not to be scared of things
P2: I was just overloaded with the fear
P2: it was just a release of all the fear, all the negative feelings
P2: more fear of these kind of situations
P2: that fear, it just reduced, and then at the end, you felt like you were cured
P2: my fear has reduced a lot
P4: I still do avoid situations
Perceptions since DAS Programme

P4: I try not to and fear it less now

P4: doing that releases the fear of trying to hide it so I think I don’t try to hide it as much as before

P4: I’m less afraid to stammer

P4: not have it as such a big deal and a feared thing to talk about

Increased confidence

P3: a lot more confident

P3: I’m more confident you know about going into a situation where I usen’t to

P4: I feel more calmer about it and I kind of feel more able to feel with it in a way that I didn’t before

Improved feelings towards stuttering

P1: it’s better than what it was years ago

P1: before it would have been a lot more harder on myself

P1: I feel happier in myself about it

P1: now I just don’t care

P1: I don’t maybe care now

P1: it’s just like you being who I am and that’s basically it

P2: my speech is much better physically

P2: now I cannot say that it’s a friend but it’s something that I’m familiar with

P2: I felt much less ashamed

P2: I’m in much better shape and I’m not as ashamed of it as I was

P2: I now can read and even if I stammer, it’s not that big deal

P2: allowed myself to approach many situations that I wouldn’t before

P2: first starting from the small things, like buying a ticket in the cinema

P2: I can buy cinema tickets, I can go to shops, I can talk to strangers, I allow myself to stammer and that’s fine
Perceptions since DAS Programme

P2: at least I can do all the small things

P2: it all became positive from negative

P2: there is still amount of fear and shame inside me

P2: it’s more now it’s more shame of the tricks that I used

P2: it cannot compare, it’s very small what it was before

P2: it was a huge improvement

P2: that I don’t need to pretend, that I can be me

P2: I think it’s a part of me

P2: it’s part of me

P3: I feel different towards it

P3: now it’s different

P3: it doesn’t bother me, you know, the stammer

P3: my speech doesn’t bother me

P3: it’s been, been a lot better

P3: because I can do stuff

P3: it won’t be such a major block

P4: my main thing is less to do with the severity of my stammer and more to do with my feelings about it

P4: it isn’t so much the case that my speech itself has improved since the course it’s more a case of my feelings about my speech have

P4: I am more equipped both emotionally and physically with some of the techniques

P4: it’s not necessarily a question of not doing something but if there’s a question of doing it and it being easier and it being less stressful

P4: it’s changed in that I now have a kind of a more of a clinical way of looking at it

P4: I still hate you know the uncontrol of stammering or the blocks

P4: it has helped my opinions of it and my feelings behind it
Perceptions since DAS Programme

P4: what DAS really gave me was the ability to control it

P4: now I have the kind of skills to work with it and have some control over it

P4: not all the time but like I feel like I can have some control over it now

P4: having some control about the extent which it does have an impact on your life

P4: can have some control over it and so absolutely I think that’s important to it

P4: not so much have it feel like it was controlling me
Appendix F

Thematic Analysis - MindMap
Appendix F – Thematic Analysis MindMap Representation

**Figure F1:** Thematic Analysis MindMap