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### Stories Online For Autism: Digital support for autistic children and adults

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**S**tories Online For Autism (SOFA) is an app that was developed through participatory research with the autistic and broader autism communities [1] and is freely available (see Figure 1). Parents or practitioners develop digital stories to make the environment more understandable for autistic individuals. The autistic individuals then access the digital stories to increase their understanding of their environment. The app gathers data as to how effective the digital stories have been in supporting the autistic individual to interact with their environment. Digital social stories are popular with both parents and practitioners [2,3]. Whilst research into the effectiveness of social stories has been mixed, digital social stories have been found to be consistently effective [4]. The explicit, rule-based nature of the digital stories is proposed to underpin their effectiveness in making the environment more predictable [5]. Digital social stories have been found to be effective in supporting autistic children in school settings [6]. Behaviour and understanding improve and anxiety is reduced. Digital social stories have also been found to effectively support autistic children as they went on a school camping trip [7]. Digital social stories have also been found to be effective when compared to a comparison condition in a Randomised Control Trial (RCT design [8]. Overall, there is good evidence that the SOFA-app can upskill parents and practitioners to develop and deliver effective digital social stories to support autistic children [9]. An interesting extension to this research is to explore whether autistic adults can develop and deliver their own digital social story to provide self-support. Initial evidence indicated that autistic adults can identify goals that they would like to achieve that can be effectively supported by developing and delivering their own digital social stories [10]. Thus, digital social stories are able to support autistic individuals across the lifespan.

#### Biography

Mark Brosnan is Professor of Psychology and Head of Department at the University of Bath (UK). He is a member of the Centre for People-Led Digitalisation (<https://www.bath.ac.uk/projects/made-smarter-innovation-centre-for-people-led-digitalisation>) and the Centre for Applied Autism research (CAAR: [go.bath.ac.uk/caar](http://go.bath.ac.uk/caar)). Dr. Katie Maras is a Reader in Psychology and a member of CAAR. Dr. Louis Camilleri is an Educational Psychologist studying for a PhD at CAAR and is a lecturer at the University of Malta.

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