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Together 
for Families

Shaping positive futures for young people with autism

Autism Spectrum Team brochure 2020



www.cornwall.gov.uk/togetherforfamilies

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Our vision is to shape positive futures for these young people and to inspire, challenge and advise our partners to find shared solutions



Introduction

Welcome to the brochure of the Autism Spectrum Team, Cornwall, part of the Children's Psychology Services within Children and Family Services, Cornwall Council. Our well-established team works with children and young people with a diagnosis of an Autistic Spectrum Condition (ASC) aged 4-16. Our vision is to shape positive futures for these young people and to inspire, challenge and advise our partners to find shared solutions. The Autism Spectrum Team (AST) consists of four Autism Advisors, a Highly Specialist Speech and Language Therapist and five AST workers, and is line managed by a Senior Educational Psychologist.

In the academic year 2020/21 we shall deliver capacity-building activities in schools alongside core casework in more complex cases. We recognise that the Covid-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on many young people with autism and we shall continue to work with our partners in education to support young people, carers and staff to rise to the challenges that this presents.

The new time allocation model to secondary schools, trialled last year was well received. Through planning meetings our advisors and school staff negotiated a range of activities including group work, staff 'surgeries' and casework. We shall continue to use this model with the time allocation based on the number of pupils on roll with a diagnosis of ASC. We shall be training the next cohort of new Autism Champions in the Autumn Term, while continuing to offer twice yearly mentoring to all of our existing champions. We look forward to another successful year working in partnership across schools in Cornwall for the benefit of young people with ASC.

The core offer

The core offer covers work carried out by the Autism Spectrum Team which is core funded and for which the team does not therefore make any additional charge.

Casework

A young person of school age (4-16) who has a diagnosis of an ASC may be referred to the team by a professional and their parents. The criteria for acceptance of the referral are the diagnosis (an Autism Spectrum Condition including Asperger's Syndrome, Pathological Demand Avoidance and Pervasive Developmental Disorder Not Otherwise Specified), and a clear objective for the work.

Objectives cover a very broad range e.g. helping pupils understand their diagnosis, reducing anxiety, analysing and providing strategies to deal with challenging behaviour, advising teachers on adapting their classrooms to be Autism Friendly and supporting the reintegration of pupils on part-time timetables. In addition, for this to be 'core work' a primary school should not have exceeded the allocated number of cases and a secondary school should not have exceeded their time allocation (see below). The majority of this casework is carried out in schools. Home based casework will only now be agreed to support the reintegration of a young person who is currently unable to attend school because of mental health difficulties. The duration of the team's involvement varies from a few weeks to several months depending on the complexity of each case. The advisor/Highly Specialist Speech and Language Therapist will typically write brief reports during their involvement which focus on agreed goals and actions that should be undertaken to support the young person.

A referral can be made by completing and returning the Request for Involvement form that may be downloaded from the Autism Spectrum Team Cornwall website:

www.cornwall.gov.uk/childrensautism

Referrals are dealt with in the order that they are received and there is usually a lead in of several weeks between a referral being received and the team's first visit. However urgent referrals that meet our Priority Case criteria are started within four weeks. Please see website for further details.

Maximum number of core cases per primary school

The number of core-funded pieces of casework per primary school will reflect the number of pupils on roll during the academic year 2020-21 as follows:

- ▶ Small Primary School (up to 200 pupils) - 2 cases
- ▶ Large Primary School (over 200 pupils) 3 cases
- ▶ Special School or Area Resource Base - 2 cases

However for schools with a large number of pupils with a diagnosis of ASC on roll the core cases will be increased as follows:

- ▶ Schools with 8 pupils with ASC diagnosis - 4 cases
- ▶ Schools with 10 pupils with an ASC diagnosis - 5 cases

Note that the number of cases includes any active cases carried over from the previous academic year.

Time allocation for casework in secondary schools

We shall again use a time allocation rather than a case limit to secondary schools in September 2020. The advisors will work closely with secondary school staff in planning meetings to agree the most effective use of the allocated time. Time may be used on casework but also other consultancy activities if preferred. Formal training to large numbers of staff must still however be commissioned as previously. The number of days allocated will reflect the number of pupils with a diagnosis on each school's roll as follows:

- ▶ Small Secondary School (up to 800 pupils) - 4.5 days per year
- ▶ Large Secondary School (over 800 pupils) - 6 days per year

However for schools with a large number of pupils with a diagnosis of ASC on roll the time allocation will be increased as follows:

- ▶ Schools with 10 pupils with an ASC diagnosis - 5.5 days per year (36 hours)
- ▶ Schools with 15 pupils with an ASC diagnosis - 6.5 days per year (42 hours)

- ▶ Schools with 20 pupils with an ASC diagnosis - 7.5 days per year (48 hours)
- ▶ Schools with > 20 pupils with an ASC diagnosis - 8.5 days per year (55 hours)

Note that this time allocation is for face to face work of an advisor in the school setting. Admin time for any office based work undertaken by the advisor and the time of an Autism Spectrum Team worker is included additionally as part of our core offer.

We recommend that core-funded referrals should be prioritised by the school professionals concerned through consideration of the level of vulnerability of the young person and the complexity of the work required. For example, pupils on part-time timetables, with moderate mental health needs, with challenging behaviour, Children in Care or on Child Protection plans, and children at risk of placement breakdown (home or school) would all be particularly appropriate for referral to the team. We strongly recommend that those schools which do not yet have an Autism Champion consider the benefits of securing one to enable them to deal effectively with less complex concerns around young people with an ASC.

Resources from the Autism Spectrum Team

The team has created a number of resources that are freely available to our partners as follows:

- ▶ Leaflets covering common issues - Eating, Transition, Sleeping and Toileting, suitable for staff and parents.
- ▶ A sibling work-pack providing all the information needed to run a four- week group for siblings of young people with autism, suitable for school staff in primary or secondary schools.
- ▶ An assembly/ class session pack to give the peers of students with autism an introduction to autism. There are both primary and secondary level packs.

New this year in response to Covid-19

- ▶ Leaflets covering various issues relating to Covid-19 suitable for staff and parents.
- ▶ A pack containing planning for group sessions for Y7 students with ASC to support a successful transition into secondary school

These resources and others are either available to down-load from our website, by contacting a member of your area team, or by contacting:

admin.staustell3@cornwall.gov.uk

Autism Spectrum Team advice line for educational, health and social care settings and schools during Covid-19

We are offering a new, free telephone advice service, which provides consultation on the education and well-being of young people with ASC. The issue may relate to an individual or a broader need within a setting. Please note that if the issue concerns a young person already known to the AST, we recommend that you contact the relevant Adviser.

The service can be contacted using the email address below. Please give your name, setting and phone number, as well as the best time to contact you throughout the working day. This is so that we can phone when you are available for a brief outline of the issue that you would like to discuss. Please do not include the names of children or young people in your email.

For the Autism Spectrum Team please contact:

AST.Advice@cornwall.gov.uk

We will aim to phone you back within two working days and offer a consultation on the issue raised.

Parent workshops

The Autism Spectrum Team runs regular parent workshops for parents of children who have received a diagnosis of an Autism Spectrum Condition. These consist of three sessions, the first an overall introduction to autism, the second a selection of themed workshops and the third an opportunity for a one- off individual consultation. The themed workshops cover a range of topics including: social communication and relationships, behavioural aspects including eating and sleeping, mental health and emotional wellbeing and finally resources and strategies to try. All participants are given a hand-book to refer to during the course and keep on completion of the course. Parents also have the option to invite a member of school staff to attend the first session in order to encourage working relationships between parents and schools and for the staff to benefit from the training. The ASDAT team which carries out diagnostic assessments of assessments of school age children in Cornwall has close links with the Autism Spectrum Team and informs us of families where a child has newly received a diagnosis of autism, so that we can invite their parents to our workshops. Additionally parents may self-refer to our workshops through contacting a member of the area team in which they live (please see contact details at the back of the brochure).

Traded work

Additional casework

Schools may purchase additional time from the Autism Spectrum Team if they require involvement with more pupils with a diagnosis of ASC than the number covered by core casework or their time allocation. They may also purchase time so that the team can work with pupils who appear to have social communication difficulties but who do not have a diagnosis of ASC.

This time can be purchased by contacting the team manager at admin.staustell3@cornwall.gov.uk at any point during the academic year 2020/21, at the following rates:

- ▶ Cost of advisor for one day (6.5 hours) - **£470**
- ▶ Cost of one day each of an advisor and an AST worker (13 hours total) - **£680**

The time purchased may be used for consultation with staff and parents, assessments of the young person, meetings including multi-agency meetings, direct work with the young person and the completion of reports if required.

Overcoming your child's fears and worries intervention

The Autism Spectrum Team can deliver an evidence-based, parent led intervention which research has shown to have an excellent record of reducing or eliminating anxiety.

Who is this intervention for?

Some young people develop anxiety problems that have a significant impact on their lives. This might be a specific anxiety such as a phobia or social anxiety or it might be more generalised anxiety. If this anxiety problem has lasted for several months or more and prevents that young person enjoying normal school or home life it might be appropriate to seek further support such as this intervention. The Overcoming your child's fears and worries programme is particularly appropriate for young people aged 7-12 but can also be used with young people either younger or older than this age group, with or without a diagnosis of autism.

What does the package consist of?

The package is 'parent-led' which means that the Autism Spectrum Team member guides and supports the parents in learning about what causes and maintains anxiety, what techniques to use to address this and how to tailor these techniques to their individual child. It also addresses how parents should manage their own anxiety. There are eight sessions that take place once a week over eight weeks in the parent's home (usually) or by phone as appropriate.

Cost: £300

For more information please contact: **Katy Neve** katy.neve@cornwall.gov.uk or admin.staustell3@cornwall.gov.uk

Capacity building activities



Autism Champions

Autism Champions is an initiative introduced to Cornwall by the Autism Spectrum Team in 2013. A member of staff with an interest and experience in working with pupils with autism is designated to be the Autism Champion by their school. They receive three days of training from the Autism Spectrum Team and ongoing mentoring from the team on a half-termly and then twice yearly basis. Within the school they are given a minimum of one day (in primary schools) or two and a half days (in secondary schools) to fulfil their role. They get to know the young people in their school with a diagnosis of autism, their strengths and needs, so that they can act as an in-school resource to the staff working with them and in some cases to work directly with the young people. They promote autism awareness within their schools, and provide a first 'port of call' for parents, pupils and staff, often providing guidance that means that small issues are dealt with before they become major concerns. The impact of Autism Champions was positively evaluated by pupils, parents, staff and senior managers in a study carried out in 2015.

We are proud of the ongoing success and popularity of the Autism Champions initiative and the strength of the partnership between our team and schools that this represents. There are currently 180 Autism Champions, trained and mentored by our team. They increase the understanding of autism in their school, are a resource for pupils, staff and parents and are able to give a quick response to issues as they arise, enabling our team to concentrate on more complex cases. The cost of the Autism Champions package is £300 which we consider is excellent value and a very worthwhile investment.

1) Initial package for new Autism Champion

- ▶ Three days of training at Bedruthan Steps Hotel on 7, 14 and 21 October 2020
- ▶ Further one day of training in Summer Term 5
- ▶ Autism Awareness and understanding the role of the champion training (one hour approximately) for host school
- ▶ Five half-termly, one-hour mentoring visits to Autism Champion from the area Autism Advisor

Cost: £300

2) Mentoring for existing champions

We are continuing to offer free mentoring of existing Autism Champions in 2020/21. Each school with one or more Autism Champions will be offered two mentoring visits per year. These may take place within the host school or with agreement be arranged for a group of Autism Champions working in nearby schools. If a school wishes to purchase additional mentoring visits the cost of these will be as follows:

- ▶ Three one-hour mentoring visits across the year - **£100 per school**
- ▶ One, one-hour mentoring visit - **£50 per School**

3) Autism Champions follow-up training

Full-day in Summer or Autumn Term - **£80 per champion**

To make enquiries or book the Autism Champions packages contact admin.staustell3@cornwall.gov.uk



Autism Friendly School package

This offers settings the opportunity to work closely with an Autism Advisor over 2-3 terms with the aim of improving the experience, attendance and attainment of children and young people with an Autism Spectrum Condition.

Using national and local benchmarking of good practice, the Autism Spectrum Team has developed an autism tool and consultation package that will enable SENCos and Senior Leaders to 'know what good looks like', celebrate successes in this area and identify areas for future development to create a culture of continuous improvement.

Who is it for? SENCos and their teams/partners, pastoral staff, Senior leadership team representatives.

Structure

- Visit 1** Introduction to the audit tool and planning of interim actions by school(1.5 hours)
- Visit 2** School presents initial results of audit. Prioritisation of areas of analysis and standardisation. AST presentation of film of good practice in Cornwall (2 hours)
- Visit 3** Collaborative analysis of evidence and standardisation using performance measures. Planning next steps (2 hours)
- Visit 4** Review of outcomes and methodologies (1.5 hours).

Then

Report by Autism Advisor summarising the impact of the work and identifying positive approaches and initiatives. Autism Friendly School Certificate on completion of process.

Cost

£300 for primary schools, secondary schools, ARBs and Special schools, to include 4 visits, ongoing consultation between visits and a final report and certificate.

Contact: Katy Neve, Senior Educational Psychologist (Mid Cornwall) and Manager of the Autism Spectrum Team:
katy.neve@cornwall.gov.uk or
admin.staustell3@cornwall.gov.uk

Training courses for school staff

We offer training on a range of autism related topics with courses written and presented by our knowledgeable and engaging team. We believe that the impact of our training is likely to be greatest when it is delivered to groups of staff within a school, or to the whole school community.

So this year, all of our training courses are available to be purchased by individual schools or clusters, at a competitive price, to be incorporated in the school's staff CPD programme. Typical courses run by our team are described below, and we are always interested in creating new courses to cover additional relevant topics requested by our customers, or to adapt our current courses to different lengths. Other areas of particular interest of the team include Pathological Demand Avoidance, Autism and girls, and Autism and mental health.

Training courses may be purchased by contacting the team manager:
admin.staustell3@cornwall.gov.uk

- ▶ Twilight sessions (up to 1.5 h) **£75**
- ▶ Half day (3h) **£150**
- ▶ Full day **£225**

Menu of courses

Autism Friendly Classrooms (Primary and Secondary)

Our training will identify and explain some of the difficulties that pupils on the autistic spectrum frequently experience in schools. We will then look at practical strategies that staff can use to support them including techniques for structuring learning, such as work-systems and task management boards, techniques for improving communication, such as using visual timetables and symbols as well as differentiating the curriculum and consideration of the whole classroom environment.

Social skills and promoting play in primary schools

Our training will identify how play and social skills development differs between children with and without an ASC; strategies to promote and develop play and social skills and identify where these differences may create particular problems.

We will explain a number of practical strategies and tools that will support break times, both for use by school staff and students. We will also help participants to develop individual plans to target the development of specific social and play skills.

Autism and challenging behaviour

A child with an autism spectrum condition will experience difficulties with social integration, imagination and communication. If a child has limited communication skills then using 'challenging behaviour' may be the only way they can successfully get their message across.

However when a child is taught communication skills that can provide an effective and efficient alternative form of communication, reduction in challenging behaviour occurs. Our training will focus on unpicking autism spectrum conditions and how communication can break down. It will look at practical strategies and techniques that can be used to support and develop children's communication skills and thereby reduce challenging behaviour in schools and settings.

Autism and relationship and sex education

In some respects the physical, social and emotional development of young people with autism is the same as that of their peers. However the triad of impairments that is common to all young people on the autistic spectrum, plus sensory difficulties, may lead to misunderstanding, confusion, anxiety or potentially risky behaviour amongst these pupils.

Our course will unpick the impact of the triad of impairments (and sensory integration difficulties) on young people's understanding and experience of puberty and social behaviour. It will show recommended resources and teaching techniques that cover the core areas of sex-education including puberty, public and private, and the impact of modern technology, and look at safeguarding in this context. The day will include opportunities for primary and secondary staff to focus on issues that are of particular relevance to the age group that they work with and will explore how to use the Brook Sexual Behaviours Traffic Light Tool, a nationally endorsed resource.

NB The course content as described represents a full-day of training in each case above. These could be adapted to a shorter training session if required.

Autism and transition to secondary school

The move from primary to secondary school is both an exciting and challenging time for many young people and their parents. This is particularly true for pupils with autism. The aim of our training is help those young people to achieve a successful transition. Our training will analyse the ways in which the four key areas of difference within autism have an impact on the move to secondary school, and where these differences may create particular problems. We will explain a number of practical strategies and tools that will support transition, both for use by school staff and by parents. We will also help participants to plan a preparation timeline for individual students. This is a half-day training suitable for parents and primary and secondary staff.

Autism Awareness

An introduction to the triad of impairments that it is common to all young people on the autistic spectrum, plus sensory difficulties that occur in many individuals with an Autistic Spectrum Condition. The course will explore how these impairments may impact on the young person in an educational setting, and cover some strategies and techniques that staff may use with pupils to enable them to engage more fully and successfully in all aspects of school life. 1 - 1.5 hours session.

Social Skills package

Social Skills package

The team has created a flexible social skills package which consists of eight one hour sessions for secondary school students with social communication difficulties. There are materials suitable for mixed or single sex groups of around eight students (with a different emphasis depending on the needs of the group). Two members of the AST lead the group for the first six sessions, which are also attended by two staff from the host school. School staff are expected to take over leading the sessions by the end of the course and should be able to run the course independently thereafter, using the large, detailed pack prepared by the AST.

Cost: £300

To purchase this package contact your area advisor or Katy Neve
Katy.neve@cornwall.gov.uk or **admin.staustell3@cornwall.gov.uk**



What our partners say about us

- The training was brilliant.
- I learnt new things.
- It was really good to hear those things again because you forget.
- Invaluable.
- We should have this every year.
- I really enjoyed the part about girls - really interesting.
- I liked that we were engaged and involved, not just sat listening.

Feedback from staff of a Primary school on their autism training

“ I always value our meetings. I meant to say when we were talking about the accreditation how valuable we found it as an experience. It also gave (our two Autism Champions) a real boost in confidence and has spurred them on to continue making an impact. If you ever needed me to speak about the process to other schools considering it then please feel free to pass on my details as **we found it to be hugely beneficial.** ”

Secondary SENCo about the Autism and Social Communication Friendly School package.

“ Thanks for such an **inspiring and practically focused** session! I'm sorry I disconnected you so quickly at the end – you missed the trainees jumping on to the call to let you know how helpful they found it! It's been a pleasure working with you all on these sessions; thanks again to you all for your support of the CAP trainees. ”

Lead tutor for the Clinical Associate Psychologists about their on-line training on working with young people with autism.

“ Appreciate all the info you are sending; you never know what might be useful; and all the support. You and your team are doing an awesome job under incredibly difficult circumstances. Everyone I email/speak to for help and information bends over backwards to give it, always with the young person in mind, **always totally professional.** Thank you so much. ”

Autism Champion for CHES Wave Academy during lockdown.

“ Thank you for everything, (our daughter) has come on such a long way with your help. I have all the emails and resources saved in a folder and the blue one which we have been using various bits from (notably the Inside Out emotions cards!) Thank you once again – your sessions have been **the most valuable intervention** we have had. ”

Parent on completion of Overcoming Programme

“ I have found it most useful to meet other parents with similar difficulties. ...I have been reassured by your kind attitude to our children. It had been a new experience being in a group where my family's experience is not unusual, this has felt unbelievably good. ... **I feel less stressed knowing the team is there with such expertise.** ... So a brilliant course, warmly and dynamically delivered. ”

Parent feedback after attending parent workshops

Contact details

Manager Autism Spectrum Team

Katy Neve - Senior Educational Psychologist

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e: katy.neve@cornwall.gov.uk

East Area Team

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Amanda Burgess - Highly Specialist Speech and
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t: 01579 341302 or 01872 323056

e: Matthew.wilmott@cornwall.gov.uk

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Mid Area Team

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Vicky Brewer - Autism Advisor

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