



Self Assessment of our SEND Implementation

November 19

*A new approach to special educational
needs and disability*



Post diagnostic support for families of young people with a diagnosis of Autism Spectrum Disorder

What was the issue

Autism is a lifelong, developmental disability that affects how a person communicates with and relates to other people, and how they experience the world around them (National Autistic Society). A CYP with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) will often display behaviours that challenge people around them.

- Parents can struggle to understand their child's diagnosis of Autism Spectrum disorder and report needing greater support from professionals in this respect (Midence & O'Neill, 1999; Osborne & Reed, 2008).

Our Journey so far

- Based on identified need, Torbay and South Devon have been successfully running programmes, for over 10 years, for parents whose CYP have received a diagnosis of Autism Spectrum Disorder. The programmes delivered are evidence based and are devised by either the National Autistic Society (NAS) or Barnardo's. Each family is given three places on the programme and it is strongly encouraged that somebody from the child's educational session attends to support the family and provide consistency of approach.
- The programmes are currently co-ordinated and delivered by the Speech and Language therapy service. We also work jointly with educational psychologists and Portage workers to deliver the sessions.

What have we done?

Currently, we run the following programmes in Torbay and south Devon.

- EarlyBird is a 12 week programme for parents of children under the age of 5 with a diagnosis of ASD which is currently run once a term. The programme requires two trained /licenced practitioners and can only have 6 families attending at one time.
- EarlyBird Plus is a 10 week programme for parents of children who are 5-8 years old with a diagnosis of ASD; the programme is currently run once a year . The programme again requires two trained /licenced practitioners and can only have 6 families attending at one time.
- Cygnet (Barnardo's) is a 7 week programme for parents of CYP from 5- 18 years old with a diagnosis of ASD. It can be run by experienced practitioners in ASD. Four programmes are run a term with session 7 being arranged as a follow up session at a later date. There is no restriction of the number of families attending but experience has indicated that a maximum of 8 families is preferable.

What difference has this made?

- We have had excellent feedback from parents .Please see some parent quotes below;

What would you tell them?

That it's an Amazing Programme that helps you understand Autism and it's a great way to communicate with others that are going through the same thing.

What have you learned about behaviour whilst participating in the programme?

I have learnt that behaviour is a and can be a reaction to situation she is not coping in. I have also learnt that to praise her with her achievements as both good behaviour is really worth it. I can now understand why things can be challenging for her.

- The emphasis of the the programme is for parents to be able to self manage their child's additional needs Families who attend the programme require very limited ongoing intervention form our service as they have learned to manage their child's Autism and have life long strategies. Families sometimes choose to attend our regular ongoing group drop in sessions for parents to jointly problem solve and to revisit the ideas from the sessions.

Areas for further action

- Parents of children under 5 have a wait of up to a year to access the EarlyBird programme; whereas the wait for Cygnet is around 3-4 months. The longer wait for the EarlyBird programme has occurred due to only 3 staff in Torbay and south Devon being trained and therefore licensed to deliver the programme. The training of programme facilitators is £1000.00 excluding travel and accommodation costs.
- To consider the benefits of continuing to run EarlyBird + programme as opposed to just the Cygnet.
- To introduce one day ASD awareness workshops for parents to access in a timely way for them following receiving the diagnosis; if desired this could be within a 4 weeks of receiving the diagnosis.

Immediate next steps

- To train additional staff members to be EarlyBird providers as no other under 5, evidence based programmes are available.
- To introduce a one day ASD workshop post diagnosis.
- To investigate the possibility of introducing a two day workshop for young people of 14-18years who have a diagnosis of ASD and their families.
- To evaluate the relative strengths and weaknesses of both the Cygnet and EarlyBird + programme in order to come to an evidence based decision as to which programme is more effectual for our families . Currently we are running more Cygnet programmes as staff do not need to attend expensive training course to facilitate the programme and the shorter course and lack of ceiling on the families allows for faster through flow of families.

Author

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