



# Autism and Social Communication

## Information for Schools

Children & Young People's Services



# Autism and Social Communication Team (ASC Team)

The team includes specialist advisory teachers, an assistant psychologist, specialist educational psychologist and a specialist speech and language therapist. All staff have additional expertise and qualifications in the areas of autism.

They are able to support children, young people, school staff and families to understand how the autism or social communication differences impact on a child or young person's presentation in school. They are highly skilled in developing and advising on supports and strategies that can minimise the difficulties experienced and maximise progress.


***Please note: children and young people do not need a diagnosis of an Autism Spectrum Disorder or any other condition to access this team.***

The team relate closely to national and regional organisations and partners including the National Autistic Society, The Autism Education Trust, and also partners in health and therapies, and local diagnostic pathways.

**The team also offers regular training opportunities.**

Please refer to the training directory for the full range of training available.

# Excellence in utism

awareness cceptance ccess chievement

# Working with us

The advisory teachers came across as experts with a realistic understanding of the challenges involved in supporting CYP with additional needs.

They worked really well delivering the CPD as a team and managed to create a relaxed atmosphere not easy online.

(Teacher following virtual training)

I have learned new methods of how to control my anxiety and emotions so that I can still progress with my day. I have also learned that it's good to talk about how you are feeling.

(Pupil Feedback following weekly intervention)

I feel confident taking this training back into my workplace and using it with my young people. This is the best, and most useful, online training I have done.

Teachers following virtual training)

The training was absolutely excellent and the support you have provided has been invaluable. I just wish all children diagnosed could receive it!

(Head Teacher following a Post Diagnostic Support Package)

Talking and discussing issues has really improved home life and at times it feels like we have had a normal evening as we have reduced meltdowns to discussions.

(Parent feedback following intervention for their child)

Thank you for the course and the resources. I'm sure these will be useful in the coming months. The course helped me reflect on things that I have used or heard about in the past and also introduced me to some new resources.

Teacher following virtual training)

# How support is delivered

Schools refer directly to the team for assessment and support for interventions for individual pupils. The degree of involvement ranges from a single consultation to more detailed individual assessment and discussion with staff and parents relating to outcomes and interventions. Initial consultation sessions are available to help support staff to identify a plan of action. **At present, due to COVID** restrictions around school visitation, we are also able to work with schools, young people and families using video consultation so that casework and training can continue without interruption during the pandemic.

## Package 1 - Cost: £395 or 1.5 COL credits

### Individual Pupil Assessment

This package may include:

- an initial contact with parents and school staff to discuss concerns;
- up to half a day spent working with the child/young person doing a range of activities/observation/formal assessment;
- an outcomes planning meeting;
- full written report detailing the activities undertaken and findings;
- a short review.

## Package 2 - Cost £195 or 0.75 COL Credits (likely to be offered virtually in 2020 21)

**Pupil Consultation** - this package may include:

- a consultation or solution focused meeting with school staff and parents/ carers together;
- up to one hour working with the child/young person doing a small number of informal tasks;
- a brief written feedback with outcomes and suggestions for strategies and approaches.

**Online Consultation** - this package may include

- a consultation or solution focused meeting with school staff and parents/ carers together; online using Microsoft Teams;
- Telephone or video consultations with parents and school staff separately;
- Online informal discussion and assessment with the young person if appropriate;
- a brief written feedback with outcomes and suggestions for strategies and approaches.

### Package 3 - Cost: £185 per half day input or 0.75 COL Credits

**Bespoke School Support** - this package may include:

- school development work
- workshops/coaching
- support with interventions
- consultation with school staff to discuss a group of children or area of concern
- If appropriate, brief written feedback can be provided.

**£370 for full day of time or 1.5 COL credits**

#### **Direct intervention with individual pupils or groups**

This option will usually include:

- initial brief assessment for an individual child or young person if required;
- liaison with involved professionals if appropriate;
- planning and delivery of a block of intervention, often run on a weekly basis;
- post intervention feedback
- a short report if required.

**Interventions are personalised and can address different needs, for example:**

- **Social communication:**
  - social interaction; social understanding; non-verbal communication; play skills and Lego therapy.
- **Emotional Well Being:**
  - managing anxiety or Emotional regulation.

**Other interventions can be negotiated with the team.**

**Where appropriate, interventions could be offered online.**

**Package 4 £825 full day; £550 half day; £275 twilight (up to 20, additional cost of £5 per person)**

#### **In School or Online Training**

The team can provide bespoke in school training designed to suit your setting: Early Years to Further Education. Themes are negotiable but could include:

- autism awareness; developing social understanding; sensory processing differences; ASC and Girls; developing play skills; curriculum access; structured teaching; understanding the behaviour of pupils with ASC or the emotional needs of pupils on the autism spectrum.

**Other training can be discussed with the team.**

# Examples of Intervention

Interventions are bespoke to meet the needs of each individual and will seek to address any particular issues which have been raised at the time of referral. A typical group or individual intervention would last at least six weeks and workshops can be provided for those supporting, so that everyone can have an understanding of the language and strategies used during the intervention, in order that they can better support the young person.

## Social Understanding (Social Cognition)

The goal of **social cognition** interventions is improving social competencies – not just social skills; how to attend, interpret, problem solve and respond in social situations. At some point we all struggle in social situations. Our interventions are to help motivate social learners to explore shared social expectations, emotional responses in themselves and others and to understand the motivations of those around them. Social concepts are explored through practical and concrete activities, which help to engage young people in social learning, not only about themselves but about others.

**Lego Therapy** **Lego therapy** is a small group activity designed to support collaborative interaction. It helps to develop listening skills, giving and following instructions, waiting, and turn-taking. It can also help to develop linguistic concepts such as attributes (colour, shape) and position. In addition, children often also make improvements in non-verbal communication, emotional regulation and confidence when speaking to others. Lego therapy is not suitable for non-verbal children and cannot be run with more than 3 children in the group.

## Build to Express

**LEGO® BuildToExpress (BTE)** encourages pupils to express their thoughts and ideas symbolically and is a more playful, creative and hands-on method to engage pupils of all abilities and achieve results. The method ensures a secure and non-judgemental process for solving problems and expressing personal feelings. The BTE process will help students enhance their speaking and listening skills. Pupils develop a wide array of skills such as: abstract thinking; reasoning; verbal communication; time management; inquiry; interpretation and active listening. Further development of these skills is beneficial for all young people but particularly important for young people with social communication differences.



## Collaborative Interaction

Similar to LEGO Therapy, the aim of this programme is for children to learn **positive interaction skills** by engaging in a highly motivating collaborative activity with other children in a group setting. It can be adapted to suit a variety of interests relevant to the children who are involved. The activity can be between a child and an adult, two children, or a small group, depending on the young people in question and their needs and skills. Themes have included (but are not limited to): **small world play** e.g. Doll's house, castles, pirates, trains, cars and garages; **construction** including: large blocks, models, junk modelling; **Art and Craft**—origami, mosaic, mural etc; **Cooking**; **Role play** e.g. super heroes, home corner; **Gardening** and **Computer/IT** e.g. power points, playlists, recording music, coding. Please contact the team to further discuss your ideas if you have some specific ideas in mind.



## Emotional Regulation

**Emotional self-regulation** is an individual's ability to manage their emotions so as to avoid spending too much time in emotional, reactive states. **Emotional regulation is the ability to recognise, name and understand emotions.**

When we are able to self-monitor emotions we can evaluate our feelings and consciously modify the way we behave and even possibly change our emotional state. When students are able to self-regulate their emotions, they are in a better position to be able to direct their efforts towards a goal and can achieve this despite other demands placed upon them. Emotional self-regulation helps students develop resilient attitudes and primes them for learning and success. Just like academic or physical skills, emotional self-regulation skills can be taught. However, in order to achieve this, we need to approach the teaching of emotional self-regulation with purpose and intention. Our team have a range of resources and approaches to offer a bespoke intervention for an individual or small group to empower them to learn more about the super-power of self-regulation.

## Drawing and Talking

Drawing and Talking is a therapeutic intervention, run by specially trained practitioners. For 12 weeks the young person will work with the practitioner, exploring their experiences and the emotions associated with these. Drawing and Talking is usually run on a 1:1 basis but can also be run as part of a group intervention. Drawing and Talking is not suitable for non verbal children.

It may be possible to negotiate a different package for group support in your school. Please ask if you have specific requirements which our current packages do not meet.

As with all interventions, the best outcomes are achieved when the outcomes and content are well-matched to the children's needs. For this reason the outcomes for one group may be different to another group following the same package and the content of the package may change to reflect the children's needs.

After the first few sessions of a group intervention, we may suggest a change in focus or on some occasions we may ask that the children be grouped differently. If this happens we will explain why and suggest alternatives.

### **For further information please contact:**

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