

Autism Schools Project

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1. Purpose

This project outline is intended to detail the rollout of the Autism School Project which was one of the CYP Accelerator Projects . It will outline the project support required to enable regions to explore and implement how they may support children and young people with Autism in mainstream schools through the provision of early intervention and preventive support. Enabling children and young people to be supported well in the school environment may in the longer term, prevent unnecessary admissions to hospital (Tier 4).

1.1 Objective/Scope

Autism Schools Projects will build on the work and learning from the North Cumbria and North East Accelerator Schools Autism Project, with an aim that regions can have project sites rolling out the key core aspects of the project within 2021/22 .

Each region will be required to identify (two project areas) ICS or TCP/ local areas which can mobilise and work with their local systems to develop a project plan and deliver the project within 2021/22. (school year Sept 21- July22)

Regions will be expected to work with Parent Carer Forums, SEND leads, mental health in schools project leads, schools and CCG / local authority colleagues to develop their project plan. This should include identifying key stakeholders and regional champions to support the delivery of the projects locally. They will be able to describe how they will implement the work and learning, localising it to work within their areas.

As there will be two project area per region; It is expected these local areas will work with up to 10 mainstream schools, ideally spread across the TCP / ICS local authority areas, including secondary schools and some primary schools, and it is optional to include a special schools or specialist provision from the local areas. It would be beneficial to link with Mental Health School Support teams.

There will be a support offer from the Project Implementation Team (this will be provided by the North Cumbria and North East team), With initial webinars – to explain the Autism schools project, and then follow up “How to” webinars for project teams (listed below)learning and sharing events and solution focussed support, along with an expectation that autism school project teams are part of a Community of Practice.

The focus is on sharing the learning from the NCNE project and allowing the regions to think about how they best implement the core elements to work within their local areas, taking into account local service provision and capacity of Parent Carer Forums, Schools and CYP/ mental health teams to engage in the work. There may be elements which are adapted to fit with local infrastructure.

There is an expectation that regions (via project teams) will engage in the support offer and will share progress against baseline measures and learning throughout the

project timescales and that regions will participate in end of year report and evaluation, demonstrating impact and outcomes achieved.

Due to school calendar year, the school delivery may be from September 2021 to July 2022, with coproduction, engagement and planning , preparation and commissioning of resources happening June to September 2021 and finances spent within financial year (i.e. by end of March 2022).

2. Time lines and support offer from the Project Implementation Team provided by North Cumbria and North East team

1. Initial communications with Julie Bates and Phil Brayshaw with regions: invitation for attendance from Regional Leads, CYP leads, and their National Parent Care Forum Regional Leads,

Four open sessions (dates and times below)- are available for regional leads to come to one of these dates to gather further information;

14th June 8.45 am – 9.15 am

17th June 8.45 am – 9.15 am and 12.00 – 12.30

18th June 4pm - 4.30pm

2. To assist in project planning there will be three Introductory 2 hour webinars, explaining the schools project, lead by Julie Bates and Sarah Thomas . Targeted audience are the regional leads/ project team, local SEND and MH Support team leads/ colleagues, Parent Carer Forum, and key stakeholders.

Regions to choose to come to one of these below; To book attendance contact Jummy MORAKINYO by email olajumoke.morakinyo@nhs.net

24th June 10.30 -12.30

25th June 10.30-12.30

7th July 10.30-12.30

3. Regions will follow their own assurance arrangements for agreeing with PCF's which local areas which will be part of the projects , including early discussion with possible schools before end of the school year.
(Two project areas per region)
Advice and consultation Julie Bates and PCF representative will be available throughout July to support/review any plans
4. Regionally agreed project areas and implementation plans to be submitted to juliebates2@nhs.net by 30th July 2021.

5. Facilitated “how to” webinars: for project teams, will available in July/ August and September (dates to be confirmed)

How to webinars will cover:

- a. Project timescales; engagement and learning from NCNE, early engagement with schools (Engaging with schools; school readiness and leadership)
 - b. Coproduction with Parent carer forums and setting up mini forums etc
 - c. Engaging with schools; school readiness and leadership
 - d. Use of modular resources and access local experts
 - e. Provision of alternative autism CAMHS support
 - f. Children and young people Understanding Myself training
6. Mentoring /Solution focused support access to expert knowledge
 7. Engagement with national colleague across SEND, MH, connect to the Mental health schools project etc
 8. Support to agree baseline metrics for the project
 9. Facilitating the Sharing and learning through Community of Practice

2.2 Implementation Project plan times scales

Action	Quarter 1 21/22	Quarter 2 21/22	Quarter 3 21/22	Quarter 4 21/22	Quarter 1 22/23
Introductory 30 mins sessions with regions	June				
webinars- introduction to Autism schools project for regions 3 early engagement sessions	June	July			
Regions develop plans and submit project plans		July			
Regional Plans agreed, funding agreed and MOU’s signed		July			
Communication/engagement/support/ Plan created with identified Regional Champions		July			
Initial community of practice			Oct	Jan	March
Commence programme of 1 hour “how to” webinars		July – sept			
Advice and consultation sessions for regions					
Schools identified and signed up		End of Sept			

Project Team supports regional champions to create baseline with identified schools			Oct to Dec		
Project Team shares modular training programme packs and supports Regional Champions with implementation plans		Aug-	Dec		
Parent Carers Forums, Regional Champions and CONTACT engaged with schools supported by project team			Oct to March		
Roll out of Modular Training by Regional Champions monitored/ quality checked by Project Team				Jan to March	Jan to March
Sharing and learning					Evaluation completed

3. For Regions to consider

1. School commitment; (see appendix section; The Role and Expectations from Selected Schools)

- Agreement from Executive Lead / Head of School
- Named link / lead person
- School readiness to engage in all aspects of the programme of work
- 7 session Modular Training Programme commitment for at least one person from each school to complete all of the sessions and
- commit to lead roll out of the knowledge and implement recommendations/ actions within school environment

School attendance -Backfill costs Regions to consider if they will be funding schools to participate, and whether sessions will be via webinar or face to face.

How to resource appropriate local facilitators for webinars/ modules.

Modular Pack will be available as a resource

2. Creation, development and roll out of Parental Engagement Plan building community capacity/resilience with the Regional Champion, example; the CONTACT Organisation and the Local Parent Carers Forum

Consider supporting /funding allocation to PCF, regions might want to consider additional funding for increasing capacity in the PCF and support from other agencies in way of a champion role/ similar role

3. Additional CPD offer for whole school approaches topics to include Autism Myth Busting, Sensory Processing, Communication, Autism Education Trust- Building Awareness, and Person-Centred Planning.

This could be via webinars or alternative to CAMHS part of offer- regions to decide best fit

4. Baseline data and outcome measures

Data re attendance/ exclusion etc also school surveys completed by Parents and Staff.

Consider baseline data available, quantitative SEND 2 data set/ school attendance etc , Qualitative data- PCF and school surveys etc Needs to be part of evaluation – regions to consider, coproduced with PCF.

5. Enhanced Autism offer / Local CAMHS provider offering dedicated time to those schools working with the Accelerator Site for advice, guidance, mentoring and coaching.

Suggest this is best sourced from local Trusts, as they will know local resources, however could it be embedded in MH wellbeing schools teams

6. Use of Voluntary sector to support awareness of Autism

Consider local resources which could be enhanced

7. Advice and Support will be available throughout the implementation of the programme from the North Cumbria and North East Project Team.

Regions / project teams to consider; What is required what would be most helpful

8. Participation in the Sharing the Learning across a range of Community of Practice Groups, coproduction leadership with regional PCF

Regions to consider need a small team/ person as project lead to attend

3.1 Additional considerations- impact on whole systems

- Voice of the child – Autism topic specific young person's group work, package to be shared for implementation.
- Roll of Mental health in schools teams, opportunity for Autism role or champions
- Education Psychology in the local area, opportunity for enhanced support and training
- Sharing of the 'Understanding Me', Training the Trainers Package for 14-16 year olds for local implementation.
- To support the promotion of the Dynamic Support Registers, Care, Education and Treatment reviews.
- The Regional Champion to support NHS Colleagues in audit of C&YP who are admitted to hospital.
- To generate other training opportunities from the Autism Education Trust and other providers to circulate to schools.
<https://www.autismeducationtrust.org.uk/>
- To promote shadowing opportunities between schools.

Appendix – Background, roles and responsibilities and the steps to mobilisation

The initial project as part of Transforming Care Children and Young People Accelerator Schools Autism Project

In its first year, the Accelerator Schools Project was run across the most southern part of NCNE covering County Durham and Tees Valley, i.e. 5 local authority areas of North Cumbria and North East. In the second year, the Project expanded across the North of the region to Northumberland, Newcastle, Gateshead, South Tyneside and Sunderland working with approximately 2- 5 schools per local authority area.

The projects:

- Worked with mainly secondary mainstream schools, some primary schools and a small number of special schools to improve knowledge and understanding of how to support autistic students and their families.
- Promoted a person centred approach to working with Autistic students in mainstream school – so that teaching staff understand the challenges faced by individual students and are able to put reasonable adjustments in place where needed.
- Enabled autistic young people and their families to understand their own strengths and challenges – increasing confidence and self-awareness.
- Improved working relationships between families and the schools, by the creation of school based support groups offering peer to peer support and reducing isolation.

Links to evaluation reports:-

<https://contact.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/Autism-Accelocator-Phase-1-evaluation.pdf>

<https://contact.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/Autism-Accelerator-Phase-2.pdf>

Link for the Autism film

[Take Time To Allow Time - Triple A Project - Autism in schools - YouTube](#)

There are 3 elements to the Accelerator Schools Project

1. Building relationships and networks of support:

- Parent carer forums - family support/mini forums in schools
- Education, health and social care professionals coming together

2. Learning opportunities for schools (Autism champions/ Heads and SEN support) and parent carer forums:

- Learning Modules and Learning sets
- Alternative Autism CAMHS support in schools

3. Autism self-awareness and skills development, hearing the voice of young people:

- All about me - for young people and their families

Project aims

- To promote whole school cultural change; commitment from senior leaders/Head Teachers; evidenced by adaptations to policy and guidance, supported by an organisational development plan which will promote positive autism support and practice in schools.
- To improve attendance at school of the child or young person, evidenced through a reduction in days lost from school and to build resilience in schools and with families
- To co-produce enhanced support to families and the child or young person
- To prevent/reduce exclusions, out of area placements, education-residential placements, inappropriate movement into specialist settings including CAMHS inpatients
- Explore ways to improve inclusive, multi-agency approaches, such as Understanding myself/All about Me, and family support that leads to improved quality of life for children, young people and their families/carers
- To improve and build on relationships with the Parent Carer Forums, developing parent networks and support to families.

The Role and Expectations from Selected Schools

The plan is to engage with selected schools that are committed to meeting the needs of their pupils collaboratively and have a willingness for change and to further develop their awareness of the impact of autistic spectrum disorders on education, social and life outcomes in general.

While early intervention work will be more difficult to measure, and may or may not show impact during the life of this Accelerator Site work, it should support changes in practice and culture that provide opportunities for longer term sustainability to truly embed new thought processes into often difficult and challenging situations, supporting changes to policies and practice, with an aim for cultural change and organisational development.

Schools should be committed to support the coproduction needed to deliver programmes that develop a shared understanding and language with parents and enable joint working to build resilience both in school settings and within families.

A significant cultural shift is required to promote reasonable adjustments and the development of early intervention pathways that reduce drift, promoting whole school cultural change, spearheaded by Senior Leaders/Head Teachers. This may be

evidenced by adaptations to policy and guidance supported by an organisational development plan which promotes new multi-agency approaches.

The commitment required from schools (approx. time commitment up to 7 days for modules plus link person flexible hours /4 days (10 days approx.) to support parent engagement / and project interventions, and evaluation)

- Sign up from schools by Head and Senior staff /representatives
- Identify Autism champion/ staff who will attend modules
- Release staff for modules approx. 7 webinars / workshops
- Review of school behaviour policies and commitment to implement reasonable adjustments in-light of the development and learning sessions
- To introducing One-page profiles / communication passports etc or other measures to increase personalisation and to support improved information sharing
- To work with project team and support engagement in interventions with children and families distribute surveys etc
- To engage with CAMHS/ Autism practitioner.
- To sharing learning with other schools – especially through Academy chains
- To implementing learning from development programme through whole school – embed in CPD
- To working with parent carer forums and developing partnership with parent carer, supporting parent evenings/ group meetings

Role of Parent carer forums (7 modules/ 7 days plus hours dependent on number of schools and parent carers, and capacity of PCF)

- Coproduce school / PCF plan and implementation plan by;
- Attend 7 modules and learn with schools
- Build relationships with schools
- Support to parents and schools
- Facilitate mini forums and build networks of parents
- Help to produce surveys /review and evaluate the programme of work

Modules and action learning sets

The Autism modular training programme is the start of a journey defined by 7 facilitated topic specific sessions; approx. (4/ 5 hours each) the modules comprise of:

1. Understanding the impact of sensory processing on the Autistic child and family.
2. Positive Behavioural Support for Autistic children and young People.

3. Effective communication and its impact on setting boundaries and reducing anxieties.
4. Reasonable adjustments and equality: working with families to manage inclusivity in the classroom.
5. Self-Awareness in the Leadership role
6. Engaging parents and carers in effective person-centred planning.
7. Transitions

Alternative CAMHS support (Practitioner time approx. 35 days over 3 months)

In NCNE the participating schools were eligible for enhanced support from the local CAMHS Team. The lead met with schools to look at training needs, devised the training to be delivered, got training packs ready and booked schools in. They supported teachers, not individual work with pupils. The schools individual plan was devised and included appropriate interventions based on need from the following training menu this included: (Schools were allocated up to 2 days support)

- General Autism training
- Introduction to managing behaviour positively
- Policy development
- Autism Training and staff development
- Bite sized videos
- Social Story training
- Support for transitions including the start and end of days, other less structured times and transitions to secondary, including support for SENCO on transitions
- Emotional regulation training
- Behaviour clinics, providing coaching to staff around needs of specific young people not direct work
- Sensory needs training
- Curriculum advice
- Support to Staff to explore attitudes and values towards autism
- How to manage with one or two young people on the autism spectrum in a year group or in a class alongside other children
- Managing the emotional and behavioural needs of children
- Knowledge surrounding the implementation of autism specific strategies.
- Met with schools to look at training needs, devised the training to be delivered, got training packs ready and booked schools in.
- Supported teachers, not individual work with pupils.
- Within training, considered other professionals, talked about signposting to services for different types of need.

This could be delivered via mental health support teams, if they were to employ Autism specialist practitioner.

Impact has included

- Parents report positive engagement from schools and more willingness to engage, along with increase of support networks
- All school champions agreed of review of behaviour policies, for example; Changing in policy “No SEND child will be sent to isolation” and School reported “we have not excluded or isolated any child with SEND since February following this project” (5 SEND children excluded in same period last year)
- Increase in school staff skills and resilience, examples include Debrief introduced, and promotion of positive changes
- Reasonable adjustments – extra time to think, preparation for mock exam, Introduction of late passes
- Personalised approaches – example; Introduction of one page profiles, use of a different entrance, fidget/ fiddle boxes. Adapting environments, learning booths and “Sensory spaces”
- Schools requested and been involved in Care Education Treatment Reviews- action plans in place to keep children in schools

What we did to help to mobilise; Example mobilisation plan of Regional Accelerator Site Projects

- Planning for presentations/promotional events, May and June 2021 to Sharing the Accelerator Site Brief.
- Building communication links with a range of relevant stakeholders pertinent to the scope of the project at a National, Regional and Local working group level.
- Brief Local Authority Children and Young People Directors, Public Health Lead and CCG Leads or equivalent on proposals and implementation.
- Regional bid submitted to Accelerator Project Team for Plan Assurance by June 2021.
- Bid agreed by National Team by June 2021.
- Parent Carer Forums structure and communication plan set up at a National, Regional and Local level promoting and upholding Co-production ethos and principles.
- Establish date for early Schools Launch Event before school summer holiday in July 2021.
- Creation of Regionally based Accelerator Site Project Steering Groups including agreement of terms of reference first meeting to be held in July 2021.
- AS Regional Steering Groups mobilised and further dates agreed.
- Regional and Local delivery plans to be co-produced by each area.

- All regions to support planned session with the Steering Group, Parent/Carer Groups and leads from AS Project by end of September 2021.
- Meetings held with Local Strategic Managers to promote key components of the project and enlist support from Local Authorities, CCG, Public Health, NHS Services, and NHS England.
- Group to be set up in each region to audit all hospital admissions in first Quarter of 2021 to gain base line information, audit completed to review C&YP `Journey to Hospital`.
- All regions to create Hospital Admissions Task and Finish Group for quarterly review.
- Brief Heads of Service CYPS on Accelerator Site work for each region and requested links into CAMHS Services or equivalent for further development discussions.
- Creation of regional delivery plan to roll out modular training.
- Set up data collection based on KLOE's and in preparation for National and Local Evaluation.
- Creation of workshop with regional and local Parent Carer Forums for September 2021
- Community of Practice/Sharing the Learning links made, terms of reference created and 4 dates created in the diary for the events.