

# Autism Schools Project

An overview of the pilot site in North Cumbria & the North East & the subsequent National roll out.



## Why the Autism Schools Project?

The transforming care project was a National Project with the aim of improving health and care services so that more people could live within their own communities with access to the the right support at the right time close to home. The lived experiences of young people with learning disabilities, autism and/or both, identified that there are "too many missed opportunities" with CYP and their families looking for support but failing to meet criteria for statutory services.



## Objectives of the Pilot project.

We wanted to understand the lives of CYP who have autism and their families, making, real and tangible improvements for them, by ensuring they have access to the right support. We wanted to invest in early intervention to prevent escalation and ultimately prevent hospital admissions ensuring that CYP could stay within their communities.



## What did we do?

Schools across the region were identified to work with, and commitment gained from schools for allocated staff to attend all action learning sets. Forum representatives attended these alongside school staff to establish working relationships. Forums then worked with schools using principles of co-production to establish 'mini forums' giving parent/carers opportunities to discuss their experiences and work together for improvement. CAMHS offer of bespoke sessions for individual schools. Baseline surveys were completed by both Parent/Carers and school staff prior to the commencement of the work and after the project was complete.



## Outcomes

Positive changes were made within schools that improved outcomes for CYP and exclusions decreased. Parent carers reported increased confidence in talking to schools directly and valued the peer support provided by the mini forums & felt 'less isolated'. They saw improvements in the mental health of CYP and also their own mental health. CYP shared that they felt now everyone valued their education. Positive changes reflected both at home and school. Schools valued the relationships built with individual parents and the PCF's. Increased schools knowledge of the reality of the lives of families. Pushed schools to develop and improve their offer.

## National Rollout.

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

This will be supported by the NCNE project team. We will be sharing 'How to' webinars over the coming months. How regions see this working in their own locality, is up to the individual regions, with PCF's, SEND leads, Schools, CCG's and LA's working together.



# What does this mean for PCF's?



## Opportunities

To co-lead and deliver on the project.  
Develop new relationships within the region, and strengthen existing ones with health and education colleagues.  
Chances to learn more about local policies and national legislation.  
Potential link up with mental health in schools work.  
A great opportunity to demonstrate co-production in practice.  
Can help identify gaps in knowledge for all.  
Promote PCF's to a wider audience.  
A chance for regional PCF's to work together to support and learn from one another.



## Preparation top tips for forums.

### Schools:

Be involved from the outset with the selection of schools, once schools have been identified contact them and speak with the decision makers, one point of contact from the forum with clear preferred and identified methods of communication.

Continuity: encourage school to have the same staff attend the learning sets **and** any parent facing sessions held.

Your support offer to schools may well need to be bespoke, one size doesn't fit all.

If you are likely to be holding face to face events, consider the location of the schools and the location of the parent carers who will be leading on behalf of the forums, what would work best for them?

When advertising events, work with the school but don't rely on them for comms.

Attend events taking place in the schools (covid permitting) open evenings, parent evenings and social events are a great way for parent/carers to get to know you.

Teaching assistants, work with CYP on a day to day basis and tend to understand the struggles they can have, invite them to join where possible.

### Parent/Carers

Basic overview of the project, why, how, how will they benefit.

Avoid jargon where possible.

Set expectations.

Promote co-production, it's important to give all time to air experiences both good and bad, but bring it back to 'how can we work together to improve'

Be transparent, share meeting notes and correspondence - increase trust.

Keep In contact with parent carers, after making initial introductions, contact them again to confirm attendance at events.

[Link to Evaluation of Phase 1 in NCNE](#)

[Link to Evaluation of Phase 2 in NCNE](#)