



## **CB-NSG Nov 2021**

### **PM Workshop 4: *Transforming Care and the NHSE Schools Autism Project***

**Workshop Facilitators:** Sarah Broadhurst (AET Director), Julie Bates (Senior Clinical & Assurance Programme Manager – Learning Disability & Autism Programme), Dionne Hollis Programme Manager, Joanne Gilliland (Parent Carer Forum Representative).

The aim of the workshop was to describe the project and its strategic intent, and to discuss how to maximise impact and agree a set of actions. Ultimately, the project aims to reduce the number of autistic children and adults admitted to Assessment and Treatment units (ATUs), and long-stay hospitals.

#### **Workshop objectives:**

- Describe the project, the strategic issues that lie behind it and how it relates to the transforming care vision.
- Describe what's working, what the project risks are, actions we are taking to mitigate the risks and how we will measure success.
- Discuss how we can maximise impact, what assumptions we are making, what questions we should be asking, what choices we have that might create greater possibilities, what could we do differently?
- Agree a set of actions.

The presentation by Julie, Dionne, Joanne and Sarah gave an overview of the NHSE Autism School Project, which is one of the CYP Accelerator Projects. The project builds on the North Cumbria and North East Accelerator Schools Autism Project, with an aim that NHSE regions can have project sites rolling out the key core aspects of the project which are:

#### **1. To build relationships and networks of support.**

This is to be done through parent carer forums, and creating mini forums within schools. Relationships should also be build amongst education, health and social care professionals, as a result of coming together within the project.

#### **2. To provide learning opportunities for schools (Autism champions/ Heads and SEN support) and parent carer forums.**

The project delivered learning modules and sets for a number of schools, and also offered 'alternative autism CAMHS support' in schools.

### **3. To increase autism self-awareness and skills development, and hear the voice of young people.**

Young people and their families were put at the heart of project development, and the development of skills for young people – to help them avoid admission – was a primary goal of the project.

The presentation focused on the challenges to meeting the needs of autistic children and young people in mainstream education. It also addressed the interface between schools and child and adolescent mental health services, and what a 'fit for purpose' model might look like. Finally, it looked at how parents in mainstream schools can be connected, and networks of support can be built.

The project has had a varied and wide-ranging impact on schools in the North East of England. Firstly, these schools now have a better understanding of the wider social care system, and where to direct families who need greater support or assessments for their children and young people. The schools are now using person-centred tools and have been involved in more Care Education and Treatment Reviews (CETRs). Secondly, parents involved in the project have reported an improvement in their own mental health, and have gained confidence in how to support their autistic children and young people. The project helped break down barriers between parents and schools, as many parents felt more comfortable raising concerns with the school and working together to find a solution. Finally, the project has had a positive impact on autistic children and young people. Young people began to see the value in their education, and the 'all about me' sessions within the project improve students' self-acceptance.

#### **Workshop discussion:**

The group of CB-NSG attendees in this workshop agreed that the 'parent champion', for autistic students and their parent network at a school, should be a role fulfilled in all schools. This could be someone working across a few schools or all schools within a local authority area.

The 'parent champion' could be a paid role, but the group agreed that the parent would need to 'sit outside' of the education system and local authority, and consistently voice parents' perspectives. Parents are more likely to believe that their voice is being represented if their representative is being paid. The role could be directed by parent forums and standardised by Ofsted. Standardisation may be useful to ensure consistency appointment, and description of the role, throughout local authorities.

The project led to a decrease in the rate of autistic children and young people being admitted to ATUs and long-stay hospitals, which suggests that this form of intervention is working. However, the time frame of the project spanning schools' terms made it difficult to assess the impact, in detail, of the project on schools. To better understand this impact, the project would need greater funding and to run for over two years.

The project demonstrates that we must invest in early intervention, to avoid traumatic and expensive crises and admissions. Part of the struggle schools face in avoiding crises is the absence of mandatory person-centred, autism training (helping the young person understand themselves and what they want) for education professionals. The project learning modules and sets rectified this for many schools.

The project aims to extend to further education colleges and employment for autistic adults.

**Actions:**

<b>Action</b>	<b>How will it be done?</b>	<b>Who will do it?</b>	<b>When will it be done?</b>
<p>There should be a (paid) parent champion in each primary and secondary school, to champion the needs of autistic students and students with LD</p>	<p>A recommendation from Julie Bates/Sarah Bradshaw's project (aimed at DoE)</p> <p>Ofsted could standardise the role</p> <p>Development of role to be informed by parent carer forums</p>	<p>Julie Bates/Sarah Broadhurst and their project?</p> <p>CBF to ask facilitators to share updates on project rollout and development of role</p>	
<p>Invest in early intervention</p>	<p>Especially in schools, to avoid exclusion and admission</p>	<p>AET, CBF, Mencap to discuss where to best direct their influence</p> <p>Ask AET/Julie Bates to share project updates (as evidence for the benefits of EI).</p> <p>Include investing in EI in CBF's letter to ICS Chairs/CEOs</p>	