

Impact Report

Priority area: 0-25 focus on ASD Practice from Action Plan 2022-2024
(2 academic years)

Project activities undertaken: - Autumn 2022 - Initial Needs Analysis, production of a summary overview of the training and support needs of settings across the locality

Spring 2023 – Recruitment of secondment post for the project, commissioned training opportunities for settings (Unlocking Autism, Lego Therapy)

Summer 2023 – Commissioned training opportunities for settings (Sensory Processing), planning for creation of TA workshops & referral service

Autumn 2023 – Presentation at Locality Board Networking Event and launch of Autism Project Referral Service, creation of TA workshops, commissioned training opportunities for settings (Social Stories)

Spring 2024 – Commissioned training opportunities for settings (Sensory Processing, Sensory Circuits, Lego Therapy Level 2), continuation of advisory referral service, continuation of TA workshops

Summer 2024 – Lego Therapy Pupil & Parent Voice project, delivery of sensory spaces training and resources, delivery of early engagement training and resources, continuation of advisory referral service (high demand), continuation of TA workshops

1. Executive Summary (if needed depending on size)

Brief overview of the project, its objectives, and key outcomes.

‘Supporting pupils with C&I needs to thrive within education, 0-25 focus on ASD practice’

The project began in the autumn term of 2022. The initial rationale for commissioning the project was based around higher than average cohort sizes for identified SEN support needs, which was a rising trend at both primary and secondary. Autism (support, identification and assessment) had also been identified as a priority via perception survey of schools.

The objectives of the project at its inception were for the project staff to act as a source of advice and support for schools and early years settings around pre-hub referral activity. The project would aim to coordinate training for settings based on the needs identified and upskills staff to equip them with the tools to better meet the needs of CYP with autism in their settings, with the ultimate aim of reducing the number of referrals which were being made to the hubs.

Across six terms, the project has worked alongside staff within settings to understand their needs. As a result of this, there have been opportunities for staff to access a range of commissioned training events, focused on the areas of provision identified, ranging from sensory processing needs to interventions based around supporting social skills, such as Lego Therapy. We have established a network of 40 teaching assistants who have attended workshops across the year designed specifically to support them in their unique role working alongside CYP with autism.

These workshops have grown and evolved based on the feedback from TA's regarding areas of particular challenge. We have established an advisory referral service, where one of the team has visited a setting to support them in meeting a particular need; whether this be bespoke training for a class or key stage team, support in creating an autism friendly learning environment or specific training linked to communication or sensory needs for example. There has been a huge demand for this service, so much so that we were forced to close referrals due to the capacity to support each setting. Separately, we have been able to visit around 40 settings to distribute resources and provide training for staff in specific interventions to support children with autism, within areas which had been highlighted as particular areas of need (early engagement and sensory spaces).

The key outcomes of the project have been evident to us as we have been fortunate enough to visit many of the different settings within the locality. Staff are demonstrating new ways of supporting the CYP within their settings, as a result of the training they have accessed. Staff have told us that they feel more confident in understanding and meeting the needs of CYP with autism as a result of the support they have accessed. Children and their parents are telling us that the projects they and their children have accessed are supporting them, not just in school, but in other areas of their lives too.

2. KPIs

Explanation of the methods used to measure and assess the impact of the project.

Key performance indicators for the project (and ways in which these have been actioned);

1. 80% of schools / colleges and 60% of EY providers (settings and childminders) in the locality will have accessed at least one sub-project (training or other support) by July 2024.
2. 80% of those settings who have engaged with training will be able to evidence at least one new way of working with CYP because of their training by July 2024.
3. There will have been a decrease of 10% in SENCOs requiring support in working with CYP with autism in the locality since the 2023 survey by July 2024.

How do we know that the KPI's have been met? Methods used to measure and assess the impact of the project;

1. Attendance data for in person or online training events
2. Course completion (for courses that involved more than one session)
3. Feedback (quantitative and anecdotal)
4. Pupil and parent voice
5. Reduction in the number of referrals to the Hubs (specifically, C&I)

3. Challenges and Lessons Learned

Discuss any obstacles faced during the project and insights gained from overcoming them.

During the initial phase of the project; one of the main challenges faced related to capacity. Following the initial needs analysis, it was evident that settings had identified a number of areas of support and were keen to engage with whatever training / support could be offered. At the time, there was only one member of staff working on the project, for one day per week, and while

it had always been planned to recruit an additional member of staff, the wide range of needs identified made this imperative. During the spring term of 2023, we recruited an additional member of staff who was able to work on the project for three days per week, and this hugely increased the capacity of the project as a whole and allowed us to plan for more far-reaching and ambitious sub projects.

Despite the increased capacity, throughout the project, we have continued to experience greater demand than we have capacity to meet, particularly in relation to the advisory referral service. Settings have been very keen to engage with us, proactively contacting us to request support, and as mentioned, we had to close to new referrals at the end of the spring term this year, to allow us to maintain the standard of support which we offered. In hindsight, we were optimistic about what we could achieve. We realised that it may have been more effective to plan pathways of support from the start to offer settings a more standardised package, rather than bespoke packages for each setting (although these were very popular!)

One of the largest challenges which we have faced has been around attracting engagement from early years settings. We realised early on in the project that engagement from this sector was harder to achieve and have tried to counter this by opening the advisory service to EY settings in January of this year, providing resource packs and training specifically centred around early communication and engagement, and attending the EY Locality Board Networking Event. Despite this, engagement with this group of settings has remained low. In retrospect, it may have been beneficial to have commissioned more training tailored specifically to EY settings and made this more accessible by providing twilight / virtual training sessions.

4. Assessment of Impact

Summarise the key findings and reiterate the project's overall impact.

The key findings from the project have indicated a high level of need in the area of support for students with autism / C&I difficulties. Initially, the project found that settings did not feel that they had enough staff with specialist knowledge in order to support students with autism (more than 50% felt that a lack of knowledge and training was preventing them from supporting CYP with autism effectively). Additionally, settings identified that the sensory issues which children with autism were experiencing was proving challenging and there was a need for heightened awareness and understanding in this area.

The impact of the project has been that teaching and support staff who have engaged with the project have been equipped with a 'toolkit' of strategies which they can draw upon to support the children and young people with autism in their settings (*100% of those who engaged with at least one sub-project and fed back, felt that they were now able to evidence a new way of working as a result of their training*). Teaching and support staff feel more confident in meeting the needs of children with autism in their settings – including the communication and sensory needs of those children. Staff understand how to make their settings 'autism friendly' and are able to make small changes in the classroom to support engagement. (*See attached data PowerPoint for evidence of impact*)

6. Future Plans and/or Legacy

Outline any future initiative or strategies based on the finds of the impact report.

Legacy / sustainability of the project;

- 20 settings have dark dens set up in their schools, with a range of resources, to support sensory regulation for students with autism and sensory processing needs
- 20 settings now have resources to allow them to run specific targeted interventions with young children with autism to support their early engagement and attention and listening skills
- 49 colleagues in separate settings have been trained to establish their own Brick Clubs, and have the initial Lego resources to allow them to do so
- 4 schools have taken part in further Brick Club training and are now able to demonstrate best practice in their Lego Therapy
- 20 colleagues have been trained to run Sensory Circuits within their setting, and have the handbook required to support them to cascade their knowledge to colleagues
- There is now an established network of TAs who have created their own communication systems to support each other and share good practice, which was facilitated by the project, but will continue after the end of the project

Future plans;

- 100% of those who engaged with at least one sub-project and fed back, reported that they would benefit from continued support in the future.

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Date approved by HKR locality board	
Date uploaded onto locality board website	
Date included into Annual HKR Impact Report	
Date included into Annual Locality Boards' Report	