

Cygnets programme parent's notes

Believe in
children



Barnardo's
Yorkshire

Autistic spectrum
condition parenting
support programme



These notes belong to:

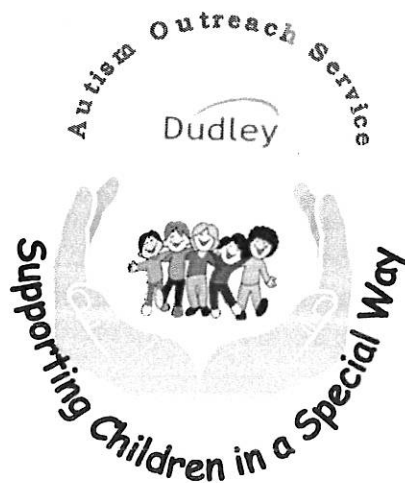
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Welcome to Barnardo's Cygnets programme.

This Barnardo's pack has been named the 'Cygnets programme', so that the title follows the theme devised by the National Autistic Society (NAS).

The NAS provides parent training programmes called 'Early Bird' for parents of pre-school children and 'Early Bird Plus' for parents of children aged four to eight years old.

The Cygnets programme offers similar advice and support to parents/carers of children/young people aged seven to 18 years old.



Introduction

'We both found the course very supportive, informative and very useful. We don't always get things right but we get things right more often since Cygnet.'

Parent's comment, three months after completing Cygnet

There are a number of parents/carers for whom this course would be useful:

- Parents who have recently had a diagnosis of a child within this age group.
- Parents who, for a variety of reasons, may not have wanted to or been able to access an appropriate course when their child was younger.
- Parents who have attended courses when their child was younger, but now wish to access a course relevant to the child's needs as they grow older.
- Parents who have attended a previous Cygnet course who feel they would benefit from attending again.
- Carers who offer direct support to parents e.g. grandparents, uncles, aunts, support workers, foster carers.

Cygnet has been developed by looking at what is done in existing parenting support programmes, examining research findings, a pilot parenting programme and in partnership with parents/carers and practitioners. Cygnet has been developed, managed, funded and run with multi-agency support. The trainers who present this programme will all have a detailed knowledge of autism and come from a variety of backgrounds and agencies.

The quality of the programme has been measured through the evaluation of each session and by considering the longer term difference the programme has made to parents/carers confidence in relation to caring for a child/young person with an autistic spectrum condition. Parents/carers are therefore asked to complete an evaluation form at the end of each session and a questionnaire before they start the course and then again 3 months after completion of the course. To date this information has not only indicated the effectiveness of the programme at empowering and building the

confidence of parents and carers, but has been used to update and amend the programme over a three year period and will continue to do so for future groups.

'I like the fact that we meet up 3 months after the course ends because I know from my own experience that you don't realise just how much you do actually take in whilst attending the course.'
Parent's comment after completing Cygnet

The programme has been developed by acknowledging parents as the experts on their own children/young people. No one knows your child/young person as well as you do, yet becoming a parent does not come with any instant qualification or training pack. Most of what we learn usually comes from watching parents, relatives and friends. Usually this works fine, or we can learn fairly quickly from a number of sources on general childcare. A child/young person on the autistic spectrum will present all the usual parenting challenges plus quite a few more and there are not many places to go for advice and mutual support.

Cygnet will provide the opportunity for parents/carers to obtain advice and information on the additional challenges which autism can present within a group of people who share similar experiences. This will be achieved by;

- Building on parents/carers knowledge of their child and their positive child care experiences
- Presenting professional knowledge in a varied format making the information easy to understand with a practical applications
- Developing a mutually supportive group who can share advice and experiences .

Managing the needs and challenges of a child/young person on the autistic spectrum is a big responsibility and very hard work. There is no magic solution which is going to change that, but with Cygnet offering the right tools and with your commitment and consistent approach, together we can make a difference.

The programme is presented quite informally in groups of usually no more than twelve people. There are six sessions and each session will last 2½–3 hours. There are usually two trainers who present the programme and a third person who may come along to learn how the programme is presented for future training purposes. We know

that the strength of a group can be weakened by too many changes in its make-up: e.g. parents/carers can feel less comfortable sharing personal and emotional experiences during the training if new faces are introduced to the group ad hoc. We therefore ask, if at all possible, for trainers and parents/carers not to invite additional colleagues, students, friends or relatives to the training unless this is agreed at the beginning of a course.

'Speaking to other parents can help you see problems from another point of view or even just make you feel better knowing that it's not just you and your child experiencing difficulties.'

Parent's comment after completing Cygnet

Most parents/carers primary reason for coming on a Cygnet course is to help them understand and manage their child's behaviour. This core Cygnet course has been designed to work towards this goal over the first five sessions, with a sixth offering you time to go over information previously covered or looking at an additional topic of your choice. Parents/carers confidence will grow as the programme develops, but in order to understand how to manage behaviour in session five you need to understand how autism impacts on a person in sessions 1 to 4. You are therefore advised to attend all sessions if possible.

The information in this folder is laid out very simply, presenting you with copies of all the slides used in the five core sessions of the course. Opposite each slide space has been left for you to write your own notes and helpful tips. We hope you enjoy the course and more importantly hope it makes a difference to you, those around you and the child/young person on the autistic spectrum.

For any further information please contact the Cygnet training

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Outline of the programme

Session 1: Autism and diagnosis

Introduction to the group

Background to the group

Aims and content

Introduction to ASCs

What is it like to be autistic?

Experience of diagnosis

Session 2: Communication

Why and how do we communicate

Communication in ASCs

– receiving language

– expressing language

Strategies for communication

Resources and aids to communication

Session 3: Sensory issues

What are the senses?

What do we use them for and how do they work?

Types of sensory issues seen in ASCs

Associated behaviours

Strategies to help

Session 4: Understanding behaviour

Understanding human behaviour

Types and functions of behaviour

ASCs and behaviour

The Iceberg principle

Session 5: Managing behaviour and support

What could explain my child's behaviour (Iceberg principle)

Analysing behaviour (STAR analysis)

Key strategies

Management strategies

Local and national contacts

Session 6: Choice decided by the group

For example:

Go over previous work

Puberty and sexual health

Siblings

Sleep

Three-month follow-up meeting