

# Autism Support Service



Regional Winner  
Yorkshire and the Humber  
National Training Awards 2008



National Training Awards  
UK Winner 2010

## INFORMATION

*Cygnet is a parent support programme for parents and carers of children/young people aged 5 - 16 within Northumberland.*

### **Acceptance Criteria:**

**To be accepted on the course your child must be:**

- **aged between 5 and 16**
- **received their a diagnosis of Autistic Spectrum Disorder from Northumberland CYPS or a Northumberland Paediatrician**

The package of training has been developed by Barnardo's. They looked at what was being done in existing parent training groups, examining research findings, a pilot training group and from consultations with parents/carers and professionals in Bradford and Airedale.

From this, a six session parent training package has been developed for parents/carers whose children have been diagnosed with an Autistic Spectrum Disorder.

Current sessions are:

### **Module 1: Introduction**

- Introduction to the group
- Background to the group
- Aims
- Content
- Introduction to Autism
- What is it like to have Autism

## **Module 2: An Overview of Autism**

- The spectrum and its background
- Describing Autism:
  - Social Interaction
  - Communication
  - Imagination, rigidity and strong interests
  - Sensory differences
- Strengths and challenges
- Parental reflection

## **Module 3: Sensory Issues**

- Understanding our senses
- Sensory differences
  - Over sensitivity
  - Under sensitivity
- Associated behaviour
- Strategies

## **Module 4: Communication**

- Understanding communication
- Building blocks of communication
- Autism and communication
- Using communication
- Strategies

## **Module 5: Understanding Behaviour**

- Understanding human behaviour
- Behavioural issues linked to Autism
  - Mind Blindness
  - Predicting behaviour
  - Understanding the whole picture
- Types and functions of all behaviour
- Underlying difficulties behind the behaviour (Iceberg principle)

## **Module 6: Supporting Behaviour**

- Analysing and managing behaviour (STAR analysis)
- Strategies
- Reflection

## **Why might I be interested in coming to a Cygnet Group?**

Parents have a lot of involvement with professionals up to and around the time of diagnosis, however they can feel that there is little available to them after diagnosis – at a time when they have a lot of questions about their child and what can help them.

If you have attended the Early Bird programme you can still attend Cygnet.

Attending the Cygnet group gives parents and carers an opportunity to better understand Autistic Spectrum Disorders. It offers practical strategies that you can implement at home, gives you a chance to meet with others in a similar position and hear about their experiences.

The training is presented quite informally. The materials are flexible and can be altered to suit the needs of particular groups of parents and carers.

### ***Parents comments from previous courses***

- *“Fantastic! Really enjoyable and helpful!”*
- *“Our biggest problems are related to behaviour so understanding our son’s behaviour properly is a very big step!”*
- *“This has given me the tools to help with my child’s communication.”*
- *“I can now identify my child’s sensory issues and have an idea of practical strategies.”*
- *“The support of other group members is really valuable.”*

**NB: *Childcare is not available nor is it appropriate to bring your child to the sessions.***

## **Do I have to attend all Sessions?**

If possible, yes. You will gain a lot more from coming to the group if you come to all the sessions. This is because each session builds on the one before. Please do not accept a place in the group if you are only able to attend one or two sessions – you will not benefit from coming and may take the place of someone else who is able to come to all the sessions.