

# MANAGING THE DEMAND AND COSTS

for Specialist Autism  
Services by Implementing  
the AET Programme



It only costs a local authority

**£15K** to save **£12m**

Find out how the DfE supported Autism Education Trust (AET) programme can help you **reduce demand for specialist autism services and cut spending.**

**With case studies** demonstrating the effectiveness of the programme in Birmingham and Leicestershire County Councils.



## THE AUTISM EDUCATION TRUST

The Autism Education Trust (AET) is a national partnership that operates across England. The AET creates and delivers a national professional development programme to enhance knowledge, understanding and skills in the workforce across Early Years, Schools and Post-16 settings to meet the needs of autistic CYP.



Organisations such as local authorities, schools, nurseries, colleges, charities and universities apply to become AET Training Hubs and are appointed and licensed by the AET to deliver the AET programme. As a result of this partnership, the AET currently has 43 early years hubs, 68 school hubs and 28 post 16 hubs. **The AET partnership offers the largest national autism training programme** in England for education-based staff, having to date provided professional development to over **240,000 Early Years, School and Post-16 staff**, including head teachers and senior leadership.



## OPPORTUNITIES FOR YOUR LOCAL AUTHORITY

The Autism Education Trust (AET) can help your local authority **reduce the demand for specialist autism services and help you reduce the proportion of local authority spend on specialist services**. On average **a specialist education placement costs £67K/per year** per child or young person. The AET can support your local authority to **meet the needs of all the autistic children and young people** across your local authority by implementing the AET programme (total average cost is £15K/per year). Data measuring the impact of the AET programme provides evidence that **the AET programme prevents exclusions, reduces demand for specialist services and saves money**.

If you would like the AET to visit your local authority to discuss how we can help you meet your specific local challenges please contact [info@autismeducationtrust.org.uk](mailto:info@autismeducationtrust.org.uk) or 0207 903 3650.

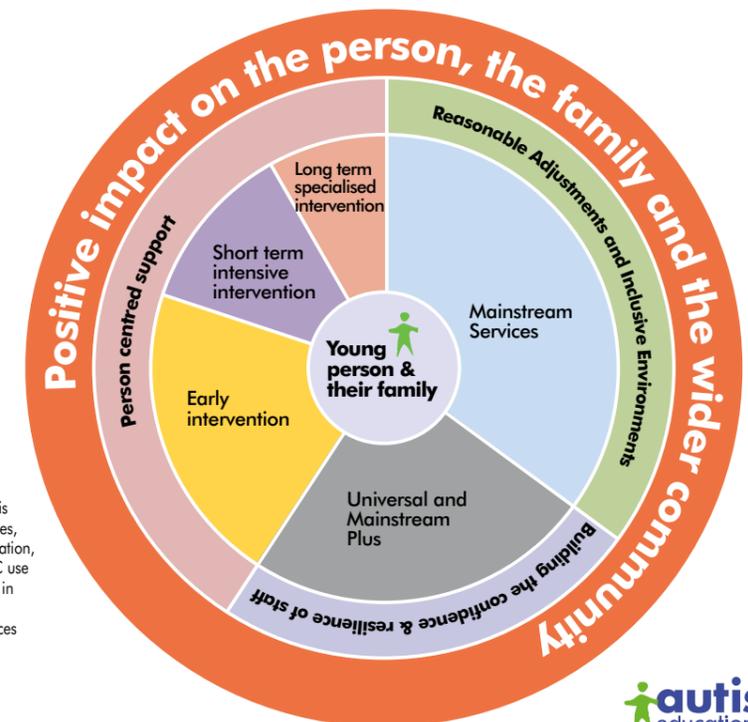


## MANAGING DEMAND AND THE AET PROGRAMME

In recent years, through their experience of supporting local authorities across England and Wales the Institute of Public Care<sup>1</sup> have constructed **a model for managing demand for autism and/or learning disability services**. The model was co-designed by people with autism and/or disabilities, their families, social care, health and education professionals and representatives from wider community groups. The model is based on the principle that a co-ordinated whole system response to support people and their families during key life episodes could, in some instances, reduce the need for some types of expensive "specialist" provision.

AET have applied the IPC managing demand model in thinking about managing the demand for specialist services for autistic children and young people. The application of the IPC model to the AET Programme is described below.

### MANAGING DEMAND MODEL



<sup>1</sup> The Institute of Public Care (IPC) was established in 1987 and is part of Oxford Brookes University. IPC works with Local Authorities, Clinical Commissioning Groups, Central Government and Education, Health and Social Care providers to deliver better outcomes. IPC use their academic rigour and considerable professional experience in commissioning and market shaping to drive improvement and innovation in the complex arena of managing demand for services within a context of austerity and limited resources.

## PREVENTING EXCLUSIONS IN BIRMINGHAM



The Communication/Autism Team (CAT) is part of Access to Education, Birmingham City Council and is a Local Authority (LA) specialist autism service, providing support for pupils with a diagnosis of autism, their parents and caregivers, and staff working in educational settings. CAT has been an AET hub delivering the Autism Education Trust Schools' programme since 2011 and the Early Years and Post 16 programme since 2013.

**The AET programme provides the foundation and framework of the CAT model of service delivery for all schools** (see Simpson et al, 2017 for further detailed explanation). **This has proved highly effective in raising the capacity of all schools**, but particularly mainstream schools, to meet the needs of CYP with autism. The model promotes whole-school development, which is consistently applied through both the AET training and the implementation of the AET standards and competency frameworks. CAT uses these frameworks to benchmark how 'autism friendly' schools are and it enables them to assist schools to reflect and identify ways to improve their good autism practice by making reasonable adjustments. All schools receive the AET 'making sense of autism' training for all staff. Additional hours of support and AET training can be purchased.

For the past year CAT staff have tracked the number of pupils that have avoided exclusions per month as a result of the work undertaken with schools. **The data indicated that their work prevented an average of 38 exclusions a month (range of 25 – 44) equating to an average of 456 a year.**

## SAVING MONEY IN BIRMINGHAM

Further data indicates that increasingly autistic CYP in Birmingham are remaining in mainstream settings. Proportionally the percentage of autistic CYP in specialist schools in 2016 was 39%. In 2019 it was 35%. This is a decrease of 4% and equates to a difference of 178 CYP. This is important because the average cost of specialist provision in the local authority area is £67K/year/child and so the **4% decrease equates to a saving of £12 million.** **The cost to CAT of the AET licence to run the AET programme supporting mainstream settings to make reasonable adjustments is just £15K per year.**

4%

decrease equates to a saving of

£12 million



## REDUCING THE DEMAND FOR SPECIALIST SERVICES IN LEICESTERSHIRE

The AET Programme is the foundation stone of the support provided to schools in Leicestershire. 78% of schools have up to date training that empowers them to make reasonable adjustments. **Since the delivery of whole school AET training, referrals to the specialist individual service have reduced** and as a result Leicestershire have managed to support schools to meet the needs of more autistic CYP but without more money.

Between 2017 and 2018 there was a 17.5% increase in the number of autistic CYP in Leicestershire. In 2017 Leicestershire had 498 pupils on its active caseload for specialist support which equates to 64% of the autistic CYP in Leicestershire. In 2018 the team had 553 pupils which equates to 61% of the autistic CYP in Leicestershire on its active caseload, a **3% decrease for specialist support.**



3% decrease for specialist support

## SAVING MONEY IN LEICESTERSHIRE

In 2017 the budget equated to an investment of £579 per CYP known to schools in Leicestershire. In 2018 it equated to £492 per CYP known to schools in Leicestershire. **A reduction of £87 per CYP.**

**Eligibility criteria for accessing the specialist service had not become more stringent, waiting lists had not become longer, and there was evidence to suggest that the outcomes for autistic CYP had not been compromised.** Data from previous evaluations (Cullen et al, 2013, 2016) demonstrated that the **AET training empowered staff to make reasonable adjustments and resulted in sustainable changes in practice.** Leicestershire reported that the AET Programme was the key 'whole school' training that they have rolled out to all schools in an effort to skill up staff to a point that they have the knowledge, skill and confidence to meet the needs of autistic CYP without support from the specialist service i.e. skilling up mainstream staff was a way of reducing the demand on services.



AET training empowered staff to make reasonable adjustments and resulted in sustainable changes in practice

## UNIVERSAL AND MAINSTREAM SERVICES

The vast majority of autistic children and young people live in the community with limited formal support. Autistic children and young people are at higher risk of many physical and mental health conditions, often have poor educational experiences leading to poor outcomes including fewer opportunities to work. Supporting autistic children and young people to lead healthy, meaningful lives and reducing the need for long-term intensive/specialist provision requires universal (i.e. mainstream schools) to be accessible. Making mainstream schools accessible means that these schools must create inclusive environments by making **'reasonable adjustments'**.

### AET OBJECTIVE

All mainstream schools make reasonable adjustments by using the AET standards and competency frameworks and undertaking the AET Making Sense of Autism training. Thus creating an inclusive environment and enabling autistic children and young people to access positive educational experiences and achieve their desired outcomes.



## UNIVERSAL AND MAINSTREAM PLUS

Access alone doesn't ensure that universal and mainstream services are utilised or that they are resilient enough to meet the needs of autistic children and young people in a sustainable way. Universal plus requires mainstream settings to help their workforce build their confidence and resilience to supporting autistic children and young people in a sustainable way.



### AET OBJECTIVE

To support educational professionals working in mainstream schools to have the confidence, knowledge and skills to support autistic children and young people to achieve positive outcomes. To achieve this through the AET Good Autism Practice training and Practitioners Guide.



## EARLY INTERVENTION

The provision of preventative and early intervention approaches can reduce the escalation of need and risk, improve personal outcomes and build capacity. Identifying need at its earliest point and providing the appropriate intervention can reduce cost across the lifespan, as can being responsive to low level needs before they escalate.



### AET OBJECTIVE

To support early years professionals to have the knowledge, skills and confidence to identify neurodiversity and to make reasonable adjustments that result in positive educational experiences right from the start thus reducing the risk of trauma. To achieve this through the dissemination of the AET Early Years standards, competency framework and training.



## SHORT-TERM INTENSIVE INTERVENTION

One important requirement of educational settings supporting autistic children and young people is that they are able to retrieve crises; to manage them while they occur and to steadily bring the situation back to one in which the problems can be tackled over the longer term. This can require specialist support provided by a range of services, across the system. Anyone who requires additional support to prevent or manage a crisis should have access to hands-on intensive 24/7 multi-disciplinary health and social care support at home, or in other appropriate community settings, including schools and short break/respite settings. This support should be delivered by members of highly skilled and experienced multi-disciplinary/agency teams. The interface between specialist routine multi-disciplinary support services and this type of intensive support service should be seamless.

People who present an immediate risk to those around them and/or to themselves may require admission to a hospital setting when their behaviour and/or mental state is such that assessment and/or treatment is temporarily required that cannot be provided safely and effectively in the community. Everyone who is admitted to a hospital setting for assessment and treatment should expect this to be integrated into their broader care and support pathway, with hospitals working closely with community services.

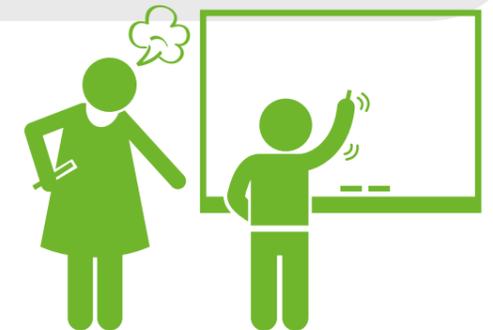
For all inpatient provision (secure or not) children admitted to hospital should be placed in an environment suitable for their age and must have access to education.

### AET OBJECTIVE

To provide a School Exclusions Service that supports professionals and families to prevent exclusion and manage it effectively when it does happen.

To support local authorities to commission alternative provision that is fit for purpose in meeting the needs of their local population of autistic children and young people with complex needs.

To disseminate training and resources to staff in secure settings to ensure that all autistic children and young people in secure settings have access to a positive educational experience.



## LONGER-TERM SPECIALIST INTERVENTION

The complexity of need of some autistic children and young people means that there will always be a need for longer-term specialist intervention. It is important that specialist intervention isn't a 'one-size fits all' and that the voice of the autistic child or young person is at the centre of designing the support they need. Outcomes should not be set by educational professionals alone or focus solely on the curriculum. There should be a recognition that autism is a difference, not a deficit and all support planning should be strengths-based. Specialist intervention should result in progress and it is important that progress is tracked and outcomes measured.



### AET OBJECTIVE

To support mainstream and specialist education settings to track the progress of autistic children and young people using the AET Progression Framework and to use this information for creating Education, Health Care Plans (EHCPs) that put the autistic child or young person's voice at the centre and jointly agrees the outcomes to work towards and the support required to achieve them.



## SUMMARY

**The AET programme results in savings to the state** precisely because it addresses the key issue that the **Institute of Public Policy Research** (2017) highlighted was **important in enabling schools to have the capacity to prevent exclusion and reduce demand on more intensive services:**

*'Workforce development is key to preventing rising exclusion. As resources outside schools diminish, capacity inside the workforce to deal with complex needs is more and more pressing.'*

The AET programme is a structured, cost-effective approach to skilling up the workforce in mainstream and specialist settings to support autistic CYP via reasonable adjustments and targeted support and is a good example of the practical application of the IPC model for managing demand.

## OPPORTUNITIES FOR YOUR LOCAL AUTHORITY

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### Autism Education Trust

 393 City Road, London, EC1V 1NG

 0207 903 3650

 [info@autismeducationtrust.org.uk](mailto:info@autismeducationtrust.org.uk)



**For more information about the award-winning  
AET programme please visit [www.autismeducationtrust.org.uk](http://www.autismeducationtrust.org.uk).**