TACKLING THE AUTISM ASSESSMENT AND SUPPORT CRISIS

Guide for education colleagues

What is the problem?

- The current system for diagnosing and supporting autistic children and young people (CYP) is under severe strain, leaving many pupils without timely access to the help they need.

- Inequities in identification persist, with girls, children from ethnic minority backgrounds and those from lower income families disproportionately overlooked.

- Relying on diagnoses to trigger support, often leads to missed chances to support unmet needs early and effectively.

What can we do in our school?

- Don't wait for a diagnosis, adopt a **needs-led approach**.

- **Integrate Early Years Foundation Stage Profile** data into data systems, including at secondary level, as it is highly predictive of autism diagnoses.

- **Be a neurodiversity friendly school** e.g., reduce sensory triggers such as bright lights, loud noise and visual clutter; have calm, consistent routines; give short clear instructions in a calm tone backed up by visual prompts; explain and prepare for transitions and changes; celebrate neurodiversity. Use existing resources e.g., https://www.inclusioned.edu.au/ or https://www.autismeducationtrust.org.uk/resources

- **Support partnerships between education, health, social care and parents,** working together to share observations and deliver in-school assessments where possible.

- **Seek out continuing professional development (CPD)** to improve understanding of autism especially in overlooked groups, e.g., "masked" autism in girls may result in anxiety, friendship difficulties or absence from school despite academic success. Check the info in this report or with the National Autistic Society for pointers.

Evidence-based insights

3 in 4 parents stated their autistic child's school did not fully meet their needs and only **26%** of autistic children feel happy at school.

Pupils who failed to reach a good level of development in the EYFSP were **4.8** times more likely to have an autism diagnosis than those who did.

Examples of good practice that you may wish to explore:

Using education data to identify autistic CYP

The EYFSP can serve as a powerful early indicator of unmet needs, by identifying children at risk through classroom observations, thereby enabling earlier support.

SUCCESS - Supporting Understanding of Children's Communication, Emotional and Social Skills

The *SUCCESS* project deployed multi-disciplinary teams to conduct assessments in schools to identify pupils who may need additional support, thus reducing barriers and missed appointments.

Tailored approaches to places

Programmes such as the *Cambridgeshire Girls Pilot* and *Nottinghamshire Early Identification of Autism* were adapted by place, offering guidance and methodologies to help local leaders create tailored programmes with and for their communities.

Psychoeducation for autistic CYP

A programme designed to help autistic CYP build on their strengths by supporting advocacy, improving professional practice, and creating inclusive environments.

Check out the useful approaches outlined in this briefing and **see what we can adapt for our school.**

Scan the QR Code for the report

Please share this guide and start a discussion in your school about how we can all play our role in building a country that works for all children and young people.