

Impact Report for Autism Fund Financial Year 2021-22

Context

- In 2015 there were approximately 600 young people with a diagnosis of autism on the autism team's caseload. By September 2021, this had doubled to 1200 autistic young people. As of Oct 2022, there are 1506 pupils with a diagnosis.
- The number of Year 6 pupils transitioning with a diagnosis has more than doubled. In 2015 approximately 50- 60 pupils were transitioning from Year 6 to 7. In September 2022 there were 120.
- The Autism Advisory Team consists of one primary school advisor, one secondary school advisor, one part-time family advisor, and two full-time TAs. The team is more able now to cover demand but our Service Evaluation consistently reports that schools would still benefit from more visits. Following the service evaluation in July 2022, we have been able to add to capacity and from Sept 1st there is now an additional day of Advisory Teacher time within the team.
- The Advisory Teachers advise on strategies and the TAs model them. However, the TAs can't remain in schools long-term, the Autism Funding provides a way of supporting the implementation of strategies and use of resources, which are supported by the TAs. They can also demonstrate the interventions, structures, and strategies discussed in training sessions, giving staff confidence in their abilities to carry these out in their settings.
- The Autism Fund can be used for pupils on the pathway, as well as those with a diagnosis which means more pupils are being supported and the impact is more long-lasting.

Project Purpose and Method

The funding (£52k) is available to provide schools with additional resources to support Autistic pupils or those on the pathway. The funding is allocated through an application process that provides evidence of the need and how the money will be spent. Funding is capped at a maximum of £2000 per child.

Bids are reviewed monthly by the panel which consists of Karen Bartlett (Learning Support Services Manager), Lesley Botchway (Autism Team Co-ordinator), and Sue Granger (Autism Team Advisory Teacher).

Schools may seek support for provision which may include but is not exclusive to:

- Resources for therapies (i.e. Lego, Art, Sports)

- Sensory resources such as weighted blankets, body socks, and sensory sacks
- 1:1 time each day with a professional in school
- Specific interventions
- Group support such as social skills
- Online tutoring

Applications were particularly welcomed where the intervention benefits groups of students and where the impact will live on beyond the intervention such as:

- Social skills groups
- Emotional regulation and mindfulness sessions
- Involve parents/carers

Outcomes and Data Collection

The aims of the project were:

- Reduce levels of EBSA
- Reduce anxiety
- Support children to learn skills to better manage their anxiety
- Improve staff knowledge of suitable interventions and resources to support Autistic pupils
- Increase the level of engagement in learning and school attendance
- Increase engagement with professionals and education
- Supporting schools to keep more complex pupils in mainstream

Schools were required to complete an Evidence of Impact report after the funding had been spent.

Quantitative data

In 2021-22 the funding supported 41 pupils in 22 schools (2 secondary schools and 20 primary schools). 16 of the schools returned the Evidence of Impact form

Strategies Implemented	Number of pupils supported
Social Skills Groups	13
1:1 TA support	13
Online Tuition	2
5 Point Scales, Happy boxes/ calm kits produced for pupils	3
Other strategies and interventions taught/used with pupils (Mindful Brain, Lego Therapy, small garden, CBT, play therapy, SALT intervention, board games, and craft materials.	10

Qualitative data

Examples of the use of funding with evidence of impact (provided by the school).

Case Study One	
Social Skills group – Secondary School	
Reason for requesting funding	<p>The request was made for a group of 6 pupils who were experiencing the following challenges:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Difficulty making friends and not engaging in discussions in class – very able but not making progress due to lack of engagement. • Difficulties making and maintaining friendships, X misreads social situations causing anxiety and upset. X struggles to access learning as she is focused on one thought pattern. • Difficulty with self-regulating and is at risk of self-harming or harming others. Shuts down and won't talk to anyone. Finds lessons stressful and has low self-esteem. • Highly anxious so attendance is poor, bright, and capable but anxiety is a barrier. • Struggles to make conversations with their peers and he comes across as immature so his peers struggle to relate.
Use of funding	<p>Social skill groups were run separately for both girls and boys. To model good practice, one of the Autism Team TAs ran the group initially with a member of the school staff observing. The member of staff then ran the group using strategies and approaches modelled by the Autism TA.</p>
Impact of funding <i>Direct quotes from schools</i>	<p><i>Both groups really enjoyed working collaboratively and they have developed relationships that may not have happened otherwise. Some of the students have really grown in confidence. For example, X was struggling to speak in front of the group initially but by the end was visibly more confident.</i></p> <p><i>Each group worked on a series of team-building games and activities. It was clear that some find it very difficult to work in less structured formats e.g. the group was asked to give each other roles e.g., designer, builder, and architect, and to design and build a town using Lego. Some found it difficult to build without following instructions, whilst others enjoyed the task freely. Some could work in a collaborative way whilst others preferred to work individually but all students did manage to collaborate at some level.</i></p> <p><i>X who is an EBSA student has managed to attend most of the sessions. He says that he enjoys coming in for the Autism Boys groups as he gets to see his friends and do fun activities. His attendance at the sessions has been 90%. It has meant that we have been able to build on this and X is now attending school for 3 sessions each week. The groups have continued all year to ensure that X attends school, at least partially.</i></p>

	<i>All of the students involved in the sessions have stated that they do not want the sessions to end. They have become an embedded part of the school schedule. Groups have continued and we hope to continue them into the new school year.</i>	
Outcomes Achieved		
Reduce levels of EBSA		√
Reduce anxiety		√
Support children to learn skills to better manage their anxiety		√
Improve staff knowledge of suitable interventions and resources to support Autistic pupils		√
Increase the level of engagement in learning and school attendance		√
Increase engagement with professionals and education		√
Supporting schools to keep more complex pupils in mainstream		√

Case Study Two	
Support from a 1:1 TA – Primary	
Reason for requesting funding	The pupil has difficulty accessing the curriculum as learning behaviours are repetitive and based on topics of interest and favoured resources. The school wanted the funding to support him in learning specific skills to ensure his interactions with others are positive and sustained. He requires support to manage his emotions and sustain attention and his ability to access learning tasks. He also requires support with toilet training
Use of funding	TA support for meet and greet, for him to take part in a speech and language programme, provide sensory breaks, provide fine and gross motor skills intervention and provide support with social interactions with his peers and other adults.
Impact of funding <i>Direct quotes from schools</i>	<p><i>The funding has meant X has been able to have directed 1:1 support, using topics that he is interested in such as trains and fire engines. Having additional adult support has meant that X can be supported outside of the classroom, as he can find the classroom distracting and overwhelming.</i></p> <p><i>X is met by an adult when coming down from before school club to support routine and settling into the day; this has allowed him to be ready for the first lesson of the day (phonics – small group of 4 children). At times he is completing 1:1 activities to support his learning. He has daily fine motor activities including hands-on practical tasks as well as the Write from the Start programme. Sometimes another child can join him.</i></p> <p><i>Social skills games guided by an adult have given him time to explore social interactions and model social skills. X has some flexibility to explore play in continuous provision-type activities, where he can choose his learning. X has been using blank levels to develop understanding and he is now using</i></p>

	<p><i>colourful semantics to support verbal sentence structure and development on why/ how questions.</i></p> <p>Successes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>achieved the phonics check pass threshold</i> • <i>accessed the Salford Reading assessment reading age 6.5years</i> • <i>write his name in recognisable letters</i> • <i>working with numbers to 10</i> <p>Sustainability of the funding:</p> <p><i>To ensure he is supported now that the funding has ended, he will continue to have a personalised curriculum and adult support to access activities. The school will continue to provide 1:1 LSA support and intend to apply for an EHCP.</i></p> <p>Impact the funding has had on the school's ability to support the child and other children with Autism:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Less distraction for peers in the classroom</i> • <i>He can access an individual curriculum to support his needs</i> • <i>Development of fine and gross motor skills to support writing skills</i> • <i>As part of developing social skills, other children at times have been able to access the support.</i>
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Outcomes Achieved	
Reduce levels of EBSA	n/a
Reduce anxiety	√
Support children to learn skills to better manage their anxiety	√
Improve staff knowledge of suitable interventions and resources to support Autistic pupils	√
Increase the level of engagement in learning and school attendance	√
Increase engagement with professionals and education	√
Supporting schools to keep more complex pupils in mainstream	√

Case Study Three	
Support from a 1:1 TA – Primary	
Reason for requesting funding	X is working on his own away from the classroom and the school would like to provide sensory resources and curriculum material to support his learning within this space. This will include emotional regulation support, cooking, and heavy work activities such as gardening.
Use of funding	TA support for meet and greet and handover to parents at the end of the day as well as to implement support detailed above. Purchase of required resources.

<p>Impact of funding Direct quotes from schools</p>	<p><i>X was supported with this funding to be educated in his own learning space to ensure a more positive school experience was gained. He has a bespoke timetable which includes Maths, English, weekly gardening, weekly cooking and lots of sensory movement breaks through the day including bubble making, popping bubbles, playing with sand, shaving foam, climbing on outdoor apparatus, etc. His afternoons are spent in Foundation to concentrate on developing play skills. Money was used to purchase ingredients, gardening seeds, plants, and sensory materials.</i></p> <p><i>Our approach to teaching X changed and we have followed PDA strategies as advised and purchased trays to put individual tasks in and reward trays with motivating items which we have purchased from this funding – these have included large floormat dinosaur puzzles, activities linked to the World and Flags, books of high interest, dinosaur stencils, play dough, etc.</i></p> <p><i>We have also recruited another member of staff with a mental health background to be able to work 1.5hrs a day with X so that staff complete shifts. X is staffed 1:1 from the school budget currently and this money has helped us fund this.</i></p> <p><i>X is now a happier boy and enjoys coming to school. He is eager to go to his learning space, has developed good relationships with his key adults, and is completing work asked of him without severe behaviour incidents which were dangerous and difficult. X's incident levels have reduced (CPOMS data) from 49 verbal and physical incidents against staff and peers before moving from his classroom to 24 but only 2 are of verbal and physical harm to staff.</i></p> <p><i>The remainder of these incidents are now related to him copying other children's behaviour when out at unstructured times and are related to copying the inappropriate language of others. A few are when he has hurt himself at play and finds it hard to regulate his emotions and let staff attend to his injury. This is a great success for X.</i></p> <p><i>X continues to control his learning, fitting with a PDA profile, however, in this environment it is easier to swap for example the English and Maths around as he chooses than it is in the classroom with his 29 other peers. This has reduced X's anxiety immensely.</i></p> <p><i>X has enjoyed the bespoke activities and we have been able to add another peer to work with him when cooking. Parents are much happier and pleased that X is enjoying school again.</i></p> <p><i>X now has work in his books that is completed and well thought out to enable us to more accurately assess him as we had limited evidence of his ability as often work was not even attempted. Teacher Assessment – GD Reading, WTS Writing, WTS Maths. He has also been able to complete his</i></p>
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<p><i>Hodder and Salford assessments fully this term in one sitting - Hodder SS130+, Salford SS130+</i></p> <p><i>The evidence has been sufficient for us to prove what works for X and will support the need for an EHCP assessment request as X will need to continue working in this manner. We will continue with what we have in place and apply for an EHCP as a priority which we hope will enable us to continue long-term working with X in this way. Staffing is remaining the same for X for the next academic year.</i></p> <p><i>The funding has helped us immensely to quickly put in place what was needed and advised. We did not have spare staff so needed to appoint and the school had not planned for this in the budget. We also needed to turn a small kitchen area into a learning space that was safe, and welcoming and needed resources of high interest to X, knowing the resources would be available just for X so that he can dip into them as and when we needed according to his presentation each day.</i></p>	
Outcomes Achieved	
Reduce levels of EBSA	n/a
Reduce anxiety	√
Support children to learn skills to better manage their anxiety	√
Improve staff knowledge of suitable interventions and resources to support Autistic pupils	√
Increase the level of engagement in learning and school attendance	√
Increase engagement with professionals and education	√
Supporting schools to keep more complex pupils in mainstream	√

Case Study Four	
Online Tuition – Secondary	
Reason for requesting funding	We are requesting this extra funding to provide online tutoring for X. Whilst working in Inclusion, work is set for X but she does not receive direct teaching. We have explored the provider Nisai and would like to put in place online teaching for X for Maths as she is on track for all subjects except maths.
Use of funding	Online tuition from Nisai. This would involve 4 x 30-minute lessons online, delivered by a qualified teacher. The cost for one subject is £1750 per year subscription. This cost cannot be met through existing school budgets as X is accessing Inclusion on a full-time basis and additional support from the EP. Teachers are also currently planning bespoke lesson resources for X to complete in Inclusion.
Impact of funding <i>Direct quotes from schools</i>	<i>X was highly anxious and spent all her lessons based in Inclusion. As a result of this, X had no direct teacher input as the Inclusion Manager is non-teaching. X was on track for almost all subjects but Maths was an area of concern. To remedy this, we applied to the Autism Limited Funding for</i>

<p><i>£2000 to put towards a Maths GCSE course provided by Nisai. This enabled X to join online live lessons, taught by a Maths teacher. X interacted brilliantly during these sessions and very much liked the set-up of the programme as there were no cameras. In terms of engagement and self-esteem, this has been brilliant for X. Without the funding, X would have had no direct teacher input for an area of the curriculum she was struggling with. It has been fantastic for what it has given X both academically and emotionally.</i></p> <p><i>X passed her GCSE maths with a grade 4 and this enabled her to access her first choice of Post-16 course.</i></p>	
Outcomes Achieved	
Reduce levels of EBSA	x
Reduce anxiety	√
Support children to learn skills to better manage their anxiety	x
Improve staff knowledge of suitable interventions and resources to support Autistic pupils	√
Increase the level of engagement in learning and school attendance	√ - learning but not attendance
Increase engagement with professionals and education	√
Supporting schools to keep more complex pupils in mainstream	√

Case Study Five	
Mindful Brain intervention – Primary	
Reason for requesting funding	<p>We would like some additional funding for X so that we can engage Katie Purdy who runs a mindfulness business. She is known to the school and has worked with many children as a teacher in local schools. We would like her to work with X as someone with a fresh approach who is new to him and not someone he associates with at school.</p> <p>In-school sessions with a teaching assistant for an hour a week over an agreed number of weeks. These sessions will explore his diagnosis and what this means to him in real terms. She will also look at building mindfulness and resilience with him.</p> <p>In the home – parents have expressed interest in working with Katie. During these sessions, she would work with the whole family looking at the use of language and consistency in approach. The sessions would involve both parents and older sibling. Parents are really proactive and would welcome the opportunity to work as a family to be able to support X.</p> <p>The reason for the relatively early application is so that we can ensure a successful start to X's time in school. He has the potential to do well both academically and socially and we believe this early input would help him in the long term and especially with his eventual transition to secondary school.</p>

Use of funding	Proposed support to be completed by Katie Purdy – Mindfulness coach on a 1:1 well-being project (emotional regulation & mindfulness sessions) with a professional at school/ parents.	
Impact of funding <i>Direct quotes from schools</i>	<p><i>We worked with Katie Purdy from Mindful Brain to support X in his understanding of his autism diagnosis as well as learning how to manage his behaviour when feeling overwhelmed and anxious.</i></p> <p><i>Before starting the course X was at risk of exclusion. His behaviour deteriorated rapidly at the start of the autumn term when he moved to Year 5 and when his older sibling moved to Secondary School. He became aggressive, argumentative, and reluctant to engage in school and would often leave the class/school building. His parents found managing his behaviour at home very challenging.</i></p> <p><i>Katie completed a 9-week course with him – looking at the ‘Super Powers’ all of us have to be able to manage and understand our emotions. Initially, X was reluctant to engage and his behaviour deteriorated. However, given time and the support of his parents and TA we turned a corner. Both mum and the class TA and teacher attended some of the sessions and together all were supported to understand autism challenges.</i></p> <p><i>Given clear examples and language (scripts) to use with X has resulted in the following:</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <i>1 – Fewer incidents (if any) when he is overwhelmed.</i> <i>2 – He no longer leaves the classroom</i> <i>3 – He consistently wears ear defenders – small and white</i> <i>4 – His behaviour at home is calmer and he can use and refer to the gems super powers.</i> <i>5 – He is more engaged in school work and contributes to class.</i> <i>6 – Although not always in assemblies he has attended.</i> <i>7 – Parents report feeling more confident in their ability to manage</i> <p><i>We can continue to support him beyond the funding as the TA that attended the training still checks in with X and will be in his class in Year 6. We can also more confidently support other pupils as staff now feel more empowered.</i></p>	
Outcomes Achieved		
Reduce levels of EBSA		n/a
Reduce anxiety		√
Support children to learn skills to better manage their anxiety		√
Improve staff knowledge of suitable interventions and resources to support Autistic pupils		√
Increase the level of engagement in learning and school attendance		√
Increase engagement with professionals and education		√
Supporting schools to keep more complex pupils in mainstream		√

Case Study Six	
CBT Intervention – Primary School	
Reason for requesting funding	X has high levels of anxiety. X has been working alongside the Clinical Psychologist for over a year and it has taken that long to build trust. He is developing the skills but isn't putting them into practice.
Use of funding	To fund a TA to work alongside a Clinical Psychologist to learn how to deliver CBT strategies.
Impact of funding <i>Direct quotes from schools</i>	<p><i>The impact of the intervention:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Increase in Attendance - before starting the intervention, X had been attending on a reduced timetable of mornings only, and his attendance for the 2nd term (1.11.21 – 20.12.21) was 65.71%. The intervention began at the start of January and the pupil's attendance increased to 79.55% during the third term (3.1.22 – 14.3.22)</i> • <i>Able to complete daily anxiety grids with the TA. Able to discuss different strategies and which help him most when previously he had been unable even to indicate to a trusted adult that he needed help.</i> • <i>Following identifying patterns in the anxiety analysis grids and X being able to talk about things that worry him, the TA was able to more effectively identify the subtle signs when he was becoming escalated or dysregulated and intervene proactively to help X to regulate or de-escalate situations</i> • <i>X started to proactively apply the strategies he had learned in different situations. On a daily basis X would unprompted and without fail, ask to complete his anxiety grids and be keen to discuss what strategies he preferred.</i> <p><i>Please note that due to other factors (e.g. anxiety about the transition to secondary school) X has struggled to be in school during this term and provision is being met by the Medical Home Tuition service. However, the impact of the intervention allowed him to remain in school and to increase his attendance during the earlier terms of the year which may not have been the case without the intervention and consequent support in the classroom.</i></p> <p><i>X is moving to secondary school and once he can make the transition to the school, he will be able to apply the strategies he has learned during the intervention in the new environment. Information about the strategies he developed was shared with the secondary school at a transition meeting.</i></p> <p><i>Our TA was upskilled by working collaboratively with the Clinical Psychologist and developed a good working understanding of a range of different strategies to help manage anxiety e.g. zones of regulation, putting</i></p>

	<i>on different glasses, etc. She developed skills in identifying triggers, planning the next steps, implementing strategies, and monitoring their impact. She has been able to apply these strategies to support other children with Autism or on the Autism pathway within the school with their anxiety. She has also been able to disseminate this information to other staff within the school and help support them to improve outcomes for children.</i>	
Outcomes Achieved		
Reduce levels of EBSA		√
Reduce anxiety		√
Support children to learn skills to better manage their anxiety		√
Improve staff knowledge of suitable interventions and resources to support Autistic pupils		√
Increase the level of engagement in learning and school attendance		√
Increase engagement with professionals and education		√
Supporting schools to keep more complex pupils in mainstream		√

Key Findings and Discussion

- The impact of the funding was positive for all those that were awarded funding.
- Most funding was used for 1:1 TAs but there was some evidence of creativity such as using external providers of well-founded interventions such as Mindful Brain and CBT. The latter was much more effective in reaching more pupils and creating an impact beyond the life of the funding. In 2022-23, we want to encourage applications that benefit more pupils so have amended the application form to reflect this and to encourage schools to apply for money to support interventions/resources. This will also ensure the impact extends beyond the period of the initial funding.
- Some of the funding was granted on the understanding that the SENCO shared the impact at a SENCo Network meeting and/or worked with someone from the Autism Advisory team. This was really successful as it ensured more people became aware of interventions that had an impact.
- The funding has enabled risks to be reduced. Most of the children who applied for funding were at risk of falling further behind academically, becoming EBSA, being excluded or needing specialist placement. The following table summarises which of these risk factors applied to each of the 41 pupils who were awarded funding. The evidence is taken from each of the application forms:

Risk of falling further behind academically	40	Of the 40 children identified as being at risk of falling further behind academically, most maintained or accelerated their previous levels of progress.
Risk of EBSA	12	None of the students identified as being at risk of becoming EBSA became EBSA. All children who were already EBSA either maintained or improved their attendance, apart from one child we moved on to Medical Home Tuition.
Risk of Exclusion	9	None of the children supported through the Autism Fund had fixed term or permanent exclusions.
Risk of requiring specialist placement	9	4 pupils were already identified as needing specialist placements at the time funding was allocated and were waiting for placements to become available. The additional funding enabled them to have better access to the curriculum in the interim period than would otherwise have been possible. The other 5 children are continuing to have their needs met in their mainstream schools.