

## SCF-funded activities

Here are some examples of the wide range of activities we fund in secondary schools and colleges:

1. [Resources](#)
2. [Implementation Support](#)
3. [Places and Spaces](#)
4. [Packages of support](#)
5. [Whole school initiatives](#)
6. [Working with parents](#)

### 1. **Resources**

**1.1 Equipment, materials, technology** - some schools buy equipment, materials or technology to enhance the learning and socialisation of autistic students. Asking young people for a wish list means they are more likely to be used. Examples:

- Virtual reality headsets, pre-loaded to support catch-up within subjects and with mindfulness and 'escape' into other worlds to help calm autistic students.
- New laptops and technology including apps and games.
- A supply of ear defenders to help students cope with the noise of returning to a busy mainstream school
- Sports equipment to promote mental well-being through introducing physical activity during lunch and break times
- 'Return to learning packages' to be sent home to support students and parents to encourage interaction between school and families.
- Resource boxes filled with sensory equipment to be put in key areas accessed by autistic students: Library, Nurture Room and Safeguarding Offices. Sometimes, a sensory wellbeing pack is put in every classroom in a school or college so that students don't have to leave to become calm..
- An AV1 No Isolation lesson-bot so students who are finding it difficult to come into school can access their lesson from Learning Support

**1.2 Interventions** - take many and varied forms and can take place in or out of school/college. Again, we look for creative ideas, where there is a clear rationale. Examples:

- A ten week course at a **local climbing wall**. SCF funded 12 autistic students across years 7,8,9 and 10 to develop teamwork, collaboration and independence.
- **Play therapy** - for autistic students struggling to attend school.
- Training and resources for **121 mentoring** which meant students could access small group work and lunchtime clubs.
- An educational psychologist ran eight-week **programmes of CBT**. The school also ran **art therapy** and **sports therapy** with the aim of helping autistic students to recognise and process their emotions, and develop relationships.
- **Drama therapy** has helped autistic students with social interaction needs who had struggled with isolation through the pandemic.
- An **educational psychologist** and **speech/language therapist** worked with adolescent girls to support peer relationships. They designed, delivered the programme and trained staff.

## 2. Implementation Support

**2.1 Additional hours** - funding to extend the working hours of existing staff has provided a quick, easy-to-implement and impactful activity. Schools have used this additional time in a range of ways. Examples:

- **Accessing ELSA support** to ensure that all autistic students had access.
- Offering **1-1 bespoke mentoring** to autistic pupils to allow them to express their feelings.
- Supporting **students with ASC with online peer groups and face to face activities** to promote friendship and social skills in school.
- **Additional lunchtime and after school activities** specifically aimed at students who are struggling with friendships.
- **To support a L3 business student with autism to project manage and run activities** in a social group in a quiet and safe space for young people to socialise and have relaxed conversation.
- **To support students in the wellbeing room during unstructured times of the day** including breaks and lunch.
- Time for a member of staff to become an **ASC ambassador** to work alongside ASC students within school and parents outside school. They also trained older ASC students to be mentors for younger ASC students, and set up ASC parental support networks.
- Additional time to set up and run a weekly **Neurodiverse support group**, inviting staff and students, who have either a diagnosis, going through the process of diagnosis or self identify as neurodivergent.
- Support staff were paid to **stay late and run bespoke after-school activities**, and SCF also paid for alternative transport to take students home.

**2.2 Training** - different activities aiming to improve awareness, knowledge and expertise in autism support. Training initiatives have involved staff, parents and sometimes students. For school staff, we are always interested in initiatives that train beyond specialist or SEND-specific teams. Examples:

- Training TAs/LSAs to run groups in school/college such as **social skills** or **Lego Therapy**.
- **Parent workshops** supporting parents whose children have a diagnosis of autism to learn how to manage their child's developing needs.
- Year 12 students were trained to deliver Lego Therapy to Y7 and 8 students to support them in developing their communication skills and to encourage social interaction.
- Training KS4 SEND students up as **playground leaders** to enable them to have a rota of break time duties where they take lead on the games during social times.
- Practical online training from the **Autistic Girls Network** to increase knowledge of aspects of autism, e.g. female presentations, masking and burnout, and interoception and alexithymia. This was for staff and students in separate sessions.
- A series of 6 bespoke workshop sessions for autistic students from an **ASD specialist**, content based on what students had said they wanted.
- Training for the SEND lead so they could train all school staff in **Zones of Regulation**, and to train the SEND team to deliver Zones of Regulation intervention.
- **Autism Education Trust** training.

**2.3 Transition** - between schools, back into schools or within school can often be a challenge for autistic students - this was particularly the case during the COVID-19 pandemic. Schools and colleges thought of innovative ways to support this using SCF funding. Examples:

- A **befriender** for a 16 year old autistic student to work on independent travel from home to college.

- Trips to an **Autism Initiative** which provides work placements for autistic young people. Travel and sustenance was funded.
- Funding to create a video to make a **virtual tour** of the school to support autistic children with the school transition.
- **Transition visits** for autistic students to local colleges rather than a busy general college open day. SCF funded additional staff time and taxi transport for an initial visit and then an interview with the college SENCo.

### 3. Places and Spaces

Around half of schools and colleges used SCF funding to develop indoor and outdoor 'safe' spaces. We look for creative ideas, tailored to the needs of individual schools.

#### 3.1 Creating sensory rooms or spaces. Examples:

- Creating a quiet area for autistic students who are in the process of reintegration or transition: 'a sensory corner' - **soft furnishings, aromatherapy equipment, books with motivational content, soft lights, games**. The space is used to run friendship group interventions and social skills workshops.
- **Purchasing bespoke sensory furnishings** - recommended by a local outreach service: 10 sensory friendly chairs, weighted blankets, building 2 cubicle spaces (pods) to support socialising - placed in the school library. A de-escalation sofa.
- To address an unusual layout one school created and equipped **seven different sensory spaces** around the school so pupils had numerous places they could easily access throughout the day when needed - in lesson time or at break times.

#### 3.2 Refurbishing or repurposing existing areas. Examples:

- Refurbishing and updating an existing sensory room. The school kept the resources students enjoyed using but added **padded walls**, the latest sensory technology equipment including a **steplite**, which is a panel using **sound-activated LED technology** to illuminate up to 12 steps of brightly coloured light
- Repurposing a classroom into a **sensory space**
- **Redesign** what was a meeting room into a more welcoming environment to provide students a safe, calm, relaxing oasis of their own.

#### 3.3 Outdoor or external spaces. Examples:

- The **renovation of an unloved and unused little plot** in the school grounds, transforming it into a **SEN garden** - an outdoor therapeutic safe space.
- **A temporary sensory room**. Buying and equipping a wheeled "classroom in a box" which staff can wheel over to the bungalow which is available only during the week.
- **Murals**, designed by autistic young people to create a welcoming entrance to the SEND department and sensory room.

### 4. Packages of support

Some schools used funding on a range of activities to ensure a broad impact. Examples:

#### 4.1 **A whole school approach to supporting autistic students:**

- Purchased resources and furnishings to create a safe calm space by refurbishing an existing break-out room.
- Bought in training for all staff about autism, for TAs to deliver interventions, and to create ASC specialist mentors.
- Funded additional staff time to facilitate parent drop-in sessions, and for TAs to deliver interventions: Zones of Regulation, Lego Therapy, smile Therapy.

#### 4.2 Sensory spaces and pet therapy:

- Created a sand/play area
- Bought supplies for autistic students to cultivate an existing roof garden
- Bought two guinea pigs for autistic students to keep as pets in the SEND department

#### 4.3 Combined components of support:

- Staff training for CBT program building social + emotional skills intervention
- Furnishing a new Wellbeing Space
- Purchase of autism-friendly sensory objects such as ear defenders;
- Non-fiction books on Autism, and a stand alone bookcase to house them in the library (alongside establishing a self-borrowing set-up so that students do not need to go to the counter to borrow them).

#### 4.4 Three waves of support:

- Universal: whole staff training led by an Autism specialist to help staff have a thorough understanding of ASC and supporting strategies.
- Targeted: caregiver drop-in sessions, more specific training on different aspects: mentor intervention training, mental health, Autism and EBSA.
- Specialist: Autism specialist 1:1 sessions, IPADS with specialist IAPP software for group work, and sensory equipment for spaces and individuals.

### 5. Whole school initiatives

We are keen to see an impact beyond the SEN department or autism specialists. Examples:

- Building on their Autism Education Trust training, one school collaborated with learners, parents/carers, staff and an experienced film maker, and **co-produced a short film**. This shared experiences, understanding and impact of autism, becoming the centrepiece of an academy wide 'awareness campaign' to promote inclusive practice.
- Funding to produce a digital resource to capture and share the **lived experiences of autistic pupils and their parents' relationship with school**. This was a set of 'talking heads' about the nuts and bolts of what helped them succeed, what didn't and how to work together to foster better understanding between school and home.

### 6. Working with Parents

Some secondary schools and colleges do not have the resource to work closely with parents of autistic students, and SCF funding can help facilitate closer working relationships. Examples:

- Running parental sessions which provide support and an insight into the lived experience of ASC students, and to develop a network of support for families to share experiences.
- Parent sessions, Community Cafe style, where an ASD specialist offers advice and information focusing on understanding autism, building confidence to encourage interaction & communication, understanding & supporting behaviour.
- Six workshops for the parents of students with ASC looking at issues such as anxiety / depression; puberty; energy accounting; eating sleeping routines; hypersensitivity and the positives of autism.