



ANNUAL REPORT 2025-26

Specialist Inclusion Support Service
Autism Team

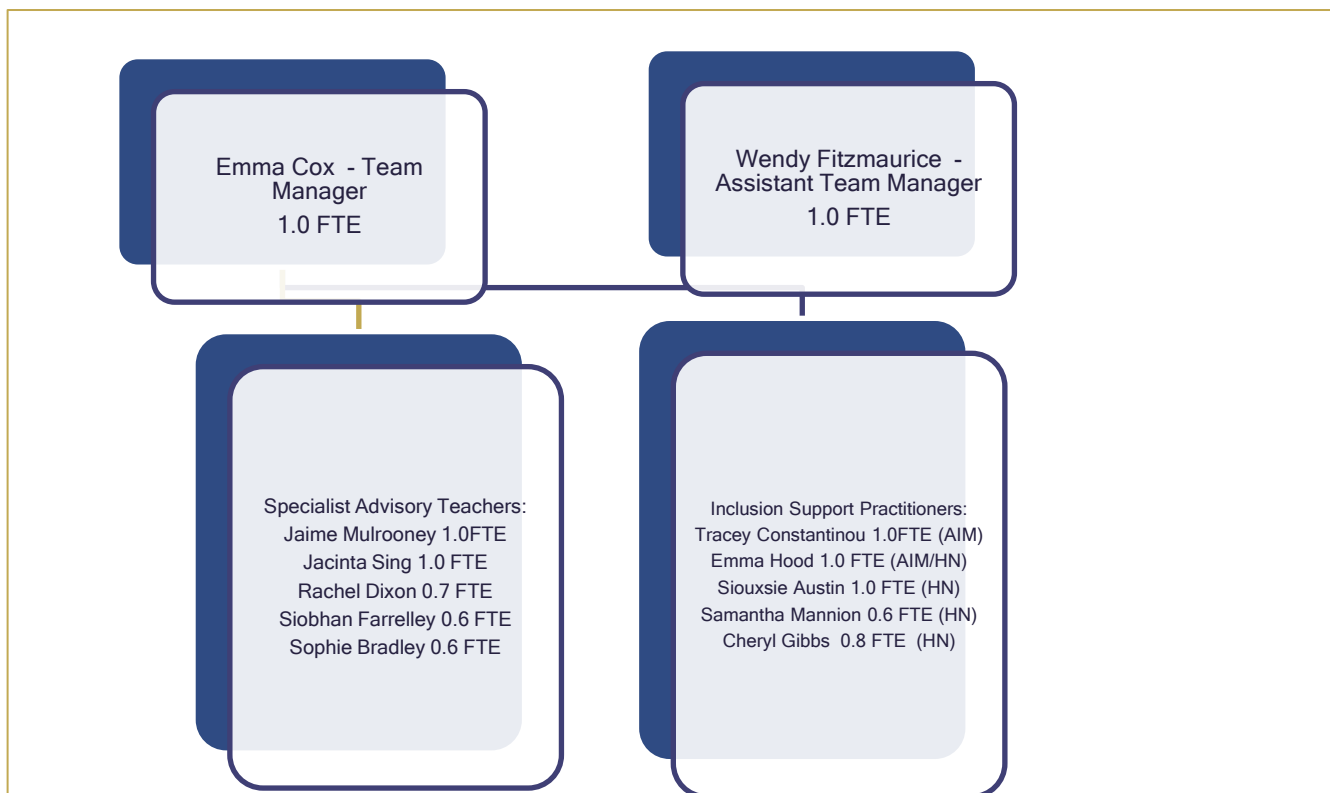
Emma Cox – Team Manager

CONTENTS

1. STAFFING STRUCTURE _____	3
2. CASELOAD INFORMATION. _____	4
3. KEY WHOLE TEAM DEVELOPMENTS _____	7
4. AUTISM TRAINING _____	13
5. KEY OUTCOMES AND SERVICE IMPACT _____	17
6. SUMMARY _____	26
7. CASESTUDIES. _____	29

1. STAFFING STRUCTURE

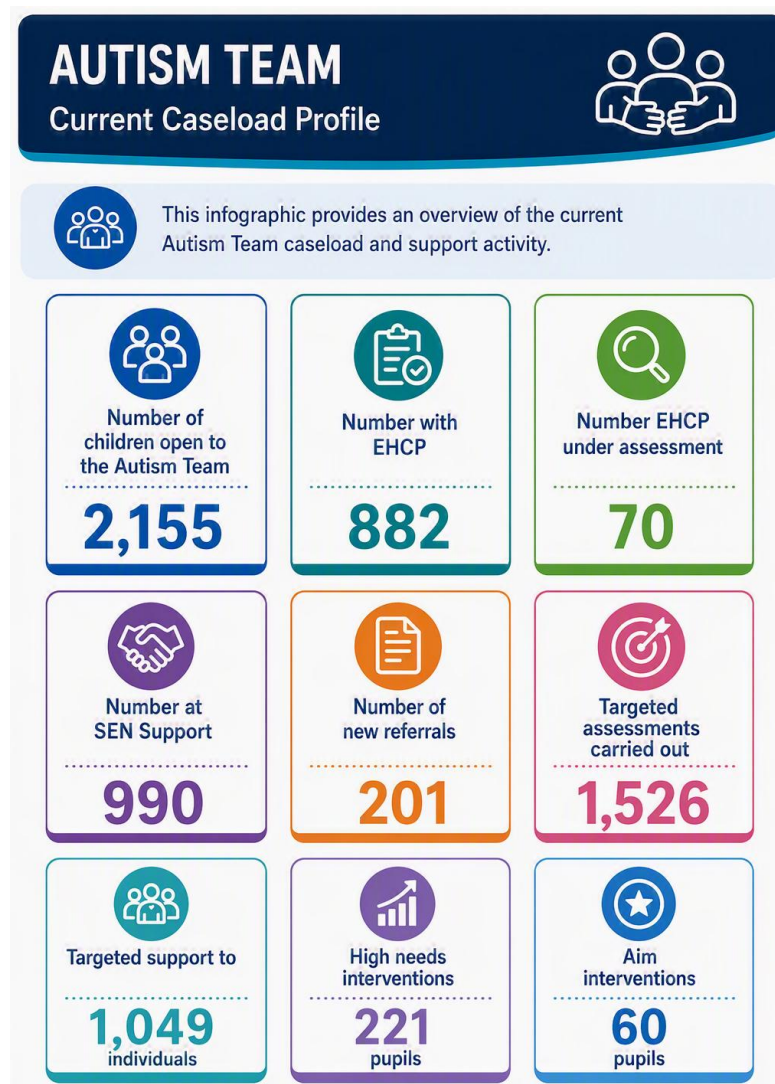
Role	FTE	Staff in Post	Vacancies
Team Manager	1	1	0
Assistant Team Manager	1	1	0
Specialist Advisory Teachers	3.9	5	0
Inclusion Support Practitioners	4.4	5	0
Total	10.3	12	0



KEY POINTS

- The Autism Team continues to be led by Emma Cox (Team Manager) and Wendy Fitzmaurice (Assistant Team Manager).
- Staff absence increased at several points within the academic year due to bereavements. Whilst this affected capacity, the team responded with flexibility and professionalism to maintain service delivery wherever possible.

2. CASELOAD INFORMATION.



- The Specialist Autism Team has continued to provide targeted, needs-led support to children and young people with autism across Solihull, working in partnership with schools to promote inclusive practice and positive outcomes.
- At the end of the academic year, 2155 children and young people with an autism diagnosis were open to the team's offer, representing an increase compared with the previous academic year. This reflects the continued growth in demand for specialist autism support across the local authority.
- The team delivered 221 High Need Interventions through Inclusion Support Practitioners (ISPs), an increase of 7 interventions compared with the previous year. This reflects both increasing levels of complexity and need amongst pupils and the

team's responsiveness in providing intensive, personalised support where it is most required.

- Targeted support and advice from Advisory Teachers also increased throughout the year. A total of 1049 pupils received targeted support, with 1,526 targeted assessments or meetings carried out across those pupils. This represents a notable increase from the previous academic year and highlights the team's continued commitment to building school capacity, supporting inclusive practice and improving educational outcomes for autistic pupils.
- The team provided Autism Intense Monitoring (AIM) support to 60 pupils during the year. This remains stable from the previous academic year, these interventions continued to provide valuable monitoring and support for pupils presenting with the most complex needs, ensuring that concerns were identified and addressed promptly through collaborative working with schools and families.
- It is important to recognise that the Specialist Autism Team does not work directly with all pupils who have an autism diagnosis. Instead, the service operates a targeted model, providing direct intervention and specialist involvement for pupils presenting with the highest levels of need.
- The Autism Team continues to operate successfully through an allocation model with schools, which has been fully embedded since September 2021. This approach supports the principles of the Graduated Approach, ensuring that schools with the highest numbers of autistic pupils receive proportionately greater access to specialist support.
- Under this model, schools retain responsibility for coordinating and delivering support for pupils whose needs can be met through ordinarily available provision. Autism Leads and Special Educational Needs Coordinators (SENCOs) play a central role in supporting these pupils and implementing effective interventions within school. Schools are then able to utilise their allocated hours to request targeted support when additional specialist advice is required.

- Where a school identifies a pupil whose needs indicate a requirement for High Need support, requests are considered following evidence of a clear and robust graduated approach through Assess, Plan, Do, Review cycles. This ensures specialist resources are directed at those pupils with the greatest level of need at the point they require it the most, whilst simultaneously building the confidence and capacity of schools to meet the needs of autistic learners in their own settings.

"This service has been invaluable. The designated teachers are brilliant. They come in and offer advice and carry out observations and guidance. They have also run CPD whole school, specific and supported ECTs. This has had a big impact of staff professional development as well as staff confidence and then the provision the pupils get. The CPD sessions that are offered are all amazing and have had a big impact in school. Of all the services we have had, this one has been so helpful and support from them is always available. They also offer support for our parents that has been very beneficial." – Primary SENCo – Survey 2026

3. KEY WHOLE TEAM DEVELOPMENTS

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT AND QUALITY ASSURANCE

- The team has continued to strengthen specialist expertise through an ongoing programme of professional development, including training in intensive interaction, Emotional Based Non-Attendance, Dyslexia, Trauma and shared learning from attendance at the National Autistic Society Annual Conference.

REVIEWING / MONITORING ALLOCATION AND OFFER TO SCHOOLS

- The team has continued to review and refine its allocation model to ensure that specialist support remains responsive to need and aligned with the principles of the Graduated Approach.
- As in previous years, the academic year commenced with a clearly defined and communicated offer to schools, ensuring transparency regarding the support available through both allocated and high-need pathways. The allocation model has been reviewed regularly throughout the year, with ongoing discussion and evaluation informing future planning and resource allocation for the 2026–27 academic year.
- This continuous review process has enabled the team to reflect on emerging needs, patterns of demand and service impact, ensuring that support remains targeted effectively and resources are directed where they can achieve the greatest benefit for children and young people.

REVIEWING AUTISM INTENSE MONITORING (AIM) AND THE WIDER SERVICE OFFER

- Throughout 2025–26, the team has observed a continued increase in the complexity of need presented by pupils, particularly in relation to Emotional Based Non-School Attendance (EBNSA). This has prompted significant reflection regarding the purpose, scope and criteria of Autism Intense Monitoring (AIM), alongside a broader review of the team's overall offer to schools.

DEVELOPMENT OF PARENT TRAINING OFFER

- The expanded parent training programme continued throughout 2025–26, providing increased opportunities for parents and carers to access information, guidance and practical strategies to support their children.
- As detailed within the Training section of this report, engagement with the programme remained strong and feedback from participants was consistently positive.
- In response to feedback from both schools and families, the team continued to deliver a programme of targeted “bitesize” workshops and coffee afternoon sessions, focusing on specific areas of need and providing practical resources and advice. These sessions have proved particularly valuable in supporting collaborative working between schools and families and have received highly positive evaluations. As a result, this element of the offer will continue to be developed as part of the team's allocated support model.
- In addition, feedback from parents and developments within the Neuroinclusive Education Network (NEN), formerly Autism Education Trust (AET), training programme have informed the introduction of a new Early Years focused parent training course. This programme provides enhanced support around key developmental areas, including play skills and toileting.

IMPLEMENTATION OF NEW NEUROINCLUSIVE EDUCATION NETWORK (NEN) RESOURCES

- The team has proactively engaged with the latest Neuroinclusive Education Network (formerly AET) materials to ensure readiness to support schools in embedding new areas of practice.
- This has ensured that the team remains well placed to guide schools in implementing evidence-informed approaches and making effective use of national autism resources.

AUTISM IN SCHOOLS PROJECT

A significant achievement during 2025–26 has been the successful establishment of the refined Autism in Schools Project, which will continue to run over the next academic year.

The project aims to strengthen autism-inclusive practice across the local authority through the development of Autism Champions within participating schools. These champions received ongoing support to:

- Enhance their understanding of autism and evidence-based practice.
- Develop and deliver targeted interventions within their settings.
- Lead strategic developments that promote inclusive environments and improve outcomes for autistic pupils.



By building expertise within schools, the project seeks to create sustainable improvements in autism practice and strengthen whole-school approaches to inclusion. Outcomes and impact are evident in the separate Autism in School Evaluation.

PUPIL QUOTE:

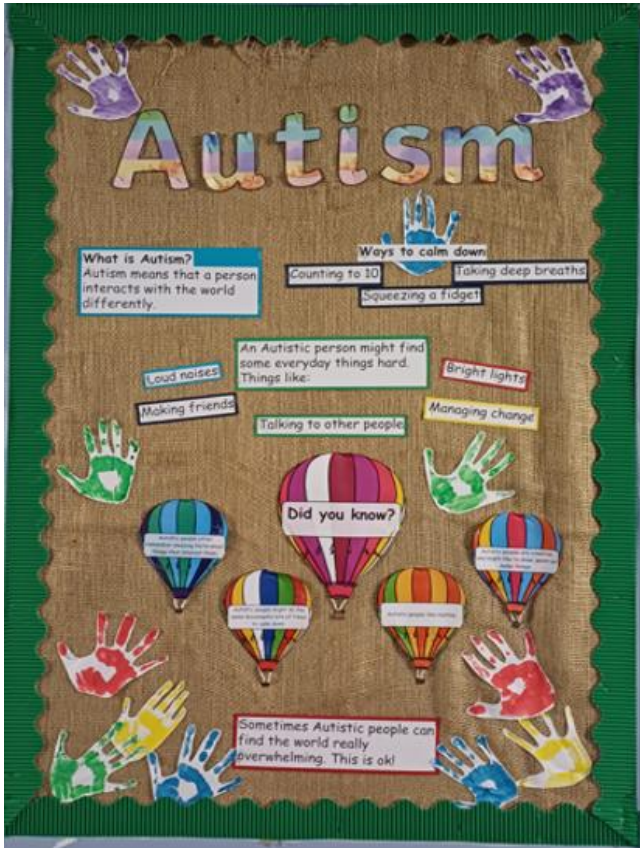
"I'm not scared of being autistic any more.

I went from being embarrassed to being proud of me."

PARTNERSHIP FOR INCLUSION OF NEURODIVERSITY IN SCHOOLS (PINS)

- The Autism Team has continued to play an active role in the Partnership for Inclusion of Neurodiversity in Schools (PINS) initiative, contributing to both the development and delivery of specialist training and consultancy support.
- Through this work, the team has provided learning opportunities and advice in several key areas, including:
 - Neurodiversity and Girls
 - Pathological Demand Avoidance (PDA)
 - Sensory Environments
 - Sensory Circuits
- The PINS project has enabled the team to further support schools in developing inclusive, neurodiversity-affirming practice and has strengthened collaborative working across education and health partners. The Autism Team played a significant role in delivering the second year of the Partnership for Inclusion of Neurodiversity in Schools (PINS) programme. Through coaching, audits and workforce development, the project **strengthened inclusive practice** across mainstream schools and increased staff confidence in supporting neurodivergent learners.

AUTISM LEADS



Within Solihull there is an expectation that each school will identify a member of staff as their Lead for Autism.

In some schools this is the SENCo, in others it is another identified member of staff (teacher or teaching assistant) who has an interest and /or experience in supporting autistic pupils.

The SISS Autism Team Assistant Manager runs a free-to-access termly Leads for Autism meetings to support sharing of good practice and development of skills and knowledge within the area of good autism practice.

No. of schools that attended the Leads for Autism Meetings during the academic year 2025-2026

	<u>Autumn Term</u>	<u>SpringTerm</u>	<u>Summer Term</u>
Primary / 59	21	17	14
Secondary /16	8	5	5
Total/ 75	29	22	19

Leads for Autism meeting focus 25-26

	School Leads
Autumn meeting	NEN Understanding Anxious Non-Attendance
Spring meeting	NEN Transitions in Schools
Summer meeting	NEN Progression Framework

"Very knowledgeable trainer with answers to all queries during the session."

"Hearing about a whole range of new ideas and fabulous supporting resources provided that I can use straight away in school."

"Having the breakout discussion times to chat with other settings and actually thinking about all the smaller transitions that occur every day."

Training Feedback – Primary & Secondary 2026

4. AUTISM TRAINING

CENTRAL TRAINING

NEN Training Impact

Autism Education & Inclusion Training Outcomes



170

Delegates Trained



100%

Confidence Improved



100%

Course Rated VG/Excellent



100%

Trainer Knowledge

✓ Every evaluated course achieved 100% across all feedback measures

Participation by Course



COMMISSIONED & BESPOKE TRAINING

Title of Training	Delivered to:	Number of Delegates
Understanding GAP and NEN Frameworks	Autism Champions	10
NEN Making sense of autism	Parent workshops	26
NEN Autism and Inclusion	Autism Champions	10
NEN Progression Framework	Windy Arbor Primary	8
NEN Progression Framework	Marston Green Infant School	1
NEN Progression Framework	George Fentham Primary	1
NEN Making sense of autism	Henley in Arden High School	40
NEN Good Autism Practice	Social Care Staff	23
NEN Early Years Developing Toileting	Parent Workshops	2
NEN Early Years Developing Play	Parent Workshops	2
NEN Anxious Non Attendance	Solihull Academy	75
NEN Making sense of autism	Windmills Wraparound Club Staff – Berkswell Primary	6
NEN Good Autism Practice	Berkswell Primary TAs	8
Total Delegates		212

Of the bespoke training, **100% of delegates rated the training as Very Good or Excellent**, and **100% said their confidence in the subject content had increased** by the end of the session.

“Everything was presented in a straightforward, easy to apply to our job manner.”

“Complexities behind non attendance to school being explained, the anxiety spiral was very helpful.”

“I enjoyed having two trainers taking turns to deliver information, as the change in voice helped maintain focus.”

“The range of topics covered and how it linked non-attendance to children's needs not defiance was so helpful. The handouts were really useful for generating relevant discussions.”

Training Feedback – Primary & Secondary 2026

PARENT & CARER TRAINING

We have continued to offer parent workshops – Understanding Autism – each term for families with a child who has an autism diagnosis or are accepted to an assessment waitlist. Parents have been able to sign up for a face-to-face workshop or could opt for an online version via Microsoft Teams.

The workshop is an adapted version of the NEN Making Sense of Autism module that all staff in Solihull are expected to attend at least once every 3 years.

We feel that it is extremely beneficial to ensure that families have the same knowledge and language as staff in schools as this will facilitate better communication, a shared understanding of strengths, need and next steps. This will then support better outcomes for the children.

The workshops have been delivered in collaboration with a range of organisations and individuals, ensuring that families receive high-quality information, advice, and lived-experience perspectives. Contributing partners have included:

- Solihull Parent Carer Voice (SPCV)
- Our Voices Heard
- SENDIAS
- Autism West Midlands
- Landau – All Age Autism Directory
- Experts by Experience
- A local family with lived experience, including two adult autistic young people (one autistic and one autistic with ADHD), supported by their mother, who regularly contributes to sessions by sharing personal experiences and responding to parents' questions.

For face-to-face workshops we offer 20 places, with a maximum of 2 spaces per family and so could potentially reach a minimum of 10 families if 2 adults came from each family. Having this number supports families to feel relaxed and build relationships.

For online sessions we kept to a similar number of 20 families to join to keep the group small and manageable for the delegates to build relationships and confidence, even though we could potentially have many more online.

Although our booking lists were closed due to full capacity for each termly session, unfortunately not all families arrived to participate.

Course name	Delivery to	Total number of families trained	% graded course overall good or outstanding
Parent Workshops	Parents of children with an autism diagnosis in Solihull schools and those on SAS waitlist.	59 families.	100%

"Helpful tips shared from course leaders and other parents. Giving me tools to use at home and to share with my family. Giving me a greater understanding of how difficult life can be for my son. I have far more empathy and hoping to be a better parent as a result for my son."

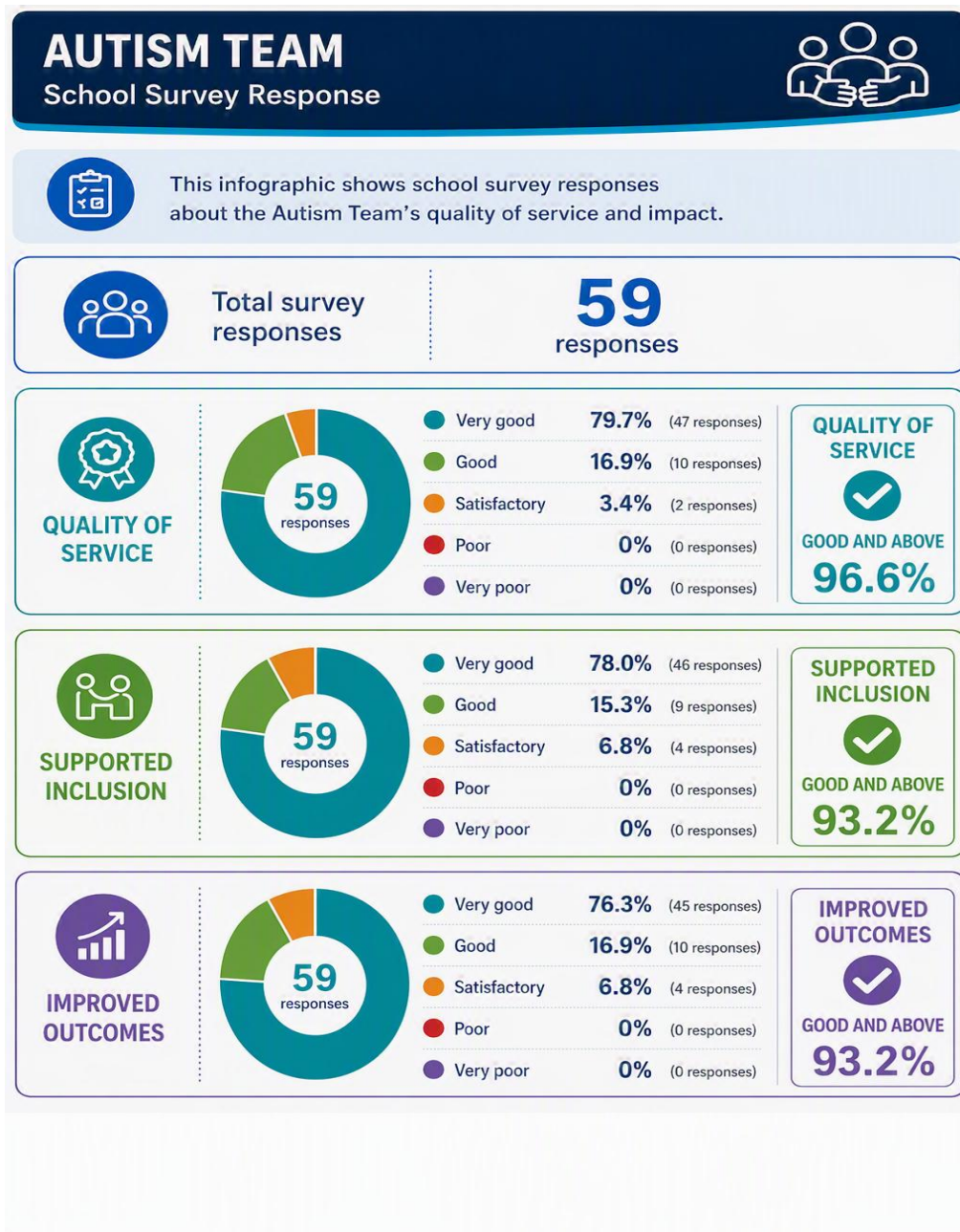
"The trainers were so knowledgeable and reassuring. They related the information well to everyday life and real experiences. They normalised things which feel far from normal when we're at home and dealing with it alone."

"The resources shared to use with my son and being given the ability and resources to reflect on his (and my) behaviour."

Parent Training Feedback 2026

5. KEY OUTCOMES AND SERVICE IMPACT

SURVEY FEEDBACK - SCHOOLS



The Specialist Autism Team continues to demonstrate a highly positive impact across schools, with consistently strong feedback from education settings regarding the quality, effectiveness and outcomes of support provided.

Service Reach and Engagement

A total of 59 school survey responses were received, providing a robust indication of the team's effectiveness and relationship with schools across the local authority.

Quality of Service

The Autism Team achieved exceptionally high levels of satisfaction, with:

Service Rating	Percentage	Number of Schools
● Very Good	79.7%	47
● Good	16.9%	10
● Satisfactory	3.4%	2
● Poor	0%	0
● Very Poor	0%	0

Overall, 96.6% of schools rated the service as Good or Very Good, demonstrating strong confidence in the team's expertise, responsiveness and support.

We hugely value the support we receive from the SISS Autism Team. Their input is invaluable, and they consistently go above and beyond to support both our staff and our SEND students.

The team are incredibly collaborative and work exceptionally well alongside school staff, families and wider stakeholders. They take the time to understand our setting, our students and the challenges of a busy mainstream environment. The advice and guidance they provide is always thoughtful, practical and realistic, ensuring strategies can be embedded successfully within our everyday practice.

Their support has had such a positive impact on our provision. They empower staff by sharing their knowledge and expertise, while always ensuring that the needs of our autistic students remain at the centre of everything we do.

Primary & Secondary Headteacher & SENCo feedback 2026

Supporting Inclusion

Schools reported that the team has made a significant contribution to promoting inclusion for autistic children and young people:

Impact on Inclusion Rating	Percentage	Number of Schools
● Very Good	78.0%	46
● Good	15.3%	9
● Satisfactory	6.8%	4
● Poor	0%	0
● Very Poor	0%	0

This equates to 93.2% of schools reporting Good or Very Good outcomes for supported inclusion, indicating that the team is successfully enabling schools to develop more inclusive environments and practices.

This service has been invaluable. The designated teachers are brilliant. They come in and offer advice and carry out observations and guidance. They have also run CPD whole school, specific and supported ECTs. This has had a big impact on staff professional development as well as staff confidence and then the provision the pupils get. The CPD sessions that are offered are all amazing and have had a big impact in school. Of all the services we have had, this one has been so helpful and support from them is always available. They also offer support for our parents that has been very beneficial.

Primary SENCo feedback 2026

Improved Outcomes for Children and Young People

Feedback also highlighted the positive difference the service makes to educational and developmental outcomes:

Impact on Outcomes Rating	Percentage	Number of Schools
● Very Good	76.3%	45
● Good	16.9%	10
● Satisfactory	6.8%	4
● Poor	0%	0
● Very Poor	0%	0

The team have had long term input with many of our learners and so knowing them not as "new cases" is a massive help.

The team show appreciation of our constraints as a school.

Liaison with our autism teacher is consistent, clear, effective - everything it needs to be.

AIM team have been great in liaising about a learner who does not attend at all and engaged with arrangements around an EHCP application for this learner.

Primary & Secondary Headteacher & SENCo feedback 2026

Overall, 93.2% of schools reported Good or Very Good improvement in outcomes, reflecting the team's effectiveness in supporting schools to meet the needs of autistic pupils and improve their access to learning, participation and achievement.

The **two settings who responded Satisfactory** made the following comments for us to consider how we could improve our offer, process and systems.

- It would be useful to be able to access direct work with understanding a diagnosis etc without having to go through the process of observation/TAC etc. Sometimes a pupil is not high enough needs for high needs support or AIM intervention but could do with a specialist teacher to support them directly.
- Please don't suggest adult support in your report when a school is facing budgetary restraints and going through management of change. Schools would love to be able to have more adult support with their children who may be finding aspects tricky, but we need to be more creative.

AUTISM TEAM FEEDBACK 2025-26

What Schools Say Could Improve the Service

Highly Valued. Trusted. Expert. More Capacity Needed.



Schools overwhelmingly describe the Autism Team as an excellent service.
The most consistent message is:

★ *"We don't want a different service... we want more of it."*

1 INCREASE CAPACITY & STAFFING

The most common recommendation



- More Autism Team staff
- Increased allocated hours
- More frequent visits
- Greater access to specialist advice
- Capacity to meet growing demand
- Earlier intervention before crisis point

Schools report that demand for autism support continues to increase.

2 MORE DIRECT SUPPORT FOR PUPILS



- Increased 1:1 specialist intervention
- Support for pupils awaiting assessment
- Direct work to understand diagnosis
- Support for pupils not accessing classrooms
- More therapeutic and longer-term interventions
- Increased ISP support capacity

"Some children would benefit from direct specialist support without needing to go through extensive processes first."

3 MAINTAIN WHAT WORKS



- No improvements needed
- Service should continue as it is
- Team expertise is highly valued
- Responsive and professional support
- Trusted relationships with schools

Schools repeatedly described the team as:



BETTER OUTCOMES FOR PUPILS, FAMILIES & SCHOOLS

*Stronger support.
Better outcomes.
Brighter futures.*

OVERALL MESSAGE FROM SCHOOLS

THE AUTISM TEAM WOULD HAVE GREATER IMPACT WITH:



More Staff



More Hours



More Direct Work



More Training



More Access to Expertise



More Support for Growing Demand



“ *Schools consistently describe the Autism Team as a vital and highly effective service. The strongest recommendation is increased capacity to enable more children, families and schools to benefit from the team's expertise.* ”

Overall Impact

The survey results provide strong evidence that the Specialist Autism Team delivers a high-quality service that is valued by schools and has a demonstrable impact on practice and pupil outcomes. With no respondents rating the service as poor in any category, the findings indicate consistently high standards of support, successful partnership working with schools, and a significant contribution to inclusion and positive outcomes for autistic children and young people across the local authority.

SURVEY FEEDBACK – PARENTS



An AIM Inclusion Support Practitioner has been working with my middle daughter for a while now and the support she has given my daughter and my myself has been incredible. In fact, my daughter says it has been "life-changing". She was suicidal at one point and it was only the support and understanding from the Inclusion Support Practitioner that got her out of that dark place. My daughter has said she wouldn't be here if it wasn't for this ISP.

PARENT FEEDBACK 2026

"The most valuable aspect of the support was having professionals who genuinely understood my son and took the time to build a trusted relationship with him.

The ISP provided consistent support within school and became a trusted adult that my son felt comfortable talking to. As a parent, it was reassuring to know there were people around him who understood his autism, recognised his strengths and challenges, and could support him in a way that worked for him.

The team's involvement helped my son feel included, understood and supported during some very important years of his education. The on his confidence, wellbeing and school experience was significant. I will always be grateful for the support, and I will never forget the difference it made to our family."

They are amazing, they have helped me more than I could express - my son is now thriving thanks to their suggestions to the school and they were an integral part of helping him get to where he is now

The **three parents who responded Satisfactory** made the following comments for us to consider how we could improve our offer, process and systems.

- My child has been waiting for school autism team to work with her as she not long got her diagnosis. Work has just started so yet to see impact.
- I am not sure about the support my child has received as I am yet to have feedback from SISS or school. Personally, I find the support as a parent good, clear communication, understandable and rational when I am face to face with them.
- More of it, timelier but I appreciate there are many people after support and the service is doing their best, so this is not a criticism. I would benefit from information on what is available as support. I know schools are able to inform but if you are unclear on what is on offer, support can be missed. After years of finding support for my child there are still things I did not know were available for support. I learn these via conversations

with SEN parents or support groups then have to go ask for them. I do not think this is an SISS issue, it's wider spread across support systems.

How can we improve:

I honestly can't think of anything. The team have gone above and beyond for my family as far as I'm concerned. I really don't know what we would have done without the input from them.

More staff and more hours

Just on expectations - so what to expect they will do when they come in to support you. To be honest they exceeded expectations anyway but nice for the student to know in advance.

No everything was really good. My child was treated well and supported excellently. I have nothing to say regarding how this could be improved.

Non at all they have been great and it's not the first time I have used them.

Parent Feedback – Survey 2026

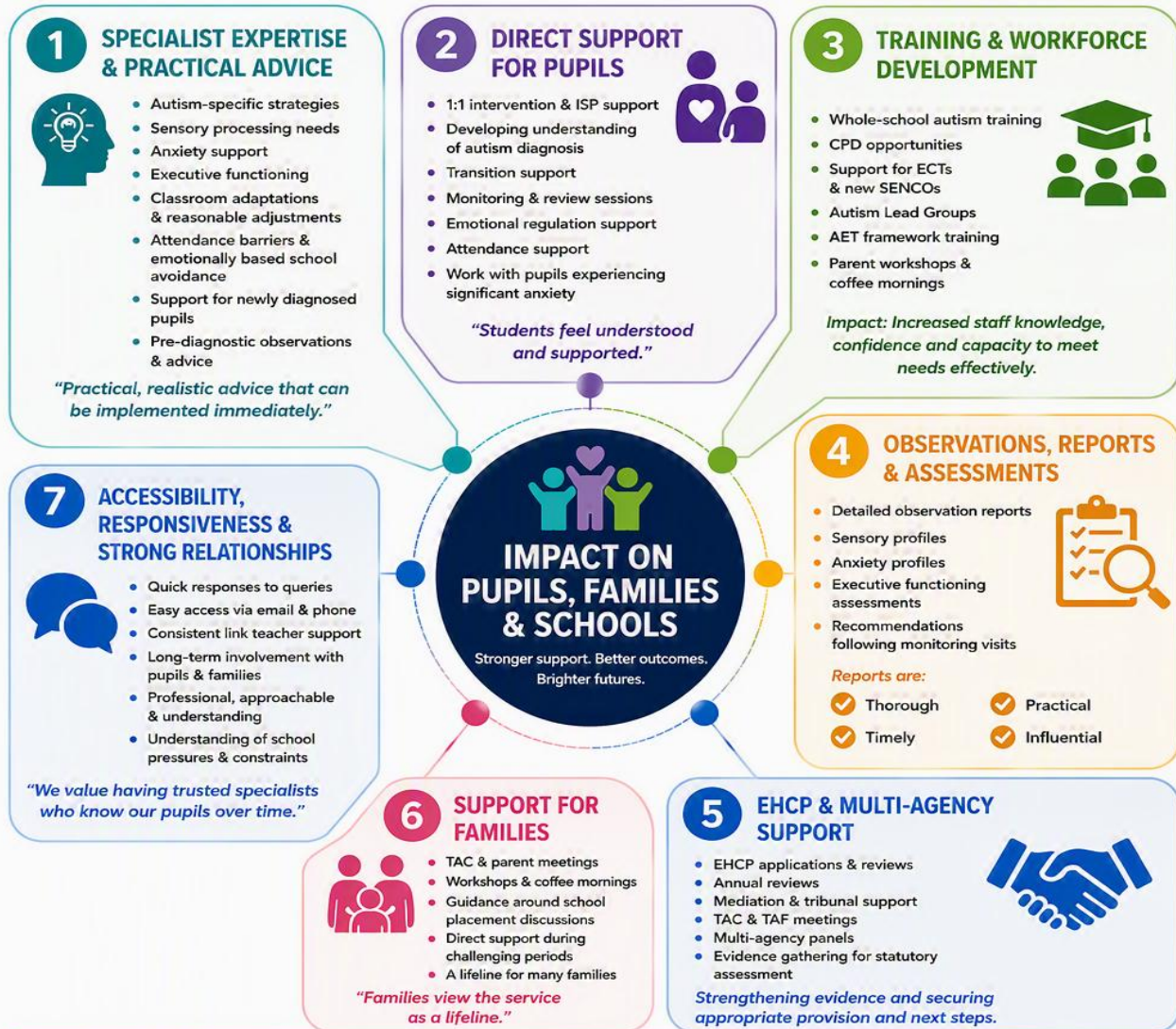
OVERVIEW FROM SURVEY FEEDBACK

AUTISM TEAM IMPACT 2025-26

Highly valued. Expert. Responsive. Invaluable.



Schools consistently describe the SISS Autism Team as **INVALUABLE, EXPERT, RESPONSIVE, COLLABORATIVE** and **HIGHLY IMPACTFUL** in supporting autistic pupils, families and staff.



OVERALL IMPACT – THE AUTISM TEAM HELPS SCHOOLS TO:



Schools consistently describe the SISS Autism Team as an essential component of SEND support across Solihull.



"Invaluable specialist support that builds capacity in schools, empowers families and improves outcomes for autistic children and young people."

6. SUMMARY

The Autism Team has demonstrated strong impact during 2025-26 despite increasing demand, greater complexity of need, and periods of staff absence. The evidence shows a highly valued service that is supporting inclusive practice in schools, improving outcomes for autistic children and young people, and building sustainable capacity across the wider education system.

Growing demand met through effective support

Demand for autism support continued to rise, with 2,155 autistic children and young people open to the team's offer by the end of the academic year.

The team delivered:

- 221 High Need Interventions, an increase on the previous year.
- 1,049 pupils receiving targeted support from Advisory Teachers.
- 1,526 targeted assessments, consultations and meetings.
- 60 pupils supported Autism Intense Monitoring (AIM) for those with the most complex needs.

The team's graduated and allocation-based model ensured specialist resources were directed to pupils with the highest levels of need, while simultaneously developing schools' confidence and capability to support autistic learners independently.

Strengthening Inclusion Across Schools

A key achievement this year has been the continued development of inclusive practice across mainstream settings. Through targeted intervention, consultation, workforce development and strategic support, the team enabled schools to create more autism-inclusive environments and improve outcomes for children and young people.

School feedback demonstrated exceptionally high levels of confidence in the service. These findings provide strong evidence that the service is making a significant contribution to improving access, participation and inclusion for autistic pupils across Solihull.

Building Capacity Through Workforce Development

The team continued to invest in sustainable system-wide improvement through training, coaching and professional development opportunities for education professionals, parents and partners.

Key achievements included:

- Delivery of bespoke and commissioned autism training to 212 delegates.
- 100% of delegates rate training as Good or Excellent.
- 100% of delegates reporting increased confidence following training.
- Ongoing support for Autism Leads across primary and secondary schools through termly professional networks.
- Active involvement in the national Partnership for Inclusion of Neurodiversity in Schools (PINS) programme.

This work has strengthened practitioner knowledge, increased confidence and supported schools to embed evidence-informed, neuroinclusive approaches.

Expanding Support for Families

Parent and carer engagement remained a significant strength of the service. The expanded training offer provided accessible, practical support and strengthened collaboration between home and school.

Key outcomes included:

- 59 families trained through parent workshops.
- 100% of participants rating the training as good or outstanding.
- Introduction of new Early Years-focused programme addressing developmental areas such as play and toileting.
- Continued delivery of coffee afternoons and bite-sized workshops in response to parent feedback.

Parent feedback highlighted improvements in understanding, confidence and family wellbeing, with many describing the support as transformative and life-changing.

Service Innovation and Strategic Development

During 2025-26 the team successfully established the refined Autism in Schools Project, developing Autism Champions within participating schools and creating sustainable leadership capacity to drive autism-inclusive practice. The project has strengthened whole-school approaches and will continue into 2026-27. [

Overall Impact

The evidence from service activity, school feedback and parent experiences demonstrates that the Specialist Autism Team continues to deliver a highly effective and valued service. Through specialist intervention, workforce development, parent engagement and system leadership, the team has improved inclusion, strengthened school capacity and enhanced outcomes for autistic children and young people across Solihull. Despite increasing demand and complexity, the service has maintained exceptionally high levels of stakeholder satisfaction and remains well positioned to continue driving inclusive practice and positive outcomes across the local area.

7. CASE STUDIES.

SISS AUTISM TARGETED STRATEGIC SUPPORT CASE STUDY

HUB DEVELOPMENT SUPPORT

THE PROVISION

- Mainstream infant school and nursery
- Small group provision for approximately 6 children with complex SEN needs including autism
- Established to meet needs in September 2025

SUPPORT FOR INDIVIDUALS

- 4x individual pupil observations with recommendations to support Social Understanding and Communication, Flexibility, Information Processing and Understanding, Sensory Integration and Processing from SISS Autism Team, Advisory Teacher
- Reports with recommendations and resources shared with setting
- Block of high need support from SISS Autism Team, Inclusion Support Practitioner for one pupil, working with staff to help develop and implement resources and strategies to support communication and sensory needs.

SUPPORT FOR THE SETTING AND TRAINING

- 8.10.25: Initial visit to the setting to discuss approaches, general set up, routines and recommendations
- 19.11.25 and 16.7.26: 2x monitoring visits to discuss progress, changes and next steps
- Regular email contact with SENCO and hub teacher to share resources and materials and to answer any questions regarding advice and support
- Time with head teacher to discuss and share recommendations to help embed practice
- 20.5.26: Training on Use of Communication Boards and Sensory Circuits

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

- Consistent daily routine supported by visual timetable
- Visuals to support communication and transitions e.g. objects of reference, Now/Next board, simple communication boards
- Sensory diet, activities and sensory circuits
- Safe/ calm spaces in the classroom for pupils to access as needed

OUTCOMES

- Pupils are following a consistent routine each day
- Visual timetable and Now/ Next board being used with pupils
- Pupils appear more settled in the setting
- Pupils are now joining in with short adult directed and group activities e.g. snack time, exercise, phonics
- Pupils are engaging with a wider range of resources and activities
- Staff are more confident in what strategies and resources to use and what works best with their pupils

NEXT STEPS

- Continue to embed strategies that are working well
- Training included wider school staff so that communication and sensory resources can be used across the school
- Agree on a whole school resource for creating communication aids so that this is consistent for children across school
- Ensure a clear sensory circuit format is used to support children's regulation across the day



SISS AUTISM TARGETED ASSESSMENT INTO HIGH NEED INTERVENTION CASE STUDY

Child/Young Person: JDH (Year 4)

Service: Specialist Inclusion Support Service (SISS) Autism Team -High Needs

Practitioners: JS specialist teacher and SM Inclusion Support Practitioner

Context

J is an autistic pupil who was referred to the Specialist Inclusion Support Service (SISS) Autism Team due to difficulties relating to emotional regulation, executive functioning, sensory processing and anxiety. Prior to intervention, J experienced significant challenges with:

- Recognising and understanding his own emotions.
- Managing anxiety and distress.
- Coping with unpredictability and change.
- Processing verbal information.
- Organising and initiating tasks independently.
- Sensory sensitivities, particularly around shouting, noise and crowded environments.
- Accessing learning when overwhelmed.

J's own voice highlighted the extent of these barriers:

"I am scared of shouting."

"I get overwhelmed with too much information at once."

"I worry when I don't know what is next."

An Executive Function Skills assessment conducted by the Autism Team identified significant areas of need in organization, working memory, emotional control and flexible thinking. These difficulties were impacting J's ability to engage consistently in learning and manage the demands of the classroom environment.

Intervention Delivered

The SISS Autism Team adopted a graduated, needs-led approach which included:

- Specialist Assessment
- Executive Function Skills assessment.
- Pupil-centered consultation.
- Sensory profiling.
- Identification of barriers to learning.
- Development of personalised recommendations.

Direct Specialist Intervention

J participated in a structured 10-session programme between March and June 2026, delivered by an Autism Team Inclusion Support Practitioner. The intervention focused on:

- Understanding autism and neurodiversity.

- Developing self-awareness.
- Understanding sensory differences.
- Emotional literacy.
- Anxiety management.
- Self-regulation strategies.
- Understanding friendships and social relationships.
- Developing personalised coping tools.

Evidence-based approaches included:

- Zones of Regulation.
- Emotional scaling.
- Sensory mapping.
- Arousal curve work.
- Fight, flight, freeze and fawn responses.
- Emotional metaphor activities.
- Grounding techniques.
- Friendship and relationship activities.
- Development of an individual regulation toolkit.

Capacity Building for Staff

The Autism Team also worked with school staff, providing:

- Detailed written advice.
- Autism Needs Based Planning.
- Executive Function recommendations.
- Environmental adaptations.
- Quality First Teaching strategies.
- Guidance linked to AET Good Autism Practice Standards.

Impact and Outcomes

Improved Self-Awareness

A key outcome was J's increased understanding of his autism and how it affects him.

At the start of the intervention, J struggled to identify emotions and explain what happened when he became overwhelmed. Through structured teaching and reflection, he developed a sophisticated understanding of his emotional and sensory experiences.

For example, J was able to articulate:

"Scared feels like I am a tiny ant in a big world where everything around me feels dangerous and huge."

"Worried feels like a speeding runaway train where my thoughts are coming too quickly and I feel like I can't stop them."

This demonstrates significant growth in emotional literacy and self-awareness, enabling adults to better understand and respond to his needs.

Increased Emotional Regulation Skills

Prior to involvement from the Autism Team, J frequently became overwhelmed and found it difficult to recognise when anxiety was escalating. His tendency was to internalise emotions during the school day before becoming dysregulated later.

Following intervention, J was able to:

- Recognise body cues linked to emotions.
- Use the Zones of Regulation framework.
- Identify strategies that support regulation.
- Contribute to the creation of his own emotional regulation toolkit.
- Discuss anxiety and sensory overload with trusted adults.

The final evaluation showed that J felt the intervention had helped him:

"The sessions have helped me to understand what is going on around me."

Improved Communication of Need

A significant outcome was J's ability to communicate what causes him stress and what support he requires. The intervention enabled him to identify:

- Fear of shouting.
- Difficulties with uncertainty.
- Challenges associated with excessive verbal information.
- The impact of sensory overload.

This understanding informed a personalised support plan, ensuring that staff could implement proactive strategies rather than responding only when difficulties arose.

Improved Access to Learning

The Autism Team translated assessment findings into practical classroom adaptations, including:

- Visual timetables.
- Task boards.
- Chunked instructions.
- Predictable routines.
- Movement breaks.
- Quiet regulation spaces.
- Regular check-ins with trusted adults.

These strategies directly addressed barriers identified through specialist assessment and enabled greater engagement with learning activities by reducing cognitive load and anxiety.

Strengthened Inclusive Practice

The intervention did not focus solely on the individual child. It also enhanced staff understanding and whole-school capacity.

Through consultation, modelling and detailed recommendations, staff were equipped to:

- Understand behaviour as communication.
- Recognise the impact of anxiety and sensory processing differences.
- Use autism-friendly communication approaches.
- Create more predictable and accessible learning environments.
- Embed evidence-based approaches such as Zones of Regulation and visual supports.

Evidence of Person-Centered Practice

A notable strength of the intervention was the centrality of pupil voice.

J's views informed:

- Assessment.
- Target setting.
- Strategy development.
- Evaluation of progress.
- Ongoing planning.

This aligns closely with Autism Education Trust Standards and demonstrates meaningful participation in decisions about support and provision.

Outcomes Summary

As a result of specialist Autism Team involvement, J demonstrated:

- ✓ Greater understanding of his autism and sensory profile.
- ✓ Improved emotional literacy and ability to identify feelings.
- ✓ Increased ability to explain anxiety, worries and sensory experiences.
- ✓ Development of personalised self-regulation strategies.
- ✓ Greater confidence in seeking support from trusted adults.
- ✓ Improved readiness to access learning through reduced uncertainty.
- ✓ More effective staff understanding of his needs and barriers.
- ✓ A personalised Autism Needs Based Plan providing clear, sustainable support for future success.

The impact extends beyond the individual intervention period. J now has a shared language for discussing emotions, a toolkit of self-regulation strategies, and a school workforce better equipped to understand and respond to his needs, increasing the likelihood of sustained positive educational, social and emotional outcomes. [

SISS AUTISM INTENSIVE MONITORING (AIM) CASE STUDY

Child/Young Person: JS (Year 8)

Service: Specialist Inclusion Support Service (SISS) Autism Team - Autism Intensive Monitoring (AIM)

Practitioners: EC specialist teacher and TC Inclusion Support Practitioner

Overview

J was referred to the Autism Intensive Monitoring (AIM) pathway following significant difficulties accessing education after transitioning from primary to secondary school. At the point of referral, he was not attending school due to severe anxiety, sensory processing differences and difficulties engaging with peers and staff. Existing school-based interventions had not secured sustained engagement because of the extent of his barriers to attendance.

Intervention

The SISS Autism Team provided intensive, person-centered support over a nine-month period. The focus was on understanding J's individual profile, reducing barriers to learning and preparing him for a successful transition to a new mainstream setting.

Key elements of support included:

- Detailed assessment of sensory processing differences through a Sensory Preference Checklist and report.
- Regular one-to-one AIM sessions to build trust, gather pupil voice and develop engagement.
- Targeted interventions to develop emotional regulation, resilience, self-esteem, social understanding and confidence.
- Identification of strengths associated with autism and use of these strengths to support future planning.
- Development of a comprehensive Needs Based Plan detailing personalised strategies and reasonable adjustments.
- Close collaboration with family, school and new mainstream setting to plan transition arrangements and ensure continuity of support.
- Practical preparation for transition, including social scripts, travel training support and attendance at a supported taster day.

Impact

The intervention resulted in a much clearer understanding of J's needs and enabled all professionals involved to plan effectively around them. Through sustained relationship-based support, J became increasingly able to articulate his needs, understand his anxiety and identify strategies that could help him access learning and new environments.

Outcomes included:

- A detailed sensory and needs profile shared with educational providers.
- Improved understanding of emotional regulation and coping strategies
- Increased confidence and self-awareness through structured therapeutic and educational interventions.
- Successful preparation for transition to a new mainstream provision, supported by a comprehensive Needs Based Plan and direct liaison with the receiving setting.

- Positive engagement with transition activities, including attendance at a taster day.

Following the taster day, J reported a positive experience and his parent reported that he returned home extremely happy and optimistic about the transition, indicating a significant shift from the high levels of anxiety and disengagement present at referral.

Strategic Significance

This case demonstrates the impact of specialist autism support in addressing complex barriers to education. Through early identification of need, specialist assessment, direct intervention and coordinated transition planning, the AIM pathway enabled a young person who was not accessing education to move towards a positive and planned transition into further education.

The case evidences how the SISS Autism Team contributes to improved inclusion, stronger participation in education, effective multi-agency working and positive preparation for adulthood through a strengths-based, child-centered approach.