Cygnet Evaluation 2024-25

Cygnet is a parenting support programme for parents/carers of autistic children and young people aged 5-18 years of age. The courses run over six sessions, aiming to support parent/carers understanding of autism, offer practical strategies to support their child and the opportunity to meet with other families in similar positions to share experiences.

Swindon Educational Psychology Service, along with Swindon SEND Families Voice (SSFV), ran five main Cygnet courses during the academic year 2024-25. A total of 36 parents/carers attended the training (at least 4/6 sessions) across the six courses and responded to the main Cygnet course evaluation.

Attendees were asked to rate their confidence in understanding and responding to their child's needs linked to autism. This was completed at the start and end of the course, as seen in the table below. 0= not at all, 5= very confident

Statement	Pre-course rating	Post course rating
Understanding your child's need for routines and to engage with special interests	3.3	4
Supporting your child's need for routines and to engage in special interests	3.1	4
Understanding that your child may experience their senses differently	3.2	4.5
Supporting your child with their sensory experiences	2.7	4
Understanding that your child might have difficulties with social interactions and social situations	3.4	4.4
Supporting your child with social interactions and social situations.	2.6	3.9
Recognising how your child understands and receives communication.	2.4	3.9
Understanding that your child might have differences in how express communication.	2.7	4.1
Selecting and using resources to support your child's communication. e.g. Visual supports, social stories.	1.9	4.09
Understanding that your child might have difficulties planning ahead and predicting outcomes.	2.9	4.5
Recognising and understanding why your child might become overwhelmed and/ or emotionally distressed.	3	4.5
Supporting your child when they are overwhelmed and / or emotionally distressed	2.8	3.9
Knowing where to go for support either locally or nationally.	1.7	3.9
Recognising your own needs and looking after yourself.	2	3.6
Supporting your child with their needs around sleeping.	2.9	3.7
Supporting your child(ren) and helping them to understand and support the needs of their sibling who is autistic.	1.9	2.8
Supporting your children's development around puberty, sexual wellbeing and relationships	1.5	2.3

There was an average increase in confidence ratings across all statements. The largest increase (2.2) can be seen in 'Selecting and using resources to support your child's communication' and 'Knowing where to go for support either locally or nationally'. Other significant increases included 'Understanding that your child might have difficulties planning ahead and predicting outcomes' (1.6), 'Recognising how your child understands and receives communication' (1.5) and 'Recognising and understanding why your child might become overwhelmed and/ or emotionally distressed' (1.5).

One group completed the post course evaluation, a separate evaluation which focused on course content and delivery. Four responses were gathered. Participants were asked how relevant they felt the sessions were to them on a scale of 1-10 (1 = not at all, 10 = essential). They gave an average score of 9.3. An average score of 9 was given for the usefulness of the Barnardo's materials. Parents/carers were also asked to rate how helpful the trainers were (1 = very poor, 10 = excellent). They gave an average score of 9.

When asked what they found most useful from the course, two main themes emerged:

Developing understanding

"Understanding my child better"

"Ways and strategies to break it down and understand why"

Sharing experiences

"Meeting others who experience similar"

"Exchanging experiences"

When asked how they would rate their confidence in meeting their child's needs linked to autism as a result of the Cygnet programme, parents/carers gave an average score of 9.3 (1=not at all, 10= extremely). To explain these scores attendees commented on the relevant information provided and excellent advice which has supported their knowledge.

Parents/carers rated the ability to share experiences with other parents/carers 7.8 out of 10 (1 = not helpful at all, 10 = extremely helpful). They explained it has been helpful to exchange experiences, however one commented "conversations in the room amongst ourselves went on a bit to long".

When asked to provide details on what differences had been noticed for parent/carers and their families as a result of completing the course, participants responded:

"I'm more patient to my child"

"I feel more patient and listen more to try understand. I explain the reasons why now instead of saying just 'no that's not ok', as a level of respect has got to be earned before your kids start to listen to you I believe"