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## **PRE-SCHOOL SUPPORT FOR CHILDREN WITH AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDERS IN SURREY**

The range of support services and early years placements available to children in Surrey with autism spectrum disorders and their families include the following:

### **Surrey Portage Early Education Support Service (0-4 years)**

The Portage Service in Surrey provides a home-based teaching and support service for families of children with special or additional needs (for example significant developmental delay, disability, autistic spectrum disorder and/or immaturities of play and behavioural development). The Portage Service offers weekly or fortnightly home visiting to families, where a Portage teacher works in partnership with the parents to help progress the child's skills. All Portage teaching staff are especially trained and experienced in helping families support children with complex needs and have additional qualifications and skills in a range of strategies considered appropriate for supporting children with autism spectrum disorders which include PECS (the Picture Exchange Communication System) TEACCH approach (Treatment and Education of Autistic and Related Communication Handicapped Children), NAS EarlyBird Programme (see parent support and following for further details) and behavioural interventions based on communicative intent such as Iceberg Analysis.

The Portage Early Education Support Service has four area teams consisting of advisory Portage Teachers, Portage Support Workers and each team is co-ordinated by an Educational Psychologist who is the Area Co-ordinator. Each area team has close links with Health and Social Care teams in the locality and strong links to the Early Years and Childcare Service, Physical and Sensory Support Service and to the local Multi-Professional teams.

There is an open referral process for families who have a pre-school child from 0-3½ years, wishing to be considered for Portage home education support.

For further information please contact the area team or County Co-ordinator as follows:

County Co-ordinator	01737 737979
Area Co-ordinator North East	01372 833630
Area Co-ordinator North West	01483 519148
Area Co-ordinator South East	01737 737977
Area Co-ordinator South West	01483 517824

### **Surrey's NAS (National Autistic Society) EarlyBird Programme**

Since 2000 the Portage Service alongside Surrey's Autism Outreach Teaching Advisory Service have joined together to develop Surrey's NAS EarlyBird programme and have been successfully offering four parent groups each year. The NAS EarlyBird programme is a licensed training programme run by the National Autistic Society. Surrey now has a number of licensed trainers. The programme runs for three months and combines group

training sessions for groups of six parents alongside some individual home visits when video feedback is used to help parents apply what they learn in the group sessions. Parents have a weekly commitment to a day workshop and a number of home visits during the three-month programme. The NAS Early Bird programme works in partnership with parents to help them to:

- Understand their child's autism spectrum disorder
- develop their child's communication skills
- apply practical strategies to manage their child's behaviour

The NAS EarlyBird programme in Surrey is available for parents who have a child under 5 years with a diagnosis of an autism spectrum disorder and who live in Surrey.

Since September 2005 Surrey has also been able to offer the NAS EarlyBird Plus programme to cater for the age group 4-8 years and where parents and professionals are trained together to meet the child's needs

For further details about either of these EarlyBird programmes please contact Sue Weston, the County Facilitator for NAS EarlyBird in Surrey or the Team Administrator both on 01737 737979.

## **Support and Advisory Services for Pre-school Children with ASDs**

### ***Autism Outreach Service***

Surrey has two special schools, Freemantles (Tel: 01483 545680) and Linden Bridge (Tel: 020 8330 3009) designated as catering for pupils with autism spectrum disorders and which also operate an advisory outreach service. The Advisory Outreach Teachers work part-time in the special schools, but also provide advice and support to pre-school and primary mainstream settings on request. Referrals at the pre-school level tend to come from Health teams or Early Years providers and focus on those children who have a diagnosis of autism spectrum disorder. The Autism Outreach Service also provide training opportunities to Early Years settings and Primary schools on request and work alongside the Portage Teachers as licensed trainers to provide the NAS EarlyBird and EarlyBird Plus programmes.

### ***Early Years and Childcare Service***

Surrey's Early Years and Childcare Service (EYCS) has a special educational needs team supporting all non-maintained pre-school and nursery settings across the county. The EYCS team is organised into four area teams each headed by an Early Years SEN Adviser and includes a team of Early Education and Childcare Officers (EEOs) who provide advice and support to the education groups to promote the inclusion of children with special needs. Pre-schools and independent nurseries can consult the Early Years SEN Team for advice and strategies regarding children with SEN at all phases of the SEN Code of Practice. The EYCS also provides an extensive training programme.

For further details tel. 01372 833833

### ***Educational Psychology Early Years Consultations***

The Educational Psychologists in Surrey work as part of the locality teams providing advice and support to a range of maintained schools in a specific locality and according to the child or pupil's level of special educational needs. Educational Psychologists also respond to pre-school notifications from Health, and have a significant role in helping to assess the young pre-school child's special needs, working as part of a multi-professional team to provide evidence and support in terms of determining appropriate placements and support strategies for the child and family. In addition to the statutory assessment procedures, the Educational Psychologists also work alongside the EYCS to provide consultations and support to non-maintained settings, so that they can access advice and

support for children in their groups at the earliest opportunity. The Educational Psychology Early Years Team also works closely with the EYCS to provide training workshops to all staff working in the foundation stage, and these include regular courses on supporting and including children with Autism spectrum disorders. For further information contact the Specialist Teaching and Educational Psychology Service (STEPS) on 0208 541 8667.

### ***Early Support Programme***

The Early Support Programme (ESP) is a government initiative that applies to all children under 3 years using Health, Social Care, Early Years and Childcare, Sure Start or Children's Centre facilities. The ESP consists of a set of materials to help professionals who work with families to coordinate their services and to provide joined up support and information. The scheme promotes Key Workers for families of children who have a disability. The ESP family pack of materials is aimed at providing better information for families and professionals and promotes the use of a "Family Service Plan" which encourages joint discussion and planning of multi agency support packages. Alongside the Early Support Family Pack there are a range of early support information booklets for parents, including a guidance booklet "Information for Parents, Autism spectrum disorders (ASDs) and related conditions". The Early Support Programme and Early Support Family Packs are available through Surrey Early Years Support Services, including Health, Education and Social Care and are used as part of a multi-professional co-ordinated approach to supporting families of children with complex developmental needs. In addition to the Early Support Programme developments, Surrey is also piloting Key Worker schemes such as Team Around the Child and Primary Worker schemes.

For further details about the Early Support Programme, please contact the DfES website [www.earlysupport.org.uk](http://www.earlysupport.org.uk)

### ***Pre-School and Nursery Provision***

Surrey acknowledges the importance of parental choice, alongside a commitment to promoting the inclusion of children with additional needs in their local mainstream provision, where at all possible. In addition to providing support and advice for mainstream pre-school and nursery placements, Surrey also provides a range of specialist provisions that cover the spectrum of learning and ASD needs. Provision in Surrey includes the following:

#### ***Maintained and non-maintained pre-schools and nurseries***

Pre-school children with a range of ASDs may be supported in their local maintained or non-maintained pre-school, nursery or nursery class. Following a multi-professional assessment, children in mainstream settings may be provided with support through the advisory support services as well as additional resources (if appropriate) such as funding for the setting to provide a Learning Support Assistant to support the child. Surrey has a commitment to improving outcomes for all children and has a new funding initiative to enable children with significant special educational needs in the early years to access support without the lengthy process of a formal assessment leading to a statement of special educational needs. Many pre-school children with ASDs may be supported in their local pre-school maintained or non-maintained early years placement with the allocation of additional resources to meet their needs, subject to careful monitoring and review.

#### ***Nursery Schools with Specialist Units***

Surrey has four maintained nursery schools that have an excellent record of including and supporting children with complex developmental and special educational needs. These are:

Chertsey Nursery  
Dorking Nursery  
Guildford Children's Centre  
The Wharf Nursery

Two of these nurseries (Chertsey and Dorking) also have specialist provision for pre-school children with ASDs, alongside the mainstream opportunities. Children are placed in these provisions by an early years assessment process, which includes referral to an Area SEN Panels.

### ***Special School Nursery Classes***

Surrey also has a range of specialist schools, which cater for children with complex and severe learning difficulties. All of these special schools have a nursery class catering for a range of special educational needs, including children with ASDs who are likely to have significant learning difficulties. Many of the children placed in special school nursery classes are there on an assessment basis as their future educational needs are likely to become clearer following a period of assessment within the nursery placement. Teachers supporting nursery children with severe learning difficulties also have expertise in terms of strategies to support children with ASDs. The following specialist schools catering for children with severe learning difficulties have assessment nursery classes:

- Brooklands School, Reigate 01737 249941
- Manor Mead School, Shepperton 01932 241834  
Manor Mead also has a specialist provision for children with ASD called the Rainbow Centre.
- Pond Meadow School, Guildford 01483 532239  
Pond Meadow also has a specialist unit for pre-school children with ASD called the Springboard Nursery
- Portesbury School, Camberley 01276 63078
- The Ridgeway School, Farnham 01253 724562
- Woodlands School, Leatherhead 01372 377922

### ***Health and Non-Maintained Specialist Provision***

There are a number of Health provisions and private nursery groups/schools that provide support to families of pre-school children with autism spectrum disorders. For a comprehensive list of these, please refer to the Surrey Branch of the National Autistic Society (01483 822630, nas@mugsy.org). These include the following:

- The **Rainbow Assessment and Treatment Group** providing assessment and treatment for children with a diverse spectrum of special needs – contact Frimley Children's Centre (01276 782000).
- The **Opportunity Playgroup** is for children under 5 years with developmental delay who attend the Child Development Centre at the Royal Surrey Hospital, Guildford (01483 571122)
- The **Little Group Nursery** in Epsom is a independent specialist nursery providing structured speech and language therapy and teaching for children with complex communication disorders from the age of 2½ - 5 years (01372 320218)
- The **Children's Challenge Group** is a pre-school playgroup for under 5s, which includes therapies, as well as play held at the Grove Community Health Centre, Egham. (01784 477677)
- The **Children's Challenge Group** at Board School Road Woking 01483 761919