

CHAPTER

4

Learning with Autism



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Learning With Autism

Building on the success of the Primary Schools Learning with Autism programme launched in March 2016, the Secondary Schools programme launched at the beginning of September 2017 and the Early Years programme was launched at the end of September 2017.

The National ASD Development Team developed many resources to support these training programmes, which highlights some of the challenges faced by autistic children during a normal school day.

Each programme adopts a whole school approach and the training is designed to stimulate discussions and increase understanding with all staff and pupils across the school/setting.



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Below is an example of the three different learning schemes for the children/pupils that constitute the programmes:



The Early Years scheme consists of Teifi and Friends – an animated film showing how children in early years settings can be kind and accepting towards peers with additional needs.

For the Primary Schools programme, the pupils have the opportunity to become “Autism Superheroes”. There are two versions, one that is suitable for foundation phase and the other for KS2 pupils, both of which are available online and as a printed book.



The pupils are shown positive role models for children providing autism awareness. Each pupil can then take a pledge online to achieve their certificate to become an Autism Superhero.



The Secondary Schools scheme encourages pupils to watch the Sgilti film which shows some of the challenges faced by young autistic people during a normal school day.

The pupils complete a pledge online and achieve a certificate for becoming autism aware.

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Each programme has a different **online certificated scheme** for the various staff and pupils within the school, which includes: teaching staff; learning support staff; pupils; and other staff (such as administrators, school governors, maintenance, domestic and catering staff, et cetera).

Every 3 years the school will be invited to re-apply ensuring there is a rolling programme for pupils within the school and new members of staff are able to undertake the scheme as part of their induction in order to keep their setting/school Autism Awareness certificate valid. All resources are freely available on the website and hard copies are also sent to those schools who have undertaken the programme(s).

The National ASD Development Team provides the administrative support to validate certification of the scheme across each of the three LwA programmes.

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Early Years



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Since its launch at the end of September 2017, 1141 staff have undertaken the training programme and 45 Early Year Settings have received their LwA award, 39 of these were during 2018/19.

In the last year, feedback following the evaluation forms from these settings have shown that 100% agree that 'the LWA programme increased their understanding of autism' and 100% agreed when answering 'Do you feel the programme has had a positive impact on children?'

Furthermore, 95% agreed that 'the learning with autism programme led to changes in the way [they] help children play and learn.'

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Primary Schools



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This programme was launched in March 2016, and during 2018/19 a further 47 schools achieved their LwA award, contributing to a total of 127 schools across Wales, and the following have been undertaken this year:

- 2206 Teaching staff (5192 in total)
- 1735 Learning support Staff (5219 in total)
- 10,534 Autism Superheroes (28,650 in total)

The feedback from the evaluation forms from these schools have shown: 96% agreed when asked 'Has the programme increased your ability to recognise any particular signs of autism that you might have missed before?'; 87% agreed to the question 'Has the Learning with Autism programme led to changes being made to a child's IEP?'; and 100% agreed that they '[Would] recommend the Learning with Autism Programme to other schools.'

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Secondary Schools



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Since its launch at the beginning of September 2017, 2814 staff have undertaken the training programme, and 12,390 pupils have received the Sgilti lesson and taken their pledge. A further 6 schools across Wales have received their LwA award this past year, which takes it to 9 in total.

The feedback from the evaluation forms from these settings have shown 100% agree that 'the LWA programme increased [their] understanding of autism', and 100% also agreed to the question 'Has the programme increased your ability to recognise any particular signs of autism that you might have missed before?'

Moreover, *all schools* have stated that they would recommend the programme to other schools.

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The usage of other resources developed to support the Learning with Autism programmes continues to increase:

Children's picture cards – a simple, interactive resource, where a parent/ carer can search, select, download and print from a series of bilingual picture cards to create a structure chart for an autistic child, providing a daily structure or support for specific activities, such as toilet training.

Child personal profile – an online resource tool, where a parent/ carer, school staff or other professional can build a personal profile to highlight an autistic child's strengths and difficulties and let those around them understand how to support them in an easily accessible way.

This is especially useful if the child has a new teacher or joins a new club, as it ensures that there is consistency and continuity of care for an autistic child. Once completed, this resource can be downloaded from the ASDinfoWales website into Microsoft Word, so that the individual can alter, edit and personalise the document before printing and distributing.

Teen profile – this resource works in the same way as the child personal profile. The main difference is that it offers further, more relevant information for the pupil to add to their profile and distribute accordingly.

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Learning with Autism Implementation Strategy

Given the quality of the LwA resources and the mixed picture of take up of the programme across Wales in 2017/18, combined with the strategic policy context of the Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal (Wales) Act, the National ASD Development Team produced an Implementation Strategy to support the roll out of the LwA programme.

This recognises the importance of engaging with the Local Authorities and in particular, the Association of Directors of Education in Wales (ADEW) to promote the scheme and its value and impact. Presentations have been given to the ADEW Joint Heads of Additional Learning Needs/ Improvement Group, to Additional Learning Needs Coordinators Groups and Educational Psychologists.

The following training has been delivered by the National ASD Development Team to support the implementation and use of the Learning with Autism resources, as well as presentations to Association of Directors of Education in Wales Heads of Inclusion group, ALNco's and educational psychologists:

- Learning with Autism:
 - **Early Years:** In total, 14 training sessions across Early Years settings across Wales.
 - **Primary Schools:** 12 training sessions, including 1 super schools across Wales.
 - **Secondary Schools:** 2 training sessions have been undertaken this year.