

Original citation:

Cullen, Mairi Ann, Cullen, Stephen Michael and Lindsay, Geoff (2014) Evaluation of Autism Education Trust Training Hubs Programme, 2013-15 : interim report. Coventry, UK: Centre for Educational Development, Appraisal and Research.

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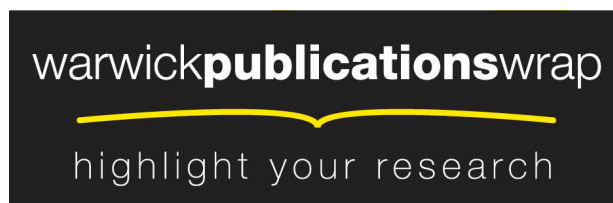
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**Centre for Educational Development,
Appraisal and Research**

**Evaluation of Autism Education Trust
Training Hubs Programme, 2013-15:
Interim Report**

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7th April 2014

THE UNIVERSITY OF
WARWICK

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Autism Education Trust's (AET) training hubs Programme, 2013-15, represents a widening and deepening of the earlier AET (School Age) Programme, 2011-13. The 2013-15 Programme involves the development of new Early Years (EY) and Post-16 (P-16) training materials for workforces and settings supporting EY and P-16 children and young people with autism. The Programme will consist of three stages of training which will be delivered via four EY and four P-16 training hubs.

This interim report focuses on the following elements of both the AET Programme, 2011-13, and the AET Programme, 2013-15:

- follow-up data relating to the AET (School age) Programme 2011-13:
 - from five case study schools which participated in the 2011-13 Programme
 - from interviews with the leads from hubs which delivered the 2011-13 Programme
- data relating to the 2013-15 Early Years and Post-16 Programme:
 - data regarding the development of the Early Years (EY) and Post-16 (P-16) programmes
 - data from interviews with EY and P-16 training hub leads
 - questionnaire data from the pilot phase (January-April 2014) of the 'Making Sense of Autism' EY and P-16 training.

Headline findings:

- there is evidence of the embedding of AET Programme 2011-13 training knowledge in the case study schools, along with evidence of the positive impact of the training in terms of whole school, individual staff and pupils

- the hub leads from the AET Programme 2011-13 regard the Programme as being a success
- in relation to the AET Programme 2013-15, the EY and P-16 development teams produced the first stage – ‘Making Sense of Autism’ – material to time, developing the Programme to meet the specific needs of the EY and P-16 workforces and settings
- interviews with the EY and P-16 training hub leads show a universal optimism as to the likely success of the Programme roll-out
- data from the pilot phase (January-April 2014) of the ‘Making Sense of Autism’ training is strongly positive in all respects.

Detailed findings:

AET Programme 2011-13, follow-up: case study schools:

- change brought about by participation in the AET Programme 2011-13 was evidenced at the individual, class and school level. There was evidence that these changes, which encompassed enhanced knowledge, improved awareness and understanding, more effective approaches, strategies and practical changes, were being maintained in the schools some four terms following the initial training. The impact of the changes made could be seen primarily in terms of improved schooling experiences for children with autism, and improved confidence and skills on the part of school staff. Evidence was provided of impact in terms of improved behaviour management and outcomes, and greater inclusion and improved learning opportunities.

AET Programme 2011-13, follow-up: training hubs:

- the hub leads of the 2011-13 (school age) Programme all regarded the roll-out of the Programme as a success. The success of the 2011-13 Programme was not limited to numbers trained, but it was also seen to be a catalyst for other developments, such as building links with schools and ensuring a longer-term future for Programme delivery in school-age settings. Funding changes in respect of the 2011-13

Programme were not, in general, expected to impact negatively on future demand for training. Four of the six hub leads indicated that their hubs had incorporated the Standards and Competency Framework into both the delivery and the marketing of the Programme.

AET Programme 2013-15, development of the EY and P-16 materials:

- the leads from the development teams for the Early Years and Post-16 Programme were interviewed in November, 2013. Both development teams consisted of a core of developers supported by a large number of advisers and stake-holders. Although both teams were able to draw upon the successful AET 2011-13 Programme, the Early Years and Post-16 focus of the 2013-15 Programme introduced important new considerations, which were successfully met.

AET Programme 2013-15, EY and P-16 training hubs:

- the Programme was seen to fit with pre-existing hub work, it had a high degree of credibility, it was seen to fill a gap in training for the EY and P-16 workforces, and would enable training hubs to offer consistency of training across age ranges. The DfE funding of the Programme enabled the initial offer to be made free at the point of delivery, and this was strongly welcomed by the training hub leads. All the training hubs were looking forward to the appearance of the EY and P-16 Standards and Competency Frameworks. There is a good deal of optimism in the training hubs as to the likely future success of the EY and P-16 Programme in their areas.

AET Programme 2013-15, 'Making Sense of Autism' pilot delivery, January-April, 2014:

- P-16 Pilot delivery:
 - overall, the Post-16 training pilot seems to have attracted delegates that are demographically representative of the target audience. In addition, the majority had had no or very little

- previous training on autism. This suggests that the pilot audience has provided a 'fair test' of the Post-16 materials
- delegates' views of the training were skewed to the positive end of a 5-point scale (ranging from 67% to 95% positive). The training was viewed as worthwhile by 95% (with 75% 'strongly agreeing'). This is a very strong endorsement of the training
 - EY Pilot delivery:
 - Overall, the Early Years training pilot seems to have attracted delegates that are demographically representative of the target audience. In addition, the majority had had no or very little previous training on autism. This suggests that the pilot audience has provided a 'fair test' of the Early Years materials
 - delegates' views of the training were almost all heavily skewed (89% to 95%) to the positive end of a 5-point scale. The training was viewed as worthwhile by 95% (with 81% 'strongly agreeing'). This is a very strong endorsement of the training.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Purpose of this interim report

This interim report brings together findings related to the following aspects of the AET Programme:

- Follow-up data relating to the AET (School age) Programme 2011-13:
 - from five schools which participated in the 2011-13 Programme
 - from interviews with the leads from hubs which delivered the 2011-13 Programme
- data relating to the 2013-15 Early Years and Post-16 Programme:
 - data regarding the development of the Early Years (EY) and Post-16 (P-16) programmes
 - data from interviews with EY and P-16 training hub leads
 - questionnaire data from the pilot phase (January-April 2014) of the 'Making Sense of Autism' EY and P-16 training.

In relation to the follow-up reporting, the intention is, in respect of the schools, to establish continuing engagement with AET (school age) Programme 2011-13 learning by school staff, and to begin to identify impact at individual, class and whole school level, along with impact on outcomes for pupils with autism. Follow-up reporting relating to the training hubs that deliver the 2011-13 Programme focuses on reflections on the roll-out of the 2011-13 Programme, funding issues, continued roll-out, the embedding of the AET Standards and Competency Framework, and reflections on the Programme materials.

In terms of the 2013-15 Early Years and Post-16 Programme, a brief review of the development of the materials is followed by reporting of interviews with the training hub leads. The data from those interviews focus on the hub backgrounds to involvement with the Programme, delivery intentions, funding questions, the Standards and Competency Framework, and expectations regarding the roll-out.

The pilot phase of the 'Making Sense of Autism' Early Years and Post-16 Programme was run from January – April, 2014, and delegates to the Programme sessions completed post-session questionnaires.

2. AET Training hubs programme, 2011-13, follow-up: schools

2.1 Introduction

The AET Programme 2011-13 delivered a programme of professional development and training to the school workforce through seven regional training hubs. The programme consisted of three levels of training at general, enhanced and specialist levels (Levels 1, 2, and 3 respectively). The evaluation of the 2011-13 Programme reported on the development of the training materials, the organisation and delivery of the three levels of the programme, the impact of the training on trainees, and the impact of the Programme at school level. In addition to questionnaire generated data, qualitative data was gathered through interview work with a small number of school staff, pupils and parents. Findings from that qualitative work were reported in the final evaluation report for the 2011-13 Programme¹.

As part of that school-focused data capture, six schools were visited by a CEDAR researcher, and staff, pupils and parents were interviewed. For the 2013-15 evaluation, staff from five of these schools were interviewed in January 2014, and will be interviewed again during the autumn term of 2014 (the sixth school was unable to take part). The intention is to gather data in relation to the embedding and impact of AET Programme training at school level. For this interim report, five teaching staff were interviewed by telephone; the interviews were recorded, with informed consent, and fully transcribed. The five staff all had particular leadership roles, four of whom had leadership roles in relation to special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) and/or in relation to autism provision. The staff had the following roles:

- Head of autism resource/assistant head teacher
- SENCO x 2
- Autism lead
- Foundation Stage Leader

¹ Cullen, M.A., Cullen, S., Lindsay, G. (2013), *Evaluation of Autism Education Trust Training Hubs Programme, 2011-13: Final Report*. Coventry: CEDAR, University of Warwick: http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/fac/soc/cedar/projects/current/autismeducationtrust/aet_-_final_report1_pdf.pdf

All the schools were primary schools, being:

- three mainstream primary schools
- two mainstream primary schools with special provision (for 20 and 17 pupils).

The data are presented here in relation to i) changes made, ii) impact of changes; with the overall focus being on the impact of the AET Programme 2011-13 training, which staff from the schools undertook in the Autumn 2012 term.

2.2 Changes made in the schools following AET Programme training

2.2.1 Whole school change

All five interviewees reported whole school change relating to:

- knowledge
- awareness and understanding
- approach
- strategies and practical changes.

Two of the interviewees from mainstream primary school (with no specialist provision) reported that the AET Programme training had been important in relation to the knowledge base of the school staff around autism. In both cases, the interviewee reported that prior to the training there had been a lack of knowledge about autism, in one case on the part of the interviewee and the school, in the other, on the part of the school staff in general:

‘At the time I went on the training [autumn term 2012] I had absolutely zero knowledge of autism apart from just very basic stuff you did in your teacher training.’ (Interviewee B).

‘Before I completed the autism training [...] we had a child come to us that was severely autistic and we weren’t equipped to deal with him in

mainstream. None of us really knew any of the strategies or why he was like he was; so that's why we did the training.' (Interviewee C).

In the latter case, the interviewee undertook Levels 2 and 3 of the training, and cascaded her knowledge to the rest of the school staff. In the case of interviewee B, there was whole school training at Level 1, and the interviewee also undertook Level 2 training. As a result of this training, the knowledge base of school staff rose, which, in turn, boosted confidence among school staff in their ability to support pupils with autism. One interviewee gave the example of how the Level 1 training had increased the confidence of lunch time support staff to support children: 'what I would say is I did notice an increased confidence [of the lunchtime supervisors] and not so much a shying away from any responsibility with the children with needs', (interviewee D).

The AET training brought about greater awareness of the nature of autism. Raised awareness was important for staff who had no previous experience of pupils with autism as well as for school staff who had experience, but little understanding, of pupils with autism. Enhanced awareness was seen as being a valuable forward step in providing for pupils on the autism spectrum: 'just having that awareness means that you are then better able to adapt as a teacher', (interviewee B); 'with greater understanding and greater awareness you are able to deal more sensitively with certain situations', (interviewee B). Greater awareness of the nature of autism and the issues that can be faced by pupils on the autism spectrum led to better understanding of autism. For example, one interviewee explained that the Level 1 training that had been delivered to the whole school led to, 'broadened awareness in terms of people who hadn't encountered much of the background [of autism...] and having a bit of a notion of the reasoning behind it all was very helpful', (interviewee E). This, in turn, led to a situation for the Level 1 trained staff when 'it had broadened awareness, which tends to bring up questions, and I have had a few people, since we came back to school in September, saying I wouldn't mind doing some [more] autism specific training', (interviewee E).

The AET training was also reported as having brought about specific changes in approach to supporting pupils with autism. For example, one of the interviewees explained that as a result of the whole school training, at Level 1, and the Level 2 training that she had undergone, there had been ‘an attitude shift’ (interviewee B) in the school when it came to supporting pupils with autism. She went on to comment:

‘Having staff that understand the basics [of autism], and understand that all children with autism are different and need different adaptations, I think we are definitely responding to those children’s individual needs better than we would have done had we not had any level of training.’
(Interviewee B)

Increased knowledge, enhanced awareness and understanding and an improved approach to supporting pupils with autism led directly to practical changes in the classroom and the school in general. For instance, one interviewee directly linked increased awareness at whole school level to whole school changes for children (Box 2.1).

Box 2.1 From AET training to school change

‘I think it raised everybody’s awareness. It made everybody very aware of the particular difficulties that children can experience and how by just making simple adaptations to what we do, how we do it, it makes everything more accessible, not just for autistic children, but generally for every child, because whatever you do for an autistic child is going to benefit everybody else as well, is what we have found. So, for instance, little things, like everybody has a visual timetable in their classrooms. We are always very aware of telling the children if things are going to change, and pre-tutoring, and making sure that perhaps children have down times and breaks and things like that. Aware of situations that increase anxiety, like busy areas, lunchtimes, smells and the things we were asking people [school staff] to do previous to that [the AET training], where they all looked at us as if we were bonkers, it just became run

of the mill – “oh, yes, we know, and we can see why you do that”. So, it [the AET training] made a huge difference.’ (Interviewee A)

This example was given by a school SENCO, where the school staff had all undertaken Level 2 training; her account highlighted the impact of the training on the various stages of change up to and including changes in all classrooms and in relation to common areas, such as dining and playing areas. In addition, she highlighted how her task as the SENCO had been eased and strengthened by the whole school experience of AET training.

2.2.2 Individual change

Individual change implemented by school staff who had undertaken Programme training was reported by three of the interviewees. It is important to note, however, that the impact of individual change was not limited, but frequently extended to other members of the school workforce. This appeared to be related to the leadership and/or SEND roles of the interviewees. In the case of interviewee C, her role as autism lead led to her attending Levels 2 and 3 training. That training provided her with new knowledge that she was able to use to bring about changes throughout the school, even though no other AET training had been undertaken by other staff members. Interviewee C described how the training had changed both her perceptions and understanding and those of her colleagues, which, in turn impacted on strategies (Box 2.2).

Box 2.2: From training to individual change to whole school change

‘I think it’s raised my awareness of children, not only the children with autism, but other children that come to us presenting problem. It’s dispelled the myth of “the naughty child”. I look at things with a bigger picture; I feel that has had a knock-on effect with staff because often now the conversations within the staff room have changed. Whereas before it would have been, “oh my goodness, what do we do? This child is so naughty dah, dah, dah”, whereas now we as a school look more to what could be causing this? Why is this child acting this way?’

That we could look at the environment within the classroom, the environment around the school, can we make allowances, can we slightly change the rules? It's all those things.' (Interviewee C)

In addition, there were examples of how the training had enabled individual members of school staff to introduce changes in their practice aimed at giving greater support to pupils on the autism spectrum. One example was provided by interviewee B, who explained how a Teaching Assistant (TA) who had undertaken the Level 1 course, had been enabled to offer improved support for a pupil on the autism spectrum:

'The TA spends time focusing solely on him [a pupil with autism], so she would work with him, and she did start stressing things [after the training], sensory activities, that would meet his needs. She would say, this year, "I would like a time, I would like a place to do this and this with him, I think this would work."' (Interviewee B)

2.2.3 Standards, Competency Framework and further training

Three of the five interviewees exhibited a lack of knowledge of the AET Standards and the Competency Framework, while the other two schools had begun to utilise them. By contrast, all the interviewees said that there was demand for further AET programme training in their schools.

Two of the five interviewees were familiar with both the Standards and the Competency Framework, and both were being incorporated into school development in order to embed AET Programme learning and improve support for pupils. For example, interviewee A explained that as the school's SENCO, she was 'looking at all of the descriptors and the Standards and gauging where we were on various ones, and where we wanted to be, and what we could do to get there', (Interviewee A). Interviewee D was able to report that her school, in conjunction with local authority autism support had

‘implemented the Standards because [...the LA] has quality assurance visits to the school and they base it on the Standards’, (Interviewee D).

However, the other three interviewees reported that they had no knowledge of either the Competency Framework or the Standards. In fact, they did not know that they existed, and asked to be directed to them.

The other issue that arose from the interviews was related to further training. All the interviewees said that there was both interest and scope for more training at their schools – either for staff wishing enhanced training, or for new staff – and in one case new staff joining the school after the initial whole school training session had received the Level 1 training.

2.3 The impact of changes made in the schools

The interviewees were able to evidence the impact on pupils of AET Programme derived changes, and cited examples of improvement in the school experiences of children on the autism spectrum. In addition, it was the view of the interviewees that changes introduced to support pupils with autism also impacted positively on other pupils. It was more difficult, however, for interviewees to evidence parental responses to changes made with regard to pupils with autism; this was largely the result of a lack of school-parent communication.

All the interviewees maintained that changes resulting from the AET Programme training had positively impacted upon pupils. Three of the interviewees gave detailed examples of improvements experienced by pupils with autism in their schools. These ranged from enabling a pupil to attend a theatre with the rest of her class, to improving the environment for a child to the degree that there were significant changes in her behaviour and, in consequence, a notable fall in entries in the school restraint book. The latter case also involved an intervention from a Community Autism Team (CAT) worker, in addition to AET training (Box 2.3).

Box 2.3 Environment and behaviour

'The little girl we had so much trouble with, she started Year 3 in September, and we were expecting it to be difficult, and it was, and we got to the point where we ended up, we were filling up, page by page the restraint book, and we were just, "oh, goodness, where do we go?". And we were doing everything we thought we could be doing, but we had our CAT guy in, and he went through it [the AET training] with us and we were more understanding about ... we'd had the training, but we were still understanding stuff about it, and through that we've managed to set her up in an environment and a timetable that's completely different from the rest of the children in Year 3, but she is now predominantly [...] coming into school happily, learning, all those things, because of the things we're using through the [AET] Standards and things like that. We haven't filled in the book for weeks and weeks now.'

(Interviewee A)

This is an interesting case study, not just because of the positive outcomes, but because it shows, in this case at least, the interaction of the training (whole school at Level 2), with additional support, and reference to the Standards. The interviewee went on to conclude that: 'we'd have been up a creek without a paddle without the training and the fact that we had a positive outlook that we can do it rather than no, we can't, she's got to go somewhere else,' (interviewee A).

A second example involved a school and a theatre working together with the child's mother to enable a pupil to attend the theatre, thereby being included in a year group event, and being able to access the learning opportunities offered by the theatre trip (Box 2.4).

Box 2.4 Enabling inclusion and learning

'The child suffered with severe anxiety, and during school, with myself and her class teachers we thought that she had some form of autism, and treated her with those strategies. Like if we went on a school trip she would be particularly anxious, and one [trip] we went to the theatre and her anxiety was would they

shut the doors and lock us in? So she was very anxious about that, so before we went we pre-tutored about what would happen, that they don't lock the doors because of fire and safety, and when we got to the theatre we spoke to the usher [for the usher] to say what happened, and we did a social story for her [...] We also, if we have any concerns or I see something in school that might be triggering an anxiety or worry [...] I'll ring her mum and we'll talk to her mum.' (Interviewee C).

In this case, the school staff did not have a formal diagnosis of autism for the child, but building on the interviewee's Level 2 and Level 3 training, strategies learnt from that training enabled positive changes to be put in place. In a similar fashion, the interviewees all argued that the training was useful for school staff not just in relation to those children who had been diagnosed, but it 'also benefits you with those children who are slightly under the radar, not quite the same as everybody else, but perhaps they are not severe enough to have a statement, but they still need that kind of understanding,' (interviewee C).

Although all the interviewees provided examples of the ways in which the schools liaised with parents and carers of pupils with autism, only one of the interviewees was able to report that a parent was aware that school staff had attended AET Programme training. In this case, it was the mother of a child with autism who had brought the school's attention to the availability of the AET training. The school undertook whole school training at Level 1, and Level 2 training for the foundation stage leader. As a result, the interviewee said that the impact on the pupil's mother was that: 'I would add as well that parents [seem happy], particularly [name's] mum, knowing that we'd been on this training and we had set aside time and put in that effort to learn about it. I think that makes her feel a bit more secure, which, in turn, transmits to the child,' (Interviewee B).

2.4 Conclusions: AET training and change

All the interviewees were able to evidence changes, at the individual, class and school level brought about by participation in the AET Programme 2011-

13. There was evidence that these changes, which encompassed enhanced knowledge, improved awareness and understanding, more effective approaches, strategies and practical changes, were being maintained in the schools some four terms following the initial training. The impact of the changes made could be seen primarily in terms of improved schooling experiences for children with autism, and improved confidence and skills on the part of school staff. Evidence was provided of impact in terms of improved behaviour management and outcomes, and greater inclusion and improved learning opportunities.

3. AET Training hubs programme, 2011-13, follow-up: training hubs

3.1 Introduction

The AET Programme 2011-13, aimed at the school age workforce, was delivered via seven training hubs – Ambitious About Autism (AAA), Birmingham City Council, Leicestershire County Council, NORSACA and Nottinghamshire County Council, Oldham, The Bridge (London), and the National Autistic Society (NAS). During December 2013, six of the training hub leads were interviewed, by telephone. The interviews were recorded, with permission, and fully transcribed prior to being analysed. The interviews focused on the following areas:

- reflections on the roll out of the 2011-13 Programme
- funding changes following on from the end of the funded period of the Programme
- the marketing of the Standards and Competency Framework
- reflections on the 2011-13 Programme materials.

Overall, the evidence of the hub lead interviews was reasonably similar in content, although there were some differences of view, in particular regarding funding and the materials.

3.2 Reflections on the 2011-13 Programme

The interviewees were uniformly positive about the roll-out of the 2011-13 Programme. The Programme itself was deemed to have been a success, and it was also seen to have been a catalyst for further successful developments, such as making links with other stake holders, building networks with schools and other settings, and embedding a longer term future for AET Programme delivery to school-age settings. For example, one hub lead explained that the Programme roll out had been successful at a number of levels, and that the hub had been able to exceed its targets, particularly by building new links with education facing services (Box 3.1).

Box 3.1 Successful roll-out of the 2011-13 Programme

'I think from our point of view it's been quite successful, strategically and on the ground as well. We've made links with several local authorities. My previous role was working as a consultant teacher for a local authority so I kind of built on all of those networks from that local authority and developed those. I think that's been the key to making sure that we more than just hit the targets, that we surpass the targets, and getting buy-in from senior people in strategic positions in local authorities. So, for example, going to talk to principal educational psychologists [EPs] has really supported getting the message out there in schools. I was asked to go and speak at an EP training day recently around Post-16 because they're interested in the developments. So those sorts of things have been quite successful in getting the message out there to different settings.' (Interviewee 1A)

For one hub with a relatively large training capacity, the 2011-13 Programme was seen as not only being 'hugely successful' in its own right, but also as having had a 'major impact on the way we as a team work [...] we've used it to develop capacity at a strategic level through the Standards, so that has been a framework for us working alongside schools – it's given us the tools to do that', (interviewee 1D).

3.3 Funding changes

There was a mixed response to the funding changes that came into effect at the end of the 2011-13 period. These funding changes meant that it was no longer the case that hubs could claim funding from the AET to enable the Level 1 training to be offered free at the point of delivery. Further, training hubs were also required to purchase a licence to deliver the AET Programme. For some hubs these changes had little impact; indeed, for a minority of hubs the AET Programme had been incorporated into a locally funded core offer, leading to some Level 1 training still being offered free at the point of delivery, post 2013. However, most hubs did feel the impact of the funding changes, but were cautious about the likely future effect of those changes.

Only one hub lead gave a clear indication that they thought the funding changes had impacted negatively upon demand for the training, and that was largely at Level 1, while they felt that demand for Levels 2 and 3 were holding up: ‘overall we’re finding Level 1 numbers have been lower, Level 2 is buoyant and Level 3 very similar’, (interviewee1F). More typically, another interviewee noted that ‘it’s tight budgets all around, so there is pressure on me to make sure we make enough money to cover salaries, but so far it has been working out reasonably well [... for example] I could book my diary [for delivery] over the next three years’, (interviewee 1A). Nonetheless, there was some concern that pressure on school budgets might impact on demand for training. However, a stronger expression of concern over financial issues came in relation to the licencing model. The majority feeling was that ‘we still do feel that the licence cost is too expensive’, (Interviewee 1F). Another interviewee argued:

‘I think the frustration is obviously when you start purchasing, from a business model, when I’ve got my people upstairs going ‘how much are you paying for this and how much are you recouping?’ and actually the ability to recoup is going to be based on what’s the market forces, what are the people out there, and I think you don’t really have to know a huge deal around the geography of the region to recognise that if you’ve got 12 local authorities and you’re paying the same amount as someone who effectively has got 2 local authorities.’ (Interviewee 1C).

This hub lead also linked this question to that of the geographic remits of different hubs, and the question of how porous, or not, the borders are, and could be, between different training hubs.

3.4 Marketing the three levels of the 2011-13 Programme

The LA embedded training hubs were in the position to take advantage of their extensive, pre-existing links with schools in their areas. The key message that came from those training hubs was that in respect of schools it was important to gain access to senior members of staff:

'We feel that's very much key to our success in schools and the level 3 is basically describing the role of this lead person in terms of supporting staff, implementing interventions, all of those other things, and I feel that if you've got that lead person then you've got that focus for actually then working with them to develop an action plan through the Standards and I think it's about having that person who can drive through the change and that's really what Level 3 is about. If you didn't already have that in place that would be where I would say you would start with the creating of that role and then one aspect of that role would be working to establish a framework around the Standards.'

(Interviewee 1D).

The sort of roles that the interviewee referred to are head teachers, deputy head teachers, and, occasionally, SENCOs.

For the non-LA training hubs, a key task has been building extensive networks of contacts to enable them to access school settings. None of these training hubs believed that there was any particular avenue that was more successful than others in marketing the Programme. Instead, the view was that every opportunity had to be taken up, with one important understanding being that recommendations by word of mouth were valuable. For example:

'It does vary - the marketing – [for example] the [name of a school professionals event] one, I had one or two enquiries from that but nothing definite, which was interesting. When I've had some enquiries following things like Heads' Association meeting or national events or from websites, people say I've seen this on various websites or I've been told about this. So it is interesting where requests come from. They seem to come from quite a variety of sources. [...] a lot of it I think is word of mouth. If schools are in some sort of collaborative or group if one school's had it and said it was worthwhile I think others are spreading the word around.'

(Interviewee 1F)

3.5 The Standards and Competency Framework

Use and promotion of the Standards and the Competency Framework was mixed, with four of the hubs fully integrating the Standards and the Competency Framework in their marketing and delivery of the Programme, but with two of the hubs being less pro-active in this respect. Typically, the hubs sought to integrate the Standards and Competency Framework both within the delivery of the Programme and in their marketing to schools. For example, one hub lead explained that by linking with the Ofsted framework, the hub was able to strengthen the Programme message:

‘Throughout all the training at Level 1 I make sure I wave and waft those [Standards and the Competency Framework] about at the beginning and reassure everybody it’s a free resource, it’s fully compatible with the OFSTED framework. And in the lecture I did the other night I actually cross-referenced those Standards that make direct links to the OFSTED framework for inspection. I’ve looked at all of that so it kind of just has relevance in every area. What we’re doing today isn’t just about developing a practice for children with autism, it’s helping you become a better teacher; it’s that kind of message.’
(Interviewee 1A).

Similarly, another interviewee explained that she used the Standards and the Competency Framework in her conversations with key school staff, such as head teachers and SENCOs, as part of the marketing of the Programme. By contrast, two of the interviewees seemed a little unclear as to the potential of the documents in marketing and delivery terms, with one interviewee, for instance, appearing to think that the dissemination of the Standards and Competency Framework was really a task for others:

‘The trainer certainly does refer to them when they’re delivering out very much so and obviously they are discussed in the training materials anyway but in terms of promoting when we’re marketing out the training no we don’t refer too much to the Standards and Competency Framework [...] I get a sense that they’re not well-known enough to be

used as a marketing tool. When I've gone to events and talked to people then quite a lot of people aren't aware of the competencies and aren't aware of it and they think it's a great idea when you talk to them about it but obviously if they're not aware of it when you're trying to sell out training then it's not useful to talk about something that people don't know about but when you do actually talk to people about it they think it's a brilliant idea and they're all for it but I don't think the awareness levels from my perspective are sufficiently high yet.' (Interviewee 1B).

However, this was a minority view, and most saw them as a way of marketing: 'it's the carrot to sell the Level 2 i.e. it will help their self-evaluation; school people management and so on,' (Interviewee 1E).

3.6 The 2011-13 Programme materials

In respect of the training materials, a number of points were made by most of the interviewees in relation to i) delivery to special schools, and ii) the volume of material in Levels 2 and 3. In addition, there was a single, but strong, criticism of some of the materials made by one hub lead.

The most frequent comment about the materials was in relation to the large amount of content. While some trainers had, initially, struggled with the choice of material, it was recognised that: 'one of the strengths [of the material] is that there's always more material than you need, so you can select and personalise it for whichever setting you're going into', (Interviewee 1A). However, three of the interviewees noted that there was a need for more material that was more closely tailored to delivery of the Programme in special schools. For example, one interviewee said:

'I've had a bit of feedback from trainers on this and the main issue I think is that they are too focused on mainstream schools and that actually when you're delivering out to special schools you have to make quite a lot of adaptations to the materials to make it relevant, and I think this is something that's been discussed at the hub meetings and things, it seems to come up quite a bit that we could really do with a

sort of separate set for the special schools really and use examples that are relevant in that situation and talk about situations that would be relevant. I think that's the main issue.' (Interviewee1B).

In addition, individual comments were made: for example, that there was, perhaps, a need for some further change to Level 2: 'I find the Level 2 quite a difficult course to teach in that it's not as practical based as we need it to be', (Interviewee1C), or that Level 3 'seems a bit thin in places', (Interviewee1F). Finally, one interviewee was particularly critical of the materials. The interviewee (1E) made extensive criticisms of the Level 2 material: 'Level 2 - it's repetitive; it's patronising; there's so many slides I can't go into each one. It doesn't fit what it says it does. It really is all down to the trainer to bespoke it and really we're using all our own slides for it,' (Interviewee 1E). These complaints were, however, not widely shared.

3.7 Conclusions

The follow-up interviews with the hub leads of the 2011-13 (school age) Programme all regarded the roll-out of the Programme as a success. The success of the 2011-13 Programme was not limited to numbers trained, but it was also seen to be a catalyst for other developments, such as building links with schools and ensuring a longer-term future for Programme delivery in school-age settings. Funding changes in respect of the 2011-13 Programme were not, in general, expected to impact negatively on future demand for training. However, the majority of hub lead interviewees did express some concern about the licencing model. Continued successful delivery of the 2011-13 Programme was seen to be linked to gaining access to key roles within schools, for example, head teachers. Four of the six hub leads indicated that their hubs had incorporated the Standards and Competency Framework into both the delivery and the marketing of the Programme. There were some issues related to the 2011-13 Programme materials, but, with one exception, the materials were seen to provide a very useful set of resources for Programme delivery.

4. Developing the Early Years and Post-16 Programme materials

4.1 Introduction

The leads from the development teams for the Early Years and Post-16 Programme were interviewed in November, 2013. The main focus of the interviews was on the preparation and development of the initial level of training for the 2013-15 Programme. Both development teams consisted of a core of developers supported by a large number of advisers and stakeholders. For example, one of the teams consisted of a core of two key developers supported by ten consultants, including a number of autism education and support bodies. Although both teams were able to draw upon the successful AET 2011-13 Programme, and earlier, related initiatives such as the DfE's Inclusion Development Programme (autism spectrum) 2009-2011², the Early Years and Post-16 focus of the 2013-15 Programme introduced important new considerations:

- range of settings
- wide variety of workforce
- age-specific contexts

For EY and P-16 there were different contexts that also had to be addressed:

- EY:
 - the central (statutory) role of the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) requirements:
 - additional material (to that in the school age Programme):
outline indicators, referral routes, post diagnostic support, learning through play, working with parents
 - new video clips related to different EY settings, e.g., child minders, mainstream schools with specialist provision

² See: Lindsay, G., Cullen, M-A., Cullen, S.M., Dockrell, J., Strand, S., Arweck, J., Hegarty, S., & Goodlad, S., (2011). *Evaluation of impact of DfE investment in initiatives designed to improve teacher workforce skills in relation to SEN and disabilities*. Department for Education, DfE report: DFE-RR115, especially, pp.45-83:
https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/182642/DFE-RR115.pdf

- P-16:
 - transition to adulthood
 - providing for young people voice
 - raising aspirations.

The material presented here relates to the common considerations that both development teams faced.

4.2 Range of settings

The AET 2011-13 Programme was a school aged initiative designed primarily for mainstream and mainstream with special provision, settings for children aged 5-16. The 2013-15 Programme, by contrast, covers two age ranges, Early Years and Post-16, that encompass a wide range of settings. For example, EY provision might include stand-alone nurseries, child minders, parents/carers, or mainstream primary schools with nursery and/or reception classes. Similarly, P-16 settings can include, for instance, Further Education (FE) colleges, community groups, residential and non-residential settings, and work placement settings. As a result, one of the challenges was to create a training package that could encompass a wide range of settings, providing both a generic core of material, along with material that could be adapted for specific settings. For the EY development team there was the benefit of having the EYFS protocols to underpin the development process although the P-16 development team did not have a similar, universally applicable guide.

4.3 Workforce considerations

As with the settings, the target EY and P-16 workforce for the 2013-15 Programme is characterised by diversity in terms of experience, qualifications, and contact time with children and young people. For example, the P-16 development lead interviewee compared school aged and FE situations, 'there's plenty of situations [in FE] where it's not the same relationship between a teaching assistant or a teacher and a child as it is between a [FE] lecturer and a whole room full of young people,' (P-16). In terms of EY, the workforce is, potentially, even wider than the P-16 workforce with nursery

workers, child minders, teachers, and carers all being targets of the EY Programme.

4.4 Age-specific contexts

For the EY development team the main consideration, compared with school-aged Programme development, was that:

‘there was a big emphasis on the schools one for more higher end kids on the spectrum and with Early Years that’s not the case, we need to focus on the lower end of the spectrum. And also looking at learning through play a bit more rather than a strong curriculum based element of learning.’ (EY).

Further, there was a need to introduce a range of EY children and settings material, such as video clips and interviews. The same was true for the P-16 developers, who were focused on underpinning successful transition to adulthood for young people with autism.

5. AET Early Years and Post-16 Training Hubs

5.1 Introduction

Following on from the successful roll out of the AET Programme 2011-13, the process of deepening the AET Programme offer by including training for the Early Years and Post-16 workforces involved a widening of the training hubs structure. Four hubs – Ambitious About Autism, Birmingham City Council, NORSACA and Nottinghamshire County Council, and Kent Association of Further Education Colleges (KAFEC) – were successful in competing for the role of being Post-16 hubs; while the National Autistic Society (NAS), Leicestershire County Council, Birmingham City Council, and North Yorkshire County Council – successfully bid to act as the Post-16 training hubs.

For this interim report, semi-structured telephone interviews were undertaken with lead representatives from each hub, between 10th and 24th February 2014. In addition, a lead trainer from one hub was also interviewed. The interviews were recorded, with permission, and fully transcribed for analysis. The purpose of the interviews was to create a picture of the progress of the hubs in the early stages of the 2013-15 Programme. The interviews focused on the following areas:

- the hub backgrounds to involvement with the Programme
- delivery
- funding questions
- the Standards and Competency Framework
- expectations regarding the roll-out.

There was a high degree of commonality between hub responses, irrespective of whether they were EY or P-16 hubs (with one hub, Birmingham City Council being both), and the data are presented here in an amalgamated form. However, where there were differences relating to EY or P-16 these are dealt with separately.

5.2 Hub involvement with the Programme

There was a small range of reasons why the organisations which became the Programme training hubs wished to be involved in the 2013-15 Programme. A universal, underpinning reason for wanting to be involved was that the organisations believed that the Programme fitted well with their existing missions to support people with autism, be it to enhance Early Years or Post-16 provision. For all the interviewees, the 2013-15 Programme was, in the words of one interviewee, ‘an extension of what we’d already been doing’ (Interviewee B1). In addition, there were particular elements of the Programme that appealed: the fact that it was an AET initiative, gave it a high degree of credibility; that by incorporating the Programme into existing work, the hubs would be able to take advantage of an initiative that filled a gap in provision; and, for those hubs who were already delivering the AET (School level) 2011-1 Programme, adding the Early Years and/or the Post-16 Programme to their offer would enable them to provide a consistent level of support across a large age range. All these reasons for wishing to take part in the Programme were mentioned by interviewee F, from a hub delivering the Early Years Programme (Box 5.1).

Box 5.1 The attraction of the Programme to a training hub

‘We certainly wanted to combine the Early Years programme with what we’re trying to do with the schools programme so there’s a through-flow. Equally it’s building on what we’ve already been doing as an Early Years provider for many years [in our area] and wanting to build on something that is very important from the point of view of our local offer [...]. That was a major component of it but what it’s also trying to do (as perhaps with other providers) is looking at a consistency of approach. We were quite comfortable and competent in many ways in what we were already doing in terms of our training and putting that together but this would add I suppose an element of credibility to new providers that are looking for training and support who perhaps were beginning to get into a market where there will be competition, and we can see that beginning to happen and I think being able to add that hub as a local offer of what we’re doing is also adding that credibility and I

suppose to some degree that brings about some challenges because it is from a team that's very well adapted to delivering training and support already, it's needing to alter that training to some degree as well as enhance what it is we're already doing, it is a challenge as opposed to starting from fresh. But that's very much why we wanted to be involved, is that through-flow, that consistency and then obviously expanding that across the region and spreading that message is very, very important for us, so absolutely that's our major point.'

(Interviewee F)

The AET 2013-15 Programme was welcomed and all the hub lead interviewees commented on how it was seen to enable them to provide, in the words of one interviewee, 'a consistent training offer that was tiered that we could offer across the county to ensure equity and consistency, and we felt that it was nationally recognised, met NICE compliance, and was a good programme', (interviewee H).

5.3 Delivery and delivery plans

A variety of delivery models was adopted by the training hubs to deliver the Programme. These ranged from direct delivery by hub trainers themselves to co-working with a delivery partner, for instance a Further Education (FE) college, supported by the hub. The training hubs were all experienced in the provision of autism support and education, and, in the case of local authority hubs were services involved with special educational needs provision. The initial impressions of the hub leads was that both the EY and the P-16 Programme was in great demand, and they took this to indicate that the AET 2013-15 Programme was fulfilling a need for autism training. For example, one hub lead involved in delivering the P-16 Programme explained:

'From my perspective as a lead and administrator of the project it's going very well. We've set the dates and we easily filled them, in fact we met our targets for Level 1 within 3 days, which took me by surprise really because I hadn't done any marketing at that point at all. It was really word of mouth from people I'd seen and mentioned it to and the

response was absolutely overwhelming so we are doing extremely well on Level 1; we're busy booking days right up until the end of our contract next March.' (Interviewee B1)

Asked to explain why she thought the Programme was in such demand, the interviewee said that, in her opinion, the fact that the Programme was recognised and supported by the Department for Education (DfE) was important, and that it was, at the moment, a free offer was also significant, because for FE colleges in particular, budgets for continuing professional development have been 'squeezed', and free training was welcomed.

Part of the initial process of delivery related to scoping and marketing to settings for both the EY and P-16 Programme. For both age ranges, training hubs were marketing to a wide range of settings. For example, interviewee H provided an account of the range of settings her training hub were approaching:

'For this academic year now and we're going to trial seven sessions that all child minders will be invited to and we're just about to promote and launch that in the next week or so for the summer term. So we're looking at how we provide training for child minders as part of the larger plan. We're also working with the children's centres strategically to try and coordinate delivery through the children's centres across the county and that would involve them inviting their cluster of pre-school settings that are attached to them. So that's another way that we're looking at and the third way is around schools with foundation stages and promoting it through the existing structure that we have for that. We've also got Early Years SENCO networks and Early Years settings manager meetings that are already scheduled across the county three times a year, so termly meetings, and marketing the training through those forums and we've got a meeting with the Early Years Senior Leadership Management Team in April to try and coordinate that as well.' (Interviewee H)

These settings represented the type of target groups that all the EY training hubs were aiming at, with the aim being to offer the Programme to all relevant settings, for example: child minders, stand-alone nurseries, and primary schools with nurseries and reception classes. In a similar fashion, the P-16 training hubs were also working to maximise the Programme reach in a wide range of settings, including, FE colleges, community groups providing work experience and other support, and employers. Across all settings there had been a very good response to the Programme, as one interviewee explained, 'we are generating a massive interest', (interviewee D).

5.4 Funding

All the interviewees expressed a very strong opinion that the ability to offer the initial stage of the Programme free of charge was of great importance. The Programme funding by the DfE was seen to offer a number of advantages in terms of disseminating the first stage of the Programme, and in terms of the ability of the training hubs to market the second and third stages of the 2013-15 Programme.

For both P-16 and EY settings, hub leads believed that many of those settings operated on very tight budgets and that for Post-16 training centres, child minders, and private nurseries, for example, being free at the point of delivery made the difference between many of these settings choosing to undertake the training or not. It was seen to be particularly important that the initial offer, at least, was free at the point of delivery, as the hubs were convinced that this offer would help build the word of mouth effect among settings, and, hence, maintain demand for the training even when it was charged for. Similarly, free training at the first stage of the Programme – 'Making Sense of Autism' - was seen to be, in effect, a 'loss leader' for the second and third stages; as one interviewee put it: 'I think in terms of take up, it's really, really important that it is free and that it is a throughway to Level 2 and Level 3', (Interviewee H).

Looking towards future unfunded delivery of the Programme, perceptions of the impact of charging were mixed, although the overall expectation was that the market would be reasonably buoyant. For example:

'I think charging will impact. I think [however] that in terms of Level 1 as long as we cost it carefully, and then try and arrange cluster sessions, and look at efficiencies there, then I think if the numbers keep increasing then there's a huge workforce that needs an introduction to autism.' (Interviewee G)

In some cases, particularly the training hubs that were local authorities, plans were being made to incorporate the AET Programme into core offers, although this was dependent on wider financial considerations. In one case, the interviewee argued strongly that introducing charges for the training could act as a barrier of some significance:

'I'm really fighting to try and keep it free because of the moral obligation of being able to get a message out about autism, it's something I've been fighting for [...] getting a message out to people, and I think as soon as you put a barrier in terms of cost, the people that you want to get there, i.e. the non-converted, will use that as a barrier to avoid attending. And also there's an element of course that "free" doesn't always mean that it's good and that sometimes you pay for something that's good, but I think it's essential, especially when it comes to Level 2.' (Interviewee F).

5.5 Standards and Competency Framework

At the time of the interviews (February, 2014) the Standards and Competency Framework for EY and P-16 had yet to be finalised. However, most of the training hubs have been alerting delegates to the training of the existence of the school age Standards and Competency Framework. This is usually done in the context of expanding the origin of the 2013-15 Programme in the earlier 2011-13 Programme; for example:

'At the beginning of a presentation I give a little bit about the background of the AET and the work that's being undertaken, tell them

about the Standards and the competency and I have a copy of them, but unfortunately the copies are not Post-16 because they've not been developed yet. I do explain that but I do say these are very good benchmarks anyway and possibly they'll be very closely or as near as mirrored I think in many ways. And I tell them how to get onto the website and download them or look at them.' (Interviewee A)

In one case, the training hub was in the process of adapting the Standards for Early Years settings because 'the terminology [of the school age Standards] is very education focused, so we're having to tweak those to meet different service area framework, so I'm working with the children's centres to make the document more geared towards them', (interviewee H). There was an expectation that the Standards and Competency Frameworks for EY and P-16 would be particularly useful in the process of marketing the Programme, and they were anticipated: 'I'm waiting for the Standards to come out for the Early Years to have a bit more of a launch party about the Standards as well as the training in County Hall, inviting all the SENCOs, and inviting as many settings as possible that can come,' (interviewee F).

5.6 Expectations

All the training hub leads expressed a good deal of optimism with regard to their expectations of the take up and impact of the AET 2013-15 Programme. The interviewees all indicated that the initial demand for the Programme was such that they had every expectation that they would be able to reach, and exceed, their hub training targets. For example:

'I think it's going to build and we're going to gain momentum hopefully, but not too rapidly, we need to keep steady with it ourselves as well. Obviously if we can build momentum with this we're in a good position to fulfil delivery of the 2 and 3 because we have got interest in that already.' (Interviewee A)

There was also an intention on the part of the training hubs to ensure that the learning from the training programme would be embedded in the EY and P-16

settings. For example, in respect of embedding the Programme in FE colleges, one hub lead explained:

‘What I’d like to see is the training embedded for new [FE] staff, which will obviously have a cost attached but I think it’s a very valid one. I’d like to see the whole concept of working in a different way with young people with autism is built into their development plan as institutions and picked up under that vulnerable stream that you mentioned earlier, colleges do need to be aware of that group and how they work with them so I think this is a key way of meeting that requirement for this group.’ (Interviewee B)

In addition, those training hubs which are LA based, made it clear that their intention is to fully integrate the Programme into their core offer to settings in their LA areas. For example, one hub lead explained that she hoped that the Programme would become part of her LA’s core offer, but she also raised the issue of possible limitations on individual LA capabilities in the future:

‘Hopefully it [the Programme] will be self-sustaining at that point [in the future, post 2015] so in terms of service restructure we need to consider what our core offer is for Early Years and hopefully the AET Programme will be part of that core offer and that will define where resources are allocated I would imagine. [...] If we’re very clear about what our core offer is around autism in the Early Years and we provide that offer and the AET Programme is part of that offer whether it be a free offer, our core offer or our traded offer, and within [the LA] I’m certain that the Level 1 would be part of the core offer.’ (Interviewee H)

In terms of the future embedding of the Programme, one hub lead raised the question of support for the Programme being seen to come from ‘the top’:

‘It’s become part of our core offer in terms of AET and I think as a result making it embedded in what we do and what we deliver and what we feed out is going to be very important and I very much hope that the

message of AET is growing across the country and as a result of that people will hear about it more and more. I suppose the more that it's promoted at the top, if you like, the more it helps us actually on the ground because settings will be asking 'where can I access this training because I'm hearing about it?' I very much hope that us delivering on the ground is matched by the promotion of it from the top, making the job on the ground a little bit easier if you like in terms of marketing.'

(Interviewee F)

5.7 Conclusions

Overall, there was a broad uniformity of evidence provided by the new EY and P-16 Programme training hub lead interviews. The Programme had attracted the hubs because it was seen to fit with their pre-existing work, it had a high degree of credibility, it was seen to fill a gap in training for the EY and P-16 workforces, and would enable training hubs to offer consistency of training across age ranges. A variety of delivery plans were in place, with the training hubs taking advantage of their extensive experience in the provision of autism support and education. The DfE funding of the Programme enabled the initial offer to be made free at the point of delivery, and this was strongly welcomed by the training hub leads. It was argued that being able to offer the 'Making Sense of Autism' level free at the point of delivery had the effect of drawing in settings that would have difficulty in paying for training, as well as acting as a recruiting platform for the later stages of the Programme training. All the training hubs were looking forward to the appearance of the EY and P-16 Standards and Competency Frameworks, and most training hubs referred delegates to the pilot training to the school level Standards and Competency Framework as an interim measure. There is a good deal of optimism in the training hubs as to the likely future success of the EY and P-16 Programme in their areas.

6. 'Making Sense of Autism' pilot delivery, January-April, 2014

6.1 Introduction

During the period of the pilot delivery (January-April, 2014) of the first stage of the AET Programme 2013-15 – 'Making Sense of Autism' - all delegates to the EY and P-16 training sessions were asked to complete a post-course questionnaire, see Appendix 1 (the P-16 and EY pilot stage, post-course questionnaires). The completed questionnaires were returned directly to CEDAR, and the data gathered is presented here. The data represent all questionnaire returns to CEDAR by 24th March, 2014.

6.2 AET Programme 2012-15 Post-16 Pilot delivery

6.2.1 The training

The training delegates were invited to complete a short questionnaire at the end of each session. Table 6.1 shows the number of respondents by Post-16 hub³. Well over a third (40%) of the delegates attended training delivered by the NORSACA hub, with just under a third attending training through the KAFEC hub.

Table 6.1 Responses by Early Years hub

Hub	Number	Percentage
Ambitious About Autism	24	11
Birmingham City Council	38	17
KAFEC	71	32
NORSACA	89	40
Total	222	100

Source: Post-course questionnaires

Delegates attending 13 different training events responded to the questionnaire. We first describe the demographic characteristics of those who attended and then their views of the training.

³ In our reporting of responses, percentages are rounded to nearest integer and so may not sum to 100.

6.2.2 About the training delegates

To give an indication of the range of people who attended, delegates were asked to state their job. The responses showed that the Post-16 training attracted a very broad range of people working in the sector. Those describing themselves as assessors made up the largest single group (N=27). Other roles represented included people working in just about every aspect of college life: reception, administrative, academic and academic support, examinations, management, careers/personal advice, employment, training, social (including café staff), residential, community, day support, leisure activities, volunteering. This very wide range reflects the multi-faceted nature of the Post-16 sector. Participants were also asked in which LA area they worked. Most responses corresponded to the hub areas, with a minority from outside these areas, such as 'Manchester/Yorkshire', 'Essex', 'Hampshire'.

Just under three-quarters of the delegates were female (74%) with just over a quarter being male (26%). This reflects the overall composition of the Post-16 workforce.

Delegates came from a range of educational backgrounds (Table 6.2), with over half educated to below degree level.

Table 6.2 Trainees' highest educational qualification

Highest qualification	%
None	5
1-4 GCSEs or equivalent	4
5 or more GCSEs or equivalent	7
A/AS levels or equivalent	15
Higher education below degree	26
University degree	38
Other	6

N = 222. Missing data: 10 responses.

The most frequent 'other' qualifications were at post-graduate degree level, e.g. Masters level.

Regarding ethnicity, the delegate group reflected the general population with 86% ticking 'White-British', and 14% ticking 'Other' (9 people did not respond). Those ticking 'other' wrote their own description of their ethnicity. There were 21 different descriptions, most of which were used by only one person. The most common 'other' description was 'Black British' written by 4 people.

The delegates included people across the working age range, from 16-19 to aged over 60 years but most were in their 30s, 40s or 50s.

Table 6.3 Trainees' age bands

Age band	%
16-19	8
20-29	17
30-39	27
40-49	23
50-59	21
60 or over	4

N = 222. Missing data: 6 responses.

When asked about previous experience of teaching/working with one or more learners on the autism spectrum, 70% said Yes and 30% said No. In spite of this high level of interaction with one or more learners on the autism spectrum, over half (56%) had previously had **no training** on autism and a further 23% had only ever had a short session on this before (Table 6.4).

Table 6.4 Previous training on understanding autism (%)

Length of previous training	%
None	56
Short session	23
1 day	11
2 days	2
More than 2 days	9

N = 222. Missing data: 2 responses.

Overall, the Post-16 training pilot seems to have attracted delegates that are demographically representative of the target audience. In addition, the majority had had no or very little previous training on autism. This suggests that the pilot audience has provided a 'fair test' of the Post-16 materials.

6.2.3 Delegates' views of the training

As Table 6.5 shows, delegates' views of the training were skewed to the positive end of a 5-point scale (ranging from 67% to 95% positive). The training was viewed as **worthwhile by 95%** (with 75% 'strongly agreeing'). This is a very strong endorsement of the training. Similarly, **just over 90% agreed** that the training had:

- Increased their knowledge, awareness and understanding about autism
- made them aware of at least one positive change that could be made to enhance this further for young children who were or might be on the autism spectrum.

This last point was further evidenced by written responses describing such a change (discussed in detail later). As about two-thirds (67%) indicated that the training had confirmed that their current practice was in line with good practice, such changes represent enhancements for most and important developments in line with good practice for about a third.

Table 6.5 Your views of the training (%)

Statements	Strongly Disagree				Strongly Agree
	1	2	3	4	5
a) It was worthwhile.	<1	<1	4	20	75
b) It has increased my knowledge about autism.	1	1	7	22	69
c) It has increased my awareness of the differences that young children with autism may experience.	1	1	5	30	64
d) It will help me to be more understanding of the types of individual differences I need to flag up.	1	1	6	28	64
e) It has made me aware of at least one positive change I/we could make relatively easily to benefit young children who are, or may be, on the autism spectrum.	<1	1	9	29	61
f) It has confirmed that what I/we already do in our Post-16 setting fits in with current thinking on good practice.	<1	9	24	28	39
g) It made me aware of where to find out more about autism.	1	6	16	28	48
h) It made me interested in further training about autism.	1	1	14	31	52

N = 222. Missing data varies from 0 to 28 responses.

In an encouraging sign for the potential market for the more in-depth levels of AET training for the Post-16 sector in preparation, Table 6.5 also shows that 83% said the training had increased their desire for further training on autism. Finally, about three-quarters (76%) indicated that the training had made them aware of where they could go to find out more about autism. This suggests that perhaps this point should be strengthened in the materials and/or delivery

so that ideally everyone attending would know where to go to find out more about autism.

6.2.4 Making a difference

Delegates were asked to make a comment in response to the question, 'tell us about at least one positive change you plan to make [as a consequence of the training], or why you think you will not be making any such changes'. Of the 222 respondents, 190 (85.6%) made a comment. Five categories of comment dominated the responses, with 165 comments falling into the following categories:

- communicating with young people with autism (59 comments)
- working with young people as individuals (42 comments)
- understanding autism, and young people with autism (31 comments)
- making changes to environments (18 comments)
- further staff training (15 comments).

The remaining comments were on a wide range of matters, for example, six comments were made about helping young people in social situations, two comments were made about intentions to contact a young person's family members, and one comment was made about linking up with a different stake holder.

6.2.4.1 Communicating with young people with autism

The most frequent response referred to improving communication with young people with autism, with delegates explaining that they would make changes to their verbal, written and visual communications with young people. There was a recognition on the part of some of the delegates that they had probably been communicating in an ineffective way prior to the training course, and that they would use their new knowledge to change that. Illustrative examples of the comments made included:

'I now have an understanding of the condition which will help with my communication with those young people with autism.'

'[I will] be more aware of the lack of understanding of non-verbal communication.'

'Disseminating information more clearly, good communication, following things through.'

'I will be considering how I structure my sessions from now on, and communicate to all my learners what exactly I am going to do. I will also be giving more written instructions instead of just telling learners what I want them to do.'

6.2.4.2 Working with young people as individuals

Forty-two comments referred to changes that delegates intended to make related to enhanced understanding of the particular need to assess the individual needs of young people with autism. Comments focused on the need to understand the impact of different factors on learning, the need to develop a clear understanding of the needs of each young person, identifying the interests of young people, and tailoring teaching to the strengths of young people. Examples of the comments included:

'Will be more aware of the uneven profile. I will not assume that just because one student can perform a certain task they will perform other tasks as readily.'

'To deal with each student as an individual, work to find out what they are interested in, how I can connect that to the task, even if I have to think less directly.'

'Meeting individual needs and explore further into the effects of autism.'

'Improving profiles for learners to represent their barriers to learning, and strengths/areas for development.'

6.2.4.3 Understanding autism, and young people with autism

There were 31 comments relating to delegates' greater understanding of autism, and the desire to use that knowledge to understand the situation faced by young people with autism. Comments were made in relation to

recognising the possibility of autism in young people, understanding behaviour, having strategies to help support young people, and understanding that the delegates' own approaches need to be modified. Comments included:

'I have a better understanding of how the spectrum manifests, the knowledge means that behaviour is less stressful.'

'Don't worry if learner doesn't make eye contact with you when you are speaking to them – it doesn't mean they aren't listening!'

'Have learned how to recognise young people who potentially may have autism. Will be patient when talking to them and help them get out of awkward talking.'

'One positive change will be to understand autism in respect of behaviour and the reasons for this.'

6.2.4.4 Making changes to environments

There were 18 comments in relation to intentions to review or change teaching and learning environments for young people. These included points relating to changing classroom layouts, changing lighting, providing ear defenders in an occasionally noisy environment, and creating quiet zones for young people to use. Comments included, for example:

'Acknowledge that the areas where we see the students may not be suitable for all students.'

'Consider the environment and how changes/changing the environment can have such a big impact.'

'Making sure that the setting/environment is right when young people come into interview – suit their needs where possible.'

6.2.4.5 Further staff training

Delegates made 15 comments about their intention to access further training for themselves, research further on autism, roll out training to other members of staff, inform other stake holders of training available, and ensure that their settings obtained further training. Comments included:

‘Teaching tutors and giving them more strategies to help students with autism.’

‘To further develop my knowledge and practices to better support learners.’

‘Ensure training is rolled out to all teaching staff.’

6.2.5 Comments on the training

Delegates were asked, in an open question, to comment on the training session; of the 222 respondents, 140 (63.1%) made a comment. The comments were almost entirely positive, many extremely so. The few negative comments referred to issues with IT, sound quality, and lack of hand-outs that matched the visual presentation. The overwhelming majority of the comments were, however, very enthusiastic, noting, for example, that much had been learnt, that the training session was well thought through, that it provided new information and much food for thought, and that some delegates were interested in more training. Typical examples of the comments made included the following:

‘Excellent training session, feel I learnt so much in relatively short space of time. Definitely made me think.’

‘Feel the training was really useful – had the opportunity to sound-board some situations and to gain a perspective of how situations can be dealt with.’

‘Found it really interesting, especially the video clips. Would have gained more from a longer session, as it was good listening to other people’s stories and experiences – would have liked to hear more.’

‘Many thanks. It was far and away the best training on autism that I’ve experienced. Very informative and great food for thought and development.’

6.3 AET Programme 2013-15 Early Years Pilot delivery

6.3.1 The training

The training delegates were invited to complete a short questionnaire at the end. Table 6.6 shows the number of respondents by Early Years hub⁴ in 17 different training sessions. Just under half (45%) of the delegates attended training delivered by the Birmingham City Council hub.

Table 6.6 Responses by Early Years hub

Hub	Number	Percentage
North Yorkshire County Council	92	31
National Autistic Society	32	11
Leicestershire County Council	41	14
Birmingham City Council	135	45
Total	300	100

Source: Post-course questionnaires

We first describe the demographic characteristics of those who attended and then their views of the training.

6.3.2 About the training delegates

To give an indication of the range of people who attended, delegates were asked to state their job. The responses showed that the Early Years training had attracted a wide range of Early Years professionals and support staff. Those describing themselves as teaching assistants made up the largest single group, followed by teachers. Other roles represented included senior and middle managers, SENCOs and Area SENCOs, childcare workers, child-minders, children's nurses, community nursery nurses, family outreach workers, Early Years/Nursery workers/practitioners/professionals, health visitors, learning support assistants, lunchtime supervisors, nursery/pre-school assistants, and one speech and language therapist. Participants were also asked in which LA area they worked. Most responses corresponded to the hub areas, with a minority being more general, such as 'all areas', 'South', 'West Midlands'.

⁴ In our reporting of responses, percentages are rounded to nearest integer and so may not sum to 100.

Almost all the delegates were female (98%). This reflects the gendered composition of the Early Years and Foundation Stage workforce. Delegates came from a range of educational backgrounds (Table 6.7), with over half educated to below degree level.

Table 6.7 Trainees' highest educational qualification

Highest qualification	%
None	2
1-4 GCSEs or equivalent	13
5 or more GCSEs or equivalent	14
A/AS levels or equivalent	11
Higher education below degree	13
University degree	38
Other	9

N = 300. Missing data: 22 responses.

Those ticking 'other' provided details. The most frequent 'other' qualifications were also below degree level, at Level 3 e.g. NVQ Level 3s or Level 3s in Childcare.

Regarding ethnicity, the delegate group reflected the general population with 85% ticking 'White-British', 10% ticking 'Other' and 5% did not respond. Those ticking 'other' wrote their own description of their ethnicity. There were 18 different descriptions, the most common one being 'Pakistani' written by 4 people.

The delegates included people across the working age range, from 16-19 to aged over 60 years but most were in their 20s, 30s or 40s.

Table 6.8 Trainees' age bands

Age band	%
16-19	2
20-29	25
30-39	21
40-49	29
50-59	19
60 or over	3

N = 300. Missing data: 8 responses.

When asked about previous experience of teaching/working with one or more children on the autism spectrum, 86% said Yes and 14% said No. In spite of this high level of interaction with one or more children on the autism spectrum, 45% had previously had no training on autism and a further 32% had only ever had a short session on this before (Table 6.9).

Table 6.9 Previous training on understanding autism (%)

Length of previous training	%
None	45
Short session	32
1 day	11
2 days	3
More than 2 days	9

N = 300. Missing data: 6 responses.

Overall, the Early Years training pilot seems to have attracted delegates that are demographically representative of the target audience. In addition, the majority had had no or very little previous training on autism. This suggests that the pilot audience has provided a 'fair test' of the Early Years materials.

6.3.3 Delegates' views of the training

As Table 6.10 shows, delegates' views of the training were heavily skewed (89% to 95%) to the positive end of a 5-point scale. The training was viewed

as **worthwhile by 95%** (with 81% 'strongly agreeing'). This is a very strong endorsement of the training. Similarly, **just over 90% agreed** that the training had:

- increased their knowledge, awareness and understanding about autism
- confirmed that their current practice was in line with good practice and also made them aware of at least one positive change that could be made to enhance this further for young children who were or might be on the autism spectrum.

This last point was further evidenced by written responses describing such a change (discussed in detail later).

Table 6.10 Your views of the training (%)

Statements	Strongly Disagree				Strongly Agree
	1	2	3	4	5
a) It was worthwhile.	<1	1	4	14	81
b) It has increased my knowledge about autism.	<1	3	5	23	68
c) It has increased my awareness of the differences that young children with autism may experience.	1	1	6	26	65
d) It will help me to be more understanding of the types of individual differences I need to flag up.	<1	1	7	26	66
e) It has made me aware of at least one positive change I/we could make relatively easily to benefit young children who are, or may be, on the autism spectrum.	<1	1	7	23	69
f) It has confirmed that what I/we already do in our	1	<1	7	35	57

Early Years setting fits in with current thinking on good practice.					
g) It made me aware of where to find out more about autism.	0	2	8	28	61
h) It made me interested in further training about autism.	1	1	7	21	71

N = 300. Missing data varies from 0 to 15 responses.

In an encouraging sign for the potential market for the more in-depth levels of AET training for the Early Years in preparation, Table 6.10 also shows that just over 90% said the training had increased their desire for further training on autism. Finally, 89% indicated that the training had made them aware of where they could go to find out more about autism.

6.3.4 Making a difference

Delegates were asked to make a comment in response to the question, ‘tell us about at least one positive change you plan to make [as a consequence of the training], or why you think you will not be making any such changes’. Of the 300 respondents, 223 (74%) made a comment. There was a high level of similarity in the open comments relating to planned change, and the comments fell into five broad areas relating to:

- giving instructions and information to children (66 comments)
- focusing on individual children’s needs (55 comments)
- environment (48 comments)
- providing more information and training for colleagues and staff (38 comments)
- working with the parents/carers of children (16 comments)

The comments gave a clear sense that the training had produced strong, focused reflection on change that could be implemented in the delegates’ settings.

6.3.4.1 Giving instructions to children

The largest number of comments (66) related to proposed changes in giving instructions and information to children, with, for example, delegates specifically mentioning consistency of instructions, giving children time to process instructions, care in the use of language, tone and manner of speaking, the use of symbols, visual timetables, and the use of a 'now and next' boards. Sample comments included:

'Give children more time to think and take in what I have said/am saying, or asked.'

'I will start to use visual clues with autistic children and be aware of noises that affect children.'

'Make sure that requests are simple, clear and have a visual prompt.'

'Examine my communication skills and adapt to children's different responses.'

6.3.4.2 Focusing on children's individual needs

Fifty-five comments were made in respect of intended change that focused on meeting individual children's needs. Comments included developing and using pupil profiles; following and engaging with a child's particular interests; being aware of difference, but playing to strengths; developing more knowledge of individual children; and ensuring that individual children had personalised objects to help them take part in activities. Representative comments included:

'Being aware of specific needs for children and making sure that they have everything they need, and not making drastic changes in setting.'

'More individualised objects such as an individualised carpet mat.'

'More knowledge of individuals rather than generalising across children.'

'To look at children as individuals and follow their interests to motivate and tune into them.'

‘Using a mat or chair with a toy they’re interested in, using their own space for register or circle time.’

There was some sense in the open comments related to change focused on individual children that the delegates had particular children in mind.

6.3.4.3 Environment

Delegates made 48 comments related to the environment for children. The training had made the delegates begin to reconsider the environments that their children were in and how they might be modified to better support children with autism. The comments mentioned noise, lights, and sensory issues, along with the layout of rooms, and the provision of quiet areas and sensory tents. Examples of comments included:

‘To make provision of a quiet area within the playroom, and to make note of the environment and be aware of changing the provisional equipment to suit the individual “unique child”’.

‘Thinking about children’s personal space in setting, looking at the environment – clearing areas for activities – can that be improved on?’

‘Making more of a quiet area or tent for the child to go to when feeling anxious.’

6.3.4.4 Information and training for staff

Thirty-eight comments were made that related to the intention to disseminate learning from the Programme training to other colleagues, or to access further training for colleagues and staff. Five of the delegates specifically mentioned the intention to encourage colleagues to access the AET Programme, while other comments referred to finding out more about a particular aspect of autism, or disseminating the Programme learning in their settings. For example:

‘When I talk to teachers I will encourage recognition that the child is unique, that “normal” is not the aim. I will also encourage them to encourage a child’s strengths.’

‘To find out more about sensory differences our children have, and think how we can build on them to tune into the children more.’

‘As a children’s centre locality teacher, I would like the Community Outreach Early Years team and PVI’s [Private, Voluntary and Independent] I work with to access this [AET] training to improve our practice across the locality.’

6.3.4.5 Working with parents and carers

There were a comparatively small number of comments (16) which referred to better and closer working with the parent and carers of children with autism, but some interesting comments were made in this respect. These included, for example:

‘Explore with parents the 4 areas of difference and how a child reacts within them.’

‘Try to find out the interests of the child and incorporate it into planning – also see what works well at home with parents.’

6.3.5 Comments on the training

Delegates were asked, in an open question, to comment on the training session; of the 300 respondents, 146 (48.7%) made a comment. The comments were entirely positive, many of them being very positive. A small number of comments related to the possibility of receiving hand-outs that were based on the visual presentations. Typical examples of the comments made included the following:

‘Excellent information which I will reflect on a lot!! Has been very worthwhile as I have already had some training but found this to be a massive benefit as well. Thanks so much!’

‘Excellent training even though I’ve attended previous courses, also made me realise a lot of this training refers to all children not just children with autism.’

'Fantastic, really interesting and very helpful. Will look forward to putting the knowledge to use and passing on to peers. Thank you!'

'Very interesting with extremely relevant information to be shared within my setting. Lots of ideas. Thought provoking.'

7. Conclusions

The interim report has shown that in respect of the AET Programme, 2011-13, there is evidence of sustained and positive impact in the case study schools. This relates to positive changes in individual and whole school practice, along with improved outcomes for some children with autism. The 2011-13 training hub leads also continue to be very positive about the continued roll-out, and future, of the 2011-13 Programme.

In respect of the EY and P-16 Programme, 2013-15, the interim report has shown that the development and roll out of the EY and P-16 Programmes is proceeding according to timetable. The pilot phase of the first stage – ‘Making Sense of Autism’ – of the 2013-15 Programme has been successfully completed, and questionnaire generated delegate data show that the pilot phase has been an overall success. In addition, the EY and P-16 training hub leads are optimistic about the future successful roll-out of the 2013-15 AET Programme.

The next stage of the AET Programme, 2013-15 will see the roll-out of the next two stages of the EY and P-16 training materials, and a final evaluation report will be presented to the AET at the end of March, 2015.

Appendix 1: the P-16 and EY pilot stage, post-course questionnaires

i) Post-16

Raising Awareness Training — Self-evaluation Questionnaire

Date of Training	Hub	Location of training

- You can choose whether or not to answer the questions – if you do answer them, it will help the AET to make any changes to the training that are needed.
- Your answers are anonymous.

1. Your views of the training

<i>(On a scale of 1 to 5, please tick one box in each row to show how much you agree or disagree with each statement.)</i>	1 Disagree	2	3	4	5 Strongly Agree
a) It was worthwhile.					
b) It has increased my knowledge about autism.					
c) It has increased my awareness of the differences that learners with autism may experience.					
d) It will help me to be more understanding of learners with autism.					
e) It has made me aware of at least one positive change I/we could make relatively easily to benefit learners with autism.					
f) It has confirmed that what I/we already do in our Post-16 setting fits in with current thinking.					
g) It made me aware of where to find out more about autism.					
h) It made me interested in further training about autism.					

2. I have experience of teaching/working with one or more learners on the autism spectrum.

(please tick one box): No Yes

3. I have previously received training on understanding autism (please tick one box).

None Short session 1 day 2 days More than 2 days

4. Making a difference

Please think about **your role in your college/Post-16 setting**, and about what you have heard and learned in the training session. Please tell us about **at least one positive change you plan to make** to better support young people with autism in that setting **or** about why you think you will **not** be making any such changes.

5. Open comments

Please add **any additional thoughts or comments** about today's training session:

6. About you

We ask for this information because:

- It allows us to describe the sorts of people who have done this training.
- It helps us to find out for which groups of people the training works well.

6.1. Your job (please state):

6.2 In which LA area do you work? (if known):_____

6.3. Gender (please tick one box): Female Male

6.4. Education (please tick your highest level of educational qualifications):

None 1-4 GCSEs or equivalent 5 or more GCSEs or equivalent

A/AS levels or equivalent Higher education below degree level

University degree Other _____

6.5. Ethnicity (please tick one box):

White - British Other ethnic group (please state) _____

6.6. Age (please tick one box):

16-19 20-29 30-39 40-49 50-59 60 or over

Thank you for taking part in the evaluation! Please hand in your questionnaire

ii) Early Years

Making Sense of Autism Training — Self-evaluation Questionnaire

Date of Training 28.03.2014	Hub Birmingham	Location of training Saplings Day Nursery
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- You can **choose** whether or not to answer the questions – if you do answer them, it will help the AET to make any changes to the training that are needed.

- Your answers are **anonymous**.

1. Your views of the training

(On a scale of 1 to 5, please tick one box in each row to show how much you agree or disagree with each statement.)	1 Disagree	2	3	4	5 Agree
a) It was worthwhile.					
b) It has increased my knowledge about autism.					
c) It has increased my awareness of the differences that young children with autism may experience.					
d) It will help me to be more understanding of the types of individual differences I need to flag up.					
e) It has made me aware of at least one positive change I/we could make relatively easily to benefit young children who are, or may be, on the autism spectrum.					
f) It has confirmed that what I/we already do in our Early Years setting fits in with current thinking on good practice.					
g) It made me aware of where to find out more about autism.					
h) It made me interested in further training about autism.					

2. I have experience of teaching/working with one or more children on the autism spectrum.

(please tick one box): No Yes

3. I have previously received training on understanding autism (please tick one box).

None Short session 1 day 2 days More than 2 days

4. Making a difference

Please think about **your role in your Early Years setting**, and about what you have heard and learned in the training session. Please tell us about **at least one positive change you plan to make** to better support young children in that setting who are, or may be, on the autism spectrum, **or** about why you think you will **not** be making any such changes.

5. Open comments

Please add **any additional thoughts or comments** about today's training session:

6. About you

We ask for this information because:

- It allows us to describe the sorts of people who have done this training.
- It helps us to find out for which groups of people the training works well.

6.1. **Your job** (*please state*):

6.2 **In which LA area do you work?** (*if known*): _____

6.3. **Gender** (*please tick one box*): Female Male

6.4. **Education** (*please tick your highest level of educational qualifications*):
None 1-4 GCSEs or equivalent 5 or more GCSEs or equivalent

A/AS levels or equivalent Higher education below
degree level
University degree Other _____

6.5. Ethnicity (*please tick one box*):

White - British Other ethnic group (*please
state*) _____

6.6. Age (*please tick one box*):

16-19 20-29 30-39 40-49 50-59 60
or over

**Thank you for taking part in the evaluation! Please hand in your
questionnaire**