

## **Surrey Autism Champions Network**

### **Autism Training**

People with autism spectrum conditions (ASC) in Surrey have identified that they need services to have expertise and understanding of autism. The Autism Champions network has been set up in response to this. The aim is to be a countywide network of expertise, and to foster joint work to meet the needs of people with ASC in Surrey. We aim to train at least 80 Champions, and keep delivering the training so that the number of Champions active in the county remains at 80 or over.

We have linked with the Tizard Centre at the University of Kent to use the National Autistic Society SPELL training materials for this process. SPELL has been formally evaluated, is linked to current research, and has a strong evidence base for its effectiveness. A formal evaluation overseen by the Tizard Centre, has shown that our Autism Champions process using SPELL is a strong and effective training approach.

### **How Does It Work?**

Any team supporting people with ASC can identify someone to do the Autism Champion training. Their manager should also support them to identify and access any other autism training appropriate to the individuals they support. The Champion then trains their team using the SPELL training materials, and acts as an autism practice lead, advising their team mates, and identifying and implementing good autism practice in their service.

Trainee Champions are trained and mentored over a 6 month period. The Mentors are professionals with a strong background in autism from Health, Social Care and independent sector specialist providers. Each Champion is allocated to a group, which meets with a Mentor for a half day once a month. The Mentors train the group using the SPELL materials, and set work to be completed between these meetings. The groups discuss how the new approaches work in their services, and share problem solving.

Each Champion should use the SPELL training materials to train their team. (Available to buy from Pavilion Publishing here - <http://www.pavpub.com/p-287-understanding-and-supporting-children-and-adults-on-the-autism-spectrum.aspx>. They may also devise other training and development activities based on courses they have attended, and their own developing expertise. **We recommend that all services with an Autism Champion buy the SPELL materials to use for internal training.** If possible, Champions should try to offer any courses they have developed to other teams involved in the process.

Champions are encouraged to network with each other, sharing problem-solving and good practice. To help with this process, we aim to run network meetings at least once a year, and to invite external speakers / trainers (Funding permitting).

## **Becoming an Autism Champion**

### **What will I get out of it?**

- The support of an expert mentor for six months.
- Extra training and development opportunities.
- The chance to mentor and train your team.
- The chance to link with other Autism Champions to share good practice, and help with problem-solving.
- The chance to make things better for people with autistic spectrum conditions who use your service and in Surrey as a whole.

### **What will I need to do?**

- Attend monthly meetings with a Mentor for six months.
- Work through the SPELL training materials, and any work set by your mentor between these meetings.
- Access other relevant training courses and other development opportunities.
- Support your team through the SPELL training.
- Devise training and development opportunities for your team.
- Link with Autism Champions from different services.
- Attend an annual meeting to make links and share the progress made
- Support development of autism expertise in other services. This may be by offering out training you have developed, and / or inviting outside staff to join a SPELL mentoring group you are running.

## Expectations from Champions:

1. To attend at least 4 of the 6 meetings arranged with your Mentor, and to catch up on any work covered in meetings you miss.
2. To do the allocated work in between meetings to your Mentor's satisfaction.
3. To contribute to the group discussions and show commitment to your learning about autism spectrum conditions, to your Mentor's satisfaction.
4. To demonstrate that you have understood and learnt the material covered to your Mentor's satisfaction.
5. To plan & commit to take your team through the training materials in groups.

When you complete these to your Mentor's satisfaction, you will get a certificate, and can call yourself an Autism Champion. Up until that point you will be a *Trainee* Autism Champion. If you have difficulty in meeting any of the expectations please talk to your Mentor, who will be flexible and, where possible, will offer support for you to catch up.

## Expectations from Managers:

1. To free up your Autism Champion to attend the 6 half day sessions.
2. In addition, to allow the Champion approximately 20 hours over the 6 months to complete the work.
3. To support your Autism Champion to attend the annual network events.
4. To support your Autism Champion to access other relevant external courses and conferences relating to autism spectrum conditions.
5. To buy the training materials, and allocate time for the Autism Champion to use them to train their colleagues.

<http://www.kent.ac.uk/tizard/Autism/index.html>

## Booking a Place

To get onto the waiting list for the next round of Autism Champions, please complete the information below and return by email to [thomas.moore@surreycc.gov.uk](mailto:thomas.moore@surreycc.gov.uk)

<b>Name:</b>	
Organisation name and team address	
Contact tel no	
Email address	
<b>Line Manager's Name:</b>	
Contact tel no	
Email address	

If you need more information, please contact:

Tom Moore,  
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