

Autism and Social Communication Team Information

ASCT
Unlocking Potential





West Sussex County Council

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Who are we?

The Autism and Social Communication Team (ASCT) consists of specialist Advisory Teachers (ATs) and Specialist Learning Support Assistants (SLSAs). Our team has a range of experience of, and knowledge about autism and social communication differences (SCD). Through collaborative working with parent carers, professionals within the educational setting and others involved with the child's development; we aim to maximise high quality local, inclusive educational opportunities for all autistic children and those with SCD to enable them to reach their full potential.

Vision

For all pupils and parent carers to be heard and enabled, and all staff supported and equipped, so that all experience equal opportunity to thrive at school.

How do we work with settings and families?

The ASC Team work directly with WSCC maintained Mainstream schools, Free schools, Academies, and the Alternative Provision College, offering consultation and training in areas relating to autism and social communication differences. No diagnosis is required for ASCT support, the team usually becomes involved at an early stage when schools first need advice on how to provide inclusive practice.

Advisory Teachers

ATs hold caseloads of schools and offer termly visits to every school. These visits are generally **C**onsultation **A**nd **R**eview **M**eetings (CARMs), the content of which is personalised to meet the needs within each school. CARMs are 1-3 hours long, hosted by the school. The format for a CARM is usually a discussion about up to four pupils, with relevant school staff and parental involvement. Pupil voice is also central to the CARM discussion. Schools can also use CARMs to discuss whole class, subject specific information or setting support (a



general report rather than individual ones for children will be provided). ATs also offer a range of staff training options which are provided free of charge.

This follows the **Assess, Plan, Do, Review** cycle (APDR). As part of the APDR cycle, it is expected that schools will have used the Ordinarily Available Inclusive Practice (OAIP) document which can be found here: <https://schools.local-offer.org/> to implement additional Quality First Teaching strategies prior to requesting support from the ASCT.

Specialist Learning Support Assistants

SLSAs will offer practical support and guidance to individual members of staff (typically a Teaching Assistant - TA), usually following discussion at a CARM.

Referral to a SLSA is made by the Advisory Teacher (AT) allocated to the school when a specific support need is identified.

How do we fit with the ADPR cycle?

Assess: Alongside school staff and parent carers, build a picture of the individual's strengths and challenges. Use pupil and parent carer voice alongside both informal and structured observations and a range of checklists completed by school staff and/or the ASCT member.

Plan: Support staff to plan and prioritise individualised support using information gathered, including strategies from the OAIP and additional advice from the ASCT. Training is also available – further information can be found on the guidance and request form.

Do: Following advice being given by the ASCT, a minimum period of six weeks for this advice to be implemented and impact to be recorded is expected. SLSAs may work with school staff to support their implementation of advice.

Review: Ongoing reviews of the impact of strategies inform next steps. This could include further discussion with a SLSA or at a CARM.





Surgeries

In addition to CARMs, the ASCT also offer weekly 20-minute slots at **AT surgeries** on a Thursday afternoon, and **SLSA surgeries** on a Tuesday morning.

The AT surgery slots are to support needs that arise that are out of the ordinary or urgent. The school can contact their allocated AT to request a slot at the next available surgery. These discussions are anonymous.

The SLSA surgery slots provide an opportunity for any school staff who are supporting autistic children and young people to develop knowledge, understanding and practice. School staff can discuss any area of concern, seek general advice, gain practical strategies to enable autistic individuals reach their full potential. For SLSA surgeries, schools should email the SLSA team at asctslsasurgery@westsussex.gov.uk with a brief outline of the reasons they are contacting the service.

Process for working with the Autism and Social Communication Team

1. Schools can download the referral form. The latest guidance and request forms are located on the ASCT and LBAT page of the Tools for Schools web site. <https://schools.local-offer.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/Guidance-and-Request-forms-for-Schools-ASCT-and-LBAT-support-Aug-2022-Final.docx>
2. Schools to complete the referral form. It is essential to share the views of all the pupil, parent carers, teachers, teaching assistants, SENCo and any other agencies involved. It is worth noting that when carefully considered and comprehensive information is shared in the referral request it adds significantly to the quality of the resulting consultation and review meeting. It is essential that parent carer consent is obtained before you consult with the Advisory Teacher
3. Schools to send the completed form to schoolsABC@westsussex.gov.uk and your school's allocated Advisory Teacher if known.
4. All requests for support are considered at a fortnightly allocation meeting. A response from the team will be communicated to you within two working weeks of the allocation meeting



5. An appointment date can be set prior to the request being submitted. Where appointments are agreed ahead of time, the school must send the appropriate request form at least 10 working days before the date of the visit.
6. Strategies for all pupils discussed are tailored to suit the individual's needs, recognising what is appropriate and possible within school resources. Interventions and strategies recommended are evidence-based following national and local guidance (such as from the Education Endowment Foundation) and support is given to develop systems to monitor impact.
7. Following the CARM a report will be emailed to the school SENCo to share a record of the discussion and strategies to be considered. The school is responsible for sharing this record with parent carers and relevant staff.
8. The school SENCo can now update the pupils individual learning plan and timetable to include the agreed recommendations and any associated interventions, strategies, and resources to be delivered.





Further Information

- We offer termly virtual training sessions covering a range of topics.
- We support schools to achieve our Autism Aware Award (AAA) which is an award for educational settings which demonstrate an effective and positive whole school approach to supporting their autistic pupils and those with social communication differences.
- We deliver parent programmes including: EarlyBird Plus, Coping with Uncertainty in Everyday Situations (CUES) and Exploring Autism. Further information can be provided by your school's allocated AT.
- Further ways to gather **pupil voice** can be found via this link: <https://schools.local-offer.org/childs-journey/voice-of-the-child/how-to-gain-pupil-voice/>
- It is expected that schools will have explored the **Tools for Schools** website that has a wealth of information and support strategies. Additionally, the **Ordinarily Available Inclusive Practice Guidance** and the **Inclusion Framework** can be downloaded from here: <https://schools.local-offer.org/>
- The West Sussex Parent Carer Forum: <https://www.wspcf.org.uk/> and Reaching Families: <https://www.reachingfamilies.org.uk/> can offer additional support to families.



If you have any questions about the service or would like to contact your allocated Autism and Social Communication Team member, you can do this directly.

If you do not know who your allocated Advisor is or do not have their contact details, please email the **ASCT manager, Carina Reid** at carina.reid@westsussex.gov.uk or the team administrator at schoolsabc@westsussex.gov.uk and they will be able to let you know who your allocated advisor is and share their contact details with you.

