



In response to research, which has clearly highlighted the importance of post diagnostic support for parents/carers, The National Autistic Society (UK) has developed the *Help!* programme.

What is the aim of the Programme?

The *Help!* programme provides parents and full time carers with information, advice and support. It helps develop an understanding of autistic spectrum disorders and positive strategies, as well as knowledge of rights, benefits and of local support services.

Who can attend the programme?

It is open to parents and carers of school age children, young people or adults, who have received a diagnosis of an autistic spectrum disorder (ASD).

What does it cost?

The programme is delivered free to parents/carers.

About the Programme

Up to ten families can attend each programme. Sessions include presentations, group discussions and video material.

The 20 hour programme, which consists of six sessions, includes the following topics:

Session 1 – Introduction and sharing experiences of diagnosis

Session 2 – Autism Spectrum Disorders

Session 3 – Communication

Session 4 – Behaviour

Session 5 – Education (or adult life)

Session 6 – Legislation and benefits

A *help!* Parent Manual, including handouts, information booklets and leaflets, and a pack containing information for a personal profile folder for your son or daughter is included in the programme.

Where possible local professionals and Autism NZ staff will attend relevant sessions.

When and where are the sessions held?

The *help!* Programme Coordinator will liaise with Autism NZ branches, organizations, parent groups and local professionals to determine the age group to be covered and where the programme might be held. Autism NZ members and the *help!* database are informed of forthcoming programmes.

The programme may consist of a mix of day and evening sessions.

Attendance on the 20 hour *help!* Programme.

Help! Is a 20 hour programme and therefore families should attend all six sessions. We appreciate that committing to attending this full programme may be difficult for some families. Please contact Autism NZ to discuss your personal situation.

How do I apply for a place on the programme?

Please contact Autism NZ to discuss forthcoming programmes in your area. Once we have your details they will be kept on a database which will help to inform of future programmes. You will be contacted when a programme relevant to your circumstances is being delivered.

The benefits of the programme

Following a diagnosis of an autistic spectrum disorder, many parents and carers feel isolated and unaware of what to do next. By providing basic information on communication and behaviour strategies and education and benefits parents are given guidance on how to support their child now and in the future.

The strength of the *help!* Programme is the sharing of experiences, learning together and reducing isolation.

Families attending the programme have said:

"It was good to share with other people who understand our situation and not to be told that things can't be as bad as we say they are."

"I have learnt more during these six weeks than in two years of reading all the books and surfing the net."

"For the first time in 11 years I am able to communication with my son."

"Our son now receives ten hours of support at school."

*"The *help!* Programme was the first real, comprehensive support that we have had. Life is still tough. However, we are using some of the techniques and they are helping us."*

Contact details:

For general *help!* enquiries please contact:

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