



EarlyBird & EarlyBird Plus Courses

EarlyBird (under 5 years old) and **EarlyBird Plus** (ages 4 to 9 years 10 months old) are programmes designed by the National Autistic Society for parents and carers of children with a confirmed diagnosis of Autism, offering advice and guidance on strategies and approaches for supporting young autistic children. Both programmes work on understanding autism, building confidence to encourage interaction and communication and analysing and managing behaviour. Both programmes aim to empower parents/carers and help establish good practice. Attendees will receive a workbook (one per family) that supplements the programme for which there is a voluntary contribution.

There are three strands to both programmes:

- Understand your child's autism
- Structure interactions to develop your child's interaction
- Develop strategies to pre-empt problem behaviours and/or manage those which are displayed

EarlyBird (for preschool children):

- EarlyBird is a three-month parent/carer programme combining group training sessions with individual home visits.
- Each course consists of between 4 to 6 families.
- Each family can have 2 places on the course.
- There are 8 taught sessions that each session last 2 ½ hours (unfortunately there is no childcare provision).
- There are 2 home visits with the child.
- The course is run by 2-3 multi-agency professionals with knowledge and experience of working with young people with autism. Each professional is licenced by the National Autistic Society to deliver the programme.

EarlyBird Plus (for children aged between 4 years and 9 years 10 months):

- EarlyBird Plus is a three-month parent/carer programme combining group training sessions with individual home visits.
- Each course consists of between 4 to 6 families.
- Each family can have 3 places.
- Ideally a representative from the child's school should attend alongside the family to ensure consistency of approach and support.
- There are 8 taught sessions that each session last 2 ½ hours whilst the child is at school.
- There are 2 home visits.
- The course is run by 2 to 3 professionals with knowledge and experience of working with young people with autism. Each professional is licenced by the National Autistic Society to deliver the programme.



Cygnnet

Cygnnet is a parenting support programme designed by Barnardo's that aims to support parents/carers of children and young people aged between 5 and 18 years who have Autism. Cygnnet acknowledges parents/carers as the experts when it comes to their own children. The underpinning value in the development of the Cygnnet programme is the belief that if parents and carers have access to appropriate knowledge, skills and support they can often find a practical solution to build confidence in family life. The programme aims to work towards supporting and developing the young person's communication skills and behaviour.

Cygnnet (for children and young people between 5 years and 18 years):

- Cygnnet is a 7-week parent programme providing group learning sessions.
- Each course consists of up to 6 families.

- Each family can have 2 places.
- A representative from the child’s school could attend alongside one family member to ensure consistency of approach and support.
- There are 7 taught sessions that each last 2 ½ hours whilst the child is at school.
- The course is run by practitioners who have experience of working with pupils with autism across the age **range** and across the spectrum.

West Kent Contact details

District	Contact
Tonbridge & Malling - EarlyBird	Emma Holt Specialist Teaching and Learning Service emma.holt@stls.nexus.school.org.uk
Tunbridge Wells – EarlyBird	
Tonbridge & Malling EarlyBird Plus	
Maidstone - EarlyBird	Mireille Ford Children’s Therapies Service mireille.ford@NHS.net
Maidstone - Cygnet	Tracey Bradley Specialist Teaching and Learning Service tbradley@five-acre.kent.sch.uk
Tunbridge Wells - Cygnet	Julie Goodfellow Specialist Teaching and Learning Service julie.goodfellow@stlsoutreach.org.uk

Cygnet can also be accessed through **Early Help** (<https://www.kelsi.org.uk/special-education-needs/integrated-childrens-services/Early-Help-Toolkit>) and **Space to Be Me** (<https://space2beme.org.uk/>) within the districts.

Are you the parent or carer of a child who has recently been diagnosed with an Autism Spectrum Disorder/Condition?



July 2023 – July 2024

A programme provided as part of the Local Offer for families in West Kent