

NEURODIVERSITY > AUTISM > SUPPORT WITH EXPLORE SERVICES

Support with Explore Services

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1. Autism and Support with Explore Services - How do I get a referral to Explore_

Hi, I'm Helen Wagstaff, an autism coordinator with Christchurch Hospital. We've been doing a few videos to help families understand a little bit more about what's available in the community and what's around families with autistic children. We've asked a number of agencies to be involved to answer some of our questions and they've all been really happy to come along. So today we've been, have invited and we're welcoming, Explore. Thank you very much for coming along. We've got Michelle and Sally, I'll leave them to introduce themselves. Kim, our parent, is going to be asking the questions that families have put forward.

So thank you, welcome. Hi, I'm Michelle, I work for Explore in Christchurch. I am a speech therapist by background and work as a supervising behaviour specialist across our contracts. Behaviour support for autism contracts, which we'll go into more detail about. Yeah, awesome. Thank you. Hi, I'm Sally. I'm Sally Clayton. I'm based down in Dunedin and I manage, have a national role managing our autism programs. My background is occupational therapy and I also do a little work with families locally down in Dunedin as well. Thank you for coming all the way out. It's a pleasure. Pleasure. Okay. How do I get a referral for Explore?

So for Explore, there's four different services that we offer. So for our group programs like Team Life and Exploring Autism, you can refer yourself through our website. For our other two programs, which is behaviour support and targeted parent support, you need to come through another agency. So the NASC is one place to go, so LifeLinks in Canterbury. Helen, autism coordinators, paediatricians

can support access through to TPS and also can help with that. I guess that link with the NASC in terms of gathering information and presenting the need of unique behaviour support as well. Do you need a diagnosis to attend those courses?

So, you need, for nearly all our services, you need to have a diagnosis at the moment. The one exception we have is that we don't have a diagnosis. If you've got a really young child, so if they're sort of nought to five and they're going through the diagnostic process, but we know that that's going to take a long time, and the family and the team doing that assessment agree that a diagnosis is highly likely, then we'll accept people with a sort of provisional diagnosis into Exploring Autism. Okay. Yeah. Cool. That's good. That's a good question. A lot of families ask, so. Thank you. Yeah. Yep.

So, our behaviour support referrals come through the NASC. So, in Christchurch, it's LifeLinks, and anyone with a disability diagnosis that is linked in with them can be referred to us. Can parents make that referral? Parents can contact their needs assessor, and they will then put that referral through for them. That is for anyone with challenging behaviour. So, what is challenging behaviour? Yeah. It's that sort of behaviour that's getting in the way of a person leaving, so that meaningful life for themselves and their family.

2. Autism and Support with Explore Services - What kind of supports does Explore offer _

Can you clarify what sort of supports Explore offers? So we've got the National Behaviour Support Contract and Autism Support Contracts with the Ministry of Health. With Behaviour Support that's one-to-one support within the home with one of our specialists and we do an assessment and work out with the family what's on top for them at the moment and get a bit of what's happening in that natural environment and then develop goals and support behaviour change through that. We have our autism services so we've got Exploring Autism which is it's split into two age bands so we've got zero to five and six to nine.

Sometimes five-year-olds may go up into the six to nine group because it's based on school age and there's some school information in that one and that is sort of introducing autism to families, building their understanding of it, getting them to think a bit more about how their young person's sort of experiencing it and developing it. So we're developing a bit of a toolbox of strategies. We've got our books here, we just brought these along just so people would look. So they come with workbooks which is really lovely because then families can, they're not pressured to remember all the information and they can sort of flip through that at a later date.

And then we have Teen Life which is our, Exploring Autism is a six session program and that can be run in groups which is really lovely because then the families build those connections as well. I think they get as much out of it from what they share with each other as they do actually from the content which is nice. I've heard that families have said that they like the face-to-face, they like meeting other families so that's good. Yeah it is really lovely meeting other families that are experiencing what they are at that moment in time. And then we have our Teen Life which is this one here, again a workbook was it, which is really handy as well.

These have even more content than what we go through at Covering.com. So it's nice for families to have. And that's for six sessions, group based or, and that can be in person or remotely online. And it sort of breaks down I guess extra considerations for that parents might have and support strategies for those teenage years. And I have to say Michelle that Teen Life I've personally come to because, correct me if I'm wrong or if it's still the same, but Teen Life is a really good thing. You can invite a professional along as well to that group to do. And so yeah I attended as a professional with one family and yeah I got a lot out of it as well.

I learned a lot so. It's amazing. It's got a really really strong autistic voice coming through. We've got some lovely videos that sort of where autistic adults share their experience which is lovely for families to hear. And a supporting professional can come along to the face-to-face groups with a parent. If that's going to help their team around the person.

3. Autism and Support with Explore Services - Living rurally

I know that you can come out and see people in your home, what about living rurally? Is that the same? Absolutely, so we accept referrals for anyone, anywhere in the country. What I'd say is if you live rurally and it's for an individual service, you're going to wait longer for one-on-one support, not in terms of behaviour support, that's just in terms of priority. So if you can connect with one of the remote groups, if you're looking at exploring autism or team life, that's a much faster way of connecting in, but if you need individual support we absolutely would come to you. Okay, thank you.

4. Autism and Support with Explore Services - Strategies to use while waiting

While I am waiting to be seen by you, what kind of support can, what can I do in the meantime? What would you recommend? Well we have, we are aware we have waitlists. So we have developed a bunch of resources and put online that parents can dip in and out of as they need. We've got, there's four modules on there currently. One is supporting my child's behaviour. One is supporting my child's

communication. One is my child's social world. And the last one is safety. And these are modules that they have additional resources within them. And you don't have to go through them all at once. You can dip in and out. I often actually jump in for my behaviour support work and grab some visual stuff from there for families. It's really useful. Which is on our website. And there's also on our website as well. If you go into the behaviour support page, there's some information on collaborative problem solving and sleep. And there's another couple in there as well. So resources that parents can access and they're all free on there. And just for parents, we'll probably put up some links to those along with our video. Cool, thank you.

5. Autism and Support with Explore Services - Are services free _

Do I have to pay for its full services? No, all the services that we've talked about today are funded, so they're available for anybody who needs disability services. We are looking at, in the next year, at growing the range of services that we've got that will fall outside of our contracts. So in six months, 12 months' time, there might be more, and that might be user pays for those, but the ones we've talked about today are all funded. Thank you. It's good to know, isn't it? Yeah.

6. Autism and Support with Explore Services - Further support – being re referred

If you've worked with us and then later on we need more support, do I need to be re-referred? Unfortunately yes. And some of that is about taking time to reconsider is that same service the right service for you or actually would one of the other services be a better match. So each episode of work sort of concludes and then if you need an extra piece of work at the end of it then read it. Is there any way we can get in faster, families can get in faster? I think some families have heard about something called rapid re-referral. Is that? Rapid re-entry. Re-entry that's the word yeah. Rapid re-entry is for those families who have come through us we've completed a piece of work with them on a specific behavior and that's sort of starting to pop up again.

So it's maybe about two or three sessions sort of supporting them to re-introduce strategies or problem solve what may have changed for them in that time. Cool and so what you're saying is that if it's a new behavior or a new thing that's happening then we need a new referral. But if it's just recently you've stickled by to the families then you can get that in. For behaviours up to a year actually from when the discharges happened. Yeah. You can do a rapid re-entry and for a light touch check just to dust off the pans rethink about it. Yeah. And then our team would also support that if you did need another longer piece of work they would support you to go back to the NASC and re-trigger that behaviour support referral as well.

So the thinking is if it is a new behavior you'd want to make sure you've got that thorough assessment and actually support the person or the family. Yeah.

7. Autism and Support with Explore Services - What happens if I don't get along with the person allocated to us _

What if I don't get on with that Explore worker that's working with me with behaviour? Can I get someone else that might be able to work with me? Is that an option? Look, I would say if there are concerns about the relationship is creating barriers for you to making positive change for your child, I would phone up the local manager and maybe ask for a three-way conversation. Because sometimes you can resolve that, and if you can resolve it, it means that somebody's already got a really good understanding of your child, they've got an understanding of the environment, they've got an understanding of the behaviour. So if you change that worker, you have to restart all that again. So if we can work on that relationship and understand what it is that's getting in the way, we might be able to find a resolution without doing that. And I think sometimes it's just potentially miscommunication. Or something that someone said something, but I haven't quite heard it right, and that's where it can lead to a downfall. So it's always a good idea to talk together and see if you can. Thank you again, Tara.

8. Autism and Support with Explore Services - Working with schools

Do you explore work within schools or work with schools and can they attend meetings with me or provide information about my child to the school? Our contracts are mainly for in the home but when you're talking about wanting children to generalise skills or you're wanting to think about ways of supporting people to learn new things, it's helpful to have a cross-environment approach. So the Ministry of Ed have their own services specifically for school but quite often if we were involved in behaviour support we'd want to see your child at school to get an idea about how they're managing in that environment.

We're really happy for our plans to be shared with school teams. And so that's really important. Sometimes it makes complete sense for all the people involved in your child's life to come round a table and to think about what those plans look like. So we're not generally

writing interventions for schools but there's a willingness to work with the wider team. Work with and alongside as opposed to within. And within a piece of work that we're doing, if it is relevant for that young person attending IELTS, I think that's really important. We're working with IEPs just to support some of those consistent goals, strategies that are being used at home being implemented at school if that is possible.

Yeah, and that's good to know when we were talking to the Ministry earlier. It was around who can attend IEPs. So that's great to know that it's something that you've explored. If it's important. If it's important and needed, yeah, totally. Thank you. Is there any other way you can help me, support me to get information out? to get information from school? So within Teen Life and Exploring Autism, there is some information for families that sort of give them some tips on how to support those conversations and yeah. That's really good to know because those courses are really designed for parents for understanding, but it's good that you can give parents information of how to either provide school with information and get that support.

And it is really lovely within a group environment that once that conversation starts, you often get parents sharing their experience and giving each other tips and pointers on what's worked for them. Yeah, no, it's just good. And I think that's such a good thing about those groups is that parents get together and actually connect with each other, don't they? And yeah, support each other, going forward, I think. I know the group that I was involved with, those parents, there was about three or four that stuck together and contacted each other for quite a few months afterwards. So that was good, yeah.

And the difference with Teen Life is that as parents, you come in with expert knowledge as well. Do you know, like it's a much more dynamic discussion because actually mums and dads and people coming into that have got 10 to 16 years experience of supporting a young person. And they're the experts, aren't you? You're the experts in your children. We always learn something new from a Teen Life group. And whether it's your groups or whether it's the behaviour side of Explore, they're the parents that know their child. And you guys are the experts in behaviour and education. Yes, you are.

9. Autism and Support with Explore Services - Supporting siblings

Do you have any supports in place for siblings, for them to help understand their sibling or what's going on with their brother or sister? I guess when you think about that, sort of thinking about it being more, when you're thinking about autism and a sibling's understanding, it's not a one-off conversation, so it's not necessarily going to be covered within a piece of work we do, but what we can do is support that starting and families knowing where to go for that information to support that, because their sibling's going to keep coming back with questions as they go. In both our programmes exploring autism and teen life, there's a section where we talk about supporting your child to understand their diagnosis, and often in that the fallout is supporting other people to understand their diagnosis and what it means. So it comes up in the group programmes as well as our individual work as well. That's good. Thank you.

10. Autism and Support with Explore Services - What organisations can help_

With autism in mind, what are some more organisations you think could offer support or help us? The two main ones for anyone in New Zealand would be Autism New Zealand and Altogether Autism. Both have really fabulous websites and lots of services that are available locally, so I would definitely check those out. Canterbury University is also doing a lot of intervention-type supports that are open to families anywhere in the country but have been facilitated out of Canterbury. Amazing autism coordinators.

11. Autism and Support with Explore Services - Behaviour support

What approach do you use in your behaviour support groups in here? So in our behaviour support work we use a model called Positive Behaviour Support and that approach is, it looks at taking time to really understand why a child or a young person is engaging in tricky behaviour. So you want to understand the why because the way in supporting that is not dealing with the behaviour head on but it's understanding actually this is around communication, this is around sensory processing. So that when you come to look at how you support that child to make change, there is a component about supporting the child and the people in that environment to develop new skills but there's also a component about thinking about the environment and how we can adapt the environment.

To be more supportive to that child and reduce the likelihood of those triggers happening. So it's a much more, we talk about it having multiple elements in terms of how we think about supporting behaviour change and one of the key bits is that it doesn't utilise any adverse strategies. So we never use punishment as a way of supporting behaviour change. Yeah, it's looking at why behaviour is happening and not just the behaviour because if you looked at the behaviour itself, the why is still there so it's going to come out in another way. So it's that building skills for that young person. There's always a reason.

It's looking for that function, what is the function of the behaviour, what is it, why are they behaving that way and what are they getting from it. Behaviour is communication so we've got to work out what it's communicating to us. Yeah. And how we can support that young person. Thank you. Yeah. That's great.

12. Autism and Support with Explore Services - Key messages

Thank you so much for coming along and spending time with us today. I was just wondering whether you two could just tell me a key message, or tell the families a key message to take away from, about Explore, about what you guys do. Guess what I really enjoy about the work I do with Explore is it's a team approach. I don't come in as the expert. We work as a team with the family to, either with the education programmes or in the behaviour support service, to work out what's on top for them and how we can work through that together. And there's always more than one solution, so that really understanding what's important to a family is essential for us understanding what is the right solution. And actually, if the first time what we're suggesting doesn't work, actually talk about it, because there are, there are other ways in which we can approach the work that we do as well. As a parent, I've had both behaviour support in the home and I'm currently attending the Team Life programme and I found both very helpful and feel thoroughly supported by Explore, so you do great work. Thank you. So thank you very much, Explore, for coming along today and sharing what you do with our families. So thank you.