



## Coventry intervention: Eating differently for children with ASD

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**At the moment, this is available for those people with a COVENTRY GP ONLY. You cannot self-refer for this intervention. Please discuss the possibility of a referral with a professional and they can make a referral to our services using our usual referral forms, requesting this intervention.**

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### What you will learn

This course will:

- Explain why some children with ASD have difficulties with eating;
- Tell you about strategies to encourage your child to eat differently;
- Show you how to keep a food diary;
- Provide you with a relaxation script to practice with your child.

This is a psychological intervention based on cognitive behavioural approaches. Children and their parents attend together and do simple tasks outside the sessions. You will bring your information about progress with practice tasks with you to the sessions.

The idea of the group is to improve your child's understanding of eating and of different foods and to help them to try out eating differently. One of the significant problems with autism is rigid thinking patterns which lead to the child rejecting information about eating and food, as well as refusing to try them. Therefore, the group will tackle this in the sessions. Your child will not need to eat in any of the sessions so you can reassure them that the sessions will involve talking and thinking only.

We know that some children will be worried about going into sessions so we have designed it so that all children and all parents will be involved in all the sessions. This will mean you will know exactly what they have been told about food, anxiety, eating and relaxation.

Most children with this sort of problem are very anxious around food and they do not know how to control their breathing and body so that they reduce the tension. Each session will have a combination of relaxation practice, understanding more about food and eating and dealing with anxiety around food and it will end with playing a food/eating related game or activity.

There will be homework tasks to complete, including a simple daily food diary, a game to play at home, and practicing eating differently (at your child's own pace so it will not be too challenging). We will be asking parents to try eating differently too, so that your child is more likely to try things themselves. This will not be a big task but it will help your child to watch someone else facing a similar sort of challenge. It will also teach your child to recognise anxiety and to see how others manage it.

## **What it will not cover?**

We will not be discussing allergies or toileting problems. It will not include eating in any of our sessions.

## **How you will learn**

We are trying to make the course interesting and useful as possible so there will be a variety of listening and learning, using handouts, presentations and video clips, and some sharing and discussing successes and some difficulties. All the families on the course will be facing similar problems. Although we might ask for examples of behaviour, there will not time be able to go into any detailed analysis of the problems of any one child, and you will not have to talk to the group as a whole unless you want to give an example.

## **Who will lead the workshop?**

One of the clinicians below will run the group:

**Claire Fenton, Neurodevelopmental Nursery Nurse** - Claire's role within the team is to run a variety of groups for children and parents/carers, including the Cygnet autism course for parents of newly diagnosed children and pre-assessment information sessions. She conducts developmental assessments of our youngest children and provides psychological therapy for young children. Claire has also provided training and consultations to colleagues within Integrated Children's Services. Claire has worked for the NHS for the past 20 years - as part of the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Team then joining the Neurodevelopmental Service in 2014. During this time she has worked with a wide range of children with a variety of emotional and behavioural difficulties as well as children with various disorders. Claire has specialised in working with children with autism and other neurodevelopmental problems.

**Heather Moran, Consultant Child Clinical Psychologist** - Heather is a Consultant Child Clinical Psychologist, in the Neurodevelopmental Team. She has worked with children and their families for 30 years and has been offering parent workshops for many years. She also gives talks and training on ASD and similar difficulties to other professionals at conferences and workshops across the UK. Heather keeps up to date with research on psychological problems and behavioural interventions and will try to explain how the research results can help you to understand and manage your child's difficulties. Heather is trained in 3Di and DISCO autism assessments and conducts autism assessments. She specialises in Personal Construct Psychology and is involved in training and supervision using that model.

## **Training for excellence in the NHS**

Sometimes we will also have trainees and students observing us in the sessions so they can learn about our work and develop their skills. This is a very important part of their training but if you or the young person would prefer not to have them in a session, please let us know when you arrive for the appointment.

## **Practical arrangements**

Due to commissioning arrangements this intervention is available for those with a COVENTRY GP ONLY. When you arrive for your session, please check in at our reception desk and a member of the team will meet you there.

## **Childcare**

Unfortunately, we are unable to offer any childcare provision.

## **How to book**

After your referral is accepted, you will be invited to book onto this intervention by calling our admin team on 024 7696 1226.

Neurodevelopmental Service  
024 7696 1226