



# Family Advice Service Impact Report 2018

Caroline Brinkman  
Income Generation and Development Lead  
We Are Beams



The Beams Family Advice Service is usually the first point of contact for most parents. They don't call us when they are having a good day. The first contact will be emotional, sometimes tearful when the parent of a disabled child is desperate, seeking help and advice and has no one else to turn to.

The Family Advice Service is offered in Dartford, Gravesham and Sevenoaks.

The role of the team is to provide the right advice and support to parents so that they can make the best choices for their disabled child. The advice we give is for any financial matters, education, health, transport and mobility, emotional support for parents and offering parental programmes so that the family can meet the disabled child's needs.

Our advice team offer home visits, a telephone helpline, dual call to appointments at schools or with medical professionals drop-in clinics, Children in Need reviews, access to a large resource library and specialist information, parent workshops on various topics such as Maketon training or stress management, a father's club, and a siblings' club.

Our intention is to offer the holistic approach to the whole family.

At any one time we can be supporting 350 member families through our various services.

This year we have achieved the following outputs:

- 1385 enquiries, 70% of which had educational concerns
- 10 Cygnet courses with 75 families taking part
- 91 families received intensive 1-2-1 support with Education, Health & Care plan assessments and reviews
- 192 individual support meetings either at home or in clinic.
- 39 drop in clinics

All outputs have been achieved through a combination of telephone advice, 121 sessions, support at school, local authority or health professional meetings or parent group work.

***“They've had a massive impact in a very short amount of time. I don't know what I would do if I couldn't ring the Family Advice Team if I needed help or advice. I'm feeling positive today as have been on the cygnets course which has been absolutely great.”***

Parents Survey 2018

Beams is also a lead member of TOTIUS, which is a consortium of four other parent led charities in Kent. Together we provide Family Advice and Support Groups, Parent Workshops, Family Events, and signpost all relevant information via the Parent Carer Forums. We receive a small amount of grant funding from the local authority to deliver these services consistently across Kent. It is felt that we are best placed to deliver these services as we are a parent driven charity and can get messages through to parents quickly and cost effectively.

## What difference do we make?

Our outcomes that we measure ourselves against are:

- Reduced social isolation for parent and child
- Improved health and well-being
- Better educational outcomes for the child
- Increased confidence in dealing with a disabled child
- Prevent a family from falling into crisis

***“We were in crisis, my son was out of control with his behaviour and I was on the verge of a breakdown. Then I was introduced to a Beams Family Advisor and they helped us to get a diagnosis for my son, the right support at school and I attended a parenting programme that has helped me find coping strategies to deal with his extreme behaviour. I can see the light at the end of the tunnel and a future for me and my son now; otherwise I really believe I would have to put him into care”. Parent survey 2018***

## Our Experience

As a charity we have been in existence for 22 years. We are well established in the local community. Our Family Advisors have the following experience:

- Four staff members have substantial personal experience of living with a disabled child
- Formal management qualifications (ILM)
- Teaching qualifications (adult education)
- 22 years’ experience of developing and managing a holistic Family Advice Service
- 22 years’ experience and working knowledge of special educational needs and disability law
- Extensive experience of multi-agency /partnership working
- Training and experience of key worker/ lead professional role
- Licenced to Train-Early Bird/Cygnet Parenting Programmes
- Parenting Practitioner (Webster Stratton)
- Key contributor/ delivery of North West Kent ADHD Care Pathway training group (delivering to parents and professionals)
- Consortium Lead for Kent County Wide Independent Support Project and TOTIUS
- Substantial involvement in strategic planning for disability services in the locality
- Experienced in partnership working alongside the local authority in Kent, Medway, Bromley, Bexley and Greenwich
- Awarded PQASSO level 2
- Awarded Best Children’s Charity Kent in 2018



**TOTIUS**

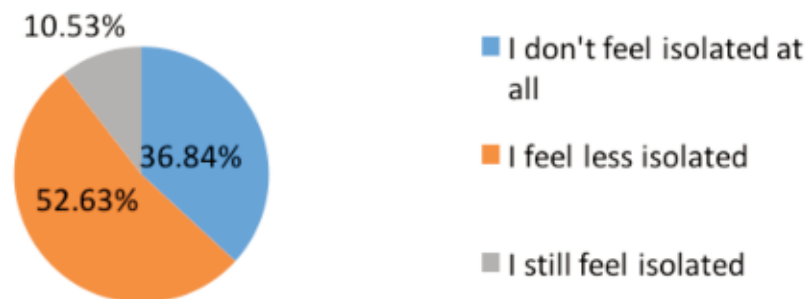


## Impact of Family Advice

- 100%** felt that staff members understood their concerns when contacting Family Advice
- 95%** of respondents felt that the service had a positive impact on their health and well being
- 91%** felt that the service had a positive impact on the health and well being of their child
- 100%** would recommend the Family Advice service to others

**Prior to using the services 84% of parents felt some form of isolation, afterwards 90% felt none or less isolation.**

**Having received our Family Advice Services, how isolated do you feel as a parent/carer of a disabled child/young person?**



*"The help has had a massive impact on our family so we are all a lot happier now"*

Parents Survey 2018

*"I am exhausted, I am torn between my son with ASD, my daughter, my husband in care with dementia and a full time job"*

Parents Survey 2018

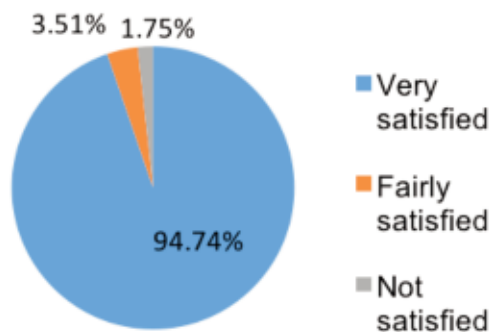
*"I feel more positive for the future and I know that there is always someone there to listen when I need it"*

Parents Survey 2018

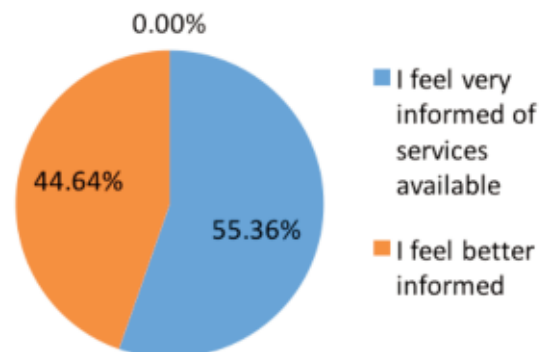




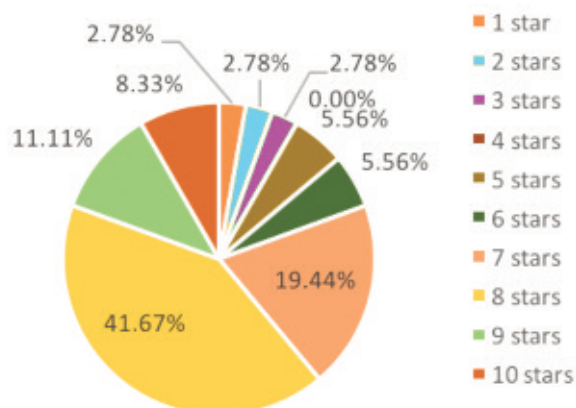
How would you describe your level of overall satisfaction with Family Advice Services received?



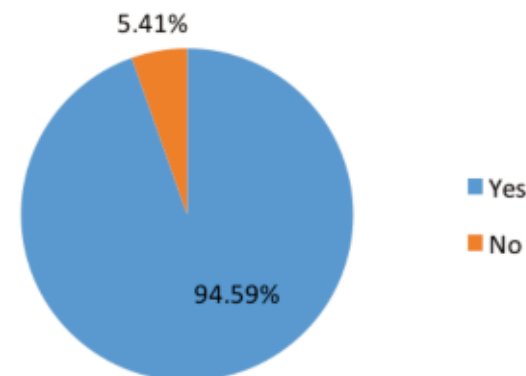
Having accessed the Family Advice, how informed do you now feel with regards to accessing the services available for parents and carers of a disabled child?



On a scale of 1-10 how much has your confidence in dealing with your disabled child changed since the course (1 is low and 10 is high)

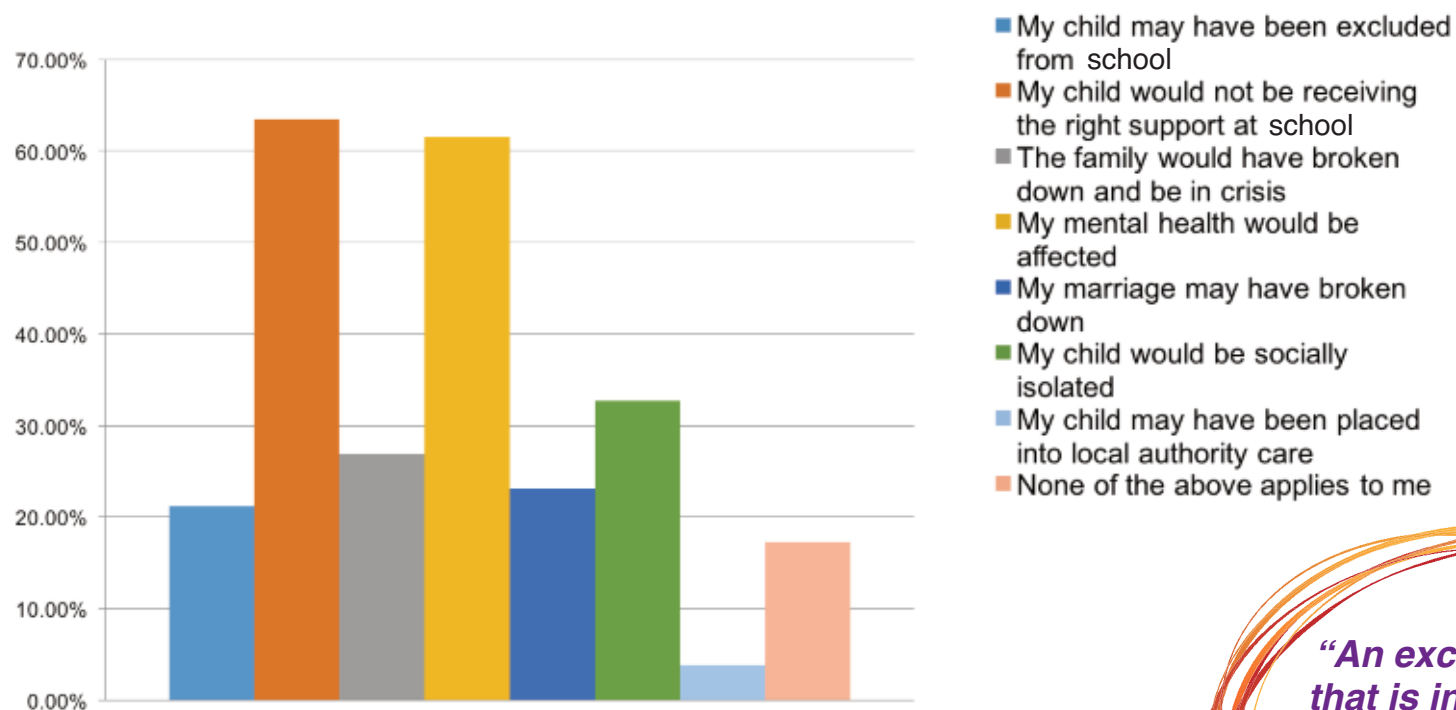


We say that our Parenting Programme outcomes may prevent a family from falling into crisis. Would you say this statement is true?





If we had not supported you or your family, could any of the following statements be true for you?



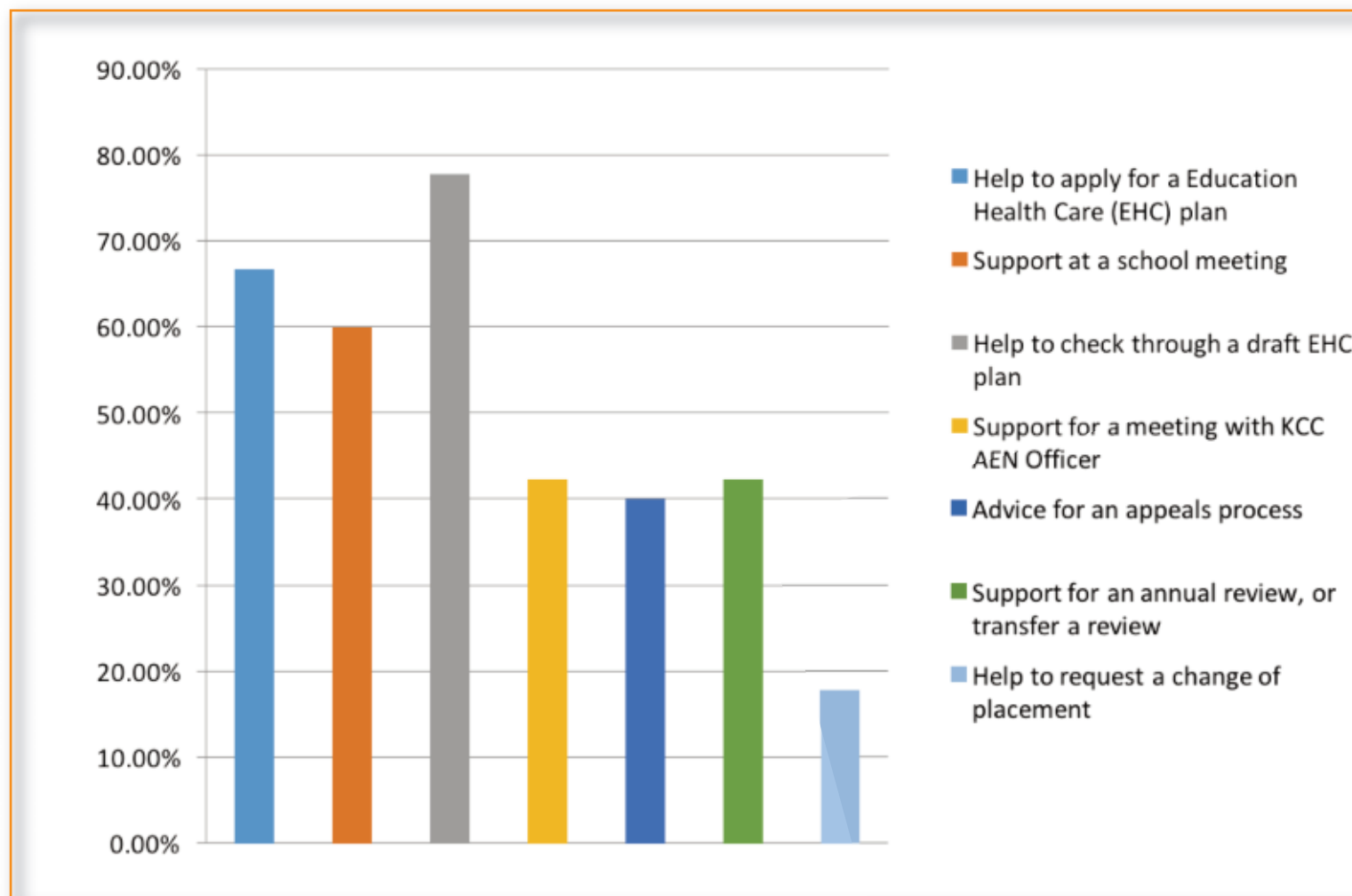
***“An excellent service that is invaluable. The expertise of the education staff is second to none.”***

Parents Survey 2018



## Educational advice

One of the specific services offered the Beams Family Advice Team is in relation to education. Our last parent survey revealed that;  
**94% of parents said their child will have a better educational outcome because of our support.**  
**89% of parents said they would be more confident in the future when dealing with this type of process for their child.**



A range of services are offered including:

- Support at school meetings (60% of parents/carers use this service)
- Help applying for EHC plans (67% of parents/carers use this service)
- Advice on appeals (40% of parents/carers use this service)

## Our Parenting Programme

Our Cygnet Parenting Programme delivers 18 hours of training to those who need guidance and advice on understanding the needs of their child.

Up to 12 families at a time can attend the programme over a 6-week period covering the following topics:

- An introduction to Beams and parent stories
- Overview of Autism
- Sensory Issues
- Communication
- Understanding Behaviour
- Supporting Behaviour

A follow up session is then held later in the year to bring everyone together to assess the impact and for further guidance to be given if needed. In addition, our Family Advice Team is always available to assist outside these times.



**“The cygnet parenting programme has been invaluable. Firstly, the staff at beams are personable and make the course material easy to follow with plenty of opportunity to ask any questions you have.**

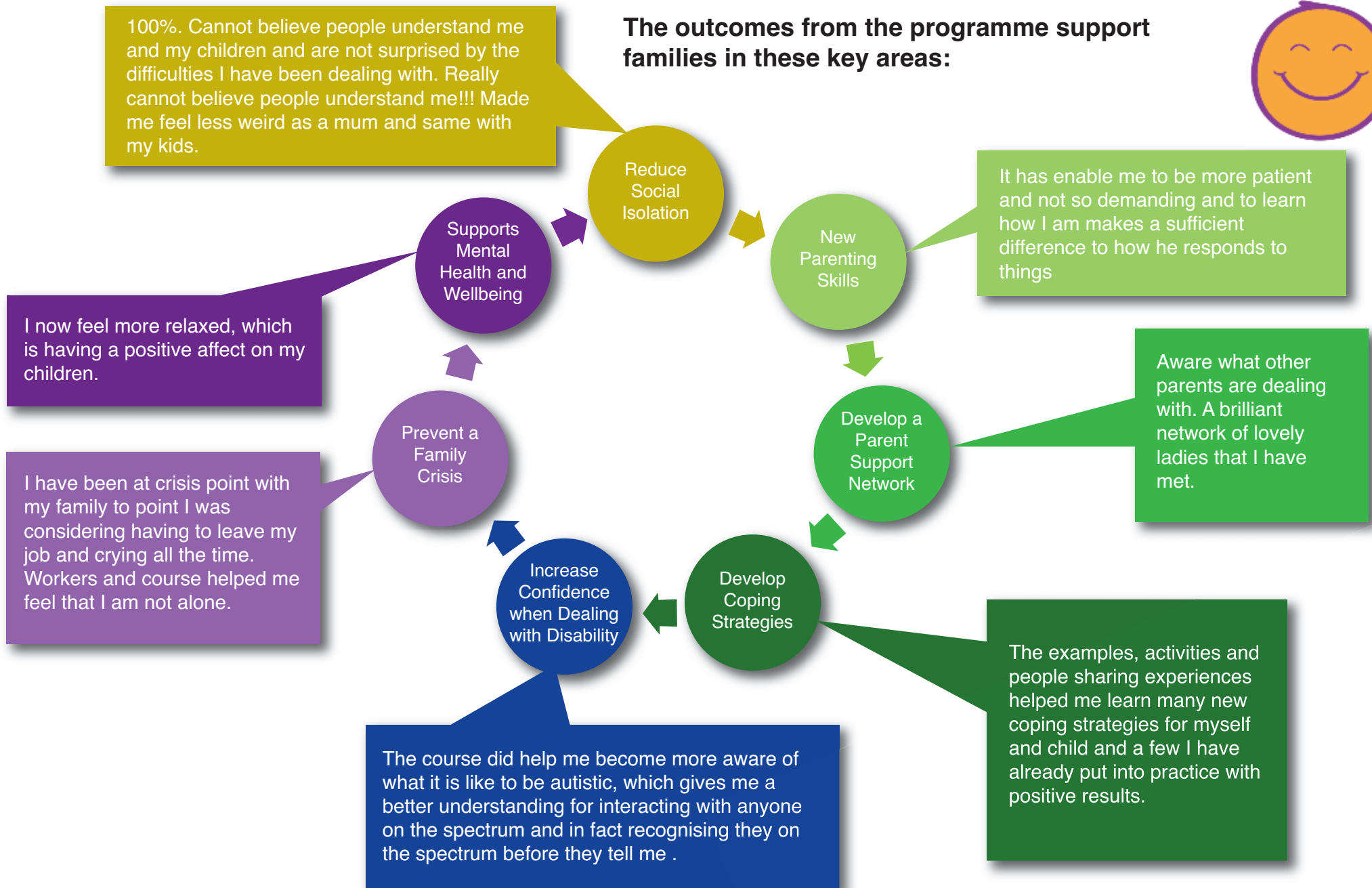
**I personally gained a lot more knowledge on ASD and associated challenges. Things clicked into place. When you first receive the diagnosis you are bombarded with information. It can be overwhelming. Cygnets breaks things down into modules that are easy to understand and relate to....and remember:)**

**Additionally the fact that parents and carers are able to share their experiences in confidence with experienced professionals, made us realise we are not alone and there is support”**

Parenting Survey 2018



## The outcomes from the programme support families in these key areas:



## Case study

“ I am single parent of 4 children following a divorce from the father of my fourth child on the grounds of severe domestic abuse in 2013. At this time there was little support for my family and at this time I was not aware of Autism!

Since 2014 I was aware my third child, was behaving and reacting to things differently to other children, which I now know were meltdowns in the evenings, after school.

I approached school for the next couple of years, for assistance to no avail. In 2017 I requested a private diagnosis which confirmed Autism.

I was introduced to Beams in 2018 by Social Services initially and contacted Beams but was advised Sevenoaks wasn't in area, but following an autistic info evening in which I met Beams Advisors I was invited to contact Beams again. I really wish I had heard about Beams earlier, as I spent a couple of months searching for assistance in the Sevenoaks area to no avail.

Beams continues to support me and my family with communication with my child's secondary school, and will be supporting my application for an ECHP plan. The

support I have received has made my focus on life more positively and constructively with an aim to gain the right support.

Before contact with Beams, I was frustrated at the lack of any support in the Sevenoaks areas of mental health or special needs and at one point gave up looking as I was very dishearten. Sevenoaks is often judged as a wealthy and therefore not needy of services and support locally. This has made parents from all areas of the district, having to seek assistance from other charities.

I attended the Cygnet course at Beams, which was well presented and informative, and my new partner was also in attendance. Without the course, I don't believe I would have the right knowledge to fight for the needs of all my children.

Working with Beams has made me stronger, and although the road might still be long, I know the support from Beams will remain consistent for my family. I never thought a year ago the support would be needed and looking back the support i have now gained is life changing for my family”.

*Sevenoaks Parent*



## Robert, Denise and Callum



Robert and Denise have been a member of We Are Beams with their son Callum for 4 years now.

Callum is now 9 and was diagnosed with ASD at 4½. There is also a strong possibility he also has Pathological Demand Avoidance Syndrome (PDA).

He will avoid demands made by others, due to his high anxiety levels when he feels that he is not in control this can result in quite extreme and angry behaviour. PDA is increasingly recognised as part of the autism spectrum.

Denise and Robert requested help in dealing with Callum's challenging behaviour so were offered a place on the Cygnets Parenting Course. They quickly learnt that they were not alone and need not be isolated. Other parents were going through the same thing and they formed friendships to gain and give support to other parents that are still strong today.

They congratulated our approach in teaching professionals the same techniques so that we all offered

a consistent approach towards the child's care. They were taught positive re-enforcement, coping strategies, how to deal with a child with extreme anxieties especially after school. (This is the worst time of the week for the family).

They understand that a different approach is needed for Callum so they take more time and offer choices so he feels more in control of the situation. However, they now get the required results without the confrontation.

Robert and Denise both feel more confident and can cope better with their child's needs. They recognise that early intervention can prevent more problems in the future.

Callum is now attending Baston House School that specialises in children with ASD and receives the 1-1 care he needs to get the best educational outcomes. He managed to secure a place there due to the help that the parents received from our Education Advisor with Callum's EHCP.

Callum also attends our Little Rascal after school club which he thoroughly enjoys and this offers him friendship with others so he need not be isolated and he gets to do activities not offered at school.



## Here is what some of our Parents say....

"Like a weight had been lifted. There is **no better way of helping** than to give parents the **information and tools** to have an active role in getting their children's needs met in education".

"**Relieved** to have somebody on my side and somebody that the school takes notice of. **Empowered** as a parent that my thoughts and feelings are now being considered and that I can **no longer be bullied** into allowing decisions to be made that are simply wrong.

"It was such a **relief**. A huge weight lifted from my shoulders, It was so nice knowing that there was **someone to talk to and help me**".

"I feel so much better - things were explained in a **clear, concise and understandable way**. There is **no where else you can get support like this**".

"My **anxiety** was at an all time high. I am disabled myself and can't cope at times without help. **Beams has saved my life!**"

"It was **amazing** they explained everything to me and supported me right through the process at meetings and making phone calls. It made the **whole process a lot easier** and I couldn't have done it without their support".