

## Y8-10 Autistic Girls' Creative Programme: Referral Criteria

This programme is designed to support girls in Years 8, 9 and 10 who are finding the school environment difficult due to suspected or diagnosed autism (or associated behaviours, such as those outlined below).

It will provide weekly neuro-affirming spaces where young people can explore and be themselves alongside similar young people, facilitated by neurodivergent adults from [A Collective](#). The programme will use a variety of creative activities to support young people to develop self-esteem, identity, confidence and friendships.

In order to identify young people who will benefit from this programme, please consider the following criteria and descriptions.

### **Criteria**

Young people should be suspected or diagnosed autistic, and have associated challenges attending school. The programme welcomes young people who fit this criteria, including those who may also have the following co-occurring conditions:

- Anxiety
- Situational mutism
- Dyspraxia
- Dyslexia
- Tourette's, or other tics
- ADHD, where this is the secondary condition rather than main presentation

This programme is **not** suitable for young people with further learning disabilities, or who require 1:1 support.

### **Description**

Young people who would benefit from the programme may:

- Present as 'fine' at school, but experience high levels of anxiety and fatigue once home (i.e., masking)
- Appear not to have bonded friendships; they may struggle to connect with others at lunchtime or during other non-structured times of the school day
- Behave in a 'people pleasing' manner, or always try to respond with the 'right' answer rather than giving their own opinion. For example, always replying 'I don't mind' rather than expressing a choice.
- Be likely to stay quiet in the back of the classroom and avoid attention
- Be reluctant to answer questions that written work indicates they know

Confidential

- Fall asleep in lessons or 'zone out' even in favourite subjects
- Display anxiety around attending school; this might include experiencing chronic pain, stomach upset, difficulty sleeping or other physical symptoms
- Appear forgetful, fail to complete homework or not quite follow classroom instructions
- Be sensitive to injustice, possibly feeling unable to move on from an instance of perceived injustice without confiding in a trusted adult or parent
- Show a pattern of unexplained absences, perhaps avoiding a particular lesson or towards the end of a week or term (for example, when they may be experiencing burnout)

Young people may not benefit from the programme if they:

- Have difficulty working as part of a group, for example face challenges with turn-taking, sharing space with others or experience frequent energetic outbursts (not including autistic stimming or movement for regulation)
- Have general learning or intellectual disability (not including specific learning disabilities such as dyslexia)

### **Structure**

The programme consists of 9 or 10-week interventions, made up of weekly sessions at The Story Sanctuary (formerly Sanderstead Library) from 1.15-2.45pm on Monday afternoons.

Cohorts aim to work with c12 students at a time. However, you may wish to 'refer' up to 16 students to a cohort, where you think absence or disengagement is likely.

### **Referral Procedure**

When you have identified a young person you think would benefit from the programme, please speak to the parent/carer and either:

- Complete the provided Referral Form to enable the Creative Health team to contact the family to obtain consent to participate; or
- Share the programme Flyer and/or Registration Form to allow parents/carers to contact the Creative Health team directly.

Further information about the young person may be requested from you at a later date, if required and if consent is received.

Please contact the Creative Health team on [CreativeHealth@Croydon.gov.uk](mailto:CreativeHealth@Croydon.gov.uk) or 07356 101117 to receive more information at any time.