



Autism & Asperger's syndrome Awareness training

Pan-Dorset Autistic Spectrum
Condition Partnership Board

Learning objectives



- Outline some facts and figures
- Explore the impact of autism & Asperger's syndrome on daily living
- Identify ways to promote wellbeing

What is Autism? What is Asperger's syndrome?



Developmental disorders falling within a range of related conditions known collectively as **Autistic spectrum condition (ASC)**

Which affect how someone:

- Processes information
- Relates to others
- Makes sense of the world

How many people have Autistic Spectrum Condition?



- Just over 1 : 100* people in the UK have autism
- Prevalence higher amongst people with learning disabilities where it is about 1:3*
- Figures are approximate because not everyone who has the condition gets or seeks a formal diagnosis

* Estimating the prevalence of autism spectrum: NHS The Information Centre for health & social care:2012

What should I know about Autistic Spectrum Condition?

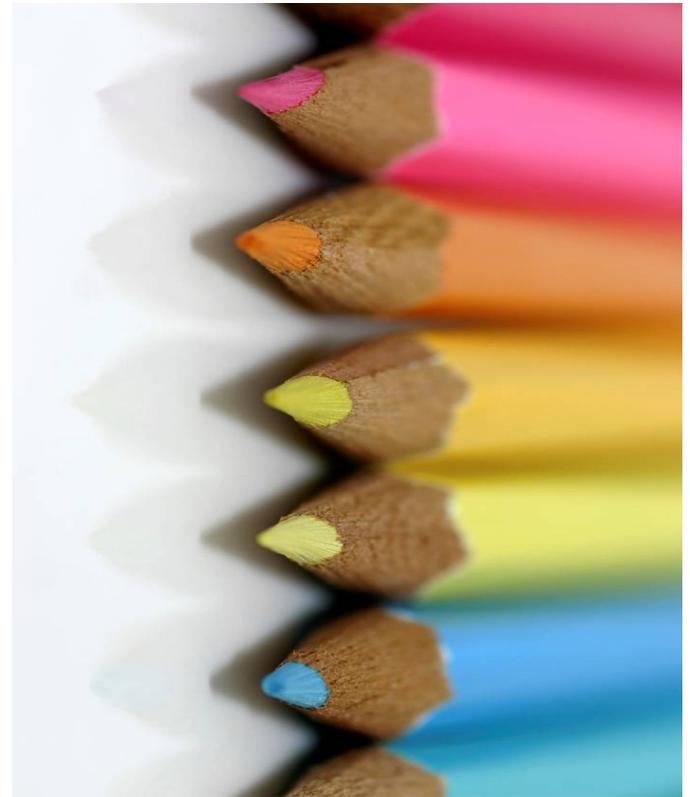


- Lifelong
- Medical treatment available for associated conditions but not for autism itself
- Right support can make a huge difference
- Awareness of the issues and appropriate adjustments by those who provide services improves access for all

Why a 'spectrum' condition?



Even though there are key characteristics there is huge variation in severity of impact, levels of IQ and social functioning



The Autism spectrum



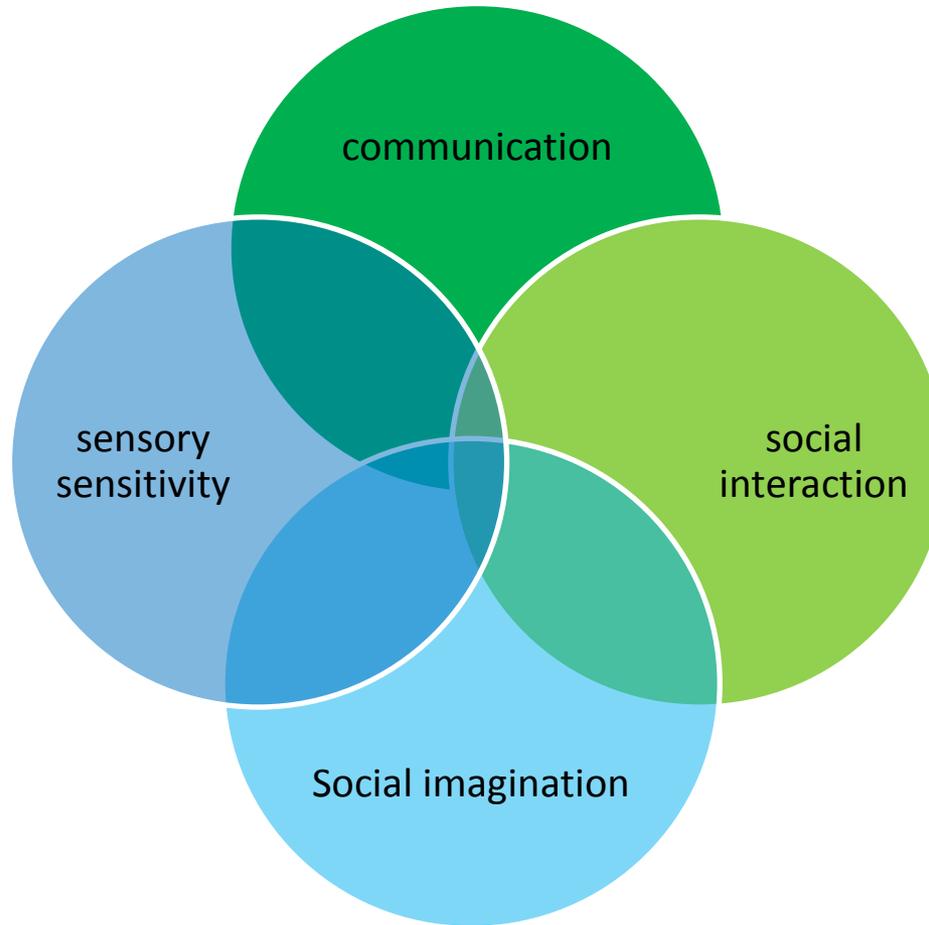
For example this includes people with:

- A profound learning disability and autism needing a lifetime of specialist support
- Asperger's syndrome who in many cases, though not all, are able to lead largely independent lives. They may nevertheless still need support to varying degrees on a regular or occasional basis to facilitate this independence.

Conditions typically occurring with autism:

- Dyslexia, ADHD or dyspraxia
- Anxiety, depression, eating disorders and obsessive compulsive disorder

Core features... likely to be issues with



Communication



Common issues include:

- Difficulty in reading body language, gestures, tone of voice, facial expression etc
- Processing language more slowly & in literal way
- Confusion when 'actions do not match words'

Some people are very articulate and their difficulties may not be obvious however communicating verbally often takes a huge amount of effort. It is helpful to write things down so that people have opportunity to absorb information at their own pace

Social imagination and flexible thinking



Finding it hard to:

- Imagine what others are thinking and feeling and therefore responding appropriately
- Anticipate consequences or risk of actions
- Cope with changes in routines, people and transferring skills

People may be drawn to IT or specialist interests

Social interaction



Some issues include:

- Difficulties around 'unwritten' social rules and conventions i.e. personal space, eye contact
- Unwittingly causing offence
- Avoiding contact because of bad experiences
- Always telling the truth and believing everyone else does the same
- Seeming remote and ignoring others

Sensory sensitivity



Everyone is different but some people may

- Feel stressed or physical pain when exposed to certain noises, lighting, colours, patterns, tastes or clothing textures
- Panic or shutdown in crowded places
- Find it difficult to screen out background noise when having 1:1 conversation
- Find it hard to cope when there is a lack of structure and stimulation

Anxiety and stress..... reinforced by



- Awareness of being 'different' and experience of being bullied
- Finding it hard to make and keep friendships
- Having an 'invisible' disability and difficulty in communicating the nature of problems
- Finding difficulties when trying to access employment, housing and coming into contact with criminal justice system

Difference or disability....

positive features



- Honesty and loyalty in personal relationships
- Drive to find the truth and solve problems
- Attention to detail and maintain focus
- Ability to stick to routines and procedures
- Sensory appreciation and creativity

However these do not apply to everyone with autism and will vary depending on stress levels and the specific situation

Promoting confidence and wellbeing



- Keep things simple, use direct straightforward language and steady calm tone of voice
- Be aware that body language can be a distraction and may not be understood
- Reinforce what you say with written information & visual clues
- Allow plenty of time for the person to process information. Avoid rushing in with more questions or second guessing answers
- Give written record of decisions etc for person to look at later when distractions and pressures are reduced

Promoting confidence and wellbeing



- Prepare person for 'what is going to happen next' e.g. procedure involving physical contact
- Maintain routines and give timely warning and support to help cope with any changes
- Always consider sensory issues as potential cause of stress and identify adjustments i.e. blinds drawn, noise levels etc
- Aim for uncluttered calm quiet environment
- Never assume you know what support someone may need. Always ask for guidance to find out what works well for them and how to recognise when they are stressed
- Creatively explore range of strategies that help i.e. phone apps for planning, reminders, wearing dark glasses etc

Information and support



- Dorset Adult Asperger's Support (DAAS)

<http://dorsetadultaspergerssupport.org.uk>

- Autism Wessex

www.autismwessex.org.uk/

- Autism online resource centre

<http://rcnpublishing.com/page/ns/resources/autism-online-resource-centre>