

IPLCN SEN Guides



Guide to 'Autism'

What is Autism and its impact?

Autism is a lifelong developmental disability which affects how people communicate and interact with the world. One in 100 people are on the autism spectrum and there are around 700,000 autistic adults and children in the UK.

Autistic people may:

- find it hard to communicate and interact with other people
- find it hard to understand how other people think or feel
- find things like bright lights or loud noises overwhelming, stressful or uncomfortable
- get anxious or upset about unfamiliar situations and social events
- take longer to understand information
- do or think the same things over and over

Impact (these CAN affect learners):

- social communication and social interaction challenges e.g. difficulties interpreting verbal and non-verbal language and tone, taking things literally, needing processing time, difficulties with emotions, finding relationships hard to make
- repetitive and restrictive behaviour e.g. hand flapping, rocking, highly fixed interests
- over or under sensitivity response to senses e.g. sensory needs
- anxiety
- shutdowns or meltdowns

Successful People with Autism

Breanna Clarke is an American athlete. She won a gold medal in the Paralympics 400 metres race in 2016.



Greta Thunberg is an environmental activist. "...being different is a super power."



Tarik El Arbour is the first professional baseball player diagnosed with Autism.



How can we assess for Autism?

The NHS will assess for autism. You can be referred by health professionals or your SENCo.

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/autism/getting-diagnosed/>

Barriers to Learning

- Difficulties deciphering the world around them often makes education stressful for the child
- Difficulty understanding or communicating their needs to teachers and fellow students
- Difficulty understanding some classroom directions and instruction
- Difficulty reading the subtle vocal and facial cues of teachers
- Inappropriate social interaction can lead to challenging behaviours, bullying, and ostracising.
- Difficulties with imaginative or creative play
- Difficulties interacting with peers
- May not be able to cope with noisy environments
- Difficulties being touched by others
- May not be able to maintain eye contact
- Struggling when making mistakes
- Struggling when receiving feedback on work

Quality Teaching to Support

See separate guide at the end.

Support for Parents

- ❖ Tell family so they understand
- ❖ Look to join support groups online or in person
- ❖ Speak to the SENCo
- ❖ 'Our Rochdale' lists many services you could contact:

<https://www.ourrochdale.org.uk>

- ❖ Rochdale Additional Needs Team for Autism (TASC) offer advice and support 01706 926400
- ❖ National Charities:

National Autistic Society

Ambitious About Autism

I AM - Celebrating Autism

Breaking Barriers

POINT

- ❖ The NHS can diagnose and offer other support services:
 - an occupational therapist
 - a speech and language therapist
 - a mental health specialist

Online Support

<https://www.mencap.org.uk/learning-disability-explained/conditions-linked-learning-disability/autism-and-aspergers-syndrome>

<https://www.ambitiousaboutautism.org.uk/information-about-autism/early-years/parent-toolkit>

Common Traits of Autism (source - National Autistic Society)

Social Communication	Social Interaction	Repetitive and Restrictive Behaviour	Sensory Sensitivity	Highly focused interests or hobbies	Anxiety	Meltdowns or shutdowns
<p>difficulties interpreting both verbal and non-verbal language like gestures or tone of voice</p> <p>limited speech</p> <p>difficulties interpreting sarcasm</p> <p>taking things literally and not understanding abstract concepts</p> <p>needing extra time to process information or answer questions</p> <p>repeating what others say to them (this is called echolalia)</p>	<p>difficulty 'reading' other people, i.e. recognising or understanding others' feelings and intentions, and expressing their own emotions</p> <p>appearing to be insensitive</p> <p>needing to seek out time alone when overloaded by other people</p> <p>not able to seek comfort from other people</p> <p>appearing to behave 'strangely' or in a way thought to be socially inappropriate</p> <p>finding it hard to form friendships</p>	<p>needing to have routines in order to know what is going to happen e.g. wearing the same clothes or eating exactly the same food for breakfast</p> <p>repeating movements such as hand flapping, rocking or the repetitive use of an object such as twirling a pen</p> <p>needing to adjust to or to be prepared for big events like Christmas or changing schools</p>	<p>experiencing over- or under-sensitivity to sounds, touch, tastes, smells, light, colours, temperatures or pain</p> <p>experiencing sensory overload</p> <p>avoiding everyday situations because of sensitivity issues</p>	<p>developing intense and highly focused interests, often from a fairly young age which can change over time or be lifelong</p> <p>becoming experts in their special interests and often enjoying sharing their knowledge with others</p> <p>becoming so engrossed in particular topics or activities that other aspects of life are neglected</p>	<p>experiencing anxiety, particularly in social situations or when facing change</p> <p>experiencing difficulty recognising and regulating emotions</p>	<p>experiencing meltdown or shutdown when completely overwhelmed by the current situation, causing a temporary loss of behavioural control</p> <p>meltdown can be verbal (e.g. shouting, screaming, crying) or physical (e.g. kicking, lashing out, biting) or both</p> <p>shutdown can be more passive going quiet or 'switching off'</p>

Quality 1st Teaching

- ✓ Organise your classroom and let children to know where things are kept
- ✓ Visual timetables, both class and personal
- ✓ Displays with not too much colour or information
- ✓ Check lighting and any persistent noises
- ✓ Get to know the children, their likes and dislikes and what motivates them
- ✓ Ask parent's what works at home
- ✓ Be prepared, what patterns of behaviour are there? Can you anticipate what might happen?
- ✓ Use plain language and give examples with instructions

- ✓ Have clear boundaries and communicate these
- ✓ Give processing time
- ✓ Facilitate with group work, set roles and tasks
- ✓ Include time away and quiet time into the day
- ✓ Organise and plan for their breaks and lunchtimes. Do they need support or an organised activity with accountable people?
- ✓ Give clear choices