

What is Autism?

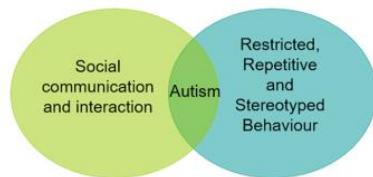
Autism is a neurodevelopmental condition which means that there is a difference in the way that autistic people's brains process information. Autism affects how a person communicates with others, and how they make sense of the world around them. Autism does not affect a person's physical appearance.

Autism is a lifelong difference in thinking, however as young people develop into adults, they often find ways to compensate for their challenges, allowing them to reach their full potential. With the right support in place, many autistic children go on to lead a fulfilling life, achieving independence, starting families and pursuing careers.

An exact cause of autism is still under study and research suggests that it may result from a combination of genetic and environmental factors. Autism is more common than people think. Showing that more than 1 in 100 are on the autism spectrum and approximately 700,000 adults and children are autistic in the UK.

Characteristics of Autism Spectrum Conditions

Autism is differences in:

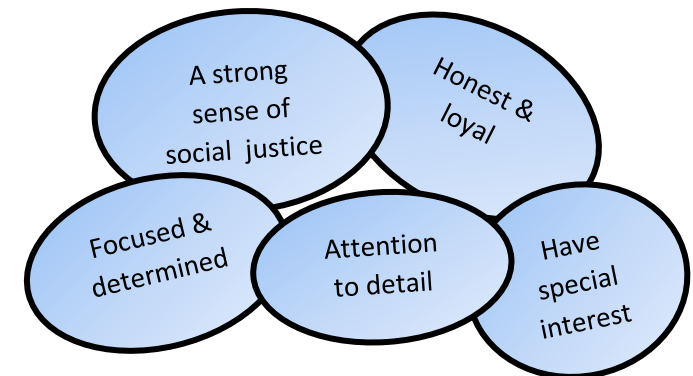


ASC are characterised by a difference in two areas of development: social communication and interaction, and restricted and repetitive behaviours (includes sensory differences). Autistic individuals display multiple differences in each of these areas. Most people in the general population will experience some difficulties in one or both of these areas - Autism is diagnosed when there is a strong pattern of difference across both areas.

Social communications and interaction	Restricted, Repetitive and Stereotypes Behaviour
<p>Autistic people may: Prefer to spend time alone and not seek comfort from others Can appear to be insensitive as can struggle to recognise others thoughts, feelings, tone of voice and facial expressions Have trouble recognising spatial awareness May struggle retaining and processing verbal information</p>	<p>Autistic people may: Struggle with unstructured time Not enjoy imaginative play Have sensory sensitivities Have intense special interest which may seem obsessional Move hands and body in a repetitive way, eg rocking, hand flapping Have trouble predicting what's next and adjusting to change of routine Being able to cope in an unfamiliar place</p>

Strengths of autism

It is important to remember that autism is associated with a range of remarkable qualities and strengths too including:

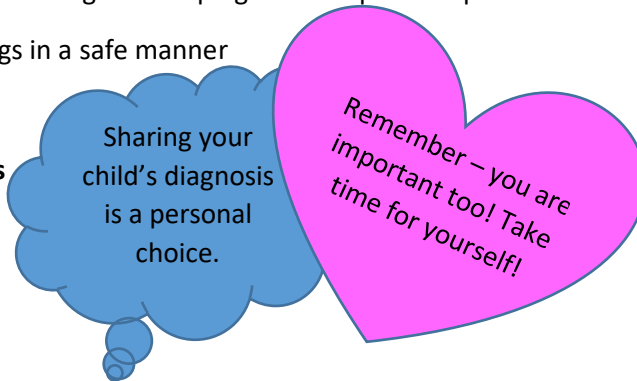


Supporting your child




Autism is characterised as a difference in thinking and behaving, not a condition to be 'cured'. Nevertheless, there are various interventions available to help support you and your child in managing difficulties that may be associated with autism. Interventions for children and young people on the autism spectrum aim to improve language and communication skills, enhance social functioning, emotional regulation skills and meet their sensory needs.

- Common challenges in autism:**
- Making and keeping friendships
 - Sleep difficulties
 - Fears and anxiety
 - Coping with changes in routine or unfamiliar situations
 - Expressing emotions and feelings in a safe manner

Explaining Your Child's Diagnosis to Others



Making adjustments

	Strategies
Setting and the environment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keep the environment around the child as calm as possible • Organisation – set out expectations • Consider using visual aids, eg timetable. List or visual clues
Improving communication 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide a wide range of social/communication opportunities using words and language your child will understand • Use visual aids to help understanding eg. Photographs • Present information in order, be clear and concise • Be patient, slow down communication to allow processing • Avoid arguing or raising your voice
Managing feelings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relaxation – deep breathing, calming activities, redirect to something pleasant • Anger management – identify triggers • Zones of regulation – a visual prompt to help your child express and communicate how they feel.

Derbyshire Autism Services offer support groups, one to one support and social activities. For more information: email: enquiries@derbyshireautismservices.org. tel: 01773 741 221.