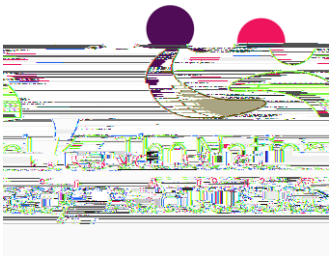
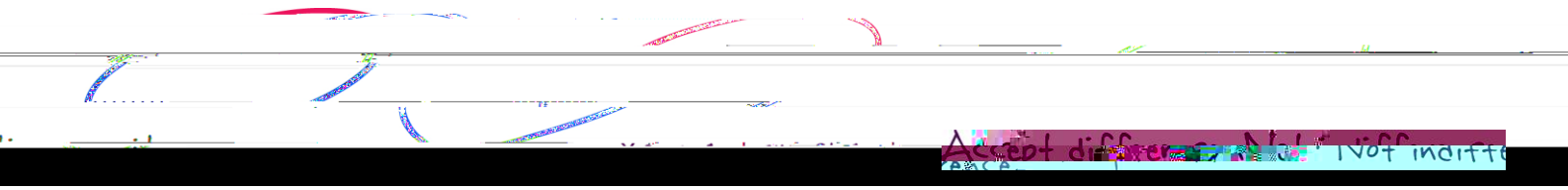


Autism

A resource pack for school staff



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Introduction

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DX people. In your school, it is likely that you will already have one or more children with the condition. You may teach or support a child or young person who you feel may be on the autism spectrum. The diagnosis process may have just started or the diagnosis may not yet be confirmed, but you want to increase your understanding of autism and appropriate interventions to use with that child or young person.

What this pack covers

This pack can be of help to any member of staff working in an education setting. We include information about autism, how it may affect children and young people in education settings, information on strategies, interventions and useful resources from the NAS and other organisations. We hope our pack will give you greater confidence in working with pupils who are on the autism spectrum.

Terminology

You have probably come across a variety of different terms for this complex condition. In this pack we have used the term autism or autism spectrum to encompass autism, Asperger syndrome, autism spectrum disorders and Pathological Demand Avoidance (PDA), unless specified.

What is autism?

People with autism have said that the world to them is a mass of people, places and events which they struggle to make sense of, which can cause them considerable stress and anxiety. In particular, understanding and relating to other people and taking part in everyday family and social life may be harder for them. Many people appear to know, intuitively, how to communicate and interact with each other, while people with autism might find this particularly difficult.

$XWLVP LV D OLIHORQJ GHYHORSPHQWDO GLVDELOLW\ WR DV DQ DXWLVP VSHFWUXP GLVRUGHU RU DQ $6 7KH ZRUG µV
can also be referred to because, while all people with autism share three main areas of difficulty, their condition may affect them in very different ways.

The three main areas of difficulty which all children and young people on the autism spectrum share are:

- difficulty with social communication
- difficulty with social interaction
- difficulty with social imagination.

This is known as the triad of impairments.

$XWLVP LV DQ µLQYLVLEOH¶ GLVDELOLW\ ±you can not necessarily tell someone has it from looking at them. Parents of children with autism often say that people simply think their child is naughty. Everyone with autism can benefit from a timely diagnosis and access to appropriate services and support.

Aut

Codes of practice

For information and advice on special educational needs, terminology and processes, please see the

Effective communication

Here is a quick reference guide where we suggest strategies you might try for overcoming difficulties you have communicating with a child or young person on the autism spectrum in your school.

7 K H \ G R Q ¶ W appear to pay attention when you are talking to them

- Always use their name at the beginning, when you are saying something, so that they know you are talking to them.
- Make sure they are paying attention before you ask a question or give an instruction. They may not be able to make eye contact, but may look at you or in your direction.
- If you are aware that they have an intense interest, then try to use this to engage them.

They have difficulty processing the information that is said to them

- Reduce the amount of communication that you use (including non-verbal: eye contact, facial expressions, gestures, body language etc) when a child or young person is showing signs of anxiety. It can be difficult for them to process information if they have high levels of anxiety.
- Use visual supports (eg symbols, timetables, Social Stories©) to help them to process the information more easily.
- Speak clearly and precisely using short sentences. A child with autism can find it difficult to filter out the less important information. If there is too much information, it can lead to µ R Y H U O R D G ¶ Z K H U H Q R I X U W K H U L Q I R U P D W L R Q F D Q E H S U
- ' R Q ¶ W X V H W R R P D Q \ T X estions. A child or young person Z L W K D X W L V P P D \ I L Q G µ Z K µ Z K R ¶ G µ Z K \ ¶ questions difficult.
- Be aware of the environment (noisy/crowded etc) that you are in. It may be affecting how much they can process.
- Wait for the child or young person to respond or complete the task before repeating yourself or giving further instruction. It can take up to 30 seconds for a child or young person with autism to process information.

The child or young person takes things literally

- Avoid using irony, sarcasm, figurative language, rhetorical questions, idioms etc. If you do use them, explain what you have said and be clear about what you really mean to say.

: K D W F D Q , G R W R K H O S G H Y H O R S D F K L O G R U ¶ V communication skills? R X Q J S H U V R Q ¶ V

- Reward and praise any spontaneous communication or appropriate behaviours that they V K R Z H J ³ * R R G V K D U L Q J ´ % \ U H Z D U G L Q J W K H P \ R X D U H L Q again.
- Use role play. Role play can be a great way of showing appropriate frameworks for social interaction and exploring how things can go wrong/what to avoid.

Useful resources related to effective communication can be found at:

www.autism.org.uk/visualsupports

www.autism.org.uk/socialstories

Time out card/exit passes

These are cards or passes that a child or young person has to indicate to teaching staff that they are feeling anxious and need to leave the classroom. This strategy will have usually been agreed by the SENCO, support for learning principal teacher or whoever has responsibility for special educational needs or additional support needs in your school. It is important that the child or young person knows where their agreed safe and quiet place is.

Moving around school

Some children and young people with autism find lesson changeover times particularly difficult. They can become anxious due the unpredictability of this time and may find it difficult to cope with the noisy and crowded environment. It may be appropriate for you to allow a pupil with autism to leave the class a little

Breaks and lunchtimes

Children and young people with autism can find breaks and lunchtimes difficult because they:

- lack the structure and routine that they need to help make sense of the world around them
- are daunting due to the unpredictability of others and use of loud and noisy environments, such as the dining hall
- focus on the use and development of social skills that children and young people with autism have difficulty with
- are an opportunity for social isolation and bullying from others.

Ways you can help

-

- For younger children, or those with greater communication needs, you may like to suggest to the parents that the child or young person create a personal passport. For more on this, see http://w3.cerebra.org.uk/help-and-information/personal-portfolios

Transition resources for England

Transition Toolkit. The Autism Education Trust.
www.autismeducationtrust.org.uk/resources

Education beyond 16. Contact a family.
www.cafamily.org.uk/advice-and-support/sen-national-advice-service/education-beyond-16

Finished at school. Ambitious About Autism.
www.ambitiousaboutautism.org.uk/understanding-autism/new-guide-launched-to-help-school-and-college-staff-better-support-young-people-with-autism

Transition resources for Northern Ireland

Transition service. Education Support for Northern Ireland.
www.education-support.org.uk/parents/special-education/transition-service

Preparing for adult life and transition guide - Northern Ireland. Contact a family.
www.cafamily.org.uk/media/597218/ni_transition_currentlastupdatedsep12.pdf

Transition resources for Scotland

Supporting transition from school to university. Scottish Autism.
www.scottishautism.org/family-and-professional-support/information-resources/supporting-transition/

Preparing for adult life and transition guide ±Scotland. Contact a family.
www.cafamily.org.uk/media/379959/transitionscot_web_amended_11_feb_2014.pdf

Transition resources for Wales

Transition ±Leaving school. SNAP Cymru.
www.snapcymru.org/help-for-families/transition

NAS Transition Support Service

Our Transition Support Service is a free service for parents and carers in England of children in year 9 and above that can help young people with making the transition from school to adult life or further education. It provides confidential information, advice and support by phone or email and can help with things such as an explanation of rights and entitlements, assistance with exploring options and signposting to other services.

Tel: 0808 800 0027

Email: transitionsupport@nas.org.uk

School refusal

School can be a challenging environment for children and young people with autism and they can sometimes refuse to attend. School refusal may not just happen on one day. It may continue until the reason for school refusal has been identified and addressed. Reasons for a child or young person not wanting to attend school can include:

- they are being teased or bullied
- unstructured and/or noisy times are causing them anxiety
- something unpleasant has occurred and the child or young person on the autism spectrum G R H V Q ¶ W Z D Q W it to happen again
- they have a particular dislike or difficulty with a particular lesson which is on the timetable that day.

Ways you can help

- Have someone that the child feels comfortable with meet them at the school gate or from W K H L U S D U H Q W ¶ V F D U 7 K L V P D \ E H D W Feeder or a teaching assistant
- Check that the child or young person with autism is getting enough and the right type of support. The SENCO, support for learning principal teacher or person responsible for children with SEN/ASN can give advice on this and start procedures for more support if needed.
- Allow them to use coping strategies such as time out cards and stress scales.
- Identify a quiet and safe place that they can use when things get too much.
- Arrange autism awareness training for all staff, including break and lunchtime support supervisors. For more information on training of this type please visit www.autism.org.uk/askautism
- Give the child an opportunity to discuss their feelings at the end of each school day. For example, you could go through the timetable and ask the child to give each lesson a mark out of 10. For those lessons they score low, ask them why.
- + D Y H R S H Q F R P P X Q L F D W L R Q Z L W K W K H F K L O G R U \ R X Q J S H will help their child to feel more comfortable at school.

When supporting the child to come back to school after a period of school refusal, start off with the child attending for an hour and then build it up gradually. This is better than putting pressure on the child to attend for a whole day and them not coping.

Resources for school staff

The National Autistic Society

Autism Education Trust

The Autism Education Trust (AET) helps raise awareness of the importance of appropriate educational provision for children and young people on the autism spectrum through a range of dedicated events, information sharing conferences, web-based resources and ongoing research and project work. The AET is a partnership of organisations (including the NAS) with an interest in autism and works to improve education for children with autism.

Inclusion Development Programme
www.aet-idp.org.uk.

Transition toolkit
www.autismeducationtrust.org.uk/resources

Autism competency framework
www.aettraininghubs.org.uk/schools/competency-

http://astore.amazon.co.uk/thenationalau-21/detail/1843102064

Can I tell you about PDA? Ruth Fidler and Phil Christie, illustrated by Jonathon Powell
A guide for friends and family (suitable for readers age 7-15)
www.jkp.com/uk/can-i-tell-you-about-pathological-demand-avoidance-syndrome.html

Freaks, Geeks and Asperger Syndrome, Luke Jackson, 2002
A User Guide to Adolescence
www.jkp.com/uk/freaks-geeks-and-asperger-syndrome.html

Resources for children on the autism spectrum

When My Worries Get Too Big!, Kari Dunn Buron, 2013
A relaxation book for children who live with anxiety.
www.autism.org.uk/worries

The Red Beast: Controlling Anger in Children with Asperger's Syndrome, K.I. Al-GhaniThde with Ader

MyWorld

Sign up to receive free autism-specific school and nursery resources straight into your inbox
www.autism.org.uk/myworld

Publications

The NAS sells a wide range of resources about autism spectrum disorders aimed at parents, people with the disability and professionals.

Tel: 020 7903 3595
Email: publications@nas.org.uk
www.autism.org.uk/shop

Membership

The National Autistic Society membership keeps you up-to-date with information and developments in the autism community. Our members play a vital role in the work of the charity and members receive benefits that include our magazine, Your Autism Magazine, delivered four times a year, regular e-newsletters, a 10% discount on NAS publications and up to £75 off NAS conferences.

Tel: 0808 800 1050
Email: membership@nas.org.uk
www.autism.org.uk/joinus

This resource pack was last updated in December 2015.
Compiled and edited by the Autism Information Team.
Copies can be downloaded from www.autism.org.uk/teacherpack

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The National Autistic Society
393 City Road
London EC1V 1NG
Supporter Care: 0808 8001050
Autism Helpline: 0808 800 4104
Minicom: 0845 070 4003
Fax: 020 7833 9666
Email: nas@nas.org.uk
Website: www.autism.org.uk