



ASD Training Manual





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ASD

What is ASD?

- An Autism Spectrum Disorder is a lifelong developmental disability which disrupts the development of social and communication skills.
 - The term Autism Spectrum is used as the condition varies from person to person.
 - Despite the wide differences, autistic people will have difficulty with communication, social interaction and restrictive, repetitive behaviours or interests
 - Autism affects the way a person interacts and communicates with others and experiences the world around them.
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1 in every 100 people in the UK is on the autism spectrum
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There are an estimated 20,000 people in Northern Ireland with autism (more than one in every 100 people)
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90% of people with Autism have sensory issues
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Boys are 4X more likely to be diagnosed than girls
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ASD and the individual



- According to current diagnostic criteria, autistic people show a set of core behaviours or characteristics, including difficulties in social communication and rigid and repetitive ways of thinking and behaving
 - There is, however, much variation in the way that an autistic person manifest these different behaviours.
 - Some individuals may also have a severe learning / intellectual disability, while others will have average or advanced intellectual abilities.
 - For some individuals, spoken language is limited or absent altogether while for others, speech can be fluent, but their use of language to communicate with others can seem awkward and often one-sided to non-autistic people.
 - Some individuals want to be around others and to have friends, while others prefer to be alone.
 - The autism is referred to as a spectrum therefore includes children, young people and adults and needs vary considerably.
 - The capabilities and difficulties of any individual may also change with age, experiences and environment
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Keep your focus on the person, the individual

A quarter (26%) of parents waited over three years to receive support for their child

Seven in ten autistic children and young people said school would be better if more teachers understood autism.

44% of parents saying their autistic child has fallen behind with work and 59% saying their child was more socially isolated than before.

Stats taken from The School Report, NAS 2021

Let's think...



In your own words, what do you understand by the term ASD ?

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Can you explain what is meant by the term 'spectrum'?

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What barriers do you see for children & young people with ASD?

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Communication

Autistic children can have difficulty with expressive or receptive communication. Expressive communication is when the person becomes the “Speaker”. Receptive communication is when the person becomes the “listener”.

There are four types of communication:



Verbal



Non Verbal



Visual



Written

Difficulties can be with reading and interpreting facial expressions, gestures and body language, eye contact, intonation patterns

What you might see in a youth setting for young people with ASD:

- Difficulty focusing / listening
- Difficulty following a sequence of commands
- Easily distracted by background noise or activity
- Difficulty interpreting the meaning of sarcasm, metaphors, idioms often taking things literally.
- Problems understanding verbal jokes/ sarcasm
- Difficulty seeing something from another person's perspective

Socialising

Although autistic people may have difficulties with social communication or interaction, this will vary from person to person, it may also vary due to the environment, context, or how someone is feeling that day.



Common difficulties may include:

- Initiating conversation / maintaining conversation
- Social greetings or knowing how to end an interaction
- Interrupting emotions of others

Interactions



Social interactions require understanding of certain skills, rules or customs. It also requires abilities in expressive and receptive communication. This can be difficult for an autistic person. It is important to remember that many autistic people do want to interact but they may find it difficult and need support

There are common difficulties that may impact on how an autistic person can engage in social interaction.

This may include :

- Difficulty understanding body language.
- Difficulty understanding different vocal tones.
- Interrupting instructions (this becomes more difficult if instructions are multistep).
- Understanding words with multiple meaning.
- Understanding steps/ processes/ rules of activities or games
- May have specific or limited interest and find it difficult to move attention to another topic/ interest

Strategies

Strategies are practices that are designed to support either a specific behaviour or person.




Thinking of the needs of an individual and what strategies to put in place will ensure an inclusive environment where everyone can feel confident and supported, including staff or volunteers

Before introducing strategies you need to get to know the young person. You need to find out what motivates them, likes, dislikes and what they would like support with. Depending on age and need you may also want to engage with the parents/carers to find out what support they need or have at home/school/ other organisations.



At Mencap NI we take a person centred approach, the focus is on the person and what they can do, not their condition or disability. We are lead by our vision and our values in how we support people. Reflection on your mission and values as an organisation is a good way to start thinking about how you can support individual needs.



 Making sure that the young person is involved in decisions will ensure that strategies are relevant, respectful, will be accepted by the person. This means strategies will have a better chance of making a positive difference.

“If you have met ONE autistic person, you have met ONE autistic person!”

Everyone is an individual and it is importance to take into account each person’s life experience, age, gender, culture, heritage, language, beliefs and identity.

Being flexible and reflecting on strategies is key.

By reflecting and ensuring that the young persons views, opinions are taken on board you can work alongside each other to provide the right support.

Tips and Tricks



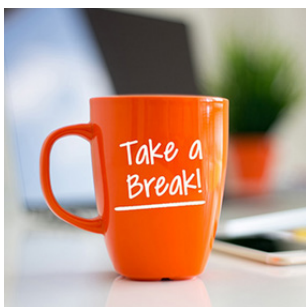
- Give simple explanations - one thing at a time.
- Give young people processing time after explanations.
- Be Patient.
- Keep sessions positive & upbeat.
- Let young people know what they are doing at the beginning of a session with a schedule on flipchart.



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- Give lots of encouragement when engaging in activities but also have a quiet space where they can go if they need a time out.
 - Patience & Understanding of how young people are in terms of their mood.
 - Encouragement is key but don't pressure them.
 - Stay Organised.



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- If an activity isn't working try and adapt it slightly so that it includes everyone.
 - Frequent breaks.
 - Allow space for them to chill when needed in busy environments.



A hand holding a red marker, crossing out "PLAN A" in black and writing "PLAN B" in red. The background is white.



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- Be prepared to use different communication tools such as PEC Cards.
 - Use clear language avoid jargon.
 - With younger age group their attention span can be short so have other activities ready for when they lose interest in current one.



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- Ask the young people in your youth club what they need and want. They are the experts.
 - Give young people some responsibility.
 - Encourage leadership to promote confidence.



Appendix A

About me - A one page profile



My Name

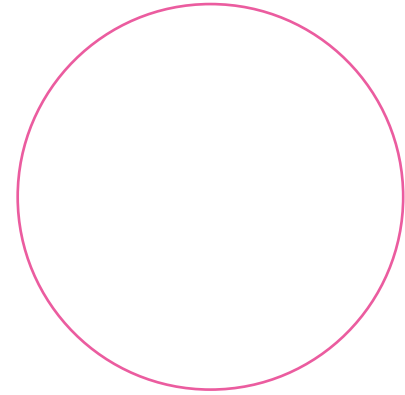
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The people who are important to me

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Picture

What is important to me

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What I am great at

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What I may find difficult

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What I want support with

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What I need support with

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When this was completed

Appendix B

What is great about me ?

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What is important to me?

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What do I need support with?

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Appendix C



Thank you!



mencap NI

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