

Factsheet

Raising awareness of Autism Spectrum and its effects in the workplace

It is estimated that around 700,000 people may have autism – or more than 1 in 100 in the population.

What is Autism?

Autism is a lifelong developmental disability that affects how a person communicates with, and relates to, other people and the world around them.

It is a spectrum condition, which means that, while all people with autism share certain areas of difficulty, their condition will affect them in different ways. Asperger syndrome is a form of autism.

The three main areas of difficulty which all people with autism share are sometimes known as the 'triad of impairments'. They are:

- Difficulty with social communication.
- Difficulty with social interaction.
- Difficulty with social imagination.

What is Asperger syndrome?

Asperger syndrome is a form of autism. People with Asperger syndrome are often of average or above average intelligence. They have fewer problems with speech but may still have difficulties with understanding and processing language.

While there are similarities with autism, people with Asperger syndrome have fewer problems with speaking and are often of average, or above average, intelligence. They do not usually have the accompanying learning disabilities associated with autism, but they may have specific learning difficulties. These may include dyslexia and dyspraxia or other conditions such as attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) and epilepsy.

Myths and facts

Myth: Misconceptions such as autism only affecting children or that all people with the condition are geniuses can have a damaging effect on the lives of people living with autism, making it more difficult to have their condition recognised and to access the support they need.

Fact: The *Autism Act 2009* was the first disability-specific law in England and led to the Autism strategy for adults with autism on 3 March 2010.

Myth: You can tell someone has autism by looking at them.

Fact: Autism is a non-visual disability.

Myth: You can only be diagnosed with autism as a child.

Fact: Autism affects adults as well as children. People with the condition can be diagnosed at any age. Some people live with autism for their entire lives without ever getting a formal diagnosis.

Myth: All people with autism are incapable of working.

Fact: Prospects is an employment and training service run by the National Autistic Society, helping people with autism into work.

Fact: According to a 2008 survey, just 15% of adults with autism are in full-time paid employment.

Myth: People with autism will never achieve anything.

Fact: Some of the world's most creative people are suspected to have had autism, including Mozart and Newton.

What can I do as a manager?

Remember that autism affects people in different ways and there is not one way to support an employee on the spectrum. In general:

- **Make sure instructions are concise and specific.**
- **Ensure the work environment is well-structured .**
- **Clarify expectations of the job.**
- **Provide sensitive but direct feedback.**
- **Regularly review performance.**
- **Help other staff to be more aware.**
- **Provide training and monitoring.**
- **Provide reassurance in stressful situations.**

Be aware of the Autism strategy for adults and seek support from autism specific organisations.

Where can I find out more information?

www.autism.org.uk

<http://www.autism.org.uk/working-with/employment.aspx>

www.autism.org.uk/prospects

www.equalityni.org/archive/pdf/Employingpeoplewithautism.pdf

www.autismhelp.info/adults/employment/categories

<https://www.gov.uk/.../supporting-people-with-autism-into-employment>

Contact Debbie Richards (Disability Advocate) for more information on this factsheet or your nearest Disability Advocate.

http://nhsbtweb/group_services/human_resources/equality_and_diversity/information_for_disabled_employees/disability_advocate_scheme.asp

and request the detailed factsheet from the **Business Disability Forum** of which NHSBT is a member.

For **carers** and anyone else who has anxieties about family, relationships, personal or financial matters we have our fantastic free confidential **Employee Assistance Programme, Employee Care managed by Capita independently from NHSBT**. You can telephone 0800 716017 to speak to someone and you can access a wealth of information on line. Please visit www.employeecare.com. To log in all you need to do is type the pin code 72992 into both the access code and password boxes. This is an incredibly valuable benefit to all staff and it's free to you as NHSBT employees!