

Autistic Spectrum Disorder

Autism is a lifelong developmental disability that affects how a person communicates with, and relates to, other people. It also affects how they make sense of the world around them.

It is a spectrum condition, which means that, while all people with autism share certain difficulties, their condition will affect them in different ways. Some people with autism are able to live relatively independent lives but others may have accompanying learning disabilities and need a lifetime of specialist support. People with autism may also experience over- or under-sensitivity to sounds, touch, tastes, smells, light or colours.

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.

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.

It can be hard to create awareness of autism as people with the condition do not 'look' disabled: parents of children with autism often say that other people simply think their child is naughty; while adults find that they are misunderstood.

All people with autism can benefit from a timely diagnosis and access to appropriate services and support.

Useful websites for further information.

<http://www.autismwestmidlands.org.uk>

<http://www.autism.org.uk>

<http://www.autismeducationtrust.org.uk/>