

ASPERGER SYNDROME

This fact sheet has been written by parent carers for parent carers



What is Asperger syndrome?

Autism is a spectrum condition, which means that it affects people to varying degrees and in different ways. People who are less obviously affected by the condition are sometimes referred to as having 'high-functioning autism' (hFA) or alternatively, you may hear the term 'Asperger syndrome' used. People who have Asperger syndrome are mostly of average or above average intelligence, although they may have some learning difficulties.

Asperger syndrome or high-functioning autism?

There is ongoing debate about whether two terms are needed for people at the higher end of the autism spectrum. Asperger syndrome has been removed from the DSM-V classification system, but not others. Some practitioners still use the term Asperger syndrome, while others do not. It's quite common to hear it used interchangeably with high-functioning autism, which can be confusing. To clarify, Asperger syndrome is typically used as a diagnosis if a child does not have a delay in language development and also has issues with co-ordination and fine motor-skills.

Characteristics of Asperger syndrome

People with Asperger syndrome share difficulties in three areas concerning social communication; social interaction, including reading emotions and facial expressions; and social imagination. These are known as the 'triad of impairments'.

In addition, a person may have sensory issues and develop repetitive behaviour or obsessive interests. they may also have other conditions such as: attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD); dyslexia; dyspraxia; hypermobility syndrome; obsessive compulsive disorder (OCD); or epilepsy, as well as difficulties with impulse control and anger management. It is important to remember however that, as with any disability, the degree to which an individual will be affected will vary from person to person.

Causes of Asperger syndrome

At the moment, the causes of Asperger syndrome are still unknown, although many experts believe that it may be a result of a number of different genetic and environmental factors.

Types of therapy

There is no 'cure' for Asperger syndrome but the following therapies that may help your child:

- **Social Stories** – short stories that teach children and adults with Asperger syndrome what to expect in social situations or activities.
- **Speech and Language Therapy (SALT)** – specialist support to build communication skills.
- **TEACCH** – a highly structured system of learning based on using visual prompts, which have found to be beneficial in teaching people with autism.





Ask about

- **SENDIASS** - Amaze provides Information, Advice and Support (IAS) to children and young people with SEND in Brighton & Hove and their parent carers. Our helpline advisers can talk you through any issues relating to a child or young person's special educational needs or disability. Call **01273 772289**, email sendiass@amazesussex.org.uk or visit www.amazesussex.org.uk
- **Integrated Child Development and Disability Services (Seaside View)** – where most primary school-age children with ASC will be diagnosed and where social care, health and education services work together to support your child. Also run courses for parents of children with ASC. Referrals are usually via a health or education professional but you can call Seaside View direct on **01273 265780**.
- **Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS)** – diagnose, assess and support secondary school age young people with ASC. Also run ASC courses for parent carers. Referrals to CAMHS should be made by a professional such as your GP, health visitor or the school nurse. Call CAMHS on: **01273 718680**.
- **BHISS Autism and Language Team** – local authority service that works with schools and other education settings to support children with ASC. Includes specialist autism and language SEN practitioners and teachers and family support workers. Also runs regular coffee mornings for parent carers. Ask your child's teacher or SENCO for a referral or call BHISS on **01273 293481**.
- **Making a claim for DLA** – if your child's care or mobility needs are significantly greater than the needs of their peers you may be able to claim Disability Living Allowance for them. Find out more at: www.gov.uk. Amaze can give you advice and practical support with making a claim. call the helpline on: **01273 772289** or email: sendiass@amazesussex.org.uk.
- **Compass Card** – a free leisure discount card administered by Amaze for 0 to 25 year olds registered on The Compass who live or go to school in Brighton & Hove or West Sussex, or who are looked after by social services in these areas. call Amaze on: **01273 772289**.
- **mASCot** – a parent-led support group for Brighton & Hove families who have a child or children with ASC. It has a private online forum and holds regular meet-ups for a wide range of activities. email: info@asc-mascot.com or go to: www.asc-mascot.com.
- **Face 2 Face club for under 7s with autism** – Meets second Saturday of every month at Turner Children's Centre, Ivory Place, BN2 9QE. Email: amandam@amazesussex.org.uk or call Amanda on: 07983 598711.
- **Autism charities for adults** – Aspire supports adults with Asperger's syndrome or Autism. call: **01273 725994** or visit: www.bh-impetus.org/projects/aspire. Assert runs a monthly, informal, support group for parents, partners or carers of adults with Asperger syndrome or high-functioning autism. contact Sarah on: **01273 234850**, email: assert.bh@assertbh.org.uk or visit: www.assertbh.org.uk

Further reading and useful links

- **Ambitious about autism** – national charity for children and young people with autistic spectrum condition. Visit: www.ambitiousaboutautism.org.uk.
- **Autism Education Trust** - resources and training geared towards getting the best education for children and young people on the autistic spectrum.- www.autismeducationtrust.org.uk/for-parents/
- **National Autistic Society** – www.autism.org.uk/about/diagnosis.aspx. Helpline tel: **0808 800 4104**.

