

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.



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Ask about

- **SENDIASS** - Amaze provides Information, Advice and Support (IAS) to children and young people with SEND in East Sussex 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
- **ISEND CLASS+** - support for families with children with autism including advice, coffee mornings, workshops and short term support at home. Part of the ISEND CLASS service that gives specialist support to schools in East Sussex for 4-16 year olds with autism, communication and learning difficulties. Call 01273 336887 or visit www.facebook.com/CLASSPlusEastSussex
- **Child Development Team** - consultant paediatricians, specialist nurses and therapists (based at the Scott Unit in Eastbourne, Kipling Outpatient Dept in Hastings and satellite clinics) who assess and support children up to 11 who may be on the autistic spectrum. Ask your GP, health visitor, your child's school or another professional working with your child for a referral.
- **Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS)** – diagnose, assess and support young people with ASC aged 11 -18. Also run 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 Hailsham: 01323 446070; Lewes: 01273 402510; Uckfield: 01825 745001; Hastings: 01424 758905.
- **Children's Integrated Therapy Service** - deliver physiotherapy, occupational therapy and speech and language therapy for children aged 0 to 16 or 19, depending on school-leaving age. Email kcht.escits@nhs.net or visit www.kentcht.nhs.uk/service/east-sussex-childrens-integrated-therapy-and-equipment-service
- **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.
- **Aspens** - family support groups and clinics, parent carer courses and workshops and a variety of groups for children and young people with autism across East Sussex. They also run Easter and Summer holiday clubs. Call 0345 450 0060 or visit www.aspens.org.uk
- **Autism Train** - training courses on for parent carers of children and young people with autism in East Sussex. Tel: 01424 845562 Email info@autismtrain.co.uk or visit www.autismtrain.co.uk.
- **Families for Autism** - weekend clubs and activities for children and young people with autism. Tel; 01323 430369 or 07415 137887 or visit www.familiesforautism.com
- **iContact Autism** - Lewes-based autism community group that runs support groups, workshops, events and campaigns. Email info@icontactautism.org or visit www.icontactautism.org or iContact's Facebook page at www.facebook.com/iContactAutism
- **Spectrum Autism Support** – helps young people with autism aged 0 to 19 to join in activities and their community independently. Run skills award course and groups for 10-18 year olds. Call 01424 724700 or email spectrum@eastsussex.gov.uk
- **Other parent-led groups for families of children with SEND** - there are a number of parent led support groups and organisations across Sussex for families of children with any additional need. For details, visit www.escis.org.uk/category/family-information/parentcarer-run-groups



ASPERGER SYNDROME



Further reading and useful links

- **East Sussex Local Offer** - for information about local services for children and young people with autism visit www.eastsussex.gov.uk/childrenandfamilies/specialneeds/learning-difficulties/autism
- **Ambitious about autism** – national charity for children and young people with autism. 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.

