

# ASPERGER SYNDROME

This fact sheet has been written by parent carers for parent carers.  
Clinical information has been approved by West Sussex practitioners.



## 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 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 been found to be beneficial in teaching people with autism.



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### Ask about

- **Autism charities in West Sussex – Autism Sussex:** go to [www.autismsussex.org.uk](http://www.autismsussex.org.uk) or call **0345 450 0060**. It runs behavioural advice services, parent workshops, coffee mornings, clubs and siblings clubs. The Worthing branch of the **National Autistic Society (NAS): 07766 525909**.
- **Children and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS)** – doctors and therapists who help children and young people with mental health issues. Referrals must be made by a professional from health, social care or an educational setting.
- **Child Disability Service** – a social work service for children and young people with severe and/or complex disabilities, it works with families and other agencies to ensure they get the right support. Call: **01403 229888** or email: [cdt@westsussex.gcsx.gov.uk](mailto:cdt@westsussex.gcsx.gov.uk). Please note that some children may be referred on to the MASH (see contact details below).
- **Compass Card West Sussex** – a free leisure discount card for 0 to 25 year olds with SEND, which is run by Amaze. Find out more at: [www.amazebrighton.org.uk](http://www.amazebrighton.org.uk) or by calling: **0300 123 9186**.
- **Early Bird** – three month course for parents and carers of children under 5 with autism designed to help develop their child's communications skills and behaviour. Early Bird+ is available for school-age children.
- **Independent Support** – Amaze's Independent Supporters provide advice and support to parent carers and young people applying for or transferring to an EHC Plan in Sussex. For Sussex Independent Support, call: **0300 123 7782**.
- **MASH** – support from health and social care. If your child is under 18, call the MASH, tel: **01403 229888**, email: [MASH@westsussex.gcsx.gov.uk](mailto:MASH@westsussex.gcsx.gov.uk). For over 18s call the Adult Social CarePoint: **01243 642121**, or email: [socialcare@westsussex.gov.uk](mailto:socialcare@westsussex.gov.uk).
- **Portage** – a home-based educational programme tailored to a child's individual needs. Available to very young children. Chichester: **01243 536182**, Crawley: **01293 572480**, Horsham and Mid-Sussex: **01444 243150**, Worthing: **01903 242558**.
- **Social Communication Team** – team of qualified specialists with expertise in autism who aim to promote the educational, social and emotional development of children and young people, working with their parents and educational settings. Ask your child's school for further information.
- **Support groups** – Autism Support Crawley, Autism Sussex, Parenting Autism Together in Horsham (PATH), Parents for Autism, Puzzle Pieces and Sussex Autism Support. All can be found on Facebook.
- **Other resources** – the Ashdown Club, Worthing: **01903 528607**; Kangaroos, Haywards Heath: **01444 459108**; PACSO, Chichester: **01243 533353**; Springboard Project, Crawley: **01293 531963**, Horsham: **01403 218888**.

### Further reading and useful links

- **Making Sense of it All** – our handy parent/carer guide contains information and advice on benefits, support for your child at school, getting help from social services and accessing social & leisure activities. For more go to: [www.reachingfamilies.org.uk](http://www.reachingfamilies.org.uk).
- **Ambitious About Autism** – national charity for children and young people with autism. Visit: [www.ambitiousaboutautism.org.uk](http://www.ambitiousaboutautism.org.uk).
- **Asperger's Syndrome Foundation:** [www.aspergerfoundation.org.uk](http://www.aspergerfoundation.org.uk).
- **Disability Living Allowance (DLA)** – your child may qualify for DLA, a state benefit that will help with their care. For further information visit [www.gov.uk/dla-disability-living-allowancebenefit/overview](http://www.gov.uk/dla-disability-living-allowancebenefit/overview).
- **National Autistic Society** – [www.autism.org.uk](http://www.autism.org.uk). Helpline tel: **0808 800 4104**.
- **West Sussex Local Offer** – go to <https://westsussex.local-offer.org> and search for 'Asperger syndrome' and/or 'Autism'.

