

HIGH FUNCTIONING AUTISM



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 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

- **ASCT (Autism, Social and Communication Team)** – team of advisory teachers with expertise in autism who support and advise schools on the educational, social and emotional development of children and young people. Referral is via your child's school – please ask them for further information.
- **Aspens** – autism charity in West Sussex. Contact **03454 50060** or **www.aspens.org.uk**. It runs behavioural advice services, parent workshops, coffee mornings, clubs and siblings clubs.
- **Child 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.
- **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.compasscard.org.uk**, email: **compass@amazesussex.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. Find out more via the Portage team.
- **National Autistic Society (Horsham)** – youth club for children and young people aged five to 18 with Autism and Asperger Syndrome. Tel: **01483 521743** or **01483 521744** or email: **SEResourcecentres@nas.org.uk**.
- **Portage** – a home-based educational programme tailored to a child's individual needs. Available to very young children. Chichester, Horsham and Mid-Sussex: **01243 536182**, Crawley: **01293 572480**, Worthing: **01903 242558**.
- **Support groups** – Autism by the Sea, Autism Support Crawley, Bognor Regis Autism & SEND Support (BRASS), PATH – Parenting Autism Together in Horsham, Puzzle Pieces Support Group, SEND Support Sussex and Sussex Autism Support. All can be found on Facebook.
- **West Sussex Children Services** – support from health and social care. If your child is under 18, call the Integrated Front Door (IFD) for West Sussex Children Services, tel: **01403 229888** or email: **WSChildrenservices@westsussex.gov.uk**. For over 18s call the **Adults' CarePoint**: **01243 642121**, or email: **socialcare@westsussex.gov.uk**.
- **Other resources** – The Ashdown Club, Worthing: **01903 528607**; Kangaroos, Haywards Heath: **01444 459108**; PACSO, Chichester: **01243 533353**; Springboard Project, Horsham: **01403 218888**.

Further reading and useful links

- **Making Sense of it All** and **Making Sense of Adult Life** (14+) – Reaching Families' handbooks for parent carers of children and young people with SEND in West Sussex provide essential information on education, social lives, money matters, social care, health, employment and much more. Go to: **www.reachingfamilies.org.uk/guides.html**.
- **Ambitious About Autism** – national charity for children and young people with autism. Visit: **www.ambitiousaboutautism.org.uk**.
- **Asperger's Syndrome Foundation**: **http://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-allowance-benefit/overview**.
- **National Autistic Society** – **www.autism.org.uk**. helpline tel: **0808 800 4104**.
- **West Sussex Local Offer** – go to **westsussex.local-offer.org** and search for 'High functioning autism' and/or 'Asperger syndrome'.

