

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 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

- **Information, Advice and Support (IAS)** – Amaze supports families of children and young people with SEN and disabilities in Brighton and Hove. We have a helpline, publications and a website. We also run workshops and courses and can offer one-to-one support with EHC planning and making DLA and PIP claims. Call Amaze on: **01273 772289** or visit: **www.amazebrighton.org.uk**.
- **ASC courses – Seaside View** tel: **01273 265780** and **CAMHS** tel: **01273 718680** both run courses for parent carers of children and young people with an autistic spectrum condition diagnosis.
- **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**, or visit: **www.assertbh.org.uk**.
- **Autistic Spectrum Condition Support Service (ASCSS)** – works with schools to include pupils with an ASC and meet their individual needs. Also runs regular parent coffee mornings at various locations in Brighton and Hove. To find out about parent groups call: **07578 768 441** or email: **LisaElbourne@downspark.brighton-hove.sch.uk**.
- **Autism Sussex** – runs individual advice and support sessions for parent carers and monthly Saturday clubs for children and young people with ASC at Downs View Special School. Call: **0345 450 0060** or email: **familysupport@autismsussex.org.uk**.
- **Bounce soft play** – for families of pre-school children with an ASC diagnosis or awaiting assessment. Meets on Mondays at Bounce Softplay, City Academy, Whitehawk. Advance booking essential, to do so email: **amanda.mortensen@scope.org.uk** or tel: **07436 810608**.
- **Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS)** – diagnose, assess and support children and young people with mental health issues. Referrals to CAMHS should be made by a professional such as your GP, health visitor or the school nurse. Call CAMHS on: **01273 718680**.
- **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 and Hove or West Sussex, or who are looked after by social services in these areas. Call Amaze on: **01273 772289**.
- **Independent Support** – Amaze's Independent Supporters provide extra advice and support to young people and parent carers who are going through the process of getting an EHC Plan in Brighton and Hove and Sussex. For Brighton and Hove Independent Support, call: **01273 772289**. For Sussex Independent Support, call: **0300 123 7782**.
- **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: **helpline@amazebrighton.org.uk**.
- **mASCot** – a parent-led support group for Brighton and 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**.

Further reading and useful links

- **Ambitious about autism** – national charity for children and young people with autism. Visit: **www.ambitiousaboutautism.org.uk**.
- **Asperger's Syndrome Foundation**: **www.aspergerfoundation.org.uk**.
- **National Autistic Society** – **www.autism.org.uk**. Helpline tel: **0808 800 4104**.

