



Autism Spectrum Disorder Manual

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Learning Outcomes

- Understand what Autism is
- Know the most common types of Autism
- Understand that individuals will have differing experiences of Autism
- Understand approaches that improve wellbeing for people with Autism
- Understand the roles of carers and others in the support of people with Autism
- Understand factors influencing communication and interaction with people who have Autism
- Understand how a person-centred approach encourages positive communication
- Understand ways of working to ensure that diverse needs are met

Complementary Manuals

- Introducing Person-Centred Approaches
- Promoting Dignity and Compassion in Care
- Challenging Behaviour

Unit One

➤ *What is Autism?*

Autism is a developmental condition which affects the way an individual communicates and relates to people as well as how they understand and interact within the world around them. It is a lifelong condition which people are born with, although many grow up without the condition being recognised. Although there is no cure for it, with the right support and knowledge it can be managed. It is a spectrum disorder (ASD) which covers a range of similar conditions, Asperger's syndrome being just one. Although autistic people share the same difficulties it affects them in different ways. Many are able to learn, live and work independently but some also have learning difficulties or co-existing health conditions which means they will need a greater level of support.

Some autistic people find the world overwhelming, they have a heightened sensory sensitivity which causes an aversion to things such as loud noises, bright lights, certain tastes, smells and certain situations such as crowds of people. Autistic people may also find social interaction difficult, have trouble picking up on hints and struggle to understand feelings and emotions and find 'chit chat'. They appear to have no 'stop button' to know when to withhold information so they are less worried about sharing personal details as they don't get embarrassed to the same level as others.

One of the significant characteristics which, is often one of the identifiers to an autistic diagnosis, is a higher level of technical and obscure interests sometimes to the point of obsession. Another characteristic can be ritualistic behaviour, where they need to do the same things at the same times, any change to this can set off a pattern of associated behaviours.

Emotions are also something which are found to be a struggle.

Contrary to common opinion, Autistic people have the same range of emotions that everybody else has they just struggle to display them. Whilst most of us are driven by our emotions, the effect they have on the decision making in an autistic person is far less.

In terms of diagnosis, this can be difficult as there is no medical test such as a blood test which can diagnose the condition, the only way is to look at their behaviour and if they are diagnosed in childhood, their development.

➤ **Levels of Autism**

Whilst everyone with autism shares the same core characteristics, many have additional conditions such as intellectual or language difficulties so in order to establish the correct amount of support that is required it is clinically split into three levels, Level 1, Level 2 & Level 3. Each reflect the individual's ability to communicate, manage new situations, cope with day to day life in social situations and understand others emotions.

LEVEL 1 – Require very little support, they have some difficulty initiating social interaction and have problems with organising and planning which can hinder independence.

LEVEL 2 – Require substantial support, their social interaction is limited only a few particular interests, they display frequent restrictive/repetitive behaviours.

LEVEL 3 – Require significant substantial support, they severely lack verbal and nonverbal communication skills. They find any change of focus difficult and stressful.

Previously autism has had many different labels which includes Autism, Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) Autism Spectrum Condition (ASC) Atypical Autism, Classic Autism, Kanner Autism, Pervasive Developmental Disorder (PDD) High Functioning Autism (HFA), Aspergers Syndrome and Pathological Demand Avoidance (PDA). However, due to recent changes within the medical criteria for the classification of mental disorders all previous labels are now diagnosed as Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). However, some doctors still use the additional terms to refer to the individuals particular form of autism.

➤ **Learners Personal Experiences**

Those working with individuals with Autism need certain skills, these are what care workers questioned consider to be the key skills and qualities required:

- Clear Communication
- Interest in autistic people and how they think and learn
- The ability to understand and express feelings
- Understanding
- Patience
- Knowledge of the individual
- Awareness of Autism
- Flexibility
- Calm
- Positive
- Undiscriminating

- Has a sense of Humour
- Observant and problem-solving skills
- Empathetic
- Be a good listener
- Understand sensory needs in autism
- Consistent in how they deal with things
- Interest in working with Autistic individuals.
- Encouraging in developing strengths
- Understanding and skills in sign language.

Why not think about your strengths and add any additional views you may have in terms of skills required to working with individuals with Autism?

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A carer's experience of working with an Autistic Person

From my experience of working with adults diagnosed with autism, I understand that they like to be very structural and some people with autism do not deal with change.

With the service users I support, we found introducing a visual weekly planner has worked well with supporting them to choose what they would like to do each day as it allows them to see it as well as making individual choices. If an activity that is planned needs to be changed then the client's needs to be asked to swap their picture over on the planner so that they are involved with the change and told about it in short, simple sentences for example "no swimming today" – staff then offer the picture cards to the service user to allow them to choose an alternative activity. Some service users find making choices difficult and confusing once it has been altered, therefore staff make a decision of activity closest to what was planned originally to avoid distressing them any further. Too much information can cause poor behaviour as it is too much for them to understand or process.

With some service users who are structured they like to do things at certain times of the day such as their personal care e.g. in the mornings service users A won't do his personal care until service user C has done his.

Also, some people with autism have very limited preferences with food – service user A doesn't like certain textures or sauces and will only eat one thing at a time on his plate. However, service user B would only eat a handful over foods when he first arrived, but over time we have introduced different meals, he now has a wide range of likes and preferences.

Unit One Questions

1. What does ASD stand for?

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2. Why do autistic people find the world quite challenging?

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3. Name one of the characteristics which an autistic person may have.

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4. How many 'levels' of autism are there said to be?

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Unit Two

➤ Individuality and Behaviours of individuals with Autism

Although the varying types of autistic spectrum disorders differ in the level of behaviours that are expressed, the characteristics which are affected are the same. Social relationships, Communication and Imaginative Thought. This is sometimes referred to as a 'triad' an individual will display characteristics from each part of the triad but these will vary in their severity from person to person. If you had two people both diagnosed with the same form of ASD it doesn't automatically mean to say that their behaviours and reactions will be identical. One may be severely debilitated whilst the other may merely appear a bit strange and lacking in social skills. It all comes down to the fact that there is no average or common type of person with ASD so the spectrum of abilities which people with ASD present are wide.

Characteristic	Slight Impairment	Moderate Impairment	Severe Impairment
Social Relationships	Active but odd/bizarre – will start off interaction with others but in an odd, repetitive and possibly inappropriate way.	Passive - will respond to interaction but never instigate it	Aloof/ Indifferent- showing little reaction to others
Communication	Moderate communication but this is limited to a small number of topics.	Communication is very repetitive	No communication at all or extremely muddled communication.
Imaginative Thought	Cannot see things beyond reality	Unable to vary how they use things	Use items for visual stimulation, don't actually physically use them.

Whilst the main focus is primarily on the triad, Repetitive Behaviour is also a common characteristic of ASD which can vary in severity.

Imaginative Thought	Have a topic of specific interest	Have particular routines involving a particular ability.	Has verbal routines – i.e words that are repeated at a predictable time during an activity.	Has routines involving objects.	Fascinated and fixed on things visually e.g a picture, a tv screen.	Displays repetitive body movements.
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Example of Behaviours.

Noah likes routine and doesn't like any changes. He likes to eat the same breakfast at the same time each day and put on his clothes in the same order. At school he likes to sit in the same place and next to the same people. He gets upset at any changes which could mean his behaviour is adversely affected all day.

➤ Why do you act that way?

Individuals with ASD can often be treated as if they cannot hear or spoken to using simplistic mannerisms, sometimes people may talk over them or ignore them altogether. When it comes to carers it is usually the former two options that are more commonly seen. Primarily this is because it may well be the first time they have met somebody with ASD so unsure how to relate with them. This is usually due to a lack of understanding and training. People can understand a physical or cognitive disability but when it comes to a social communication disability they find this far harder to comprehend.

➤ Understanding the Impact of your behaviors

How people react to individuals with ASD can have a significant impact.

Look at the example below and think about how the individual with ASD would feel.

Elliott entered the doctor's surgery, although the doctor invited him to sit down, he remained standing by the door wringing his hands and shifting his weight from side to side whilst looking at the floor. After several attempts of asking "How can I help?" which were met with nothing but silence and a slight glance, the doctor finally informed Elliott that "if you won't tell me what the problem is then I am unable to help you, you are wasting my time, please leave I have a waiting full of other patients to see"

How do you imagine Elliott is feeling?.....

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What we say and how we react to individuals with ASD not only affects them but impacts on their family as well from the reverberations it sets off with their behavior, look at the following:

- People wrongly think that those with ASD don't want to mix with others, preferring their own company so leave them alone – this can result in them feeling alone and that people don't want to relate to them.
- Many people feel uncomfortable communicating with ASD individuals as they do not understand the difficulties they have with social interaction such as appropriate talking subjects or personal space – this can mean they become socially excluded.
- Many think that Individuals with ASD are unable to connect with emotions – they aren't reserved with what they say, openly being insensitive to them.
- Those unfamiliar with the challenging behaviours that come with ASD view them as offensive and confrontational. – They may try and avoid them
- The difficult behavior and/or problems with social interaction which individuals have can hinder their ability to gain access to services and facilities.
- People unfamiliar with ASD don't understand their needs and view them as 'odd' – They may well experience bullying and abuse.
- People can make pre-judgements about individuals with ASD including their abilities – This can affect the opportunities available to them.

A carer's attitude and the way they react with an individual can have a direct effect on their behavior. They commonly have difficulty interpreting and dealing with social emotions so struggle to level and control their resulting reactions. The effect of which can mean that managing their care becomes more difficult, it can also mean it can have a negative impact on their quality of life.

➤ **What do you think about the scenarios below?**

“Chris never eats any of the food on offer so it is pointless offering any, he will have to find somewhere else to eat”

“Lucy won’t be able to join the group on the visit to the cinema as last time she kept screaming and shouting so spoiled it for everybody else in the auditorium ”

“Oh, she doesn’t care what I say about her she doesn’t really understand”

How would you feel in any of these situations?

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What do you think your reaction would be?

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What options do you think could be offered to Chris?

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Unit Two Questions

1. Name the three characteristics affected by autism.

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2. If an individual's communication skills are moderately affected what would their communication be like?

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3. What is one of the common ways that people relate to an autistic person when they meet them for the first time?

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4. How might a carer's attitude affect an individual?

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5. Why might an autistic person be vulnerable to bullying?

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Unit Three

Communication and Support

We all need to communicate, be it with family, friends or in a job. It is how we form and build relationships which is what we need to do in order to develop and engage in all parts of society. However, although the majority find this an easy and natural thing to do, for others like those with ASD it can be challenging. Having effective communication requires listening as well as talking. Being polite, considerate and clear about what you are talking about. In order to interact in conversation with someone with ASD you need to change the way you communicate with them, i.e. what and how you say it, as well as your expectations in the answers they provide.

Being aware of the difficulties individuals have with communication such as; they may not automatically pay attention to you when you start speaking, they may struggle to process what is being said, they struggle with open ended questions, If they don't understand they won't necessarily ask for help, they take things literally, they react badly when I say no, they may hit out if they don't want to do what is being asked.

When communicating with an individual the following tips can be helpful in ensuring that the communication is constructive and understood on both sides.

- Make communication as simple as possible.
- Speak slowly and clearly, although not too slow to be condescending.
- Be patient for a response.
- Don't rush them, be gentle and encouraging.
- Don't force them to look at you when they or you speak.
- Encourage them to speak about things they want to and show an interest.
- Allow time for them to think about things.
- Look out for and be aware of non-verbal signs.

➤ Non-verbal communication

The problems which those on the Autistic Spectrum have with communication means they have difficulty initiating conversation, replying to people's conversation or interacting with others to be sociable. This can mean that people without ASD struggle to communicate and interact with them. This can sometimes lead people to have a negative opinion towards Autistic people.

A common trait with Individuals on the spectrum is that they can have a poor use of language or sometimes a lack of speech altogether, therefore other means of communication need to be introduced.

It can sometimes seem that the individual doesn't hear what you say to them, won't respond or seems uninterested to attempts to communicate with them.

They can use others way to communicate which can include:

Gestures/Crying/looking at the object they want/guiding your hand to the object they want/reaching/looking or staring at the object they want/using images/expressing challenging behaviour/repeating other people's words and sentences (echolalia)

➤ **Enabling communication**

Whilst it may be tempting to try and do all the communication for somebody with ASD, i.e. it may be quicker, it is less stressful for them and more helpful for the person receiving the information, this is often not the best plan. By doing all the communication the individual starts to rely on somebody else to 'do the talking' for them, what really needs to happen is that they strengthen their skills in conventional communication in order that they become as effective as possible at communicating, this will then give them wider access to social, academic and other opportunities within life.

By supporting communication, it encourages the individual's confidence in doing so autonomously.

There are several ideas which can support communication:

Let them lead – rather than you directing activities let them take the lead. This will improve their attention and promote independence in the early stages – If the individual has only just started to talk then use single words when starting to communicate and use repetition to increase recognition.

Allow time for Communication – Don't jump in and do everything for the individual, this reduces opportunities for communication. Consider their abilities and how much they are able to do before offering help.

If possible, allow them time to do things themselves.

- Let them see your face – this allows them to see the variety of facial that can be used in communication. Always be mindful however that reading your facial expressions at the same time as verbal communication can be too overwhelming for some which could set off negative behaviours.
- Imitation – whilst some advocate imitation and a means to encourage communication it can also set of negative behaviours through confusion.

- Gestures and visual prompts – these can help the individual relate words to activities e.g. when you smile, say the word or when you say “ shut the door” actually do it.
- Other types of visual supports can be photographs, pictures or cue cards.
- Music and role play - some people feel more confident and are more able to communicate when then sing. Think of the many cases which have made headlines of people with stutters losing them when they sing, this can have a similar effect for some people with communication difficulties. Role play is good way to template social interaction including when it can go wrong.
- Feedback – It is always important to give praise for attempts to understand and communicate, this provides encouragement to do so again.
- Encourage communication – Try and design opportunities for communication and interaction to take place this could involve a whole range of things, it could be putting a plate of their favourite biscuits out of their reach so they have to ask for or maybe asking a question which would require a sentence answer e.g “ what would you like to do now?”
- Encourage interaction – look for opportunities to join in activities with the individual, e.g find matching pieces in a puzzle for them. By doing so they learn that interaction with somebody else can be enjoyable.

➤ **General good practice:**

Staff working with individuals with ASD should have skills in maintaining and encouraging communication. They should encourage and “create opportunities for interaction, engagement and involvement and spend time with people for no purpose other than interaction and engagement”*. By doing so this will help them gain confidence and independence and maximise relations and interaction.

It is also good practice to encourage individuals to make their own decisions which will help them feel more in control of their own lives *CQC Brief Guide BG007: Good communication standards for people with a learning disability or autism v2

➤ **Improving communication for individuals**

In order to improve communication for individuals the first step is to establish the individual’s capabilities, what they can and cannot do. By working and observing the individual it allows you to not only understand their abilities but also what their learning style is in order to establish what types of communication and support they will need. Just because two individuals have been diagnosed with the same type of autism, it doesn’t mean that the same support method will be effective for them both. Each one will have their own individual challenges, whilst one may understand what they see better than what they hear the other may not, so it is important communication support is established on a 1:1 basis.

Dependent on the individual's challenges a variety of alternative communications could be used which could include signing, gestures, use of symbols, written communication and Voice Output Communication Aids (VOCAs) which can come in several forms, primarily either supporting speaking (augmentative) or to replace speaking (alternative).

➤ **Advocacy**

Primarily it is carers who have the main role in supporting people with ASD, but continual reliance upon family members can mean that it inhibits their independence. Therefore, advocacy can be important in order to help adults with ASD have greater independence.

People on the autistic spectrum can need help to express their feelings, wishes and aspirations as well as understanding and interpreting information about their rights and the relevant services they can access. By its nature some people such as those with Aspergers can be very articulate so the assume can be that they do not need an advocacy service, but this can be misleading as they may struggle with other aspects of their daily life, so it is important that an advocacy service is available for all people with ASD.

Advocacy services are most commonly used to help with: young adults to transition into adulthood and adult services, accessing housing, accessing employment and accessing health, social care and voluntary services. It can also be needed to assist with socialising with others and becoming part of the community as well as developing a plan for life.

The requirements of a good advocate are someone who is knowledgeable, has tenacity, skilled and resilient and has a good level of common sense.

Qualities that are needed from an advocate:
Trust and confidence: the right to choose an advocate where possible
Accountability
The ability to make you feel better even if you have not been successful, because they put your case forward well.
Patience and assertiveness
The ability to determine when a volunteer or paid advocate is required.
That they ask the person what kind of advocate they want.

➤ **Promoting interactions**

The key to promoting interactions is firstly preparing the individual for such situations, building and developing their social skills to the point that they feel comfortable and are prepared, as much as they can be, with social interaction this provides the tools for social interaction to be more successful. When this is established the focus then moves to providing a variety of differing opportunities for social interactions to take place.

An important part of the success of beginning social interaction is to prepare the environment. By this it means training/teaching peers or leaders how to interact with the individual.

Doing one without the other only increases the likelihood that the socialization will fail.

Providing a wide variety of social situations allows the individual to experience a variety of opportunities. It is quite common that some will be disliked but some may also appeal which means they will feel more confident, this in turn means that they are more likely to engage and interact with others, becoming more confident and successful with it.

➤ **Professional help**

There are a variety of sources of professional help for interaction with autistic people which can include specialist social groups, activities and projects. Another option is to get help with social skills from professionals who specialize in working with autistic people. There is a directory for autism services through the autism UK website which covers the whole of England.

Unit Three Questions

1. Which of the following would be the right thing to do when communication with someone with ASD.

a) Ask them to look at you so they can see your facial expression when you speak.

b) Don't force them to look at you but follow their gaze wherever they may be staring.

c) Speak to them whilst doing other things so you don't look at them, it is less obtrusive for them.

d) Don't try to look at them when either of you speaks.

2. If an individual with ASD doesn't speak how else might they try and communicate?

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3. What does 'VOCAS' stand for?

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4. Why would you need VOCAS?

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5. Why would someone have an advocate?

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Unit Four

➤ **Introducing Positive Care Practices**

The key to good care practice for individuals with autism is to develop and provide a well-rounded service which supports users, treating them with respect, consideration and as an individual. Good practice should promote empowerment in individuals for input into their own care ensuring that it is of good quality and appropriate for them, giving a sense of equal opportunity. This in turn will have a positive impact on their quality of life.

The first stage of this is to have a specialist autism team including GP's, community care team, specialist ASD team and social care workers who have a good knowledge and understanding of autism can support the individual and evaluate the appropriate care for them. Alongside this there must be broad range of good quality support services available both for the individual and the family/carers who play an important part in the individuals care.

➤ **Supporting the rights of people with Autism**

Historically the rights of people with autism were significantly violated, one example being of laws passed to permit compulsory sterilization of people with an 'intellectual disability' which includes what we now recognise today as autism.

Thankfully things have moved on since then and several laws and legislations have been put in place in order to protect individuals with autism from being discriminated against. These include The Autism Act (2009), Care Act (2014), Equality Act (2010), Disability Discrimination Act (1995)

The Autism Act 2009.

This was the first ever disability specific law in England.

The purpose of the act was to do two things:

- Put a duty on the Government to produce a strategy for autistic adults, which was published in March 2010
- A duty on the Government to produce statutory guidance for local councils and local health bodies on implementing the adult autism strategy by the end of 2010. This guidance was published in 2010.'

The Autism Strategy is the Government's plan to ensure autistic adults get the help they need to take an active participation in life, this could be accessing employment, further education or even help at home. The strategy itself sets out how the government aims to meet these needs. It also provides local councils and health services guidelines on how they can provide assistance.

The Mental Capacity Act 2005

The Mental Capacity Act 2005 provides guidelines to protect and empower vulnerable individuals who need support or who are unable to make and/or convey their decisions.

Whilst providing protection for individuals who lack the mental capacity to make decisions for themselves, the Mental Capacity Act provides a framework for those who provide their care to use whilst making decisions on the individuals behalf. The MCA sets out who is able to make decisions on the individual's behalf, how they should do it and in what situations.

If they follow the act it also provides protection against prosecution should their actions be challenged.

There are 5 key principles within the act, these are:

1. Assume a person has capacity unless proved otherwise
2. Do not treat people as incapable of making a decision unless all practicable steps have been tried to help them.
3. A person should not be treated as incapable of making a decision because their decision may be unwise.
4. Always do things or take decisions for people without capacity in their best interest.
5. Before doing something to someone or making a decision on their behalf, consider whether the outcome could be achieved in a less restrictive way.

The act covers very simple decisions such as eating or drinking through to decisions such as medical treatment to sustain their life.

Having any form of Autism, ASD, Aspergers or other associated condition does not automatically mean that the individual lacks capacity to make a decision for themselves. All practicable efforts should be made to help the individual to make a decision by themselves before they can be diagnosed has having lack of capacity.

➤ **The statutory principles**

The statutory guidelines which include the 'Think Autism' strategy introduced in 2014 set out the good practice that is expected from those providing care services for those with autism

The Statutory Guidelines

- 1. Training of staff who provide services to adults with autism:** *Staff who provide services to adults with autism should be suitably trained and qualified for the role they are carrying out. They should understand the condition and be able to communicate with individuals. Those undertaking assessments need to be appropriately trained. All frontline staff should be given autism awareness training so that they are able to identify signs of autism in order that they can amend their behaviour and communication.*
- 2. Identification and diagnosis of autism in adults, leading to assessment of needs for relevant services:** *Diagnosis and identification of autism should happen as soon as possible. Adults who are not diagnosed as children may well have had their life affected in terms of them feeling difficult in social situations not properly understanding why and not knowing how to respond. They will also have missed out on mental health and learning disability support. Local authorities and Clinical Commissioning Groups are both responsible for the identification and commissioning of diagnostic, care and support services. A diagnosis of autism is a formal confirmation so should be carried out by a specially trained professional working as part of a multi-disciplinary team. It should identify how the individual's autism affects them personally alongside their family in order that the right level of support can be put in place. Some people may not need further support, but a diagnosis is important should they situation change in the future. There should be an easily accessible and clear pathway to diagnosis*
- 3. Planning in relation to the provision of services for people with autism as they move from being children to adults:** *Transitioning from youth to adulthood is an important stage with autism as it brings its own challenges. In order to ensure that individuals are supported to reach their full potential it is crucial that the relevant authorities cooperate. Young people and educational establishments should be able to ask for an assessment of their educational health needs (EHC) for the provision of special educational needs and disability (SEND) support. If an EHC plan is not required, this should not inhibit their access to appropriate support services. Arrangements should be established for any young person who has complex care needs in order that they can smoothly transition into adulthood. If young people do not meet the need for adult services, they should be guided to other sources of support and information.*
- 4. Local planning and leadership in relation to the provision of services for adults:** *Local authorities should have planning services for adults with autism.*

They should also have clear plans on how adults with autism can access payments and personalised care services which will support them across the spectrum of their needs. Young individuals and their parents should have access to information which is relevant to help them make choices about the type of support they receive mentally, physically and practicably.

5. ***Preventative support and safeguarding in line with the Care act from April 2015:*** Preventative support is important as lack of it can result in mental health issues arising. Everyday life can create stresses for individuals without taking into account changes such as moving home, divorce, bereavement or unemployment etc. Prevention support can come in a wide variety including groups, supported living etc all of which should be easily accessible on an ongoing basis not just at the point of crisis.
6. ***Reasonable Adjustments and Equality:*** All public sector organisations should make reasonable adjustments to services to ensure they are accessible for people of all abilities and needs
7. ***Supporting people with complex needs whose behaviour may challenge or who may lack capacity:*** Individuals who express challenging behaviour should be allowed the same level of support and services as others. They should, where possible, be assessed, treated and cared for in the community as much as possible with the appropriate level of support provided by appropriated trained individuals.
8. ***Employment for adults with autism:*** Being in work is highly beneficial for people with autism, unfortunately there are a significantly low number of such individuals in employment. Some may require support to get or keep a job, but this should not prohibitive, they have a variety of skills and talents which can be highly beneficial in a variety of workplaces. Local authorities play an important part in supporting individuals with autism to access employment. They themselves can be a role model for others by being an autism-friendly place to work.
9. ***Working with the criminal justice system:*** Regardless of whether they are a victim or a witness, people with autism need access to support when they are involved in the criminal justice system. They or their carer need to explain what effect their condition has on them and how it affects their behaviour and communication in order that they authorities can provide the correct support to assist them.

➤ **Active participation**

It is imperative that people with ASD are involved as much as possible in decisions about their care and services they can access. That said they can struggle with recognising what is important information and what isn't along with remembering information given previously, therefore it is important to 'state the obvious'. This can help individuals understand actions. Similarly, they can struggle to understand information from post or mail, by finding out what the best way of communicating with them can be the difference been confusion and understanding. Many find pictures an easier way to interpret information so try presenting information in a

more visual way. Actions such as providing meeting agendas in advance to allow carers to prepare them and simplifying language can also help. Meetings can often change times or dates so preparing them for such occurrences and having back up plans can help. Visual cards and letter templates such as the one below can be useful.

The Meeting has been delayed.

**Please take a seat and
somebody will come out and
get you in 10-15 minutes.**



➤ **The Human Rights Act 1998**

Over the years the government have made many amendments to the Human Rights Act and has introduced several initiatives which aim to improve the support, services and advocacy for people with learning disabilities.

Human rights are at the core of person-centred planning with the aim of giving people with disabilities the right to live life, be treated and have access to exactly the same rights, choices and opportunities as everybody else.

Article 2: The Right to Life

Article 3: Right to be free from cruel and degrading treatment

Article 4: Freedom from slavery and forced labour

Article 5: The Right to liberty and security

Article 6: Right to a fair trial.

Article 7: No punishment without law

Article 8: Respect for your private and family life, home and correspondence

Article 9: Freedom of thought, belief and religion

Article 10: Freedom of expression

Article 11: Freedom of assembly and association

Article 12: Right to marry and start a family

Article 14: Protection from discrimination in respect of these rights and freedoms.

Protocol 1, Article 1: Right to peaceful enjoyment of your property

Protocol 1 Article 2: Right to education

Protocol 1 Article 3: Right to participation in free elections

Protocol 13 Article 1: Abolition of the death policy

➤ Equality

The Equality Act 2010 forbids discrimination against anyone who has protected characteristics as laid out in section 4 of the act.

Section 4. Protected Characteristics:

- Age
- Disability
- Gender Reassignment
- Marriage and Civil Partnership
- Pregnancy and Maternity
- Race
- Religion or Belief
- Sex
- Sexual Orientation

Disability/impairments, in which Autism and other conditions on the autistic spectrum are classed as one of these protected characteristics.

‘A person has a disability if she or he has a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on that person’s ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities.’

The Equality Act 2010

‘Mental impairments’ includes those within the range of the autistic spectrum. This means that people with ASD are now supported by legal guidelines to expect equal treatment to those without the condition. This may mean that adjustments have to be made or assistance be put in place in order for this to happen, but that is their right.

➤ Person-centred values

What do we mean?

Person centred values are the principles which aim to put the individual who is receiving support at the heart their care. Each of us has a set of values which are formed by the experiences we have, people we meet and interact with and the world around us. These values influence how we act and feel. Health and social care have its own set of values, ‘The 6 C’s’, these help to guide care workers to understand how to deliver good quality supportive care. The focus of the 6 C’s is that the Individual should be placed at the centre of their care.

The 6 C's:

- **Care**
- **Compassion**
- **Competence**
- **Communication**
- **Courage**
- **Commitment**

Working together with the individual to make a plan for their care gives them control of the choices and decisions that are made about their life. Control of the choices and decisions that are made about their life.

Working in a person-centred way is about finding out what is important to the individual and ensuring that their own personal values are the guiding principles at the centre of their care. These can include, choice, dignity, respect, rights, privacy, individuality and independence.

➤ **Risk management.**

One of the features of autism is that individuals become extremely focussed on a particular thing so are unaware of the effect their behaviour has on others. Added to the difficulties many have with identifying and understanding other's emotions and feelings this puts them at risk of negative behaviour from others. They often struggle with understanding others motives so can easily be manipulated into criminal behaviour. Sensory issues are something which can affect many. They can be hyper or hyposensitive to things such as noise or extremes in temperature so putting them at an additional risk of harm.

The solution is to do a risk assessment, whilst it would be impossible to eliminate all risk you can achieve a level of risk management. Identify what in particular the individual struggles with and assess both their environment and activities. Think about the lighting as fluorescent or harsh light can affect some people. The decoration, patterns can be confusing and cause anxiety, the location, some autistic people are unable to block out noise so locating their room in a busy area can cause distress, some may also find certain smells overwhelming so situations near to a field or a kitchen can cause distress. Also think about safety e.g installing radiator covers, fitting a temperature gauge on taps to stop them getting too hot and putting plug sockets outside of the bedrooms.

In terms of safety around others, try and talk to them about socialising with others, how to start conversations, what they could talk about and what to avoid, how to react if someone expresses their feelings, how to end a conversation and how to identify who is a 'real' friend.

Unit Four Questions

1. What should. Good care practice promote for individuals?

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2. Identify three people who may be in an individual's specialist support team.

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3. How many key principles are there in the Mental Health Act?

- a) 10
- b) 6
- c) 4
- d) 5

4. What sets out the good care practice that care providers are expected to meet?

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5. Which rights are at the core of person-centred planning?

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Unit Five

What things or daily tasks are difficult or challenging, how can you help individuals?

By identifying what the individual struggles with you can assess their exact needs and then plan ways in which you can help. Many struggle with everyday tasks such as prioritising, managing time, sequence, organisation and choices. By putting strategies in place, it can help them carry out these tasks and minimise anxiety. Lists, calendars, pictures colours and objects are all good ways to help individuals to understand what is happening at what time. Think about calendars with pictures showing what activities will take place on what days, writing lists of things to pack before they go out. Providing timetables for the day showing, dressing, breakfast, activities, lunch etc in the order in which they will happen or providing visual menu with pictures to help them choose which meal they would like.

In the first instance they may require assistance and prompting to use these but in time they should be able use them independently.

Ideas for encouraging good personal care

Some people with autism struggle with personal care. Many have heightened sensory issues with smell or touch so can make washing activities distressing. If this is the case try identifying what it is they find so upsetting and then try and find an alternative option, e.g If they don't like the smell of the soap swap to a different one

Sometimes those on the autistic spectrum don't understand the need to do things like wash or put on clean clothes to be accepted by others. If this is the case, try and do some social skill training with them indicating why we need to keep clean and how it relates to enjoying activities with others.

Another reason is that they may well find that having to remember to do these things every day or what order to do them in may well make them feel anxious, so they just avoid it. One solution to this is to break the activity into smaller sections and go through the duties with them gradually each day providing encouragement and praise. It can also help to have visual prompts available such as daily plans or picture cards. Prompting is a simple thing to do but can be very successful. By simply saying "now brush your hair" and miming the action, it can encourage them to do it. It is important to use motivating language and tone followed by praise when they have done it. This acts as an encouragement for them to do it again in the future.

Tips for providing support

In order to provide the best possible level of support to the individual you are working with you need to understand their particular problems. You can get this information from their care plan, but the best way is speaking and working with the individual as well as their family. When you have established what needs they have you can look into ways in which you can provide assistance. For example, if they struggle with meeting new people find events especially for people with ASD this won't make them feel so different from everybody else. Ask them if they would like you to go with them at the first few meetings, it may make them feel more comfortable if they have somebody they know there.

If they struggle with making choices about what to put on in the mornings try separating clothes into outfits in their wardrobe, then give them a choice of couple they may find this easier than being faced with a whole wardrobe full of clothes which could be very confusing. Although each individual will have aspects which they in particular need support with, there are tips which can be useful for everybody providing support to an individual on the autistic spectrum:

- **Create a Friendly Environment** – find out what they find stressful and try to minimise their contact with that situation, organise a quiet space when they can go when things become overwhelming
- **Make a Schedule** – this helps them understand what will happen and when through the day/week.
- **Prepare Them for Changes** – always give them plenty of warning of any changes to the schedule.
- **Make Sure You Plan Time for Them to Relax** – an overly busy day can set of a pattern of negative behaviour.
- **Give Time for Exercise** – this can be a good way to get rid of excess energy.
- **Learn How to Identify the Signs of An Approaching Outburst** – learning to identify triggers and patterns in behaviour will allow you to intervene and diffuse a situation before it escalates.
- **Try And Find Out What Caused the Episode** – knowing the cause can help you to know what can be done to avoid the situation in the future.
- **Good Communication** – learn how to communicate effectively with the individual you are working with.
- **Be Patient, Calm and Don't Judge Body Language** – the processing and delivering of information can be difficult so be patient and provide assistance if appropriate. People with ASD often don't understand the meanings of body language and behaviour so don't judge it.
- **Teach Them Some Self-Management Skills** – Helping them skills such as identifying when situations are becoming too much and telling someone or teaching them self-calming techniques can give them some independence and self-control.

- **Be a Good Role Model** – Autistic people watch others and take their behaviour cues from them so be an example of good behaviour.
- **Give Praise** – People with ASD generally have a low self-esteem so give lots of praise.
- **Be Knowledgeable** - try and read as much information as you can so you are able to understand the aspects of autism.

Adapting the environment

People on the autistic spectrum view the world differently. Many of them struggle to make sense out of things which others regard as everyday practice.

Each individual will experience the world on their own sensory level. So their environment should be adapted to their specific needs. That said, there are some general guidelines which can provide a template;

Lighting – florescent lighting can be distracting and debilitating for some people.

Colour and Pattern – colours can have different effects on us e.g yellow can stimulate, and green can calm. Some people can find pattern distressing whilst others need visual stimulation.

Content – having a clear minimalist environment can be calming for some whilst others need an environment which has more ‘things’ providing visual stimulation.

Sound – some people are sensitive to noise so a room next to a busy area such as a kitchen or hall may not be suitable

Touch – texture is important for some people and they like feel and touch things, others however may find too many different textures unsettling.

Smell - Are there any smells within the environment? to an over receptive sense of smell even mild scents can be overpowering and linger which can cause distress.

Space – Some people need space as they hate being within a closed in environment. Others however prefer the comfort and security of a smaller space.

Safety – Sharp edges, low shelves etc can be potential hazards, especially if someone is experiencing an outburst, think and identify any possible hazards.

Feeling useful

The best way carers can feel useful to those with autism is to learn about their needs and what they can do to help them. By getting to know them they can learn to identify what causes them to feel uncomfortable or distressed in order that things can be put in place so that any upset is minimised. Uncomfortable and outburst situations can be distressing so by being able to identify the behaviour which runs up to it and de-escalating the situation before it deteriorates it can save a lot of distress.

Help them with things they struggle with but not to the extent that they no longer try. Whilst it is good to support them with things they find difficult carers should be conscious of the fact that they should try and assist them to be as independent as possible so they can build on their confidence and sense of self.

Unusual behaviours

Autism by its nature can produce reactions which to those without the condition can appear shocking, disturbing and upsetting. But it is good to remember that people with the condition don't have the control or awareness to know what reaction their behaviour will create.

- Be Patient
- Always be positive
- Ignore attention seeking behaviour
- Be firm and resilient
- Show them how to express their feelings without being aggressive
- Show your interest and care
- Don't judge their actions.
- View them as a person they are not by their actions

Unit Five Questions

1. Identify two things individuals may find challenging in everyday life?

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2. How could a carer help with each of the things you have identified?

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3. How could encourage an individual to maintain good personal care?

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4. Why might the lighting in a room affect an individual's behaviour?

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5. How can good care help to minimise upset and potential outbursts?

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6. How should you view an autistic person?

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Conclusion

Autism is a condition which has many facets which will vary from person to person. This means that one solution or action will not suit everyone, care and support needs to be designed with the individual in mind. For the carer this means that they need to spend time watching and getting to know the individual they are working with as well as talking to them, their family and the other support services with whom they are involved. This will provide them with a better understanding of the individuals needs and what support they require in order that the care is person centred.