

Supporting autistic people in employment

Human Resources Training



AwtistiaethCymru.org
AutismWales.org

Can You See Me?

Autism is a 'hidden disability', this means that it is not easy to recognise when someone has the condition. If someone has a wristband, card or screensaver on their mobile device this means that they are autistic and want you to know so that you can support them:



Autistic people often have difficulty in accessing community activities, leisure facilities and other services. Everyone having a better understanding of autism has the power to change lives. The following information is provided to help you to gain a better understanding of autism and suggests ways in which you can support autistic people.

**For more information on the 'Can You See Me?' scheme,
please visit:**

AutismWales.org/en/i-am-autistic/resources-for-you/can-you-see-me/



Equality Act 2010

An individual is classified disabled under the Equality Act 2010 if they have a physical or mental impairment that has a 'substantial' and 'long-term' negative effect on their ability to do normal daily activities.

'substantial' is more than minor or trivial



Equality Act 2010

The employer has a duty to make 'reasonable adjustments' in the workplace. The employer's overall aim should be, as far as possible:

"To remove or reduce any substantial disadvantage faced by a worker which would not be faced by a worker which would not be faced by a non disabled person"

The duty contains three requirements that apply in situations where a disabled person would otherwise be placed at a substantial disadvantage compared with people who are not disabled:

- Changing the way things are done (ensuring the disabled employee is not at a substantial disadvantage because of a provision, criterion or practice of their employer)
- Making changes to overcome barriers created by the physical feature of a work place.
- Providing auxiliary aids and/ or an auxiliary service



Why employ an autistic person?



Specific Skill Set

Many hours spent researching, learning and engaging in activities relating to their specific areas of interest

Personality Traits

Good time keeping and attendance, less time gossiping and more time working. Great attention to detail

Investment

A small investment can reap great rewards when employing someone with autism

What Is Autism?

What is Autism?

Autism is a lifelong neurodevelopmental condition and affects people from all backgrounds

Currently more males than females are diagnosed with autism

It is estimated that 1 in every 100 people in the UK have an Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)

Many people are unaware that they are autistic

This is especially true for adults

What Is Autism?



**Many adults
remain
undiagnosed**

**this is especially true
of women**

Please visit the Integrated Autism Service if you would further information regarding the referral for an autism diagnosis:
[AutismWales.org/en/integrated-autism-service/](https://www.autismwales.org/en/integrated-autism-service/)



Autism is not a learning disability or a mental illness

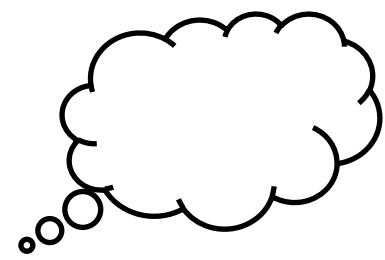
**However some autistic people may
have a co occurring learning
disability or mental health condition
such as anxiety or depression.**

What Is Autism?

Autistic people have differences in the following areas:



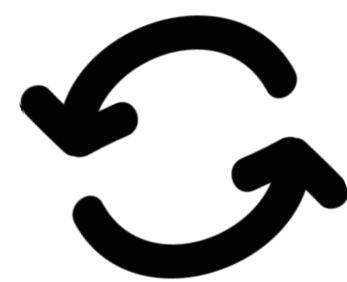
**Social
Communication &
Social Interaction**



**Social Imagination
and Flexibility of
Thought**



**Restricted,
repetitive interests
or activities**




**Restricted,
repetitive patterns
of behaviour**



**Unusual sensory
responses**

Social Communication



Autistic people may have difficulties in social communication. The way in which the person is affected varies. These difficulties can include:

language

speech

facial expression

gestures

eye contact

body language

tone of voice

When communicating with an autistic person you should:



Avoid figurative language, metaphors and idioms can be confusing



Be specific and avoid ambiguity



Not rely on gesture, body language or facial expression to convey or emphasise a point



Use a calm and consistent tone of voice



Recognise that avoiding eye contact is not a sign of disinterest or rudeness

Social Interaction



Autistic people may have difficulties with social interaction. The way in which the person is affected varies. They may include difficulties with the following:

building and sustaining relationships

enjoying conversation

giving and receiving compliments

understanding humour and sarcasm

seeking and offering comfort

When interacting with an autistic person you should:



Initiate interactions



Avoid meaningless social chit chat



Try and find out if they have a special interest



Offer help and explanations (some autistic people may not be confident to ask)



Not pressure them to join social activities

Social Imagination and Flexibility of Thought



Autistic people may have difficulties with social imagination and flexibility of thought and demonstrate restricted, repetitive patterns of behaviour. Again, the extent varies from one person to another. The impact of this can affect many areas of daily life and may include difficulties in:

**predicting others
and events**

problem solving

planning

**coping with
changes**

creative activities

relating to others

When supporting an autistic person you should



Provide additional structure



Be clear about expectations, priorities and end points



Recognise that they might find changes difficult and minimise these



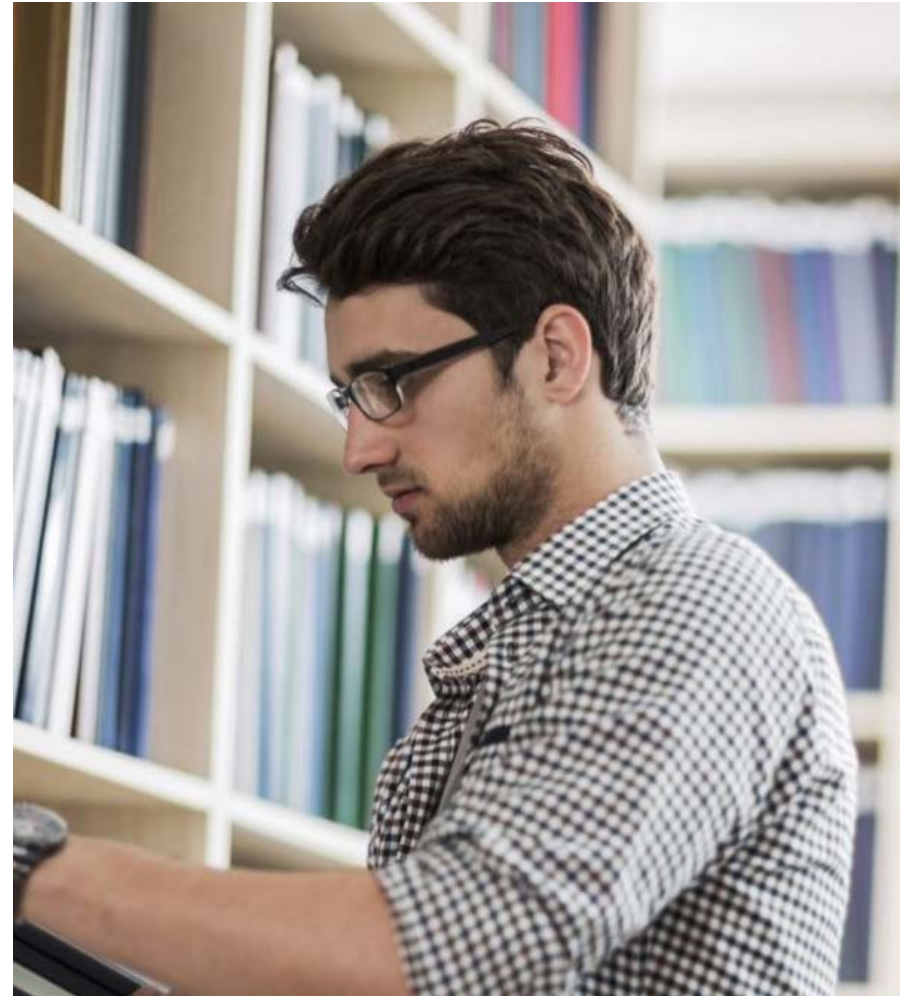
Provide additional resources that will help with planning and undertaking tasks



Provide a limited number of choices rather than free choice

Special Interests

Restricted patterns of behaviour can often manifest as the individual having an intense, restricted or fixated interest. An individual's special interest can be beneficial to employers because of the intense level of knowledge. Pursuing this interest may have also led to the development of wider skills such as researching or cataloguing.



Reasonable adjustments for autistic employees

Be accepting

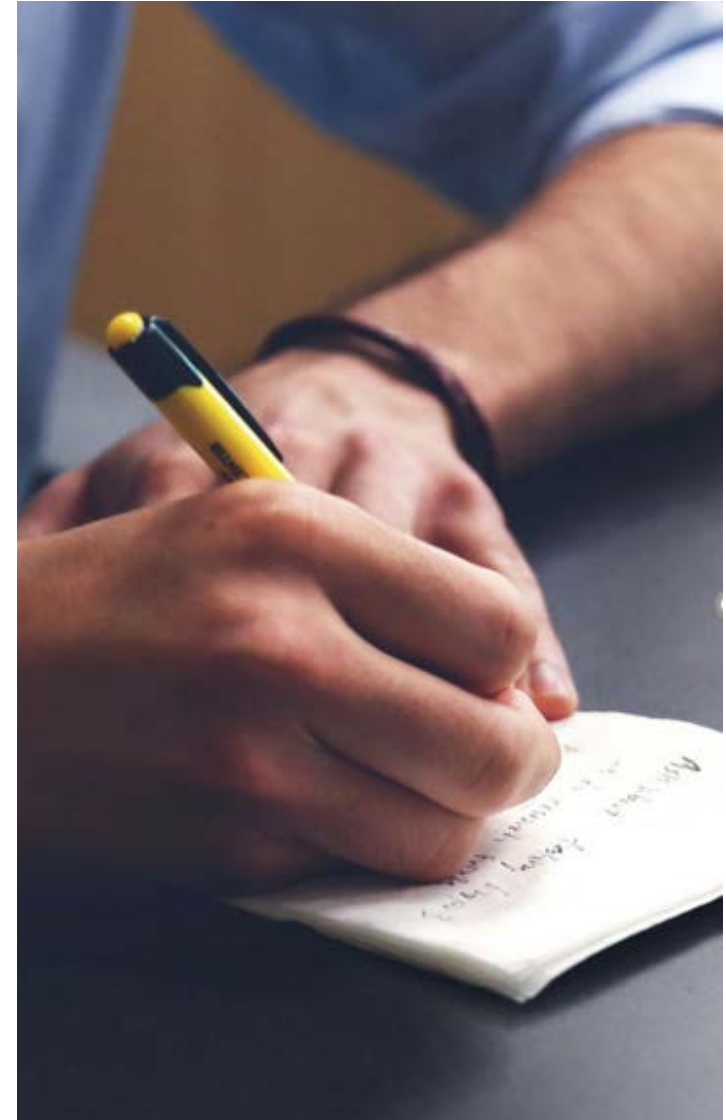
Recognise strengths and challenges

Always adapt communication

Be sensory aware and make adjustments

Provide additional structure

Support to engage with Social Interaction



Impact of autism during job interviews

SOCIAL COMMUNICATION

Reduced or unusual eye contact

Take things literally so will struggle with metaphor and sarcasm

May not provide additional information unless asked

May repeat words or phrases

SOCIAL INTERACTION

Difficulties with social chit chat

May not respond to greetings and farewells

May not follow social rules and conversations

Difficulty using and understanding facial expression, proximity and body language

SOCIAL IMAGINATION

Difficulty imagining situations such as “what would you do if...”

Difficulties with problem solving

Struggles with ‘reading between the lines’

Unable to take someone else’s point of view

SENSORY ISSUES

May have difficulties utilising more than one sense at a time, e.g. looking and listening

May dislike shaking hands

May be distracted by fluorescent lighting or flickering lights

Adjustments during a job interview

Give clear instructions and information prior to the interview

Interview questions should be provided in advance

Allow the candidate to bring pre-written material to refer to during the interview

Remember an individual's body language may not be as you expect, this does not mean they are not interested or demotivated

Remember that a lack of eye contact does not mean that an individual is being rude

Avoid social chit chat at the beginning and end of the interview

Use specific questions

Avoid hypothetical questions such as "what would you do if..." instead base your questions on individual's experiences "describe how you..."

Avoid figurative language, idiom, metaphor and sarcasm

Allow extra processing time for the individual to answer your question

Avoid linked or 2 part questions

Provide questions in a written format

Impact of autism during induction

SOCIAL COMMUNICATION

Needs specific information rather than ambiguous inferences

Take things literally so will struggle with metaphor and sarcasm

Difficulty understanding gestures such as pointing to indicate directions

May experience delays in processing information

SOCIAL INTERACTION

Difficulties with social chit chat

May find being introduced to lots of new people stressful

May not understand what is expected of them during introductions

SOCIAL IMAGINATION

Difficulties relating to others

Difficulty coping with new places, people and activities

May not be able to work out arrangements for breaks and lunch without specific rules

SENSORY ISSUES

Difficulties managing in loud, busy environments

May have difficulties utilising more than one sense at a time e.g. looking and listening

Dislikes unpredictability and chaos

Adjustments to induction

Invite the individual to visit the workplace and be introduced to staff members before starting work

Provide written information outlining expectations e.g. what to wear and start and finish times

Provide advice with travel arrangements, if required

Provide information about breaks, lunch options and 'unwritten rules' about eating/drinking at work

Allocate a co-worker, who is autism aware, to buddy

Discuss any adaptations to the work station that could be useful, such as a desk in a quiet area

Impact of autism on Performance Reviews

SOCIAL COMMUNICATION

Reduced or unusual eye contact

Difficulties in understanding body language, facial expressions or eye contact

Struggles with open questions

Struggles with ambiguous language

SOCIAL INTERACTION

Difficulties with social chit chat

May make comments with no awareness of social niceties or hierarchies

May not read signed of someone wanting to end a conversation

Struggles to understand purpose of interactions or may misunderstand

SOCIAL IMAGINATION

Difficulty imagining situations such as “what would you do if...”

Becomes anxious if meetings are delayed or cancelled

Struggles to generate creative ideas and goals

Struggles to predict outcomes to hypothetical situations

SENSORY ISSUES

Difficulties concentrating in loud, busy environments

May have difficulties utilising more than one sense at a time e.g. looking and listening

Adjustments to Performance Reviews

When asking for feedback, ask specific questions rather than asking for general feedback

Provide structure so the individual has something to follow when giving feedback

Be specific when giving feedback and avoid terms such as 'quite', 'normal' and 'average'

Provide additional structure if you expect the individual to set goals. Give limited choices and don't expect the individual to generate their own goals

If reviews are conducted via meetings, prepare the individual before hand by telling them what the meeting is about and what will be expected of them

Allow the individual to have a co-worker or advocate for support

Choose a quiet area to meet

Give advance notice of meeting and avoid changing times or cancelling

Write feedback down in a structured format

To find out more about autism watch our 'What is Autism'
and 'Living with Autism' films:

AutismWales.org/en/parents-carers/what-is-autism/



AutismWales.org/en/parents-carers/information-for-parents-carers/living-with-autism-film/



Further information and links to other resources can be found at:



@ or email enquiries to ASDinfo@WLGA.gov.uk



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