



Peripatetic Learning Support Service

Autistic Spectrum Disorders (ASD)



What is Autistic Spectrum Disorder?

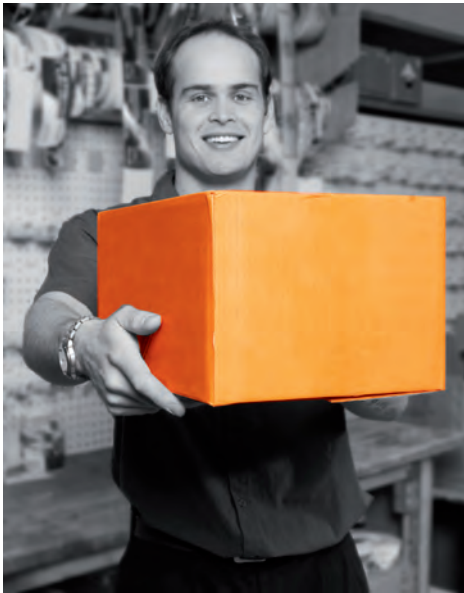
Over half a million people in the UK have ASD. That is approximately 1 in 100. There are approximately 330,000 people of working age in the UK with ASD. Many are regarded to be of average intelligence or above average intelligence. Only 6% of people with ASD have full-time paid employment. However, many adults will say that finding a suitable job would help improve their lives significantly. ASD is a lifelong developmental disability which affects how a person communicates and relates to others and who struggle to make sense of the world around them. The word "spectrum" means range of: while some people with ASD may need a lifetime of care and support, others will be able to live independent lives.



Employers need to be aware that sensitivity to light, sound, touch, taste and smell can totally alter the way in which individuals with ASD perceive the world about them.



ASD also includes a condition known as Asperger Syndrome. Males are more likely to be diagnosed with ASD which often co-exists with other learning difficulties. It is difficult to create an "awareness" of ASD as people with the condition do not look "different".



Impact on Learning

Because of difficulties with verbal and non-verbal communication, a literal understanding of language inhibits social interaction. A person with ASD often has difficulty understanding other people's emotions and feelings as well as expressing their own. These difficulties often lead to feelings of anxiety and depression. Difficulties with social imagination mean that people with ASD find it difficult to predict what could happen next (cause and effect), the concept of danger, and cope with new and unfamiliar situations.

People with ASD can make very valuable employees:

- They are reliable in terms of punctuality and attendance and rarely take time off work.
- Loyal: once settled with an employer they are unlikely to want to change
- Honest: will openly admit to errors
- Mundane and repetitive tasks which are usually of no interest to most people are often attractive to people who have ASD.

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Support Offered

- Support and advice on accommodating a person into the workforce
- Advice on developing a sensory sympathetic working environment
- Awareness raising sessions for colleagues
- Confidential advice and support for the employee