

Understanding Aspects of SEND: Asperger's Syndrome

1. What is Asperger's Syndrome? Asperger's Syndrome is a developmental condition that is part of the autism spectrum. It is often characterised by difficulties with social communication and interaction, alongside restricted or repetitive behaviours and interests. Individuals with Asperger's typically do not have significant delays in language or cognitive development. While the term "Asperger's Syndrome" is less commonly used in medical diagnoses today, many still identify with it as a distinct profile within autism. People with Asperger's often have unique strengths, such as intense focus, logical thinking and expertise in specific areas of interest. There are 700,000 autistic people (including Asperger's) in the UK – that's more than 1 in 100. (NHS Information Centre)

2. How can Asperger's Syndrome present? The presentation of Asperger's varies widely but common characteristics include:

- **Social communication challenges:** Difficulty understanding social cues, body language, facial expressions or tone of voice. Unable to understand other people's feelings or perspective.
- **Restricted interests:** Intense focus on specific topics or hobbies, sometimes to the exclusion of other activities.
- **Repetitive behaviours:** Preference for routines, rituals or repetitive actions.
- **Sensory sensitivities:** Heightened or reduced sensitivity to sounds, lights, textures or smells.
- **Difficulty with change:** Struggles to adapt to new environments, routines or unexpected events.
- **Strengths in logical thinking:** Strong analytical skills, attention to detail or problem-solving abilities.
- **Literal thinking:** Difficulty understanding jokes, idioms or abstract language.

3. Ways to help manage Asperger's Syndrome Support for individuals with Asperger's Syndrome involves fostering understanding and leveraging strengths. Strategies include:

- **Promote social skills development:** Use role-playing, social stories or peer mentoring to teach social interaction.
- **Provide structure and predictability:** Use visual schedules, timers or written instructions to create a sense of routine.

- **Encourage interests:** Incorporate areas of interest into learning or activities to increase engagement and confidence.
- **Be clear and direct:** Use straightforward language and avoid sarcasm or ambiguous instructions.
- **Support sensory needs:** Offer sensory-friendly environments, such as quiet spaces or tools like noise-cancelling headphones.
- **Focus on strengths:** Highlight and celebrate the individual's abilities and talents.

4. Where to find out more

- **National Autistic Society** (www.autism.org.uk): Offers comprehensive resources and advice for individuals with autism and Asperger's Syndrome.
- **Asperger/Autism Network (AANE)** (www.aane.org): Provides community support, training and resources tailored to individuals with Asperger's.
- Book recommendations:
[*Look Me in the Eye* by John Elder Robison](#)
[*The Complete Guide to Asperger's Syndrome* by Tony Attwood](#) provide personal and professional insights.