

Think  Autism!



People with autism say that the world, to them, is a mass of people, places and events which they struggle to make sense of, and which can cause them considerable anxiety.

In particular, understanding and relating to other people and taking part in everyday family and social life may be harder for them.

Over **700,000** people in the UK have autism. Together with their families they make up over 2.5 million people whose lives are touched by autism.



# What is autism?

**Autism is a lifelong developmental disability that affects how a person communicates with, and relates to, other people. It also affects how they make sense of the world around them.**

It is a spectrum condition. This means that, while all people with autism share certain difficulties, their condition will affect them in different ways. Some people with autism are able to live relatively independent lives but others may have accompanying learning disabilities and need a lifetime of specialist support. People with autism may also experience over or under-sensitivity to sounds, touch, tastes, smells, light or colours.

The 3 main areas of difficulties are:

- difficulty with social communication
- difficulty with social interaction
- difficulty with social imagination

# What is Asperger syndrome?

**Asperger syndrome is a form of autism and is mostly a ‘hidden disability’. This means that you can’t tell that someone has the condition from their outward appearance.**

People with Asperger syndrome are often of average or above average intelligence. They have fewer problems with speech but may still have difficulties with understanding and processing language.

They do not usually have the accompanying learning disabilities associated with autism, but they may have specific learning difficulties.

These may include dyslexia and dyspraxia or other conditions such as attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) and epilepsy.

With the right support and encouragement, people with Asperger syndrome can lead full and independent lives.

## Getting a diagnosis

If your child is on the autism spectrum or you think you are, getting a diagnosis can be a positive thing. It means you have an explanation for some of the difficulties you or your child may be experiencing, and it also gives you access to services and support.

Speak to your school or GP as a first step to getting a diagnosis. Be prepared for the referral process to involve long waiting times. The national and local organisations and groups listed in this booklet can give you support and advice during and after you get a diagnosis.

## National support

### The National Autistic Society (NAS)

[www.autism.org.uk](http://www.autism.org.uk)

NAS is the leading UK charity for people with autism and Asperger syndrome and their families. They provide information, support and services. They also campaign for a better world for people with autism.

### The NAS autism helpline

Provides impartial, confidential information, advice and support for people with autism spectrum disorders and their families and carers.

Call **0808 800 4104**. Lines open Mon-Thurs 10am-4pm, Friday 9am-3pm except Bank Holidays.

Call **0808 800 4106** for the **Parent to Parent helpline** – a confidential listening service provided by parent volunteers.

## Adult autism strategy for England

The first ever strategy for adults with autism in England was published in 2010 with a commitment to review this strategy three years later.

The Government asked for feedback from adults with autism, parents, carers and professionals about how well the 2010 strategy had been implemented so far.

The new strategy – Think Autism – was published in April 2014. This updated strategy states that all of the existing recommendations and duties from the 2010 strategy still apply to local authorities and NHS bodies.

The existing duties and recommendations from the 2010 strategy are:

- 1 improved training of frontline professionals in autism
- 2 the recommendation to develop local autism teams
- 3 actions for better planning and commissioning of services, including involving people with autism and their parents/carers
- 4 actions for improving access to diagnosis and post-diagnostic support
- 5 leadership structures at national, regional and local levels for delivery
- 6 proposals for reviewing the strategy to make sure that it is working.

There are three new key proposals in the Think Autism strategy. These are in addition to the existing duties of the 2010 strategy, and are expected to make a big difference to the lives, services and support for adults with autism over the next five years.

The three proposals are:

- ① **Autism Aware Communities** – Think Autism community awareness projects will be established in local communities and there will be pledges/awards for local organisations to work towards.
- ② **Autism Innovation Fund** – funding for projects that promote innovative local services and projects, particularly for lower-level preventative support.
- ③ **Better data collection and more joined up advice and information services** – including a new way of social care staff recording someone's condition as autism, and a commitment to make it easier for people with autism to find information online about how their local authorities are performing.

The Government has allocated £4.5 million towards the Autism Innovation Fund, a Capital Fund and an autism aware communities' programme.

## What else does the strategy say?

The Think Autism strategy reinforces the expectations and actions for local authorities and local NHS bodies, set out in the 2010 strategy.

There are some significant developments including:

- local authorities need to report on data about people with autism for the first time
- the Royal College of GPs has made autism a priority for training and awareness over the next three years
- autism awareness training will be made available to all mainstream healthcare professionals
- new autism training will hopefully be rolled out to all Disability Employment Advisors at Jobcentres
- the Government has committed to reviewing the autism strategy again within the next five years.

## South Gloucestershire Autism Planning Group

The South Gloucestershire Autism Planning Group (APG) is a multi-professional group with carer and user representation that meets on a quarterly basis. The aim of the group is to review and consider national and local guidance and policy relating to adults with autism.

The group also oversees the development of a long term strategy to improve local support for people with autism. The group supports the development of services for people with autism and works with other providers to ensure that non-specialist services are accessible for people with autism.

Details about the South Gloucestershire APG and other useful information can be found on the Autism pages of the South Gloucestershire Council website: [www.southglos.gov.uk](http://www.southglos.gov.uk)

## National Autism Strategy: South West stocktake

In 2013 NHS South of England (West) asked all local authorities to carry out a stocktake of progress on the support, information and training available for people with autism, family carers and professionals locally. The audit also enabled areas to identify what further improvements are required.

## Training for service providers in South Gloucestershire

The National Autism Strategy requires that front-line public service staff access training in autism awareness as a key part of ensuring their service delivery meets national standards and expectations of quality.

South Gloucestershire Council Workforce Development team provides council employees and local organisations with the opportunity to access these services. These include a range of training courses, e-learning modules, occupational qualifications and other development resources.

Details of courses that are available for any agency that comes into contact with adults with autism in their work and staff who support individuals with autism are available from the South Gloucestershire Workforce Development team.

# South Gloucestershire Council

## 0–25 Service

0–25 service provides support for children, young people and adults up to the age of 25 years old with additional needs. The team is able to assess for an education health and care plan to enable this group to access supported education via school, colleges, apprenticeships or training.

Further details can be found on the South Gloucestershire's Local Offer. [www.southglos.gov.uk/local-offer](http://www.southglos.gov.uk/local-offer)

**Avon and Wiltshire** 

**Mental Health Partnership NHS Trust**

## South Gloucestershire Autism Advice Service

### **At the Armadillo café in Yate**

Station Rd, Yate, South Gloucestershire, BS37 4FW

**For adults with autism spectrum conditions**

### What we do at the South Gloucestershire Autism Advice Service

The South Gloucestershire Autism Advice Service runs on a Friday from 12.30 – 4.30pm at the Armadillo café in Yate, South Gloucestershire.

We are here to:

- help people with autism spectrum conditions (ASCs) access a range of services and opportunities that suit them
- offer one to one support to people with ASCs
- offer a variety of groups for people with ASCs such as mindfulness meditation
- provide a safe place where people with ASCs can meet & share their experiences
- offer support to carers and supporters of individuals with ASCs
- run a Mindfulness Group.

## When and where

The service takes place on:

Friday from 12.30 – 4.30pm at the Armadillo café in Yate. We are based on the first floor of the building. The building is wheelchair accessible.

## Your first appointment

At your first visit, we will talk to you about what support is available to you through the advice service and elsewhere. We will ask you some questions about your current needs and any support you may have accessed in the past.

## Post diagnostic support group

You can attend this group after you have received a diagnosis of ASC. This is a 6 week course (each session lasts 2 hours and there are usually about six people with two group leaders)

The aims of this group are to:

- learn about autism spectrum conditions
- learn about how autism affects you
- discuss the experience of receiving a diagnosis
- discuss telling people about your diagnosis
- find out what further support is available to you
- get to know other people.

If you received your diagnosis through Bristol Autistic Spectrum Service (BASS), we will automatically add you to the waiting list for this group. We will tell you when the next group is available. If you were diagnosed somewhere else, you can still access the group.

Call: **01275 796200** or email: [awp.bass@nhs.net](mailto:awp.bass@nhs.net)

## What the advice service is not able to do

Whilst we aim to offer a number of services to meet the needs of adults with ASCs, there are a number of things that as a service we are unable to do:

- We cannot coordinate or manage your care.
- We are not a crisis team, although we will signpost you to the appropriate services who are set up to support people in crisis.
- We do not prescribe medication.
- We do not conduct long term therapy.
- We are unable to reply to frequent email or phone messages.

Contact us for more information

**BASS @ South Gloucestershire Petherton Resource Centre,  
3 Petherton Road Hengrove, Bristol BS14 9BP**

Tel: 01275 796200

Email: [awp.bass@nhs.net](mailto:awp.bass@nhs.net)

Website: [www.awp.nhs.uk/bass](http://www.awp.nhs.uk/bass)

## Help and Support

National Autistic Society Avon Branch

**The NAS Avon Branch** provides support, information and advice to Autistic Adults, and to the Parents/Carers of adults who have Autism, including those who have Asperger syndrome, whether or not they have a formal diagnosis. Enquiries from professionals are also welcomed.

To join the mailing list, or to ask for information on where to go for advice or support, please contact:

**Diana Elliott (Branch Officer)**

Tel: 07825 227 026 email: [avon@nas.org.uk](mailto:avon@nas.org.uk)

Branch website: [www.nasbranch.org.uk/avon](http://www.nasbranch.org.uk/avon)

NAS website: [www.autism.org.uk](http://www.autism.org.uk)

**Information** is regularly circulated by email or post with useful information and details of events of interest.

**Branch meetings** are held periodically in South Glos, Bristol or BaNES to give the opportunity to exchange experiences and information. Some of these meetings will have an invited speaker to talk about a specific issue.

**Our main areas of concern** are diagnosis, training, support, employment and housing, but any subject is discussed in a friendly and supportive setting.

Anyone is very welcome to join us at the meetings or just ask to be added to the mailing list. There is no subscription or membership fee.

## National Autistic Society South Gloucestershire Branch

The NAS South Gloucestershire Branch gives support to families who have a child or young person with an Autism Spectrum Disorder diagnosis. It provides:

- **Day and evening support groups to parents/carers. These groups can also be attended by parents/carers whose child is still going through the diagnosis process.**
- **Activities for children and young people aged 8 – 18 years.**

For more information, or to become a branch member, please email: [southgloucestershire@nas.org.uk](mailto:southgloucestershire@nas.org.uk) or telephone: **07917 085132** website: [www.nasbranch.org.uk/southgloucestershire](http://www.nasbranch.org.uk/southgloucestershire)

**The NAS out of school clubs** run play sessions for children and young people with High Functioning Autism and Asperger Syndrome aged 8–18 years.

The clubs, meeting once a week in the evening – in South Gloucestershire, Bristol, Bath, Nailsea and Bridgwater – provide opportunities for vulnerable and isolated children and young people to make new friends, try new and exciting activities, develop confidence and build on social skills.

For more information go on: [www.autism.co.uk](http://www.autism.co.uk)

email: [oosc@nas.org.uk](mailto:oosc@nas.org.uk) or phone: Cristina on **07771 808247**

## Bristol Autism Support (BAS)

BAS is passionate about improving and maintaining the wellbeing and good health of parents and carers affected by autism. We exist to provide information and support to families affected by autism in Bristol and surrounding areas. We do this via our website, our very active parents and carers Facebook group, our Facebook news page, Twitter (@BristolAutism), our newsletter and our formal and informal group meetings, events and courses. We believe that information is power, and that a strong and welcoming community empowers parents and carers to help each other and themselves to be better parents and better individuals.

We also run BAS4Life, our children's activity scheme which was launched in January 2015. BAS4Life provides play activities for young children to develop social skills and 'un-school' education activities for older children to develop special interests. For teenagers and young adults, we'll work with other organisations to facilitate activities that develop life skills and employable skills.

Tel: **07787 452164**

Email: [info@bristolautismsupport.com](mailto:info@bristolautismsupport.com)

Website: [www.bristolautismsupport.com](http://www.bristolautismsupport.com)

## Carriages at the Avon Valley Railway

Carriages provide a meeting place for adults with additional needs to come along with their carers once a week. It meets in a railway carriage at the Avon Valley Railway. The arts and craft sessions are run for adults with learning difficulties who are assisted by their own support workers.

For more information contact Liz Gray – [lizgray4@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:lizgray4@hotmail.co.uk)

## The Music Train

The Music Train provides an inclusive opportunity for people with learning difficulties to meet with a wide range of people from the community and take part in art, crafts and music sessions.

For more information contact Liz Gray – [lizgray4@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:lizgray4@hotmail.co.uk)

# Children and Young People

## Local Support – For Parents

Courses for parents and carers whose children have been diagnosed with an Autism Spectrum Condition or Asperger Syndrome are offered by South Gloucestershire Council. The courses have been designed by the National Autistic Society and Barnardos; these organisations accredit and license the trainers.

The courses are based on the age of the child:

- **Ages 2 up to 4 years – Early Bird**
- **Ages 4 up to 9 years – Early Bird Plus**
- **Ages 9 up to 18 years – Cygnets Barnardos**

## Local Contacts

**South Glos Parents & Carers (SGPC)** is a parent carer led, not for profit Community Interest Company, covering the whole of South Gloucestershire. They support local parents and carers of children and young people aged 0–25 years with a disability or additional need, representing the voice of parent/carers and sharing their experiences and knowledge of family pressures and needs. SGPC promotes parent carers' contribution to the planning and development of services that will make a real difference to their families.

SGPC provides a range of options to enable parent carers to come together to learn from and support each other including informal coffee mornings, training workshops, focus groups, website and use of social media, monthly e-bulletins, a six monthly magazine and an annual conference. They also recruit parent carer representatives to sit on key planning and commissioning groups to represent parent carers' views and assist in the development of education, social care and health services that are designed to meet parent carers' and their children's needs. The Forum is independent of the Local Authority and Health Services but works closely with them to ensure they are informed of parent carers' opinions and the issues that they face.

To contact them:

email: [parents@sglosparentsandcarers.org.uk](mailto:parents@sglosparentsandcarers.org.uk)

or phone: **01454 501009** or **07827 322358** (please leave a message), website: [www.sglospc.org.uk](http://www.sglospc.org.uk)

**Supportive Parents** – provides information and support to families of children with any type of special education need (SEN) from 0–19 years in Bristol, North Somerset and South Gloucestershire.

They are an independent organisation offering a free, confidential and impartial service to any parent who has a concern about their child's education.

They will provide parents with information they need to understand the SEN process.

For more information go to [www.supportiveparents.org.uk](http://www.supportiveparents.org.uk) or telephone the Information and Support line **0117 9897725**

Spectrum Respite – Short break service for students 10–18 yrs on the Autistic Spectrum, in mainstream education.

For more information visit [www.spectrumrespite.co.uk](http://www.spectrumrespite.co.uk) or email [info@spectrumrespite.co.uk](mailto:info@spectrumrespite.co.uk)

### CEA cinema card

The Cinema Exhibitors' Association Care Website. This is a national card that can be used to verify that a holder is entitled to one free ticket for a person accompanying them to the cinema.

### Autism friendly cinema screenings

For more information visit their website at:

[www.dimensions-uk.org/support-services/autism-care/autism-friendly-screenings](http://www.dimensions-uk.org/support-services/autism-care/autism-friendly-screenings)

### Netmums

Netmums provide local signposting on support for parents of children with Autism or Aspergers in South Gloucestershire.

<http://netmums.com/southglos/local/index/support-groups/special-needs-autism-aspergers>

### South Gloucestershire Library Service

You can borrow specially recommended books from your local South Gloucestershire library that provide information and advice, support for living well, advice for relatives and carers, and personal stories. To see which books are available, go to

[www.southglos.gov.uk/autism](http://www.southglos.gov.uk/autism)



If you need this information in another format or language, please contact: 01454 868009.

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