

# **An introduction to Autism (including social communication difficulties) and ADHD and strategies to support your child**

**Presented by Nicola Keohane, Autism Specialist  
Teacher**

# Aims of the session

- ▶ To develop a greater understanding of autism (including social communication difficulties) and ADHD.
- ▶ To consider problem solving approaches and strategies that can be used.
- ▶ To provide a reflective space for parents/carers to consider practical application and share their own experiences.

# Ground Rules

- ▶ Be respectful & listen to all contributions
- ▶ Respect Confidentiality
- ▶ Self-monitor your own contributions
- ▶ Recognise this may be an emotive topic-  
take some time if you need to
  
- ▶ Any others?

**Have you had any training about  
Autism and/or ADHD or  
attended workshops?**

**What would you like to get from  
these 2 sessions?**

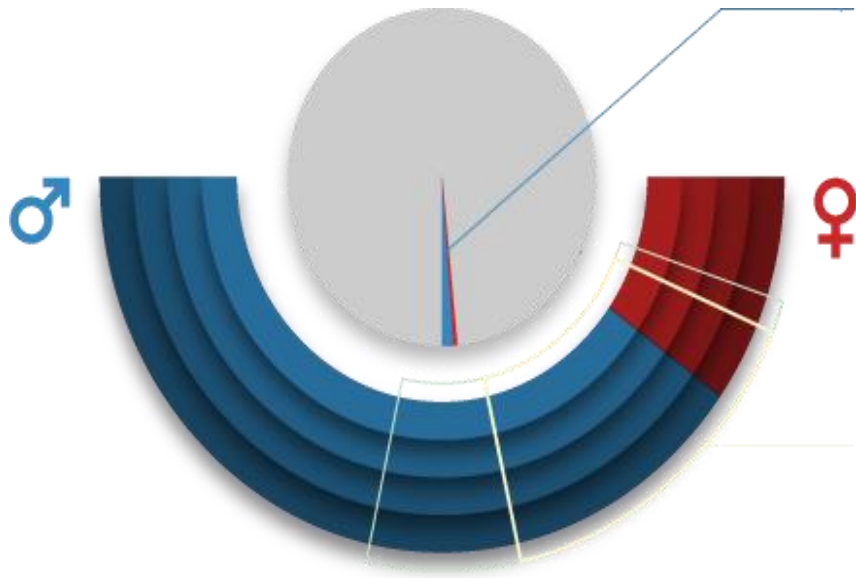
# Definition of Autism



*“Autism can be described as 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”*

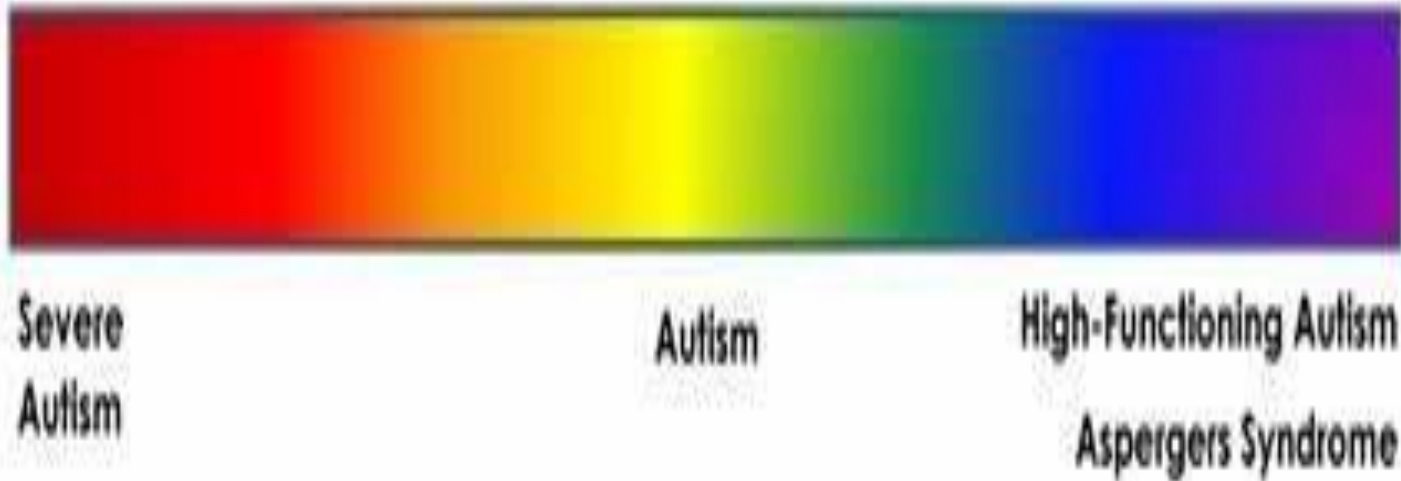
***National Autistic Society (NAS)***

# PREVALENCE



- An estimated 1% of the UK population is on the Autism Spectrum.
- 1 in 5 people on the Autism Spectrum are female.
- **Between 35 and 50%** of people on the autism spectrum have an **additional learning difficulty**.

# Autism Spectrum Disorder



**Not every autistic person will find the same things difficult. This is because each autistic person is different.**



# Autism student videos to improve understanding and acceptance

<https://youtu.be/aS0uT58Gpz0>



# Key Areas of Difference

- Social communication and social interaction
- Restricted or repetitive behaviours/interests
- Sensory differences

# Social communication



May not understand words or only seem to hear parts of sentence.



One-sided communication; difficulties with turn-taking; may interrupt.



Doesn't understand facial expressions and misinterprets non-verbal communication.



Talks incessantly about one subject.

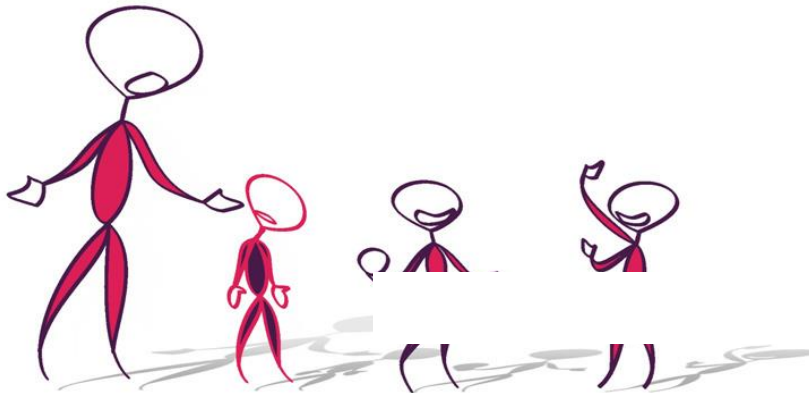
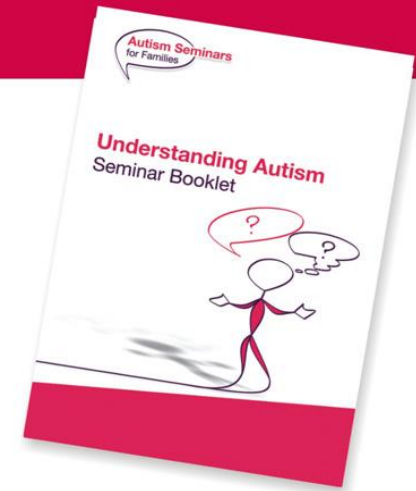
# Social interaction



Being with people may be quite stressful.



Approaches others but may not be very socially skilled - may appear 'odd' or inappropriate.



Finds it hard to understand games and turn-taking.



Never seems to listen; doesn't respond to name.

# Reflective Space

Any thoughts/ reflections thus far?

- ▶ Do your children have any difficulties in this area?
- ▶ What strategies have you tried that have worked or not worked?

# Restricted or repetitive behaviours/interests

- May engage in repetitive play or activities.
- May have a need for sameness with everything in its place.
- Unexpected change could be difficult.
- May have intense interests and/or engage in repetitive behaviours.

# Reflective Space

Any thoughts/ reflections thus far?

- ▶ Do your children have any difficulties in this area?
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# Sensory Differences

Many autistic people have differences in how they process everyday sensory information. Any of the senses may be over- or under-sensitive, or both, at different times.

► The eight sensory system - over or under sensitive:

- ❖ touch(tactile)
- ❖ sight (visual)
- ❖ sound (auditory)
- ❖ smell (olfactory)
- ❖ taste (gustatory) - over and under sensitive

- ❖ balance (vestibular)
- ❖ body spatial awareness (proprioception)
- ❖ inside body (interoception)

# Sensory Differences

(Source: NAS Autism Seminars for families)



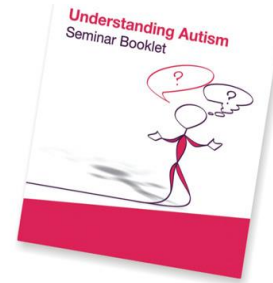
Hand flapping or rocking.



Diet can be a problem.



Doesn't like being touched or held.



May make quite a lot of noise but get upset by loud sounds.



May show an unusual reaction to pain.



Poor balance may affect ability at sports.

# Reflective Space

Any thoughts/ reflections thus far?

- ▶ Do your children have any difficulties in this area?
- ▶ What strategies have you tried that have worked or not worked?

# Autism and Girls

- Various studies suggest that the ratio of autistic males to females ranges from 2:1 to 16:1. The most-up-to-date estimate is 3:1. (*National Autistic Society*)
- Research, clinical practice and anecdotal reports suggest that many autistic females or those who demonstrate the less traditionally obvious traits of autism are not recognised. This can result in misdiagnosis, late diagnosis, or women and girls not being diagnosed at all.



**Developing  
'scripts'**

**People  
pleasing**

**Mimicking  
actions and gestures**

**Withdrawing and  
appearing 'shy'**

**Ignoring  
sensory  
needs**

**Mirroring  
behaviours**

**Autistic Masking  
may include...**

**Hiding stims**

**Withholding  
meltdowns**

**Acting out different  
roles and personas**

**Copying accents  
or tones of voice**


**Compartmentalising**

**Trying to  
act 'normal'**

- Often, autistic people are really tired at the end of the day because they have tried so hard all day to try to fit in but have found people and their environment really difficult.
- They can feel overwhelmed and exhausted by the day.
- They might feel as if they want to scream.
- They may not be able to talk to anyone.
- They may feel as if they can do NOTHING at all for a while.

*“School was a nightmare! I was so easily caught away with life’s interruptions. It might have been a child coughing, a bus passing by the road outside, a bird singing or simply my own thinking trying to work out words from a previous conversation”*



A young girl with a red cap and backpack, looking thoughtful. The background is a blurred outdoor setting with trees and a building.

**‘After-school restraint collapse’ is real. And it might have you feeling like a screaming monster jumped off the school bus.**

**—But look closer.**

**It’s just a little person who’s been juggling endless expectations in a complex environment all day. And they just reached their safe place.**

# Reflective Space

Any thoughts/ reflections thus far?

- ▶ Do your children have any difficulties in this area?
- ▶ What strategies have you tried that have worked or not worked?

# Psychological theories

# Psychological Theories

- ▶ **Theory of Mind** - reading and interpreting others' emotional and mental states
- ▶ **Executive Functioning** - planning and monitoring actions
- ▶ **Central Coherence** - integrating the components to obtain the bigger picture

# What Is ADHD?

Children with ADHD find it harder to control their activity level and their reactions to what is going on around them. Sometimes, they can be impulsive. They may get up out of their chair and walk around, they may interrupt on the carpet or they may find it difficult to concentrate when working.



# Let's talk about ADHD – VIDEO

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YeamHE6Kank>

# Reflective Space

Any thoughts/ reflections thus far?

- ▶ Do your children have any difficulties in this area?
- ▶ What strategies have you tried that have worked or not worked?

# Next session - 11<sup>th</sup> June

- ▶ Is there anything that you would like to focus on next time?

# FURTHER SUPPORT

- ▶ **National Autistic Society-** <https://www.autism.org.uk/>
- ▶ **ADHD UK -** <https://adhduk.co.uk/>
- ▶ **ADHD Foundation -** <https://www.adhdfoundation.org.uk/>
- ▶ **Harrow Council Local Offer -** [harrowlocaloffer.co.uk](http://harrowlocaloffer.co.uk) - provides information about services for children and young people 0-25 with Special Educational Needs & Disabilities, The Local Offer has been created by parents and professionals
- **Early Support Hubs:** They deliver evidence-based services and activities. Further information is available on the following website: <https://www.harrow.gov.uk/childrens-social-care/childrens-hubs>
- **Young Harrow Foundation:** The following link provides information about activities and services for children in Harrow: <https://youngharrowfoundation.org/>
- **HUB of Hope -** <https://hubofhope.co.uk/>
- **JOY App -** <https://www.thejoyapp.com/>

# FURTHER SUPPORT

- ▶ **Harrow Parent Carer Forum (HPCF)** HPCF support parents with children/young people 0-25 with Special Education Needs and or disability and Health Problems, with or without a diagnosis in the borough of Harrow: [info@harrowparentforum.org](mailto:info@harrowparentforum.org)
- ▶ **The Centre for ADHD and Autism Support:** They run courses and offer 1:1 and group support.

Contact details: Website: <https://adhdandautism.org/>

Email: [enquiries@adhdandautism.org](mailto:enquiries@adhdandautism.org)

Tel: 020 8429 1552.

- ▶ **Kids Can Achieve** - <https://kidscanachieve.co.uk/>
- ▶ [Amazing things happen project – video](#) - This is also a good video to show children/young people to explain differences

# National Autistic Society Parent Programmes

**EarlyBird** Programme – organised and led by the Portage Team.  
For parents who have a child with a diagnosis of Autism aged between 1 - 4 years old and are a Harrow resident.

**Further information:** [portage@harrow.gov.uk](mailto:portage@harrow.gov.uk)

**EarlyBird Plus** Programme – organised and led by the Autism Advisory teachers.  
For parents who have a child with a diagnosis of Autism aged between 4 - 9 years old and attend an educational placement and are a Harrow resident.

**Further information:** [autism@harrow.gov.uk](mailto:autism@harrow.gov.uk)

**Teen Life** Programme – organised and led by the Autism Advisory teachers.  
For parents or carers of autistic young people aged 10 to 16 years and attend an educational placement and are a Harrow resident.

**Further information:** [autism@harrow.gov.uk](mailto:autism@harrow.gov.uk)



# Thank you for listening

Questions?