

What is autism?

According to the National Autism Society (2022) autism is typically described as a 'neurological' disorder'. Autism is a lifelong disability which can affect how individuals communicate and interact with the world. The NHS (2022) explain how autism is not an illness, autism simply means that the brain works in a different way to those who are not identified as autistic.

What is non-verbal autism?

Non-verbal autism is a subset to autism where the individual is unable to communicate via speaking, majority of non-verbal autistic children eventually begin to speak however there is a minority who will remain non-verbal (Exceptional Individuals, 2020). Very well Health (2022) research findings suggest that an estimated 40% of individuals diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) are considered non-verbal. Speech Ease (no date) explain that non-verbal autism is not a diagnosis, the term non-verbal simply refers to a child or adult with autism who struggles with verbal communication. According to Very Well Health (2022) there is no clear line between verbal and non-verbal autism, however non-verbal autism is usually described as level 3 autism.

Statistics

1 in 68 children and adolescents are being diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder (Nationwide children, 2017).
1 in 42 males are being identified with autism spectrum disorder (Nationwide children, 2017)
The ratio of 1 female for every 4 males diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder.(Nationwide children, 2017).

Barriers for non-verbal autism?

Raising children (2022) explore how children with autism may often behave in challenging ways, the reasoning for this may include the concept of understanding life around them, for example – children who are non-verbal have difficulty communicating their needs and wants, this often leads to the child feeling overwhelmed, stressed and anxious. However, according to National Library of Medicine (2020) it is often difficult to recognise the symptoms of social anxiety amongst those with autism due to the overlap between social anxiety and autistic symptomatology.



(Source: Cafepress 2022)

What support is available to parents of children with autism spectrum disorder?

Social Care Wales (2022) acknowledge that each child is different, and their needs may differ so the support offered to parents in Wales may also differ. Services could potentially include accommodation or respite care in a care home or specialised premises. The National Autistic Society (2022) explain how parents are also offered counselling and advocacy as well as direct payments which can help towards childcare costs.

Strategies to non-verbal autism?

Common strategies to teach a child with non-verbal autism tends to be sign language – Makaton, British sign language (BSL) or sign along. However, more frequently used today is a programme called PECS, PECS UK (no date) is a picture exchange communication system which enables children to communicate using pictures, according to research conducted by PECS UK (no date) some PECS learners will develop speech. According to Language Dynamics group (2020) PECS is more commonly used because PECS includes a series of images to communicate using a manual board or a technology device whereas sign language is standardized and sign language often leads to a communication barrier between the individual and the communicative partner due to understanding.

Common behaviours in children with autism

According to the NHS (2022) it is common for autistic children to have what is referred to as challenging behaviour, these behaviours may include stimming which is a kind of repetitive behaviour and a loss of control over their behaviour which is described by health professionals as 'meltdowns'. Some children with ASD may also be physically or verbally aggressive and their behaviour may be harmful to themselves or those around them. Help Guide (2022) state that related signs to ASD may include sensory problems which include underreact or overreact to sensory stimuli, emotion difficulties and uneven cognitive abilities.

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