

Supporting Children with Autism Spectrum Disorder, as an Additional Learning Need. ECEY6006

Appreciating the Uniqueness of all children

Every Child is entitled to high-quality education, in which meets their individual needs, and provides them with the opportunities to achieve the best outcomes in order to reach their full potential, as illustrated by UK Government (2023). The inclusive practice in education for children with ASD, is vital to ensure they receive education in which meets their individual needs, just as every other child, as understood within the Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs Act (2004). Adaptations to classrooms for ASD pupils is often needed to ensure such needs are met, where pupils are able to be educated with the typically developing peers (Goodall, 2015).

Children with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) are likely to display social impairments, cognitive impairments, communication difficulties and repetitive behaviors. The range of the disorder can differ between mild to very severe in each case (National Autism Association, 2023). Some of the many early symptoms displayed in the earlier years of ASD are-

- Not play games that are "pretend".
- Delayed or no speech.
- Avoid eye contact.
- Have obsessive interests.
- Flap their hands, rock and spin.
- Have low to no social skills.

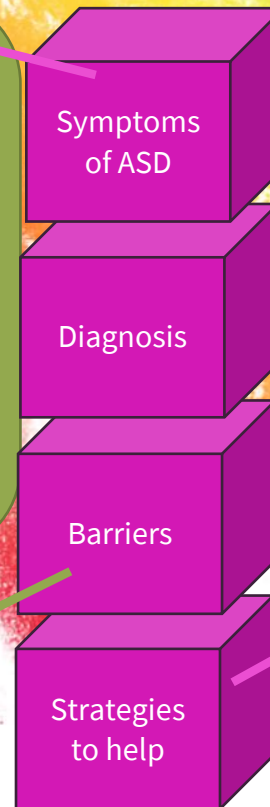
(National Institute of Mental Health, 2023; National Autism Association, 2023).

The barriers of those with ASD can differ in types and in severity, however there are some shared symptoms. The difficulties in communicating and in social interaction is a common shared symptom (National Institute on Deafness and Other Communication Disorders, 2020). Literature suggests that children with ASD tend to be self-absorbed, as though they are living in their own existence and private world. This can lead to the difficulty of successfully communicating with others where there is lack of understanding of what others are saying and more so, the difficulty of developing language skills. (National Institute on Deafness and Other Communication Disorders, 2020). Although language and verbal communicating is often difficult of those with ASD, they may also have difficulty communicating with others even non-verbally through hand gestures and eye contact (O'Brien Towle, 2013). Visual supports, are often the greatest way for those with ASD to learn, in-comparison to learning through auditory input, as by visualising it, helps them retain and process information greater than via verbal communication (Bennie, 2017).

What is Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)?

Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) is a neurological and developmental disorder that has an effect on how one communicates and interacts with others, and how they may learn and behave (National Institute of Mental Health, 2023). Evidence suggests that signs and symptoms of the disorder generally tend to appear within the first 2 years of life, however it can be given a diagnosis at any time in one's life (National Institute of Mental Health, 2023 & National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, 2017).

Diagnosing ASD is a long and sometimes complex process, of gathering knowledge from a party of multi-agencies (National Institute of Mental Health, 2023). This is because of the symptoms displayed in ASD may overlap with other mental disorders (Becker *et al*, 2021). The local autism multi- agency strategy group in order to diagnose a child (National Autistic Society (2020b), should be made up of managerial, commissioner and clinical representation from children's health and mental health service, education, social care, and parents and carer service users (National Institute for Health and Care Excellence, 2017). Diagnosing ASD does however require extensive clinical expertise and training of each member of the multi-disciplinary team (Becker *et al*, 2021). The diagnosis is made by evaluation of behaviours and development, and where diagnosis is made at an earlier stage, the sooner that the treatments and services can begin and support the disorder (National Institute of Mental Health, 2023). Each member of the team would have carried out their own individual assessment on the child and then the individual findings are shared. The investigations that are carried out by the individual professionals will be gathering their findings that support or provide evidence of ASD symptoms (Subramanyam *et al*, 2019).



Amazon (2023)



Freepik Company (2023)

Literature recognises how each child with ASD and their symptoms will differ in severity. There for, the coping strategies and supportive mechanisms will also differ. However, there are many children with ASD that have strong visual strengths, which is why the use of visual aids, is a great supportive strategy (Pawlett, 2017). Forukawa and Eyberg (2019), recognise how children with ASD often suffer with the inability to verbalize their needs to others or perceive the emotional needs of others, which can sometimes lead to frustration or an aggressive response because of the communicative barriers.

Visual Supports are a tool for those with ASD to communicate and are useful to provide those with ASD a form of structure and routine, improve their understanding, can help avoid anxiety and frustration in the child and are provide interactions (National Autistic Society, 2020a). Structured visual aids are an effective method for guiding ASD children within their daily routines and teaches them the new activities that they will undertake, either at home or at school. The set of cards are made up of drawings or images of which will show the child what exactly each task or activity is (Murshid, 2017) A research conducted has identified, that the use of visual aids helps decrease the levels of anxiety in children with ASD, when carrying out new experiences (Aljubour *et al*, 2022) Children with ASD find new experiences and tasks, increase their level of anxiety (Aljubour & Al-Sehaibany, 2018). The Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS) is known to be a unique training package in which is developed as a communicative package for ASD learners. It is developed for those with poor communicative skills in ASD, the ability to communicate with the use of pictures. The use of PECS can encourage a child with ASD to communicate a request or thought or anything that they require via the use of picture cards (National Autism Resources, 2023). The benefits of this supporting strategy for children with ASD, is that the package is simplified enough for the child to understand its use, and so will the listener of their needs (National Autism Resources, 2023).

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