

# Autism Spectrum Disorder

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## Introduction

This poster focuses on Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), it evaluates two strategies used to aid the learning and development of children with autism.

## Strategy 1 - PECS

“The Picture Exchange Communication System (**PECS**) is described by its authors as “a unique AAC training package developed for use with young children with autism and other social-communication deficits.” (Communication Matters, 2018)

**Picture exchange communication system (PECS)** – A pictorial system which can aid development of autistic children’s communication skills.

**Advantages** – encourages children to interact with others, using pictures to ask questions.

**Disadvantages** – misplaced pictures can cause frustration which can lead to ‘sensory meltdowns’ (Special Educational Needs, 2018).

Research suggests when children are introduced to PECS prior to age 6, using it for more than one year, they are more likely to progress to use speech effectively (Bondy and Frost 1994)

## Background and Statistics

**Medical definition of autism spectrum disorder (ASD)** - ‘a condition that affects social interaction, communication, interests and behaviour’ (NHS Direct, 2016)

**Additional definition of Autism** - it is a lifelong developmental disability that affects how a person communicates with, and relates to, other people and in some cases, it can also affect how an individual with ASD makes sense of the world around them (National Autistic Society, 2018).

**How common is autism?** It’s common, it’s estimated that in the UK approximately one in 100 children have it. There are around 100,000 children diagnosed with ASD in the UK and presently, four times as many boys as girls are diagnosed.

Ambitious about autism (2018) states:

70% of children with autism are educated in mainstream schools; the rest are in specialist units

Over 11% of children with special educational needs in government funded schools have a diagnosis of autism

The number of Statements/EHCPs that list autism as the primary need has increased by 3% since 2010

## Conclusion

Being a spectrum disorder every child with autism is unique, presenting various challenges. The strategies evaluated in this poster seemed the most common strategies used to aid autistic children’s social, emotional and language development skills however there are various other resources and strategies available to suit the needs of each child (National Autistic Society, 2018)

## Strategy 2 – Play Therapy

“Eye contact, language, attention span, nonverbal communication and social flexibility are just a few of the skills needed to succeed in the social world. As your child grows, these challenges turn into real pitfalls. When you play with your child you increase their ability to have an extended social interaction. When your child’s ability to interact increases so to does their ability to make relationships and learn.” (Playconnectgrow, 2018)

**Play therapy** - Commonly used to support children with autism to aid development of their social interaction skills and holistic development. Autistic children have difficulty interacting with their peers, this often results in them withdrawing themselves from the play experience. Play therapy helps build confidence and encourage the use of the imagination through positive play experiences (Research Autism, 2017).

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