

AUTISM

CDC (2022) suggest that Autism affects a person's development and is caused by differences in the brain. They state that people with Autism often struggle to communicate and interact with others.

Similarly, Leonard and Smyth (no date) state that Autism is a neurodevelopmental disorder that is usually diagnosed in early childhood. NHS (2022) state that people with autism may get overwhelmed, uncomfortable and stressed over unfamiliar situations, noises and lights.

Frith (2003) explains that Autism is a disorder that affects children and adults of all ages in their development.

According to Roane, Fisher and Carr (2011) the number of children diagnosed with Autism is increasing significantly with it being noted that 1 in 68 children have been diagnosed to date.

How is autism identified and diagnosed?

Early intervention is an important factor while identifying any ALN. According to Jordan, R. (2002) an early diagnosis of Autism will have positive long term affects regarding a child's skills and development.

Leonard and Smyth (no date) explains that Autism is typically diagnosed in early childhood. However, an early diagnosis is not always possible as Arky (2022) explains that more boys are diagnosed with autism than girls. She explains that the reason for this is not that more boys have autism, more so that girls are able to mask their symptoms or their symptoms are misinterpreted as something else making it harder to diagnose as Autism.

In addition, Hull et al (2021) explain that girls can camouflage their autism with strategies involving masking their autistic characteristics. For example they might deliberately suppress their stimming in public.

Pietrangelo (2019) suggests that children and adults with Autism will have self-stimulating behaviours. They suggest that a classic sign of autism is stimming, this can include hand flapping, humming, rocking and many other movements. These types of behaviours can help in identifying a child or person with Autism. Pietrangelo (2019) also state that stimming can be calming and help people with autism deal with and control their emotions.

CDC (2022) states that as there is no medical test to diagnose Autism, it can be difficult for doctors to diagnose. They rely heavily on records of the child's developmental history and behaviour to make a diagnosis.

According to Curran (2020) accessing multi agency support is key in identifying and diagnosing children and investigating a child's potential needs.

CDC (2022) would agree with this as they suggest developmental monitoring. This includes observing the child while playing, talking and learning to ensure the child is meeting the required developmental milestones. For developmental monitoring to be successful, parents, care givers, health professionals and early years professionals need to work together to share their observations.

A contrasting view is that of Gillingham (1995) who states that Autism is treatable, however this information is dated and is not supported by updated research.

Impact Barriers and challenges.

Curran (2020) explains that there are many challenges while implementing Special education needs provision in early years settings.

One barrier that children with Autism face is people's negative attitudes and lack of knowledge. Kafer (2013) states that children face barriers that are not only physical, but in the way of stereotypes and prejudice. Kafer (2013) explains how in the medical model people are disabled by their differences and that their differences need to be treated with medicine. This way of thinking can cause children with an ALN like autism to lose independence and confidence.

Curran (2020) state that schools and educational settings are required to have an allocated special educational needs coordinator, who are responsible for assessing. Planning and monitoring the progress of each child with special educational needs and disabilities in their setting. The good schools guide (2022) state that in England, the special educational needs coordinator should be aware of the relevant procedures needed in order to make a diagnosis of Autism and other learning disabilities.

However, in Wales, a possible barrier to implementing special education needs in early years provision in settings is the ALN coordinators knowledge and training for specific areas of ALN.

According to ARCAS (2021) there is no specific training required, the candidate only needs to be 'highly qualified' However, Plimley, Bowen and Morgan (2007) argue that the term 'highly qualified' is open to interpretation as they don't specifically need to be qualified in additional learning needs such as autism.

Smeets and Roseleveld (2016) found that around 20% of students required extra support but have not been diagnosed as having an ALN or disability.

While carrying out research Curran (2020) found that 20% of SENCO's reported that they didn't feel confident while identifying a special educational need in their setting. Wall (2004) states that as a direct result of lack of knowledgeable practitioners many children do not get diagnosed which results in children not getting the help and support that they require.

however Leonard and Smyth (no date) state that during their investigation the majority of early years professionals had received training in inclusion, special education needs or

Strategies.

According to Welsh government (2017) All children and young people with Autism or another ALN are entitled to an individual development plan. This plan will include support for their learning and development. This and other strategies are in place however due to funding, lack of knowledge and training schools and educational settings struggle to put these into practice.

As suggested by Evans and Dubowski (2001) A strategy that could be used in supporting children with autism is Lego or Art therapy. According to Lindsay and Cassiani (2017) Lego therapy is an effective teaching tool which can help children increase their communication and social skills. It includes focusing on childrens natural interest in play to help motivate children to learn and increase their skills. Furthermore, Phytanza and Burhein (2019) state that play therapy is important in overcoming problems that children may have in communicating, interacting and their overall behaviour.

Kafer (2013) suggests that by referring to the social model of disability and finding ways in which to remove barriers that are caused by Autism or another ALN. Children can develop, learn and grow independently.

Conclusion.

To conclude, Autism is a condition that affects children and adults of all ages that can be identified in early childhood by noting autistic characteristics, however diagnosing Autism can be difficult as there are no medical tests that can diagnose it.

Children may face challenges and barriers in educational settings due to lack of knowledge and funding.

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