

Autism

CDC (2022) explains how autism, also known as ASD, is a developmental impairment caused by brain differences. ASD children frequently struggle with social communication and interaction, as well as confined or repetitive behaviours or hobbies. People with ASD may also learn, move, or pay attention in various different ways to others. Autism affects each person differently, no two people will show identical signs.

More than one in every hundred people is on the autism spectrum, and the UK has approximately 700,000 autistic adults and children. Autism is a spectrum disorder that affects people differently. An autistic person, like everyone else, have their own set of skills and deficiencies (The National Autistic Society 2023).

NIH (2017) states how there is no known cause for autism as the complexity of the disorder is so wide resulting but there may be many causes for it. There is also a possibility that there are no causes at all.

Early Interventions

Rudy (2021b) believes that chances are possible that a child who has been diagnosed early with autism will be eligible for early international services up to the age of six.

Zappa (no date) agrees that children who are diagnosed early can benefit from early intervention as it integrates techniques, therapies and interventions that aid in the development of abilities that will ensure the child reaches their full potential. Play is frequently implemented as a kind of intervention, which masks to the child that they are learning.

Barriers

A barrier in place involving autism is the lack of staff with the correct training. Marbaix (2021) suggests how staff members need better understanding of children with autism and to be aware of the signs and triggers. She highlights how this includes all staff members, including dinner ladies and support staff.

Marbaix (2021) also explains another barrier is how the behaviour of an autistic child can be seen as unacceptable behaviour according to the schools policy. Under the Equality Act 2010, each school has a duty to make reasonable amendments to include allowance for behaviours which are a result of a disability.

ECYY6006 Supporting Children with Additional Learning Needs -Autism



(Image: Nightingale, 2021)

Diagnosis

Autism can occasionally be identified in children as young as 18 months although, a more reliable diagnosis from a qualified expert can be made by the age of 2 years old. Children with autism may not receive the early assistance that they require as a result of the delay in diagnosis. To ensure that children with autism receive the resources and support that they require to realise their full potential, it is extremely important to make the diagnosis of the ALN as soon as possible (CDC 2022).

If the child is of school age, it can be helpful to speak to the school SENCO about the concerns of the child, which who have may already picked up the behaviours in the child. The health visitor or GP are able to conduct a screening interview, if the child is of school age, to indicate whether the child is autistic, however this is not a diagnosis. The child should be referred for a formal assessment, where they are diagnosed, once the GP or health visitor is convinced of his or her difficulties (National Autistic Society 2023).

Support in Place

The Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal Act 2018 was a new education law that came into effect in September 2021. It is an act that modifies how young people, up to the age of 25 years old, who have additional learning needs have their needs assessed, planned and evaluated. Careers Wales (no date) states that this act was put in place to create a new legal framework to support children and young people with additional learning needs (ALN).

There is also a charity, Child Autism UK, which provides support for parents. A helpline for parents is one of the main services provided by Child Autism UK. When their children have difficulties, many parents find it difficult to get answers finding it hard to know where to turn. Child Autism UK provides information packs and connects parents with other parents who have gone through similar experiences and are now optimistic (Child Autism UK no date).

Signs

A child with autism typically shows symptoms by the age of 2-3. Although, signs of development delay can appear earlier allowing the child to be diagnosed earlier. There has been research to prove that early intervention for a child with autism, will lead to a more beneficial result in adulthood (Autism Speaks 2023).

The NHS website (2022) explain how the signs of autism in young children are slightly different to the signs in older children. Young children tend to make frequent and repeated movements such as hand flapping, body swaying and flicking their fingers. They also are not as socially confident when it comes to talking to other children, avoiding eye contact, and they would rather play alone than engage in activities with other children. Autistic children typically do not respond to their name when being called and will not smile back when being smiled at.

Older children show slightly different signs. They tend to be more emotional and find it hard to describe their feelings. If they are asked to do something, they can become easily upset. Having a daily routine is highly beneficial to an autistic child as change is difficult for them to overcome. Howlin (2004) states how a person with autism experiences reality as a complex web of events, people, locations, sounds and visuals. Routines, timings, routes and rituals all help bring order to a life that is chaotic. A portion of the tremendous fear is reduced by attempting to maintain the status norm.

Strategies

Lindsay (2017) found that Lego therapy may be an excellent teaching tool for fostering social competence and communication skills in children by utilising their natural desire to play. The study shows that there are not many thorough analyses of how Lego treatment affects autistic children.

The Autism Service (2022) explains another strategy which is autism masking. Watts (2022) agrees by saying how children mask to get through their day in school which results in them not receiving the support they need as their needs are unrecognised. Masking happens as children are worried that as they are different, they will be victimised.

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