

Signs that a child might have an ASD

- Delayed speech in some, but not all
- Social avoidance of adults and children
- Lack of shared attention
- One-sided conversation
- Unusual eye contact
- Unusual sensory responses
- Others describe child as anti-social, or remote, or naughty, or self-centred or odd

Signs that an adult might have an ASD

- Social isolation, anxiety or depression
- Lifelong difficulties, particularly in relation to the social aspects of life and employment
- Unusual conversational style, tone, content and eye contact
- Rigidity of thought and behaviour
- Strong special interests
- Unusual sensory responses

Some facts about ASD

- Those with ASD are often misdiagnosed/labelled as naughty, challenging, loners, eccentric, little professors, emotionally disturbed.
- Parents can be blamed for their child's apparent anti-social behaviour before diagnosis which adds to their distress.
- ASDs are developmental disorders with a genetic component and more than one person in the immediate or extended family might have an ASD.
- Inadequate parenting or neglect does not cause ASD.
- There are brain differences in structure, function and processing which are being researched.
- ASDs are classified as pervasive developmental disorders.
- Symptoms are present before the age of 36 months, but on average ASDs are not diagnosed until the age of 5 years, or for some individuals, until adolescence or adulthood.
- Those with ASD span the whole range of cognitive ability. Some individuals will be of well above average intelligence and others will have ASD along with intellectual disability which can be severe.
- Those with ASD can have other disorders, in particular epilepsy, additional learning difficulties, visual and hearing loss and Down syndrome, for example.

Some facts about ASD

- There are no medical tests to confirm the diagnosis.
- A full developmental history is needed.
- An ASD screening or diagnostic tool might be completed.
- The child/adult is observed across settings, alone and with others, and/or in specially set up situations.

- Referral made to the local specialist assessment team.

Screening and diagnostic methods

- CHAT (Checklist for Autism in Toddlers).
- CAST (Childhood Autism Spectrum Test formerly known as Childhood Asperger Syndrome Test)
- For adults who do not have moderate-severe intellectual disability the Autism Spectrum Quotient (AQ-10) may be helpful.

Screening and diagnostic methods

- Based on observation of current behaviours and data on early childhood development.
- Criteria listed within International Classification of Diseases (ICD 10) and the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual (DSM 5)
- Multi-agency assessment recommended.
- Interview with parents or others who can report on early development is required (this may be difficult to obtain for adults)
- Variety of screening and diagnostic instruments have been developed to aid diagnosis.

Diagnostic tools include:

DISCO (Diagnostic Interview for Social and Communication Disorders); 3Di; ADI-R (Autism Diagnostic interview - Revised); ASDI (Asperger Syndrome Diagnostic Interview); ADOS (Autism Diagnostic Observation Schedule).

Screening and diagnostic methods

- Development in the first 36 months of life.
- Social interaction with family members and peers.
- Communication and language skills.
- Play and leisure pursuits.
- Educational history and attainments.
- Employment history.
- Current everyday functioning and independence skills.
- Current needs of the family and the individual.

Screening and diagnostic methods

- Enables access to appropriate interventions, services and literature.
- Provides an explanation for the behaviours, and often relief, to parents/professionals and the individual with ASD.

Resources

Autism Network Scotland connects and communicates with individuals on the autistic spectrum, their families, carers, and practitioners working in the field of autism. It is a hub of reliable and impartial information,

signposting people to supports, resources and useful information. ANS offers a platform for knowledge exchange and sharing of good practice and promotes a solution focused approach. ANS supports regional networks across Scotland by providing a neutral space for discussion and communication. www.autismnetworkscotland.org.uk
The National Autistic Society is a leading UK charity providing support, help and information for those with ASD, their families, carers and links to resources including information for GPs.

<http://www.autism.org.uk/working-with/health/info-for-gps.aspx>

National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) provides clinical guidelines for different conditions. Guidelines on diagnosis and management for Autism Spectrum disorder are available for both children and adults

<http://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/cg128/>

<http://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/cg142>

One Stop Shops offer advice and support before, during and following diagnosis.

<http://www.autismnetworkscotland.org.uk/one-stop-shops/>

Scottish Intercollegiate Guidelines Network (2007) SIGN 98: Assessment, Diagnosis and Clinical Interventions for children and young people with autism spectrum disorders

The Scottish Strategy for Autism: Menu of Interventions (2013) was developed by a multi-agency group (including parents and carers). It provides a guide to intervention aimed at providing support to individuals on the autism spectrum across the age range and across the whole of the spectrum.

<http://www.gov.scot/Resource/0043/00438221.pdf>

Want to know more? This leaflet forms part of the NHS Education for Scotland web resource on Autism which can be accessed at:

<http://www.knowledge.scot.nhs.uk/home/learning-and-cpd/learning-spaces/autism-spectrum-disorder.aspx>

The University of Birmingham and NHS Scotland have developed a specialist, online learning resource on ASD, designed for GPs and Primary Care Practitioners, where you will find more detailed information on:

- About Autism
- Preparing to see Someone
- Putting the Patient at Ease
- The Consultation
- After the Consultation
- Medication
- Screening and Onward Referral
- Stress Behaviour and Mental Health Problems

The content of this leaflet was provided by the Autism Team at the University of Birmingham.