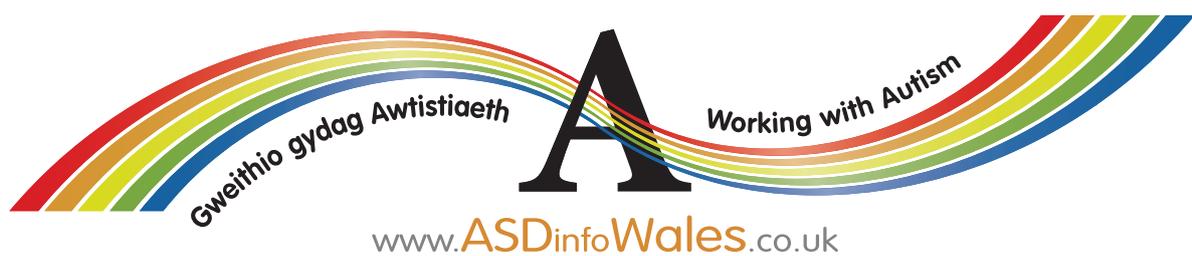


Autism: A Guide for Work-Based Training Providers



1

What is Autism?

What is Autism?

Advice sheet for staff

An autism spectrum disorder (ASD) is a neuro-developmental condition which affects the way a person communicates with and relates to other people and the world around them. Current estimates suggest that around 1 in 100 people have autism.

The causes of autism are yet unknown. It is only since the 1980s that autism spectrum disorder has been a recognised condition within the diagnostic assessment manuals and initially the diagnostic assessments were focused on children especially those displaying the signs of 'classic' autism.

As more research into autism has been undertaken it has become evident that there are many people, both children and adults, who are autistic but this has not been recognised as they are unaware of their condition or have been misdiagnosed with other conditions like anxiety, mental health issues etc.

Many people report that 'they knew that they had difficulties but did not know why'. There are a significant number of adults who are now being diagnosed with autism.

Autistic people can be affected by their condition in a variety of ways and to very different degrees. This is why it's called 'the autism spectrum'. However, increasingly research tells us that people can have a range of different needs and abilities which results in them having a 'spikey profile' for example, they may have high intellectual capacity but lack social interaction and planning skills.

Autism can affect people with any level of intellectual ability, but it is not a learning disability, although some autistic people may have a co-occurring learning disability. Or they may have other co-occurring conditions such as ADHD, depression or anxiety. The cognitive strengths of some individuals may mean that they can focus on tasks without breaking their concentration.

A Person Focused Approach

An autistic person deserves the same rights to learn, engage and reach their potential as anyone else, and has potential to play an active part in the training and workplace community.

The way in which an autistic person presents and the difficulties they experience varies from one person to another. However, all autistic people will need some adjustments to be made in order to maximize their learning potential and reduce distress.

From experience it is evident that as a result of the range of difficulties that autistic learner's experience, more structure, adapted communication and increased understanding will need to be applied across all training and work activities.

Each person is an individual and therefore, it is essential that their individual learning plans (ILP) accurately captures the unique strengths and needs of the person.

Many of the suggestions outlined in this guide are no or low cost, and Providers have a duty to make these reasonable adjustments in line with **The Equality Act**, qualifications and curriculum requirements.

What are the Signs and Characteristics of Autism Spectrum Disorder?

People have significant issues in the following areas to receive a positive autism diagnosis:

Social interaction

Difficulty understanding social rules, social behaviours and relationships, for example, difficulty taking turns during a conversation, being unable to adapt behaviour to suit different situations.

Social communication

Difficulty with verbal and non-verbal communication, for example, not understanding the meaning of facial expressions or tone of voice, interpreting language literally.

Rigidity of thinking and difficulties with social imagination

A preference for consistency and sameness, difficulties with predicting outcomes to situations and planning ahead.

It is usual that all individuals with a diagnosis of autism have some difficulties in all of these areas. However, the ways in which they manifest themselves vary enormously. For example, some people are very aloof, some passive and some may want interaction but may lack the expected social 'norms'.

Also many autistic people have special interests and repetitive behaviours that can often preoccupy their attention.

Sensory issues

Increasingly research has shown that 90% of autistic people experience issues with processing sensory information as a feature of their condition.

Many of the tips within this pack relate to reducing identified sensory issues within the training and work place environment (where possible).

For autistic people the brain tries to process everything at once without filtering out unimportant things like background noise, wallpaper, people moving about and the feel of clothes on their skin. This results in sensory overload.

If this happens you may find the individual either has a 'meltdown' or even 'shut down' which is beyond an autistic persons control as it is an involuntary fight, flight or freeze response. Both 'meltdown' and shut down' can result from this situation.

Meltdown

“It literally feels like my head is imploding. Building up to it gets overwhelming, but an actual meltdown is just like... like your brain is ceasing to exist.

Of course, it doesn't actually, but I lose control of my muscles and ability to talk, I can't modulate my voice or really send any signals from my brain to my body to calm down. It's as though my brain, as a last-minute thing, sends a bunch of energy to the rest of my body, but there's no instructions for how that energy should be used, so it just goes all over and is out of my control.”

Shayna G

Shut Down

Some autistic people describe that they sometimes enter 'shut down' after a 'meltdown' – kind of during recovery mode. It is important to understand that the autistic person may be unable to communicate, move, or interact with you, or the environment.

They may feel incredibly vulnerable in this state and hypersensitive to touch. You should reduce sensory input including keeping communication as brief and calm as possible.

“Shutdowns are hard for me, I become extremely hypersensitive to sensory input, to people in my environment, I even lose my verbal ability. It's hard for my loved ones too, because they want to comfort me, but any social demand, like speech, is unwelcome, and physical touch, like hugs or a tap on the arm can be excruciating.

If an autistic person is consistently stressed and overwhelmed for a long period of time, they can enter an extended shutdown sometimes referred to as 'autistic burnout'. This can drastically reduce an Autistic person's ability to function for weeks, months or even years.”

Emma D

For further information, please look on : www.ASDinfoWales.co.uk/work-based-learning where you will find resources that relate to this topic.

2

Transition

Transition

The transition from school to work and/or training can be an exciting but anxious time for young people. It can be particularly unsettling for autistic learners who often find change very difficult. However, there are things that you can do to make the transition as smooth and as positive as possible.

Choosing a Work Based Training Course

Centre Based Employability Courses

- Provide opportunities to meet a key contact from the Provider at an agreed familiar venue such as school. Ideally this 'key contact' will be a consistent link person for the learner throughout the transition process.
- Ensure website information is easy to read and contains factual information, including visual information where possible.
- Allow time for learners to process information by providing an opportunity to ask questions after transition events and not only during. Provide opportunities for non-verbal communication.
- Offer additional transition visits to the Provider, starting at quieter times of the day/week and building to include busier sites and times of day.
- Offer additional support for attending course interviews and open day events.
- Provide a Transition Guide to clearly outline the support services offer available to autistic learners.
- Provide opportunities for site familiarisation, allowing learners to plan how they will navigate around the centre and different vocational learning environments. Provide clear maps to facilitate this process.

Applying for an Apprenticeship

- Autistic learners may require some additional support to plan for and apply for Apprenticeship vacancies.
- Ensure that the learner is fully aware of the job role that they are applying for (and the type of tasks that will be involved).
- Support the learner to prepare information about their skills, qualities, experiences, hobbies and interests that can be matched to the person specification for the job that they are applying for.
- Support the learner to plan and be aware of the work place environment and that it is suitable for their needs.
- Offer additional support for attending interviews and familiarisation with the work place.

Putting support in place

- Support the learner in producing/developing a One Page Profile to be used to help develop a personalised package of support.
- Ensure support planning meetings are person centred and capture what is important to, as well as for the learner.
- Ensure all relevant prior medical information / education based support plans / Learning and Skills Plans are used to appropriately meet the needs of each individual learner.
- Involve parents/carers in the transition process as appropriate, whilst supporting the learner to gradually experience training and work independently, in order to minimise anxiety around parental/guardian separation.
- Make an advanced plan for managing unstructured time during break and lunchtimes, this may include making use of designated quiet spaces.
- Try to provide learning timetables and other process information in advance wherever possible.
- Provide opportunities for learners to meet with other learners in order to help facilitate social interaction. This may include other learners with an ASD diagnosis if appropriate.
- Ensure learners know how to access additional wellbeing support services and counselling if needed.
- Share personalised support plans with Tutors/ Assessors/ Employers and pastoral support staff as appropriate, with guidance on how to best support the learner to achieve specific outcomes.
- Offer travel training/ opportunities for journey planning. Use social stories to support this process if appropriate.

Reducing the learner's anxiety

Prior to beginning their training programme/employment

- Organise a visit before they start to look around the training centre/work place and show key places such as reception, canteen, toilets, chill out room. Give the learner a map of the training centre so they can find their way round easily on their first day. This can help with coping with the environment, dealing with large, noisy crowds, trying to find their rooms. Or they could produce their own with your help.
- The learner could use a video film or take photos of key places and build up their own map.
- Introduce key staff members.
- Show the learner where key activities happen.
- Provide a time out / safe base for stressful situations.
- There should be clear labelling around the training centre.
- Clearly explain the procedures for break times and lunch time and how to cope with meeting others.
- Travelling to training/work by bus – Allowing time to get to the bus, where to wait, times of the bus, what happens if the bus is late.

Once they have started on their training programme/employment

- Explain the rules clearly and maintain boundaries consistently.
- Stay calm if the learner is pushing the boundaries.
- Do not expect the learner to read your facial expression.
- If appropriate use social stories in pastoral time/review meetings to explain appropriate behaviour.
- Be aware that a learner may use a lot of energy trying to fit in and may get tired and agitated at certain parts of the day such as before using public transport.
- Warn in advance of changes/room change/change of Assessor.
- Autistic people may also give the appearance of being compliant and willing to do any task they are asked and may not give a verbal indication they have not understood your request.
- They may sometimes mask that they have problems by deflection or not being able to stick to tasks. This may manifest itself by the learner not being able to complete tasks, varying the task given and/or just concentrating on the elements they find interesting or drawn to.

3

Creating an Autism Friendly Learning or Work Environment

Creating an Autism Friendly Learning or Work Environment

Navigating the building and the day

- Starting in a new place can be really challenging for anyone. However, for autistic people it can be especially difficult. There are things you can do to ensure that their experience of provider is as positive as possible and they can achieve their full potential. This can be approached as 3 key areas;
 1. Transition into training/employment,
 2. The time spent in training/employment and
 3. Move onto their next step be that employment, training or further study at a higher level.

The key to this being successful is to effectively support the learner and to help reduce their anxiety.

Sensory differences

- Autistic learners often process sensory information differently – they may be hypo sensitive or hyper sensitive. If hypo sensitive they may display sensory seeking behaviours, or they may not feel pain. If an autistic person is hyper-sensitive, they can be overwhelmed by too much sensory input. This can cause increased anxiety and impaired ability to focus. Sensory input can include noise, visuals, smells, taste, touch, texture and people.

Communication

- If an autistic learner does not look at you when you are talking to them, it does not mean that they are not listening. Eye contact can be uncomfortable (or even painful) for some autistic people. They will be able to take in what you are saying far easier if they do not look directly at you. Avoid telling a learner to look at you when you are speaking to them. This does not apply to every autistic person.
- Ensure that instructional language is explicit and unambiguous. Avoid idioms, metaphors, similes, long questions and explanations. Break down instructions and support with visual information or lists (for some learners e-communication may be more appropriate).
- A learners' vocabulary is sometimes more advanced than their understanding of words; check that the learner understands what you have asked of the class.
- Break down tasks to make them easier to understand, even provide a writing framework if necessary.

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- Autistic learners often have auditory processing difficulties so you may need to give them time to process your question, rather than expecting an answer immediately.
- Autistic people may also give the appearance of being compliant and willing to do any task they are asked and not may not give a verbal indication they have not understood your request.
- They may sometimes mask that they have problems by deflection or not being able to stick to tasks. This may manifest itself by the learner not being able to complete tasks, varying the task given and/or just concentrating on the elements they find interesting or drawn to.

Visual

- For autistic learners who are hypersensitive to light, try to keep the surroundings plain, with pastel coloured display boards and keeping distracting displays to a minimum. This may be difficult when sharing rooms but it would be good practice if Providers could adopt this as a policy.
- Avoid fluorescent lighting. Aim for dimmed or natural lighting with no flickering lights.
- Dim lights where possible, especially when displaying information on screen to ensure there is limited glare on the board.

Sound

- Be aware that learners may be over sensitive to noise; allow learners to wear headphones/noise reducers as needed.
- Reduce and eliminate background noise.
- Provide quiet spaces to work, any noises can appear amplified. Autistic learners can sometimes concentrate more effectively when working alone.

Stimming

- Do not try and prevent learners from engaging in 'stimming' behaviours such as hand flapping and pacing as they rely on these behaviours to self-regulate and avoid going into shut down or meltdown when they are feeling overwhelmed.

Reducing the learner's anxiety

Once they have started on their training programme/employment

- Explain the rules clearly and maintain boundaries consistently.
- Stay calm if the learner is pushing the boundaries.
- Expect to repeat or recheck the learners' understanding of tasks.
- Do not expect the learner to read your facial expression.
- If appropriate use social stories in pastoral time/review meetings to explain appropriate behaviour.
- Be aware that a learner may use a lot of energy trying to fit in and may get tired and agitated at certain parts of the day such as before using public transport.
- Warn in advance of changes/room change/change of Assessor.

Managing the environment

How to deal with unstructured time in Centre Based Learning

Unstructured time can be particularly stressful for autistic learners. Many autistic people may find it hard to build and sustain friendships/ relationships/ social rules and therefore break times can be a difficult time. They can often feel isolated or become socially isolated.

Autistic people often find it hard to cope with change, and imagine what to do during unstructured time and are unable to plan their free time – therefore they often find sameness, a structured activity or structured time easier to cope with.

This can lead to the autistic person experiencing high levels of anxiety. You can help to alleviate some of their anxiety by making some simple adjustments. Some top tips of how to do this are outlined below:

- Make a timetable of things to do during each unstructured time – break times and lunch times or free periods of the day.
- Organise some structured groups/clubs – could be a special interest club. Create accessible social opportunities.
- Create a project – like a photo project which involves a small group - something which can be done during unstructured times but gives real focus.
- Here are some ideas for suitable clubs – Warhammer, cards, board games, xbox, art, photography.
- Use social stories, where appropriate, to develop practice scripts to use in specific social situations.

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- Provide opportunities for non-verbal communication if required, such as participating in shared non-verbal games and hobbies, which encourage turn taking.
- Sign post to external activities, events and clubs which provide supported opportunities for social interaction with peers such as targeted social groups.
- Use peer mentors to support learners in developing social skills and practicing social interaction.
- Help raise awareness of how neuro-typical people may use language that may be confusing i.e.
 - a) Idioms (e.g. save your breath)
 - b) Double meanings
 - c) Sarcasm (e.g. saying 'great' when you have spilled ketchup on the table)
- Raise awareness of how autism can affect social interaction and encourage acceptance of diversity amongst their peers.

In the Workplace

- It would be good practice for the Assessor and Employer to support the learner with unstructured time during the working day e.g. break and lunchtime. Some of the tips above could be adapted to the work environment.
- Employers should consider what they can do to better support neuro-diversity in the workplace.

Appendix 1

Inclusive teaching and learning checklist

Some learners with ALN may not need additional support, if the learning environment is inclusive.

These strategies can benefit all learners not just those with ALN.

Name:	
Date:	
Group/Session:	

Inclusive Checklist	Progress Towards	Evidence Planning
Planning		
Tutors plan differentiated activities and outcomes.		
Tutors plan the role and expectation of the learning assistants.		
Individual learner targets are used to inform teaching strategies.		
In lesson		
Greet all learners and settle group effectively.		
Introduce the lesson giving the big picture and link to previous and future lessons.		
The lesson content aligns with the objectives and assessments.		
Lesson objectives displayed and explained. Check learners are clear on objectives. Refer to objectives during and at end of lesson.		
Teach study skills and emphasise when they are being used. Support learners when applying study skills, progressing to independent use.		

Inclusive Checklist	Progress Towards	Evidence Planning
In lesson (continued)		
Pair and group work used effectively for support and activities.		
Speak clearly, rephrase and give specific examples (real life).		
Regularly reflect, recap and consolidate during lesson to maintain pace and assess learning.		
Plan questioning to challenge all learners. Allow processing time before responding to questions.		
Activities are explained clearly (step-by-step) or modelled (show a good one).		
Transitions between activities are clearly explained and managed.		
Use alternatives to written tasks.		
Effective use of IT.		
Present and assess in different ways to engage and motivate learners.		
Provide positive feedback that is specific and constructive.		
Environment		
The learning areas are well organised and free from clutter.		
Clear learning area rules and routines are established. Behaviour management is consistent.		
Learning area seating and layout planned in advance.		
Key vocabulary displayed and used.		

Inclusive Checklist	Progress Towards	Evidence Planning
Environment (continued)		
“Resource boxes” should be available for numeracy, literacy and topic.		
Teaching materials		
Provide electronic copies of presentations and handouts (prior to lesson).		
Limit the amount of text on resources, use bullets.		
Use suitable font, spacing, colours.		
Use visual displays – images, charts, diagrams.		
Learning assistant/ peer-to-peer		
Helping, explaining, and simplifying information.		
Help learner focus.		
Provide encouragement.		
Support organisational and study skills.		
Notes :		

**This checklist was provided by Additional Learning Needs (ALN) Department, Coleg Cambria*

Appendix 2

'My Personal Profile' template

Learner Name:

Route:

Things I like to do
(give 3 examples)

What I want to achieve at
(give 3 examples)

--

What could affect my learning?

How can we overcome this?

What could affect my learning?	How can we overcome this?

Are there signs we need to know so that we can help you if you are getting agitated/ anxious?

--



Useful contacts

(Eg. CAMHS, social worker, PA, foster carer, YOS worker)

Attendance and wellbeing comments

Date plan agreed: Signed:

Is the plan working?

Review date	Review comment	Learner signature	Tutor signature

4

Supporting the Learner in the Learning or Work Environment

Supporting the Learner in the Learning or Work Environment

Sensory differences

- Autistic learners often process sensory information differently – they may be hypo sensitive or hyper sensitive. If hypo sensitive they may display sensory seeking behaviours, or they may not feel pain. If an autistic person is hyper-sensitive, they can be overwhelmed by too much sensory input. This can cause increased anxiety and impaired ability to focus. Sensory input can include noise, visuals, smells, taste, touch, texture and people.

Visual

- For autistic learners who are hypersensitive to light, try to keep the surroundings plain, with pastel coloured display boards and keeping distracting displays to a minimum. This may be difficult when sharing rooms but it would be good practice if Providers could adopt this as a policy.
- Avoid fluorescent lighting. Aim for dimmed or natural lighting with no flickering lights.
- Dim lights where possible, especially when displaying information on screen to ensure there is limited glare on the board.

Sound

- Be aware that learners may be over sensitive to noise; allow learners to wear headphones/noise reducers as needed.
- Reduce and eliminate background noise.
- Provide quiet spaces to work, any noises can appear amplified. Autistic learners can sometimes concentrate more effectively when working alone.

Stimming

- Do not try and prevent learners from engaging in 'stimming' behaviours such as hand flapping and pacing as they rely on these behaviours to self-regulate and avoid going into shut down or meltdown when they are feeling overwhelmed.

Communication

Effective communication is essential in supporting autistic learners. Many of the difficulties and problems experienced by autistic learners are underpinned by poor communication. Increased anxiety may reduce the ability to communicate verbally.

- Ensure you have the learner's attention, say their name before beginning.
- Use a clear, calm voice.
- Ensure that instructional language is explicit and unambiguous. Avoid idioms, metaphors, similes, long questions and explanations.
- Break down instructions and support with visual information or lists.
- Break down tasks to make them easier to understand, even provide a writing framework if necessary.
- Ask specific questions.
- Do not overload the person with lots of verbal information.
- Use facts to explain things, avoid analogies and never use sarcasm.
- Don't rely on body language, gestures and tone of voice.
- A learners' vocabulary is sometimes more advanced than their understanding of words; check that the learner understands what you have asked of them.
- Autistic learners often have auditory processing difficulties so you may need to give them time to process your question, rather than expecting an answer immediately.

Space

- It is useful to have a conversation with the autistic learner regarding where they would like to be seated e.g. where they can easily see the tutor and the board without having to frequently turn around.
- Ensure that learners have enough space around them. Physical proximity can be overwhelming and uncomfortable for some.
- When talking to an autistic learner try not to stand too close or lean over their shoulder.
- Try to sit left and right handed learners so that their writing arms are not adjacent and bumping as they write.
- Try to maintain a tidy and clutter free learning area. Resources should be kept in a set place and clearly labelled.
- Monitor displays. 'Busy' visuals of many colours can be overwhelming and cause distraction to autistic learners.
- Allow movement breaks and opportunities to get up and stretch, sitting in one position can become uncomfortable.
- Think about the physical structure of a learning environment to create a non-distracting area for learning.

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- Be aware of learners' anxiety levels. Have an agreed safe and quiet place for pupils to go to when they feel anxiety building or are overloaded by sensory stimuli. Pre-arrange that learners can leave the learning area if they are feeling anxious or overwhelmed.
- Allow learners to leave the lesson five minutes earlier so that they can move to their next location before all other learners start moving around the centre. They may find this less distressing.

Supporting the learner with their work

- When carrying out learner reviews, give a brief beforehand so that they can prepare for the meeting. Explain what your role is and the purpose of the meeting beforehand.
- Encourage the learner to sit in a place avoiding visual and sensory distractions, such as noise, bright lights and busy rooms.
- Provide regular mentoring and ask very specific questions rather than rely on the learner to tell you what they are struggling with.
- Autistic learners may rarely offer more information than they have been asked and there could be something essential that you are missing.
- Email learners rather than face to face if it works better.
- Use a variety of teaching styles and use one that suits.
- Make information visual, use pictures to help explain things.
- Print out workshop notes/PowerPoint before the workshop/after the workshop or ensure it is uploaded to an e-learning platform.
- Support the learner in advance of controlled assessments - providing details of the room, its layout.
- Encourage learners to develop visual aids to help understand their timetable. Ensure that learners know which days to bring specialist equipment.
- Reinforce teaching with a podcast, a multi-sensory game.
- Use visual timetables, learners will know what they are doing so that there are no unexpected surprises.
- Use task boards and other visual instructions this can reduce the anxiety around forgetting what needs to be done.
- Explain the rules and expectations. Tell learners exactly why certain rules are in place and the benefits of following them.
- Ensure that written information on the board is clearly displayed.
- Encourage learners to access Learning Support for help with developing visual strategies. Autistic learners are usually visual learners and can use visual information to their advantage when being able to schedule information and learn effectively.

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- Provide structure for your learners; try to avoid sudden changes to routine. If possible, give advance warning to any changes of structure or routine.
- Help learners deal with any unstructured time (lunch/study hours).
- Be mindful that autistic learners are often the target of bullying, as they are often perceived as being 'different'. This can have devastating effects on their confidence and self-esteem and can lead to mental health problems. Be observant to how others are treating the autistic learner.
- A buddy system can sometimes be successful. Often autistic learners will have special interests, such as gaming or chess. Encourage these learners to join groups with like-minded individuals where they can form friendship bonds over a common interest.
- Be flexible about rules: chewing gum may prevent a learner from muttering in class.
- Autistic people may also give the appearance of being compliant and willing to do any task they are asked and not may not give a verbal indication they have not understood your request.
- They may sometimes mask that they have problems by deflection or not being able to stick to tasks. This may manifest itself by the learner not being able to complete tasks, varying the task given and/or just concentrating on the elements they find interesting or drawn to.

When producing worksheets:

- Use a clear font.
- Use font size 12 or 14.
- Use line spacing of at least 1.5.
- Have clear spaces between paragraphs.
- Use bullet points or numbered lists for tasks.
- Avoid narrow columns.
- Remove any unhelpful pictures and distractions, any visuals should be relevant and aid understanding.

Planning time and workload

- Autistic learners may find it hard to ask for help or to say that they have finished a task.
- Poor executive functioning is a key feature of autism so autistic learners may find it hard to plan and problem solve. As a result they may struggle with organisation, time management and meeting deadlines.
- General questions are especially difficult for autistic learners to cope with – they may become engrossed in one aspect of an assignment or task and fail to answer the question. How can you help?

Organising their work

- Provide a clear timetable. This may be a visual/pictorial one if more suited to the learner's needs.
- Give the learner advanced warning of any timetable or venue changes.
- Develop a clear work schedule showing what work needs completing and by when. The learner may find it useful to use planner, diaries, virtual timetable, phones, iPads to plan ahead and put deadlines and events in diaries in advance. It may be beneficial to schedule workplace reviews and assessments several months in advance.
- Ensure assignment hand in dates are clear and written in their diary, set reminders on their phone at intervals.
- Help learners to prioritise their workload – planning is really difficult for them. Make to do lists. Use apps such as evernote/google keep to make lists and reminders.
- Encourage learners to organise their work, either with an online portfolio or paper portfolio with coloured sub-sections.
- It is also useful for the learner to print on the same colour paper (e.g independent study tasks on green paper).
- Learners should also be taught how to organise their time to plan and meet deadlines – this should form part of their individual learning plan. It may be useful to use visual timers for this.
- Provide a tick sheet to support work that needs to be completed either in a workshop or between reviews in the work place.
- Help provide structure for work to be done independently in-between reviews/workshops/assessments.
- Help learners to develop a clear structure at home as well.
- Learners can get upset if they are told that they have made a mistake
- Teach them how to self-correct.

Understanding the task

- Break long tasks/questions into manageable sections – using flow charts may be particularly useful.
- Teach how to deconstruct a written question.
- Use writing frames to support the completion of tasks.
- Give written instructions rather than a verbal list.
- Give a clear idea of how much time a learner is expected to spend on a task.
- Put clear time limits when asking for written work, support learners to stay on topic e.g rather than ask 'write everything you know about the beginning of the 1st world war' ask the learner to 'give 10 reasons why the war started' etc.
- Give a clear assignment plan with key questions.
- When asking for a goal or a preference for something provide options as autistic learners have difficulties making a free choice.
- Link the questions/work to learner special interest if possible.
- Give extra time for a physical task if fine or gross motor skills are an issue.
- Allow the use of pictures /diagrams in assignments to show understanding if possible.
- Learners may find it hard to move from topic to topic so allow plenty of time to finish one and introduce a new topic.
- Ensure one task is finished before introducing a new one.
- Explain how they will know when they have completed the task.
- Use visual cues to show change of task.
- Autistic people may also give the appearance of being compliant and willing. to do any task they are asked and not may not give a verbal indication they have not understood your request.
- They may sometimes mask they have problems by deflection or not being able to stick to tasks. This may manifest itself by the learner not being able to complete tasks, varying the task given and/or just concentrating on the elements they find interesting or drawn to.

Appendix 2 - Case Studies

Case Study 1 - Darren James Success Story (ACT)

A self-confessed 'petrol head', eighteen year old Darren James from Pontyclun is well on his way to achieving his dreams of becoming a heavy vehicle diesel fitter. After completing a Traineeship programme with Wales' leading training provider, ACT, Darren is now thriving as an Apprentice with one of Wales' Premier tour operators, Edward Coaches.

Darren loves working with vehicles, but having been home-schooled throughout childhood he was unsure of what opportunities were available to him:

"I was home schooled with my brother, until I was 15 and a family friend suggested ACT as a way for us to get into college. We looked in to it for my brother first and then when we saw he was doing well, I followed him a year later."

After researching the many different routes available, Darren joined ACT's Traineeship programme, a Pre-Apprenticeship training programme that prepares 16-18 year olds for the world of work. With a keen interest in motor vehicles, he chose to enrol onto a Level 1 Traineeship in Vehicle Maintenance Repair, working hard to overcome the many barriers to learning he faced.

Darren's commitment and drive did not go unnoticed by his tutors, and in 2017 he was nominated for the 'Traineeship of the Year' award at ACT's internal awards in the Motor Vehicle category.

Commenting on the accolade, Darren said, "I was shocked and very surprised to win the award as I was not expecting to be put forward for it but I am so grateful to the tutors for nominating me."

Ros Smith, Care, Support and Guidance Co-ordinator at ACT, who nominated Darren for the award and played a key role in his learner journey said, "Since joining ACT, Darren's really come out of his shell and he's worked hard to build his employability skills. What an achievement for a learner who lacked confidence."

Darren had initially struggled to adapt to the new work and social situations he found himself in, but was determined to persevere and overcome any obstacles he faced. His tutors were incredibly supportive and encouraged Darren to take part in a pilot scheme, which enabled him to gain access to an educational psychologist for an assessment.

The outcome resulted in Darren being officially stated as having Special educational needs and gaining additional support from his Motor Vehicle tutors via an ALS worker (Additional Learner Support) who provided excellent one-to-one support for Darren during his qualification.

Ros was successfully able to progress Darren onto a Level 2 Heavy Goods course with Cardiff and the Vale College, which later led to an Apprenticeship with Edwards Coaches. All this within a 3 year period. Darren Gould, ACT Motor Vehicle

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Sector Lead and Darren's tutor commented, "I'm very proud of Darren for overcoming his barriers and realising his dreams. He deserves all of the success for all his hard work and efforts."

Darren himself added, "I couldn't believe it at first when Edwards offered me the Apprenticeship. I was so excited. I now go to college one day a week and work with a brilliant group of men who 'take the mick' a lot but who also take time to teach me the job."

Jason Campfield, Fleet Engineer at Edward Coaches commented, "Darren's been with us since September and he's settling in really well. He gets his head down and cracks on with the tasks at hand, which is brilliant. Of course it's the early stages of his Apprenticeship but he's learning a lot and there are plenty of opportunities for him to continue to progress and develop his skills and knowledge further so he can take on even more responsibility. We support our Apprentices every step of the way and we're currently also putting Darren through a driving course so he'll hopefully have his licence soon too. We also keep in regular contact with the college, so we're always aware of how he's doing on his course."

Apprenticeship schemes have been an excellent resource for Edwards Coaches, who use their Apprentices to grow and nurture a skilled workforce to suit their business needs. They currently have around 10 Apprentices working across their business.

Jason added, "As a company we massively benefit from Apprenticeship schemes as it means we get to mould our learners to our specific needs. There are plenty of car mechanics out there but working with buses is very different so it's not always easy to find mechanics who have the experience and skillset we need. We would definitely recommend Apprenticeship schemes to other businesses as they allow you to train your workforce to fit your specific requirements."

Darren is one of thousands of Apprentices who is benefiting from the chance to specialise and develop his skillset, and he is looking forward to taking advantage of the many opportunities that lie ahead for him. Reflecting on his journey to date, he said:

"If I hadn't gone to ACT and began my Traineeship, I wouldn't have had the chance to learn about motor vehicles till later on in college - if I had even made it there to begin with. ACT has given me a huge amount of support and I would highly recommend them to absolutely anyone."

Talking about his future plans, Darren added, "I'm looking forward to completing the Apprenticeship, including the additional improver year I'm currently doing, and working towards my goal of being a fully qualified heavy vehicle diesel fitter. I'm really excited for what the future holds."

Case Study 2 - Little Tigers Day Care (ACT)

We are very proud as a nursery to announce that our apprentice Ellie Curtis aged 18 years was announced as 'Apprentice of the Year' 2017 by Monmouthshire business awards at a lavish awards ceremony at the Celtic Manor on Friday 6th October. Ellie was chosen out of over 200 candidates over the whole of Monmouthshire.

Ellie joined us in September 2015 as a young 17 year old apprentice who was about to step into the scary (but enjoyable) world of working with young children. Ellie fresh out of college came with her own personal issues that she was clearly striving to work against and manage, for Ellie has Autism, Dyslexia and Irlen Syndrome. Does she let this stop her.....NO she doesn't. As her manager I have never met such a determined and focused young lady who is set to prove everyone wrong (especially her previous schools), that she CAN achieve and gain a career that she has always wanted.

Ellie did her training via ACT in Cardiff as well as working closely with her supportive colleagues. Ellie has completed numerous courses such as Speech and Language, Foundation phase training, First Aid, Food Hygiene, Additional needs training and working alongside children with ASD. Due to her own personal knowledge and that gained on training it became clear who our Additional needs co-ordinator should be..... Ellie. She took over as our designated ALNCo in September 2016 and she has been able to work wonderfully alongside children and their families to ensure focused care and education is received as well as specific support. She attends all meetings with other professionals and directs the way forward for children who need that little bit more support.

We are all exceptionally proud of Ellie and all she is achieving, She has always said that she 'wants to help and support children like her' – Well she is certainly putting that into practice.

Since Ellie won the award in 2017 she has completed her Level 3 playwork qualification and has now enrolled onto level 5 management.

Case Study 3 - DB Case Study

– Supporting an apprentice in the work place

What were you looking for when employing this apprentice?

We were looking for a Level 3 apprentice to work in our centralised department where the requirement would be to provide accurate and timely information and be able to react to unpredictable situations.

What help did they need in making reasonable adjustments?

The learner (DB) had support from their Apprenticeship Assessor who identified what support they and we (the employer) would need through Access to Work.

What is their story – recruitment journey e.g. What, if anything, did they disclose about their condition or how they wanted to be supported?

DB was upfront with us about their diagnosis of Asperger's Syndrome which they were happy to disclose at interview. As they were a suitable candidate we offered them an apprenticeship in our centralized team.

They initially appeared to be very helpful with a compliant nature and showed willing to undertake any tasks they were given. In reality they were distracted, lacked concentration, had memory issues and showed poor organizational skills. This meant mistakes were being made which could be seen across the organization and deadlines were being missed. In turn this was causing the learner to become distressed and they were in danger of not completing their apprenticeship.

What information and support did you supply/put in place?

Assessor Intervention

Following the assessors 1st review it was clear that DB was struggling in the role. We and DB worked together to apply for Access to Work, however, the process took longer than anticipated. In the meantime, the Assessor put the following in place:

- Moved DB to an e-portfolio system so all communications were made digitally
- Made frequent visits to DB and adopted a more hands on approach
- Gave bite size pieces of work with smaller actions.

Access to Work Intervention

The assessor observed DB over a period of time and their assessment recommended that DB move to a more repetitive role where tasks were the same every day. It was felt that this would help DB to make fewer mistakes and present a better fit for their particular skill set.

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What were the Key Milestones?

- 1st review point where issues were identified and addressed
- Move to e-portfolio learning
- Move to new role within organisation

Any Good or Bad experiences and any lessons learned?

Action plans still have to be in place to manage DB to keep them to task and limit their tendency to vary or not complete the tasks given. The learner should be involved in the development of the action plan.

The provider feels that had they been involved earlier they could have supported us through the recruitment process. By the time they became involved DB was already employed.

This particular learner was better suited to a one to one approach.

It is important to keep appointments. The Assessor stressed they cannot miss an appointment as DB becomes agitated. However, sometimes appointments have to be rearranged due to illness, emergencies etc. If appointments have to be cancelled then it is important to notify the learner as soon as possible and to explain why the appointment has to be rearranged and discuss 'what will happen next' e.g. how a new appointment will be arranged, how the learner will be notified, someone they can contact if they need any information or advise in the interim.

Applications for Access to Work funding should be undertaken as soon as possible. Consider the type of work that is being offered to the learner and whether there is capacity within the organization for them to change roles if needed.

Where they are now?

We are much more positive now that DB is in the right role and is more relaxed in the new role. This has given the learner a chance to shine and gain new skills. Their colleagues have now discovered the learner's passion for computers and they naturally offer help to colleagues if they experience computer problems.

DB is still on programme and is working to complete their Level 3 Apprenticeship in 2020.

Case Study 4 - Traineeship Learner at ACT

At the start of ZL's ACT journey, he came in with very low motivation, some unhealthy lifestyle choices and a poor experience of school and learning. At school he struggled to manage his own behaviour, had social and communication difficulties and was also diagnosed with depression. This was complicated further by ZL's a chaotic home life and a lifestyle including a high consumption of junk food and late nights watching TV and gaming.

With the support of Mum and Careers Wales, ZL made the decision to start at ACT on an Engagement IT programme. Together, they felt that he would benefit from the person centred approach at ACT, and the opportunity to engage in the range of learner support services in a supportive and positive environment. ZL was keen to have the opportunity to develop his social skills alongside vocational skills and training.

As part of the support offered, ZL had an Additional Learning Support Assistant assigned to him. In the beginning, he refused any support, as he had no intention of engaging with the programme or taking part in the classes. He would isolate himself by sitting away from everyone, not talk to anyone or make eye contact, and refused to complete any class work.

During ZL's time at ACT we have seen so much growth, it has been lovely to witness the stages of this transformation. Firstly, he started to sit closer to the other learners, but was still not comfortable to say anything. Then he began interacting with them on occasions. Today, he sits with the others, chats frequently and has also been seen engaging with new classmates and helping them to integrate into the group. He has gone from doing no work in class, to putting in minimal effort, and now to showcasing the strength of his ideas. He is fully engaged in the classes, answering questions and completing tasks that have been set.

We have seen such an increase in ZL's confidence, motivation and social development. He is becoming a happy learner who interacts well with his Learning Support Assistant, Tutor and peers. He has progressed from the Engagement programme to the Level 1 Programme and has begun assessment towards his Level 1 Diploma.

Later this year ZL hopes to start on a Level 2 IT course at college and continue his learner journey. ZL will be leaving ACT with a new found confidence and the ability to make friends and interact with his peers. We are very proud of the personal growth and development during his time here and wish him every success for his college journey and future career in IT.