

Information for Adults with an Autism Spectrum Condition living in Plymouth



Autism
Plymouth

This pack is for adults living in Plymouth who have received a diagnosis of an Autism Spectrum Condition (ASC). We have produced this for you because we know it can be difficult to find out what information and support is on offer and how best to find it. There is a great deal of information in here but we have designed it in sections so that you can refer to the section you need when you need it.

This advice and guidance has been created from information provided by Devon Adult Autism and ADHD Service (DANA), which is part of the Devon Partnership Trust, and Plymouth City Council, and has been reviewed by people who are on the autistic spectrum.

We have tried to bring together the most important and up to date advice; however, as this is a developing area, we are always pleased to receive new information along with your suggestions for improving this pack.

If you would like to pass on any comments or suggestions, please contact:

JointCommissioningASC@plymouth.gov.uk

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I. Useful Contacts

The Autism Services directory (run by National Autistic Society)

This is a directory of services and support for people with an autism spectrum disorder, their families, and people who work with them.

<http://www.autism.org.uk/directory.aspx>

Autism Helpline (run by the National Autistic Society)

The Autism Helpline provides impartial, confidential information, advice and support for people with autism spectrum disorders, their families, professionals, researchers and students.

Tel: 0808 800 4104 (open 10.00am – 4.00pm, Mon – Fri excluding Bank Holidays)

Website: www.autism.org.uk/enquiry

The Autism Directory

The Autism Directory is an online directory website that aims to pull together the help and support that is out there and signpost autism families to the help they need. The Autism Directory is easy to use and you can re-visit to get information, support and help.

Telephone: 01443 844764

E-mail: hello@theautismdirectory.com

Website: www.theautismdirectory.com

National Autistic South West Regional Team

If you are living with autism as an adult or as a family, the NAS teams provide specialist help, information and care across England. Their local services include their residential homes, one-to-one support, support in your home, daytime hubs and support in further and higher education.

Based at Kingsley House on the outskirts of Bideford in North Devon, the South West regional team is set in spacious, well-established grounds. Offering residential and day services, they provide a wide range of leisure and learning opportunities for adults with autism in a specialist-learning environment.

The National Autistic Society

Church House

Church Road, Filton

Bristol BS34 7BD

Tel: 0117 974 400

Email: swregionalteam@nas.org.uk

Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)

The Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) offers confidential advice, support and information on health-related matters. It provides a point of contact for patients, their families and carers. It can help you with health-related questions and help resolve concerns or problems when you are using the NHS. The PALS can also provide information about the NHS, including the complaints procedure should you wish to make a complaint.

Contact: Derriford Hospital; tel 01752 439884

Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency (DVLA)

If someone feels that their autism spectrum condition affects their ability to drive, they are required to notify the DVLA. Further information is available on this link:

<https://www.gov.uk/asd-and-driving>

2. What is Autism?

“Autism is a lifelong developmental disability that affects how a person communicates with, and relates to, other people. It also affects how they make sense of the world around them.”

(National Autistic Society)



Throughout this booklet, we will use the term **Autism Spectrum Conditions (ASCs)** to refer collectively to all the different autism diagnoses, such as Childhood Autism and Asperger Syndrome.

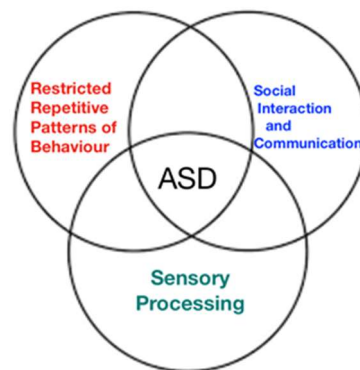
We will talk later about the differences between these diagnoses, but first of all we will look at what they have in common.

What do people with ASCs have in common?

People with ASCs show differences in two/three main areas:

- Social interaction and communication
- Patterns of behaviour, interests and activities
- Sensory processing difficulties

The diagrams below illustrates this:



You may also have heard of the term ‘triad of impairment’ to describe the differences that people with autism spectrum conditions have. This is referring to the same set of differences.

Later we will talk more about what these differences are.

What causes ASCs?

ASCs are **neurodevelopmental** disorders: this means that they are the result of differences in the way the brain develops and processes information.

Researchers are still trying to understand what causes ASCs. However, we know that:

- People first show the differences associated with ASCs in childhood.
- We expect these differences to stay with the person throughout their life (although they may find ways of adapting or adjusting to them)
- There seem to be hereditary links; i.e, the characteristics of ASCs can run in families
- Some people can show characteristics associated with ASCs but not meet the full criteria for a diagnosis.
- ASCs are not caused by 'bad' parenting
- People with ASCs are more likely to have (or show symptoms of) neurodevelopmental/physical conditions, such as Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADD/ADHD), dyspraxia, dyslexia, hypermobility or Ehlers Danlos Syndrome, irritable bowel, OCD, hyperlexia, epilepsy, autistic seizures, fibromyalgia, PDA, learning disability, General Anxiety Disorder (GAD)

How common are ASCs?

- Research now suggests that about 1.1% of the population have an ASC; that means approximately 700,000 people in the UK have an ASC
- Over the years, we have become better at recognising when people have an ASC; however, there are many other reasons why people may not be diagnosed until later in their life.
- ASCs are more common in men: the ratio is considered four men to every one woman. However, it is thought that women with ASCs may be under-diagnosed.

Why do we call it the autism spectrum?

We describe it as a spectrum because there is a wide difference in the way the autism symptoms affects people

Like any other person, all people with ASCs are different!

Main characteristics of people with ASCs

These are examples of some of the differences that people with autism spectrum condition may show.

Social communication and interaction

People with an ASC can find it difficult to communicate effectively with other people. For example, they may:

- Find it difficult to understand gestures, facial expressions or tone of voice
- Find it difficult to know how to start, maintain and end conversations
- Find it difficult to grasp the underlying meaning of certain conversations and to understand jokes, metaphors and sarcasm
- Have unusual eye contact, e.g. avoidant or overly intense
- Have an unusual style of speech
- Find it difficult to have a mutual sharing of ideas and feelings

People with an ASC often find it difficult to understand how to behave and interact with other people. They may have particular difficulties in terms of:

- Understanding unwritten 'social rules' or non-verbal cues. For example, how close to stand to other people, or what is an appropriate conversation topic
- Appearing aloof and uninterested in other people
- Finding it difficult to make and keep friends
- People with an autism spectrum condition often find social situations very difficult. There are so many social rules that people without an ASC learn instinctively; however, people with an ASC often have to work at learning these rules, which can be confusing and can cause anxiety.

Some communication difficulties that people with an ASC could experience may include:

Taking things literally:

People do not always mean exactly what they say; often people use shortcuts or learnt phrases. For example, someone saying, "I'll be back in five minutes" does not always mean he/she will be exactly five minutes.

Giving too much information:

Often people ask general questions in conversation but don't often expect a long and detailed answer. You may learn to notice signs that people are getting bored of a conversation; for example, if they keep yawning, stop looking at you, or stop asking you questions.

Missing social cues:

People do not always like to say directly what they mean if they think it will be impolite. Instead, they say things or use their body language or actions to imply something. These cues can be learnt, but are not always easy to work out.

Body language:

This can vary across situation, but it can often be intimidating for people to stand too close and talk loudly to other people. It can make them feel afraid.

Changing social rules:

The way a person should act or behave often depends on the situation and person they are speaking to. Much of our social interactions with others are based on unspoken or unwritten social “rules” For example, it would be appropriate to say 'Hiya' or “Alright” to a friend but not to someone you were meeting in a formal setting. When meeting a new client at work, the social rule would be to say “Hello”

Ways to tackle some of these difficulties:

- If you know the person, you may find it helpful to tell them about your communication style
- Asking people to be specific when giving you instructions
- If you are not sure what someone means, try to ask him or her
- Try to consider the perspective/feelings of the person who you are communicating with
- Develop your social skills by attending social groups, using internet resources and chat rooms or volunteering with local charities.

Patterns of interest, behaviour and activities

People with an ASC may have:

- Difficulties understanding and interpreting other people’s thoughts, feelings, or actions
- Difficulties imagining alternative outcomes to situations, or predicting what will happen next
- Difficulties in generalising things that they have learnt across different situations
- A fondness of routines and doing things in particular ways
- Strong or unusual interests that can be very important to that person
- Differences in how they react to sensory information, e.g. being over or under-sensitive to things like noises, touch, or texture.

Positive attributes¹:



Autism: the positives

Understanding, embracing and celebrating different ways of thinking and doing can release the true power of the autistic mind. Here we look at the positive features of autism.

Attention to detail <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Thoroughness• Accuracy	Methodical approach <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Analytical• Spotting patterns, repetition
Deep focus <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Concentration• Freedom from distraction	Novel approaches <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Unique thought processes• Innovative solutions
Observational skills <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Listen, look, learn approach• Fact finding	Creativity <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Distinctive imagination• Expression of ideas
Absorb and retain facts <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Excellent long term memory• Superior recall	Tenacity and resilience <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Determination• Challenge opinions
Visual skills <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Visual learning and recall• Detail-focussed	Accepting of difference <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Less likely to judge others• May question norms
Expertise <ul style="list-style-type: none">• In-depth knowledge• High level of skills	Integrity <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Honesty, loyalty• Commitment

Remember

Every experience of autism is unique. No one person will identify with every positive feature of autism. We all have individual skills, attributes and characteristics that are as unique as our personalities – this is the power of neurodiversity.

¹ “Autism:the positives” poster created by Harriet Cannon, Disability Service, University of Leeds, February 2018
January 2019

Strengths

People with an ASC often experience difficulties in their lives as mentioned above; however, these differences can also result in having many **strengths**. For example:

- Loyalty and dependability in relationships with other people
- Honesty
- An ability to do certain things in very precise careful ways
- An enthusiasm for unique interests and topics, which can make them extremely knowledgeable
- An ability to notice details that other people may miss
- High sensitivity to certain things

Autism and associated conditions that can effect physical functioning

Autism is often diagnosed alongside other conditions. It is important to support people with more than one condition in a way that meets all their needs, while understanding that the needs arising from autism are distinct.

Please see the link that describes the other commonly co-occurring conditions associated with autism:

<http://www.autism.org.uk/about/what-is/related-conditions.aspx>

The National Autistic Society describes how to manage self-care and other physical tasks in this link:

<http://www.autism.org.uk/about/health/self-care.aspx>

Research and good practice have highlighted the benefits of specific types of exercise to improve physical functioning for autistic people:

<http://researchautism.net/autism-interventions/types/motor-sensory-interventions/physical-exercise>

There are different approaches and therapeutic interventions that can help autistic people who may have physical impacts from autism or other related condition. Sensory assessments and motor interventions can be used to support autistic people. Motor interventions refer to any treatments and therapies which aim to improve motor functioning, i.e. control, coordination and movement of the whole body or parts of the body.

Please see the link for more information:

<http://www.researchautism.net/autism-interventions/types/motor-sensory-interventions>

Resources and support

Passport to individual autism support

The NAS provides a free printable autism passport that can help people to better understand your personal social and communication needs.

<http://www.autism.org.uk/global/content/search%20results.aspx?q=communication%20passport>

Autism Alert Card

A free card you can get if you are diagnosed with autism. You can carry it round to show if you get stressed or into communication difficulties.

It contains some advice for people about how best they may be able to help - e.g. by giving you extra time to process information, and a calm quiet place if you are distressed or suffering sensory overload. Approved by the Devon Police.

You apply for one at:

<http://devonlink-up.org/autism-alert-card>

and there is also information about it here:

<https://www.devon-cornwall.police.uk/advice/your-community/adults-at-risk/autism-awareness>

Other resources

There are plenty of websites where you can also find some help and support on social communication. The NAS has some help and tips on its website, which you can find here:

<http://www.autism.org.uk/about/communication/social-skills/adolescents-adults.aspx>

Types of ASCs

Over the years, a number of different diagnoses (or labels) have been used to describe people with autism. Here are some of them:

- Autistic Disorder
- Childhood Autism
- Asperger Syndrome
- Atypical Autism
- Pervasive Developmental Disorder (not otherwise specified)
- Kanner's Syndrome

A new diagnostic system (DSM 5) uses the term **Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)** to replace all the terms above, and this is increasingly being used by clinicians.

Here is some more information about the different diagnostic labels above.

Autistic Disorder or Childhood Autism

People with this diagnosis have the main features of the autism spectrum as well as having some type of delay in their early development, e.g. learning to talk at a later age than is typical. Some people with this diagnosis have a learning disability, while others may have a normal level of intelligence.

Asperger Syndrome

The diagnosis of Asperger Syndrome is given to people who show the main features of the autism spectrum, but who do not have a history of delayed development, and have average or above average intelligence.

Atypical Autism or Pervasive Developmental Disorder – not otherwise specified

For this diagnosis to be given, some but not all the symptoms necessary for a diagnosis of autism are present.

Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)

The diagnostic term ASD is increasingly being used to replace the separate diagnoses described above.

The "role" of functioning labels

The use of functioning labels to describe an autistic's ability to function has been in operation for many years and they are still used today. Functioning labels are predominantly used by non-autistic people to describe an autistic's ability to function in society, typically labelling them as either "high-functioning" or "low-functioning".

After consulting with people on the spectrum in Plymouth, we have made the decision not to use the labels 'high functioning' and 'low functioning' in this guide.

Andy Burns is a 26-year-year-old YouTuber who uses his own experience and knowledge to create autism-related content. His YouTube channel is [IndieAndy](#). The views below are drawn from his article in CareKnowledge in 2018.

“Speaking is not the only way to communicate.

To me, it is hurtful to label someone as “low-functioning” because traditionally autistics who are given this label are non-verbal (unable to communicate verbally). This label dismisses the voice that these people have and their abilities do not get recognised. Just because someone is unable to speak through conventional methods, it does not mean that they have nothing to say. Through technological advances, more and more autistics are able to use communication aids which speak the things that they put into the system. Other non-verbal autistics may use sign language or Makaton to communicate.”

The label of "high-functioning" Autism - which I am often assigned - is also harmful. Because of being labelled as "high-functioning", some of the challenges I face are not taken seriously, with whether I am truly struggling being called into question. The label is misleading because it implies that "high-functioning" autistics can function better than “low-functioning” autistics - this is not the case. “High-Functioning” autistics might be able to manage everyday tasks with little difficulty but struggle with sensory processing. With these autistics, their needs might not be recognised, potentially hindering them later in life if they do not receive appropriate support early on.

I used to think that both labels fell on either end of a line that represents the Autistic Spectrum. However, as I have grown my understanding of autism, I believe that this conception of it is too black and white. This reduction of autistics to one label or the other fails to take our differing abilities into consideration. It does not recognise that our state of being is subject to fluctuation; there will be days or week where we are on top of the world - other times, we hit rock bottom.

An alternative to functioning labels:

So, you might be wondering: “instead of functioning labels, what could I use when speaking or supporting autistic people?” Well, you could simply say the person's abilities and the things that they may need support with in a concise way. Applying this to myself, I would say “I am able to communicate verbally and I can do most things with little to no support. I may need help when it comes to crowds or loud places, as well as more time to process my surroundings.” That gives you a very brief idea of what my abilities are and the areas in which I might need assistance. It also does not have the expectation of never needing any support that the "high-functioning" label suggests.

Ultimately, all autistics have different areas in which we thrive as well as times we need more support. I am not "high-functioning" or "low-functioning": I am simply being”

Sensory Differences

Some people on the autism spectrum experience differences in how they process information from the world around them. Different people may be under or over sensitive to different sensory experiences.

Sensory differences are increasingly being recognised as a characteristic of the autistic spectrum and is now included in the diagnostic criteria for Autism Spectrum Disorder in the DSM-5

Some people describe experiencing intense sensory experiences in terms of **sounds, lights, smells, touches or tastes**. However, they may also experience differences in terms of other senses, such as pain perception, temperature perception and balance. To date, we do not really know why sensory issues occur in association with autism spectrum conditions, but we do know that they tend to be lifelong issues. There are some ways to adjust your lifestyle to minimize experiences of sensory sensitivities.

Build self-awareness

- Being aware of your sensitivities can make it easier to modify your environment as needed
- Ask people close to you to be more understanding
- At work, discuss the possibilities of adjusting your environment with human resources or your boss.

Avoiding or tolerating aversive sensory experiences

- Recognize that some events / places are just too much and give yourself permission to limit the time you spend there or avoid them
- Take a break from sensory irritants and recharge your coping abilities

Reducing the intensity of the experience

- Carry earplugs to use in the event of loud noise
- Use sunglasses or a baseball cap in bright areas or try changing, dimming, obstructing or turning off the light

Look on the National Autistic Society website for further information and advice

<http://www.autism.org.uk/sensory>

Assessment and Diagnosis Services

Your local authority provides children's services, education, adult social care, housing support, cultural and leisure services (e.g. libraries, sports development), a children's disability register, a parent partnership service, an Autism Partnership Board and a Portage early years service.

Plymouth City Council
www.plymouth.gov.uk
Email: enquiries@plymouth.gov.uk
Tel: 01752 668000

Devon County Council
www.devon.gov.uk
Email: customer@devon.gov.uk
Tel: 0845 1551015

CAMHS (Child & Adolescent Mental Health Service) – NHS Only

CAMHS provides assessment and therapeutic intervention to children and young people and their families where there are specific needs regarding their emotional health and wellbeing.

Plymouth
www.livewellsouthwest.co.uk
Email: customerservicespch@nhs.net
Tel: 01752 435122

Devon
www.virgincare.co.uk
Email: vcl.devonspa@nhs.net
Tel: 0330 0245 321

There is a range of local support services for children and adults, which you can find on the Plymouth Online Directory by searching 'autism'. For example:

Plymouth Adult Aspergers Branch:

Here is a link to the new NASPAAB new webeden website.

<http://www.naspymouthadultaspergersbranch.webeden.co.uk/home/4594252535>

A Plymouth Autism Parent Support group started running last year. It uses a Facebook page now but is getting its own email address soon- details on the the 'Support Groups' page.

Contact Ellie Scott or Tara Vassallo

E-mail: NASplymouthadultaspergersbranch@nas.org.uk

Website: www.autism.org.uk

Twitter: <https://twitter.com/Autism>

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/NationalAutisticSociety>

Autism Hope and Future (Independent and Private)

Sharon Horswell is a specialist Speech and Language Therapist who specialises in the diagnosis and treatment of children and young people with autism and social communication disorders. She is experienced in contributing to multi-disciplinary assessments and is trained to use specialist assessments including the ADOS. Sharon can provide therapy tailored to the person's individual profile of needs and is trained and experienced in approaches such as Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS), TEACCH, Social Communication, Emotional Regulation and Transactional Support (SCERTS), Intensive Interaction and Lego Therapy. Sharon is able to attend educational tribunals and has received training in providing court compliant written evidence.

Email: autism.hope.future@gmail.com

Tel: 07706 885960

www.autismhopeandfuture.co.uk

Reach (Hannah's at Seale-Hayne) – NHS & Private

Reach is a charity that is open to everyone and, with no waiting lists, offering a provision of assessment, diagnosis, intervention, consultancy, advice and support for individuals of all ages with a range of disabilities and support needs.

www.discoverhannahs.org/

Tel: 01626 325800

3. General ASC Resources

Below is a selection of sites and resources providing information about ASCs, including Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) and Asperger Syndrome, that we hope you will find helpful.

British Psychological Society (BPS)

This is a link to the BPS autism e-learning modules, where you can complete a short online course about autism.

<http://www.bps.org.uk/news/raising-awareness-adult-autism>

Fulfilling and rewarding lives: the strategy for adults with autism in England

This document, published by the Department of Health, outlines the new autism strategy in England. 'Think Autism' sets out a clear programme that the Department of Health and other government departments will be taking to improve the lives of people with autism, primarily through taking actions that will support local authorities, the NHS, other public services and their partners with their local implementation work.

It is available to download by:

1. Searching: <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-of-health>
2. Click on '**publications**'.
3. Search '**Think Autism: an update to the government adult autism strategy**
4. Select either the normal or simplified version to view.

NHS choices

This website contains information about diagnosis, symptoms and treatment.

<http://www.nhs.uk/Conditions/Autistic-spectrum-disorder/Pages/Introduction.aspx>

Autism Hangout

Autism Hangout is YouTube page with short video tips from Tony Attwood on how best to deal with the daily challenges of autism.

<https://www.youtube.com/user/autismhangout>

Colourse7en

A website about Autism that is run by someone with an ASC.

<http://www.colour-se7en.co.uk/index.html>

The Autism Research Centre

This is the website of the Cambridge University Autism Research Centre run by Professor Simon Baron-Cohen, a well-known researcher in the autism field.

The website contains links to numerous research articles about autism.

<http://www.autismresearchcentre.com/>

Temple Grandin

A website run by Temple Grandin, a well-known woman with an ASC. A film about her life was also made starring Claire Danes.

<http://templegrandin.com/>

The link below will take you to one of Temple's articles (*Social Problems: Understanding emotions and developing talents*) in which she describes how she has grown to understand emotions and developed her talents to find her perfect job.

<http://www.autism-help.org/story-emotions-talents-autism.htm>

Autism Digest

This website has regular blogs from Temple Grandin and others with an ASC. It contains further information and articles on topics related to ASCs.

<http://autismdigest.com/>

Tony Attwood

Run by the psychologist, Tony Attwood, this website contains a wide range of resources and information.

<http://www.tonyattwood.com.au/>

Patient Voices: A Future with Autism?

A website run by Pilgrim Projects. The link below tells a story to inspire others that there is a future with autism.

<http://www.patientvoices.org.uk/flv/1169pv384.htm>

Social Media

<https://www.facebook.com/NationalAutisticSociety>

<https://en-gb.facebook.com/myautismawareness>

http://www.youngminds.org.uk/for_children_young_people/whats_worrying_you/autism_aspergers

<http://www.webicina.com/autism/autism-related-community-sites-facebook-groups-and-forums/>

<https://www.facebook.com/autismdiscussionpage/>

You Tube

<http://www.youtube.com/user/NationalAutisticSoc>

<http://www.bing.com/videos/search?q=youtube+resources+for+autism&qpv=youtube+resources+for+autism&FORM=VDRE>

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5GB4gNp7bow>

<http://iidcautismresources.blogspot.com/2009/09/from-youtube-understanding-asperger.html>

4. Charities

Below is a selection of sites and resources with information regarding local and nationwide ASC charities that we hope you will find helpful.

The National Autistic Society

This is the website of the largest UK autism charity. It contains a huge amount of information about autism, including advice for those with a diagnosis, and details about available support.

<http://www.autism.org.uk/>

The National Autistic Society Plymouth Branch

The National Autistic Society's Plymouth Branch provides support for parents and carers with children and adults on the autism spectrum. It offers a monthly daytime parent/carer support meeting with regular visiting speakers, as well as time and space for people to chat. You can also contact the Branch for information and advice.

<http://nasplymouth.org.uk/>

Contact Ellie Scott for times, dates and more information.

Email: NASplymouthadultaspergersbranch@nas.org.uk

Routeways, Plymouth

We are a Plymouth charity that supports children and individuals with autism and other disabilities. We run several projects including:

- Devonport Park Activity Centre provides activities including horticulture, outdoor education, creative play and personal development
- Volunteer Opportunities for people aged 18 and over, on Wednesday and Thursday mornings
- Rooted Club for young people with a disability aged 8 – 16, offering opportunities to get involved in cooking, gardening, crafts and other social activities. Siblings are very welcome every Monday 4pm - 6pm (term time only) and Saturdays 10am - 1pm (all year round)
- Short Breaks and Respite for Disabled Children & Young People. The Beckly Centre is a Routeways project where disabled children and young people can enjoy positive and inclusive fun social activities in a friendly, caring and supportive environment at our accessible premises located in beautiful Radford Park, Plymstock.
- Regular weekend and evening activities run throughout the year with additional weekday activities during all school holidays offering opportunities to join in small groups with a wide range of play, social and practical activities.

We cater for a broad spectrum of additional or special requirements, disabilities and conditions. Services provided can include personal care and one to one support for children and young people. The Beckly Centre is registered with OFSTED. We are able to accept young people aged from six and upwards.

Please contact us on the website below to find out more about costs or using Beckly as part of your Local Authority funded care package.

www.routeways.org.uk

Resources for Autism

Resources for Autism is a registered charity. We provide practical services for children and adults with an autistic spectrum condition and for those who love and care for them. We have a team of trained, enthusiastic and kind staff and volunteers offering a wide range of support. All our staff are autism specialists who understand communication and sensory needs

<http://www.resourcesforautism.org.uk/>

Research in Autism

This is the website for a UK charity exclusively dedicated to research into interventions in autism.

<http://www.researchautism.net>

Space4Autism

SPACE4AUTISM is a voluntary-run charity set up by parents in 2005. We support the whole family by holding monthly parent support meetings/workshops, and events, clubs for all ages and a whole lot more - see below for more details.

Register on the website to receive up to date information on everything going on at SPACE4AUTISM and beyond.

<http://space4autism.com/>

Youth Enquiry Service (YES) (The Zone)

A service for young people living in Plymouth and surrounding areas. YES can provide free, safe and friendly information, support and counselling on:

- Education and training
- Health and Wellbeing
- Help in emergencies
- Housing
- Independent living
- Leaving care support
- Money, relationships
- Rights and benefits
- Sexual health
- Volunteering and work
- Any other issue important to you!

Tel: 01752 265775

Email: enquiries@thezoneplymouth.co.uk

www.thezoneplymouth.co.uk

The Social Care Institute for Excellence (SCIE)

The Social Care Institute for Excellence (SCIE) improves the lives of people who use care services by sharing knowledge about what works. It is an independent charity working with adults, families, children's social care, and social work services across the UK. It also works closely with related services such as health care and housing.

<http://www.scie.org.uk/Index.aspx>

5. Benefits

People with autism – and those who care for them – may be entitled to financial support and services from local authorities. However, it is important to note that benefits are awarded based on an assessment of need rather than by diagnosis. This means that having a diagnosis of an ASC does not automatically entitle you to receiving benefits.

Some benefits are paid to meet basic living costs, some are paid for specific expenses such as rent, and other benefits are paid if you meet certain criteria such as being in full-time work. The benefits system can be confusing and daunting as there are dozens of different benefits and many have complex rules.

Below is a selection of sites and resources that provide information around benefits and financial support services that we hope you will find useful.

The National Autistic Society (NAS)

The NAS website contains detailed information about the different types of support you could be entitled to and how you can apply for this. Please follow the link below.

<http://www.autism.org.uk/living-with-autism/benefits-and-community-care.aspx>

It also offers a benefits information pack through its Autism Helpline. You can request this pack by sending a text with your name, address and age to 07903 200 200 or call the Helpline on 0808 800 4104.

The NAS has also developed a 'Managing Money' website with free tools and resources to help people with an ASC learn how to:

- Budget
- Set up a bank account
- Pay bills
- Use a cash machine

The site also provides information on different issues including:

- Scams
- Going abroad
- Hoarding money
- Compulsive spending

To access the NAS Managing Money site, please follow the link below.

<http://www.autism.org.uk/living-with-autism/at-home/managing-money.aspx>

Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB)

This website has a range of fact sheets on the benefits system. You can also use the website to find your local CAB office to arrange a telephone or face-to-face appointment. Your local CAB can provide further advice around benefits and help you to complete benefit claim forms.

http://www.adviceguide.org.uk/england/benefits_e.htm

Gov.uk

This site provides information on what benefits are available and how to apply for them including facilities to download benefit application forms. There is also a 'Benefits Advisor' service where you can do an online assessment of your financial situation to see what benefits you may be entitled to claim.

<https://www.gov.uk/benefits-calculators>

Welfare rights

This website contains information about welfare support.

www.welfarerights.net/home.php

The Money Advice Service

If you are struggling to manage your finances, it is important to seek help and advice early to avoid the problem getting worse. The Money Advice Service offers free, unbiased and independent advice on issues such as:

- Debt
- Bank accounts
- Budgeting
- Savings and planning
- How life events such as losing your job, having a baby or setting up home might affect your finances.

Tel: 0300 500 5000

<https://www.moneyadviceservice.org.uk/en/categories/benefits>

Blue Badge Scheme

In July 2018, the government announced that the UK Blue Badge scheme would be extended in 2019 to include hidden disabilities, including autism. This will help to remove barriers that many autistic people face if they:

- cannot undertake a journey without there being a risk of serious harm to their health or safety or that of any other person (such as young children with autism)
- cannot undertake a journey without it causing them very considerable psychological distress
- have very considerable difficulty when walking (both the physical act and experience of walking)

Although people with non-physical disabilities are not currently excluded from receiving a Blue Badge, the rules are open to interpretation. The new criteria will give clear and consistent guidelines on Blue Badge eligibility for the whole of England.

Read about these changes and comments from the National Autistic Society on the following link:

https://www.gov.uk/government/news/people-with-hidden-disabilities-to-benefit-from-blue-badges?utm_source=5cb1969f-4309-4f01-a8d3-2c2be352c84&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=govuk-notifications&utm_content=daily

6. Information and Advice Services

Plymouth Online Directory

POD is an online list of services in Plymouth. If you type 'autism' into the keyword search field, you can find lots of services and groups to help in Plymouth. The web address is

<https://www.plymouthonlinedirectory.com>

There is a Facebook page for the POD Local Offer and you can find family information:

<https://www.facebook.com/podplymouth/>

Improving Lives Plymouth (formerly DIAC)

Improving Lives Plymouth provides a free, specialist disability advice, information and support service. The service is for disabled people and carers as well as local statutory and voluntary organisations. Improving Lives Plymouth helps disabled people and carers with information about other service providers and supports them to access these services and receive the help needed to lead an independent life. It also works in partnership with a number of organisations to enable disabled people and carers to meet with them in their fully accessible centre.

The service is open Monday 10am to 1pm and Tuesday to Friday 10am to 1pm and 2pm to 4pm.

Tel: 01752 201065

Email: infoandadvice@improvinglivesplymouth.org.uk

www.improvinglivesplymouth.org.uk

Sensory Integration Network

The SI Network is free to join and provides members with up to date information and breaking news about the developments in Sensory Integration theory, practice and research.

www.sensoryintegration.org.uk

Tel: 0118 324 1588

Plymouth Information Advice and Support for SEND (PIAS)

Plymouth information, Advice and Support for SEND (PIAS) provides information, advice and support relating to Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) for parents, carers, children and young people within the Plymouth Local Authority area. It can support with choosing schools, education and training settings. Information provided is impartial and confidential.

Contact: Jan Cutting Healthy Living Centre, Scott Business Park, Beacon Park Road, Plymouth, Devon, PL2 2PQ

Opening hours: Monday - Thursday 9.00am - 5.00pm, Friday 9.00am - 4.30pm. Other times by arrangement

Email: pias@plymouth.gov.uk

Tel: 01752 258933 / 0800 953 1131

The British Institute of Learning Disabilities – PBS Awareness Course

This course forms part of the Department of Health's Positive and Safe Programme and is about the organisational culture needed to put the Positive and Proactive Care guidance into practice. It has been designed for staff and carers who support vulnerable people, and the purpose of the course is to raise awareness of the principles and practices embedded in PBS.

<http://www.bild.org.uk/capbs/pbs-awareness-course/>

MindEd – Autism & Related Problems

MindEd is a free online e-learning resource for everyone with a duty of care for children and young people, whether this be through their work or outside it in a voluntary or charitable capacity. MindEd is developed and supported by a group of multi-disciplinary organisations, known as the consortium. Its members are the Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health; the Royal College of Psychiatrists; the Royal College of Nursing; the Royal College of General Practitioners; the British Psychological Society; the National Children’s Bureau and YoungMinds.

Autism and Related Problems

<https://www.minded.org.uk/Component/Details/445688>

Complex Neurodevelopmental Problems

<https://www.minded.org.uk/Component/Details/447103>

Behavioural Management in Special Education Needs -

<https://www.minded.org.uk/Component/Details/511784>

Introduction to Autism Spectrum Disorder -

<https://www.minded.org.uk/Component/Details/505731>

Supporting Autism Spectrum Disorder

<https://www.minded.org.uk/Component/Details/505960>

Autistic Spectrum Matters

<https://www.minded.org.uk/Component/Details/505735>

Mild to Severe Learning Disability

<https://www.minded.org.uk/Component/Details/513655>

Hidden Disabilities Matter

<https://www.minded.org.uk/Component/Details/511196>

Autism: Combining Therapies and Collaborative Treatment -

<https://www.minded.org.uk/Component/Details/480831>

Neurodevelopmental Disorders (CT): Families and Professionals -

<https://www.minded.org.uk/Component/Details/480825>

Autistic Spectrum Issues

<https://www.minded.org.uk/Component/Details/447238>

FutureLearn – Understanding Autism

FutureLearn offers a diverse selection of courses from leading universities and cultural institutions from around the world. This course aims to help learners understand more about autism, including diagnosis, the autistic spectrum and life with autism.

<https://www.futurelearn.com/courses/autism>

7. Social Care

Care and support is the term used to describe the help some adults need to live as well as possible with any illness or disability they have. It might also include emotional support at a time of difficulty. It can include:

- Help with independent living skills
- Help seeing friends
- Help caring for families
- Help with being part of the community

Individuals with an ASC are entitled to a social care assessment. This is an assessment of your care and support needs and can lead to further support or signposting. However, it is important to note that, while an individual is entitled to an assessment, this does not mean they will definitely be deemed eligible to receive care.

Following your diagnosis, you may wish to speak to Adult Social Care Services for advice and information, or to ask about having an assessment of your social care needs.

Communication Interaction Team – Social Communication and Autism Support

We work with children and young people aged up to 19 years who have social communication needs, including those with a diagnosis of an autism spectrum disorder. We can provide

- intensive, individualised support within the home and in early years settings for children aged up to five years who have complex social communication needs and autism spectrum conditions
- advice, support and training to your child's early years settings or school around social communication needs and autism spectrum conditions
- assessment of your child's needs within their school setting
- strategies and resources
- support to help early years settings to cater for your child's pre-school needs
- support to help your child's school to cater for your child needs
- support with transition from nursery to foundation and from Key Stage 2 to Key Stage 3
- training and consultation meetings for parents

To access our services you will need to make a referral through The Gateway and contact your school's SEN Co-Coordinator (SENCo) to discuss a referral. We might not accept your request if there is insufficient evidence of your child's social communication needs

- Email gateway@plymouth.gov.uk
- Phone 01752 668000
- Or fill in the form below found on Plymouth Online Directory

[Download and complete the request for support form](#)

Return completed forms to the SEND Services, Windsor House, Tavistock Road, Plymouth, PL6 5UF.

8. Advocacy

What is advocacy?

Sometimes it can be hard for people to access support and information or ensure their wants and needs are being listened to. In these situations, some people may find it useful to use an advocate. An advocate is an independent individual, someone who is not involved in that person's care or in other services they receive. The aim of an advocate is to provide unbiased support and information and to:

- Ensure that a person's personal wishes and views are taken into account
- Defend and promote their rights
- Find information and access services
- Explore different options
- Help you tell people if you are unhappy with a service you have received

Although an advocate can provide support and talk through options with you, they cannot make decisions, solve problems for you, or give their opinion. An advocate may, if an individual chooses and gives permission, support them at interviews and meetings, write letters on the individual's behalf and speak on behalf of the individual in situations where individuals feel unable to speak for themselves.

Local authorities in Plymouth and Devon may access an advocate if someone has difficulty being involved in care and support processes and has nobody appropriate to support them through that process. Having an advocate can be very valuable for an individual in situations where they might struggle to make their views known and understood. Situations where someone might need an advocate include undergoing a needs assessment, preparing and reviewing care and support plans or if they are undergoing a safeguarding enquiry or review.

Plymouth Advocacy

seAp is an independent charity that specialises in the provision of advocacy and related services. Our high quality independent advocacy services support people, especially those who are most vulnerable in society, to have their voice heard, access their rights and have more control over their lives.

We provide advocacy support through well-trained and highly motivated advocates who enable their clients to express themselves, ensuring that everyone who uses health and social care services can have their voice heard on issues that are important to them.

All our staff are committed to the central advocacy principles of independence, confidentiality and empowerment.

In Plymouth, seAp delivers services in partnership with Plymouth Highbury Trust and RAD.

<http://www.seap.org.uk/local-authority/plymouth.html>

Tel: 0300 3435719

Text 80800 keyword SEAP

Email: plymouth@seap.org.uk

NASPAAB: National Autistic Society Plymouth Adult Autism Branch

http://www.nasplymouthadultaspergersbranch.webeden.co.uk/home/4594252535?preview=Y;use_flash=1

Email: NASplymouthadultaspergersbranch@nas.org.uk

Self-advocacy

Self-advocacy is speaking up for yourself and making your own needs known. The National Autistic Society has created a booklet especially to help those with an Autism Spectrum Condition do this. The aim is that by filling out relevant sections of this booklet an individual will be able to make their needs known.

The booklet includes sections on the different difficulties someone with an ASC might experience, and what could help with these difficulties, as well as sections relating to education, employment, financial, health and religious needs amongst other things. It also allows an individual to state their hopes and aspirations relating to different things.

For more information about self-advocacy and to access this booklet, please visit the NAS website: <http://www.autism.org.uk/about/adult-life/advocacy.aspx>

Rights and Choices

Should I disclose my diagnosis?

Whether you disclose your ASC diagnosis is entirely **your choice**. You are not legally obligated to disclose your diagnosis and whether you decide to might depend on the types of difficulties you may have (and how they may affect your work), as well as the type of job you do and your relationship with your employer.

Disclosing your diagnosis may allow you to discuss any difficulties with your employer and think about any reasonable and appropriate adjustments that could be made in order for you to achieve your potential. It may also help colleagues to understand and support you.

Furthermore, if you were to disclose your diagnosis you would also then be protected under the **Equality Act (2010)**. This means that you should not be treated unfairly on the grounds of your autism spectrum condition diagnosis, which is included as a disability under this act. Naturally, some employers will be more understanding and accommodating than others will, so it is good to weigh up your decision carefully.

The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) website has some useful guidance: <https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/cg142/chapter/1-guidance>

Autism Act 2009

The Autism Act 2009 was the first ever disability specific law in England. As a result of the Autism Act, the Government has to set out a strategy for supporting adults with Autism as a whole, as well as produce guidance for local health bodies and councils.

The Autism Strategy

This is a plan set out by the government to help adults with autism spectrum conditions achieve the things they need, including finding employment. There have been two strategies set out to date. The first was Fulfilling and Rewarding Lives (2010). The second strategy was Think Autism (2014), developed using feedback from individuals with ASCs, their family and professionals on the first Fulfilling and Rewarding Lives strategy.

You can read more about the Autism Strategies on the National Autistic Society website here: <http://www.autism.org.uk/about/strategy/overview.aspx>.

9. Education

There is a variety of higher education courses including:

- Adult learning courses
- Online courses
- Evening courses
- Workshops
- Part time

Some people attend courses for personal development just for the pleasure of learning; others enrol as a first step back into learning, for work or business purposes, to increase employability, or to gain skills that they can use in their local community. Below are some links that may be helpful if you are looking to learn new skills and develop your knowledge.

Learn Direct

Learn Direct offers a wide range of courses including:

- [English](#)
- [Maths](#)
- [Computers and IT](#)
- [Job seeking and employability](#)
- [Life skills](#)

Learn Direct has several local centres across Devon, follow the link below to find the centre closest to you.

<http://learndirect.co.uk/>

Plymouth centre: <https://www.learndirect.com/help/centre/learndirect-plymouth/>

Tel: 0345 241 2533

Learn Devon

Learn Devon provides adult and community learning courses on behalf of Devon County Council. With centres in Tavistock, Totnes and Newton Abbot, it offers courses for leisure, apprenticeships and qualifications and skills

<https://www.learndevon.co.uk/>

Exeter College

Exeter College is committed to the success of our students offering a wide range of courses: full time, part time, apprenticeships and training for all ages

<http://www.exe-coll.ac.uk/>

Petroc College

Petroc is Devon's leading college, providing a range of courses including apprenticeships, high education, part-time and adult evening classes

<https://www.petroc.ac.uk/>

The National Autistic Society

The NAS website contains information about further and higher education for people on the autism spectrum.

1. Follow the link: <http://www.autism.org.uk>
2. Select **Living with Autism** tab
3. Click on **Education and Transition**
4. Select **Further and Higher Education**

Autism Education Trust: for help with primary and secondary education.

<http://www.autismeducationtrust.org.uk>

First Class Support

First Class Support offers a bespoke, private specialist support service for disabled students at education institutes in the South West of England. First Class Support specialise in academic mentoring and one to one study skills support, as well as other non-medical help (NMH) including library assistance, note-taking, electronic note-taking, study assisting and many more. All support is designed around the needs of student and the specific academic and support programmes of the education institution. Our goal is simple; we want the students we support to feel comfortable, safe and confident with their studies, as well as enjoying and making the most of their time in academia.

www.firstclass-support.co.uk

Email: admin@firstclass-support.co.uk

Matthew Mitchell - Tel: 01752 358641

<https://www.gov.uk/disabled-students-allowances-dsas>

Plymouth Outreach Service

Plymouth Outreach delivers a person-centred engagement package to people with autism and Asperger's in the local area.

www.autism.org.uk

Email: sw.services@nas.org.uk

Carly Jarvis - 01752 764821

CEDA – Caters for ages 5+

CEDA works with disabled adults and children in ways that make sense for them, always keeping the individual at the centre of the service. We listen, learn and act, to enable each person to be who he or she wants to be, as visible and valuable members of the community.

www.cedaonline.org.uk

Email: info@cedaonline.org.uk

Tel: 01392 360645

ASD Bright Ideas

ASD Bright Ideas produce a wide range of bright and colourful visual aids and resources

www.asdbrightideas.co.uk

University

National Autistic Society (NAS) ASD: <http://www.users.dircon.co.uk/~cns/>

The link below has some useful Autism specific information on choosing and applying to the right university for you. It provides insightful answers to frequently asked questions such as:

- What course should I take?
- How do I apply?
- What support can I expect?
- Do I have to disclose my disability?
- What help can I get with funding?
- Which university should I choose?
- What facilities will there be?

To find the answers to these questions and more, visit the link below.

<http://www.autism.org.uk/18455>

University Students with Autism and Asperger Syndrome

As a website, 'University Students with Autism and Asperger Syndrome' has a lot of very useful information, including information on:

- Study skills
- Tips on surviving the university environment
- First-person accounts about the experience of university by individuals who have an ASC

<http://www.users.dircon.co.uk/~cns/>

Autism Center for Education Research University of Birmingham -

<https://www.birmingham.ac.uk/schools/education/research/acer/index.aspx>

University of Plymouth

There is a broad range of support for autistic students at the University of Plymouth. Please see the links below which detail the support on offer:

- Plymouth Autism Society:
<https://www.plymouth.ac.uk/student-life/services/learning-gateway/disability-and-dyslexia/joining-a-group>
- Pre Induction Programme for applicants with autism:
<https://www.plymouth.ac.uk/student-life/services/learning-gateway/disability-and-dyslexia/we-can-offer-you-a-range-of-advice-and-guidance>
- Autistic Spectrum Condition Information:
<https://www.plymouth.ac.uk/student-life/services/learning-gateway/disability-and-dyslexia/autistic-spectrum-condition-information>
- Accommodation requirements for students with disabilities:
<https://www.plymouth.ac.uk/student-life/services/learning-gateway/disability-and-dyslexia/students-with-disabilities-and-accommodation>

- FAQ:
<https://www.plymouth.ac.uk/student-life/services/learning-gateway/disability-and-dyslexia/frequently-asked-questions-4>
- Exam modifications:
<https://www.plymouth.ac.uk/student-life/services/learning-gateway/disability-and-dyslexia/student-support-documents>
- Advice about specific conditions:
<https://www.plymouth.ac.uk/student-life/services/learning-gateway/disability-and-dyslexia/advice-about-specific-conditions>
- There is more information on the Plymouth University webpages:
<https://www.plymouth.ac.uk/student-life/services/learning-gateway/disability-and-dyslexia>

10. Employment

Competition for jobs is increasing, and finding and maintaining employment can be tough. Those with an ASC might need some extra support to help them both secure a job and sustain employment.

Concerning employment in those with autism, strategies set out to move towards more personalised support in finding employment for those with disabilities, which is to include autism, and start ensuring Job Centre Plus advisors are aware of the need to make adjustments for those with autism.

Resources

Please find below a selection of resources designed to give you information on employment and related issues.

National Autistic Society

There is a wealth of information on all things work-related under the “Employment” section of the National Autistic Society’s website: <http://www.autism.org.uk/about/adult-life/work.aspx>. This section of the site includes information on a number of different topics:

- Finding work
- Interacting with people at work
- Bullying
- Links to other information

The National Autistic Society also provides information and training courses. One course is for people with autism and focuses around communication, assertiveness, being organised and coping with anxiety. There is also a course for employers and colleagues on the needs of those with ASC if you think this might be helpful for the people you work with. More information about these can be found on the employment section of the website.

Disability Employment Advisers (DEAs)

You can access DEAs through your local Jobcentre. Disability Employment Advisers can offer:

- An employment assessment to help you identify what type of work or training suits you best
- A referral, if needed, for a specialist employment assessment with a Work Psychologist to help you prepare to find and stay in work
- A job-matching and referral service - the DEA can let you know about jobs that match your experience and skills and provide advice about Access to Work, if required
- A referral, where appropriate, to the Work Programme to help you prepare for and stay in work
- A referral, where appropriate, to a programme for disabled people, like Work Choice or Residential Training
- Information on employers in your area who have adopted the ‘two ticks’ disability symbol

<https://www.gov.uk/looking-for-work-if-disabled/looking-for-a-job>

Pluss

An organisation based in Plymouth that supports people with an autism diagnosis to find work and a career.

Website address is www.pluss.org.uk and the phone number is 0800 334 5525

Step One (formerly St Loyes Foundation)

Step One is a Devon-based charity aiming to help people with physical, mental health, sensory and other disabilities or with long-term health conditions improve their quality of life and degree of independence. It also provides support around employment. Step One has been created through a merger of St Loyes Foundation (Exeter) and The Community Care Trust (Torbay)

www.steponecharity.co.uk

Tel: 01392 255428

The following fact sheets may also be helpful when thinking about employment.

<http://www.autism-help.org/story-autism-finding-work.htm>

<http://www.autism-help.org/adults-aspergers-work.htm>

Prospects, employment and support for jobseekers:

The National Autistic Society

The National Autistic Society, in conjunction with Remploy, offers support for jobseekers who have an ASC.

<http://www.autism.org.uk/working-with/support-for-employers/jobseekers.aspx>

We are continuing to develop a range of online modules - you can find the full list via this link:

<http://www.autism.org.uk/professionals/training-consultancy/online.aspx>

We also have a new NAS Women and Girls online module -

<http://www.autism.org.uk/professionals/training-consultancy/online/women-and-girls.aspx>

The target audience for this is professionals. It is free to access but please note that we recommend that this be accessed on a pc or tablet rather than a mobile phone.

Remploy

Remploy provides a range of employment services to support disabled people and those experiencing complex barriers to work.

<http://www.remploy.co.uk/>

Training providers

HOPE Programme

HOPE stands for Help Overcoming Problems Effectively. A licensed programme that helps people who are living with and whose lives are affected by a health condition achieve 'What's important to them'. These courses are free to attend and run for 6 weeks for 2½ hours each session at various times and locations in Torbay and South Devon. They are run by trained HOPE facilitators who are health and social care professionals alongside volunteers who are living with a long-term condition.

Email: o.weightl@nhs.net

www.torbayandsouthdevon.nhs.uk

Tel: 01803 655404

Devon Care Training

Devon Care Training is a training facilitation and signposting consortium that consists of public, private and voluntary sectors of care. Amongst its services is a programme of training based on the identified needs of members and those of the market place. Courses are heavily subsidised and offered at a reduced rate to members. Previously, it has delivered courses on managing autism through diet, aspects of autism, communication, care planning, Asperger syndrome and autism spectrum disorders. You can view a current list of events on the website, which is updated regularly. Devon Care Training also hosts an annual conference that attracts large numbers of providers across the region.

Email: dctc@devon.gov.uk

www.dct.org.uk

Tel: 01392 382071

ARC (Devon and Cornwall) Ltd

ARC (Autism Resource Centre) offers a bespoke life skills training programme for independent living and self-employment, using a person-centered method of training for young people aged 16-25.

<http://arc-plymouth.uk>

Tel: 01752 600421

Email: info@arc-plymouth.uk

PECS level 1 (basic) 2 day workshop

This intensive two-day training is designed to teach participants the theory behind the Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS) and the protocols for how to appropriately implement the six phases of PECS. Participants will learn how to implement the six phases of PECS, plus attributes, through presenter demonstrations, video examples and role-play opportunities. Participants will leave the workshop with an understanding of how to implement PECS with individuals with autism, related developmental disabilities, and/or limited communication skills. This workshop is the basic accredited training in PECS for parents as well as professionals.

What you will learn:

- Everything you need to know to begin successfully implementing PECS; the theoretical background, including how to develop effective educational environments
- A review of visual strategies useful for communication
- The six phases of PECS, where to start and when to move on
- Strategies for motivating your child/student to communicate
- How to move from a single picture exchange to sentences
- How to teach picture discrimination with two or more pictures
- The criteria for transitioning from PECS to other communication modalities
- The key Pyramid components to designing effective educational environments
- Strategies to create an abundance of opportunities for communication
- The relationship between PECS and traditional communication training approaches.

Learning first-hand will teach you how to move through this structured approach and avoid misunderstandings which can prevent progress.

Email: pyramiduk@pecs.com

<http://www.pecs-unitedkingdom.com>

Tel: 01273 609555

The Plymouth Autism Network

The Plymouth Autism Network (PAN) brings academics, practitioners, carers and individuals interested in autism together to share research, ideas and experiences. The network aims to provide meetings and events to facilitate collaborative, informed and high quality research and practice focusing on Autism Spectrum Disorder. The Faculty of Education and The School of Psychology at the University of Plymouth jointly fund PAN.

<http://blogs.plymouth.ac.uk/pan/>

<http://blogs.plymouth.ac.uk/pan/people/>

Email: PAN@plymouth.ac.uk

Community Links South West

Community Links SW is a social enterprise with experience of working with families, agencies and schools. Current services include Family Support, Counselling, ADHD/ASC Support, Early Years Education, Okehampton Music Centre, Conferences and Training, Children's University and Collaborative Events for Schools.

www.communitylinks-sw.co.uk

Email: info@communitylinks-sw.co.uk

Tel: 07808 523111

Positive about Autism

Positive about Autism is a training company providing workshops on autism. It also has a range of useful information resources and autism news updates on its website.

www.positiveaboutautism.co.uk

Video Links:

Social Care Institute for Excellence:

[Working with people with autism: the autistic perspective](#)

[Working with people with autism: the professionals](#)

Free Training Courses:

University of Bath: SMART-ASD: Matching Autistic People with Technology Resources

<https://www.futurelearn.com/courses/supporting-autism>

British Psychological Society (BPS)

This is a link to the BPS autism e-learning modules, where you can complete a short online course about autism.

<https://www.bps.org.uk/find-cpd/e-learning>

The British Institute of Learning Disabilities

This course forms part of the Department of Health's Positive and Safe Programme and is about the organisational culture needed to put the Positive and Proactive Care guidance into practice.

Designed for staff and carers who support vulnerable people, the purpose of the course is to raise awareness of the principles and practices embedded in PBS.

<http://www.bild.org.uk/capbs/pbs-awareness-course/>

MindEd

MindEd is a free online e-learning resource for everyone with a duty of care for children and young people, whether this be through their work or outside it in a voluntary or charitable capacity.

MindEd is developed and supported by a group of multi-disciplinary organisations, known as the consortium. Its members are the Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health; the Royal College of Psychiatrists; the Royal College of Nursing; the Royal College of General Practitioners; the British Psychological Society; the National Children's Bureau and YoungMinds.

<https://www.minded.org.uk>

Free Online Books/Reading:

Segar, M. Coping: A Survival Guide for People with Asperger Syndrome.

<http://www-users.cs.york.ac.uk/~alister/survival/survival.pdf>

This guide aims to introduce the debate around autism and gender; identify key issues for girls with autism spectrum conditions; provide practical school-based support strategies; share family, professional and academic perspectives.

<http://www.nasen.org.uk/resources/resources.girls-and-autism-flying-under-the-radar.html>

11. Families

Many websites offer support for families and friends of people with an autism spectrum condition.

The Devon Adult Autism and ADHD Service offers a support group for the family and friends of those diagnosed.

<https://www.dpt.nhs.uk/our-services/adult-autism-and-adhd>

AspergerSyndrome.me.uk

The idea of this website is to help families and friends who need some help or support with a child or adult with the condition Asperger Syndrome.

<http://www.asperger-syndrome.me.uk/>

ASPIRES

This is an online resource for spouses and family members of adults diagnosed or suspected to be on the autism spectrum. It includes information and support about relationships.

<http://www.aspires-relationships.com/>

FAAS (Families of Adults Affected by Asperger Syndrome)

This website has a number of resources that deal specifically with issues concerning the partners, family members and friends of people with Asperger Syndrome.

<http://faas.org/>

Talk about Autism

Talk about Autism is an online discussion forum and community for parents, carers and family members of people with autism, people on the spectrum, and professionals. It is a safe and friendly place to share your story, get support and discuss how autism impacts on your life.

<http://www.talkaboutautism.org.uk/>

Mind

While not specifically for those with an autism spectrum diagnosis, Mind has lots of information for loved ones supporting someone with mental health difficulties. It includes numerous useful links from supporting someone to seek help for anxiety and depression and dealing with issues such as self-harm, to supporting them with more practical issues such as budgeting and finance.

<http://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/helping-someone-else/>

Carers UK

Carers UK works to improve the lives of carers by providing information and advice on carers' rights and by campaigning for changes that make a real difference to carers. If someone is caring for an adult with autism at home, they can get help and advice from Carers UK.

Helpline: 0808 808 7777

Email: advice@carersuk.org

www.carersuk.org

Plymouth Parent Partnership

Plymouth Parent Partnership is a universal support service for all parents and carers in the Plymouth area. It includes a specialised service to parents and carers of children with additional or special needs and disabilities. Providing impartial and confidential information and support.

www.plymouthparentpartnership.org.uk

Email: pias@plymouth.gov.uk

Tel:01752 258933

12. Relationships

Relationships can be difficult for anyone to understand. However, individuals with an ASC may particularly struggle with certain aspects of developing and maintaining relationships. Some find it difficult to know the 'rules' of friendships and relationships; other people with an ASC may prefer to spend time on their own and may have less interest in spending time with others. Because of their unique differences, people with an ASC can bring a number of positive qualities to a relationship.

Below is a selection of resources providing information and support around sexual and romantic relationships that may be useful for an individual with an ASC and their partner.

Different Together

Different Together is a website aimed at providing information, support and resources for partners of adults affected by an autism spectrum condition. It provides opportunities for individuals to connect with others in the same situation, lists of courses and workshops and various news articles and articles, amongst other things. To find out more and access its resources, visit:

www.different-together.co.uk

Aspires

As well as being a useful resource for family members, Aspires also has information relating to romantic relationships.

<http://www.aspires-relationships.com/>

AS and relationships that work

This is a forum for people in a relationship where Asperger Syndrome has been diagnosed, or is suspected, in one or both partners.

<http://forums.delphiforums.com/asworks/start>

Synapse

Synapse has a site called autism-help.org that has a huge amount of information to support those with an ASC. The following links in particular provide advice on different aspects of relationships:

- Sexual relationships.
<http://www.autism-help.org/adults-aspergers-sexual.htm>
- Advice for partners of those with an ASC.
<http://www.autism-help.org/adults-partners-aspergers.htm>
- Advice on some ways in which to deal with relationship difficulties.
<http://www.autism-help.org/adults-aspergers-relationships.htm>

The National Autistic Society (NAS)

The NAS website provides lots of information for partners of those with an ASC. The "FAQ from partners of autistic adults" has lots of tips and information (*you can find the link to this on the right-hand side of the webpage below*).

<http://www.autism.org.uk/about/family-life/partners.aspx>.

General information on relationships

There is also a huge amount of general information about relationships available online, including the different challenges that some people may face in their relationships. While these resources are not specifically designed for individuals on the autism spectrum, they may still be relevant for some individuals.

NHS

This site provides general advice around sexual health and sexual relationships. Topics discussed include:

- Intimate health matters
- Sexually Transmitted Infection's (STI's)
- Fertility and contraception
- Communicating about sex
- Gay and Trans health

<http://www.nhs.uk/Livewell/Sexualhealthtopics/Pages/Sexual-health-hub.aspx>

Relate

Relate is a charity offering support face-to-face, by phone and through its website. It offers various different kinds of support including:

- Advice
- Relationship counselling
- Sex therapy
- Workshops
- Mediation
- Consultations

<http://www.relate.org.uk>

LGBT (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual & Trans) Foundation

If you would like any advice or support relating to gender or sexuality, there is a whole wealth of information on LGBT Foundation's website. The site has pages on a number of different topics including:

- Coming out
- Staying safe (physically and mentally)
- Bullying and discrimination
- Mental Health
- Relevant news articles and how to get involved in their causes

·You can find the site here: <http://lgbt.foundation/>

This is ABUSE

The government has a separate website where you can learn about what abuse is and what counts as an abusive relationship. You can log onto the site if you have any questions or simply want to learn more. It also has a huge number of links to different services where you can get support. Simply click on the "worried about abuse" tab and go to the "need help" section.

<http://thisisabuse.direct.gov.uk/>

Splitz

Splitz is a charity who offer support for women and young people across South West England experiencing the trauma of domestic abuse. As well as offering help for victims of abuse, it also offers support and programmes for perpetrators of abuse wanting support to change. For more information, see the website or contact the Devon team:

Website: <https://www.splitz.org/>

Tel: 0345 155 1074 (landline call rate)

Enquiries: admin@splitzdevon.org

13. Leisure & support groups

Leisure Groups

Leisure and interests are a matter of personal taste so it would be difficult for us to list all of the groups and activities to cover all interests. Good sources for local information include:

- Internet
- Library
- College or adult learning service
- Church
- Community centre
- Council offices
- Sports centres

There are some local leisure events specifically for people with an ASC:

Autism-Friendly Cinema Screenings

Autism-Friendly Screenings are film screenings especially for people on the autism spectrum and their families, friends and carers.

On the last Sunday of every month, The Vue Plymouth hosts a sensory-friendly screening designed to be an inclusive and welcoming environment for those with sensory sensitivities and their loved ones. Adjustments include:

- Sound and lights on low
- Freedom to move around
- No trailers
- Take your own food and drink

For more information and for how to book tickets, visit this website:

<https://www.dimensions-uk.org/get-involved/campaigns/autism-friendly-cinema-screenings/autism-friendly-screenings-vue/>

Tel: 0345 308 4620

AUTISwiM

Every Sunday 3.30pm-4.30pm. Weekly family general swimming session for all Plymouth families affected by autism. Parents, siblings, etc welcome.

Harewood House, Plympton, Plymouth PL7 2AS

01752 307008

Far Flung Dance Theatre

(in partnership with Funky Llama and Improving Lives Plymouth)

Supported by the This Girl Can Campaign, Far Flung Dance Theatre is looking for disabled /neurodivergent females aged 18+ to join a FREE five-week dance training course.

Sessions will focus on Integrated Dance Technique and each participant will be supported to develop a personal training plan. Perfect for those with experience in dance or a passion to progress into the performing arts industry.

To book, contact Clair Beckett on farflungdt@gmail.com

When: 2019 - Friday 1st March, 8th March, 15th March, 22nd March, 5th April

Where: TR2, 12 Neptune Park, Cattedown, Plymouth, PL4 0SJ

We also run the 'Tidal Surge' education project in collaboration with the National Marine Aquarium Plymouth. Tidal Surge offers monthly inclusive dance and theatre workshops, including story writing, junk music making, junk costume making, beach cleans and performances.

Website: <http://farflungdancetheatre.co.uk/performance/a-project-in-partnership-with-the-national-marine-aquarium>

We hold a Funky Llama dance on Wednesdays from 10.30am-12pm at TR2.

Contact lauren.flook@theatreroyal.com

We run weekly integrated classes for disabled and non-disabled adults who have a passion and interest in dance and theatre. Please visit our website for fuller details of our timetable:

<http://farflungdancetheatre.co.uk/classes>

Care Farming

Care Farming is a traditional working farm offering a daycare service to adults with learning disabilities, based in mid Devon. We teach agricultural skills to our clients and do a variety of activities from growing vegetables, working with animals on the farm to arts and crafts. We have found our services and environment to be therapeutic and beneficial to people on the autism spectrum.

Tel: 01884 855 837 / 07958548009

email: l.e.knight.fam@gmail.com

www.knightfarm.co.uk

Befriending/ mentoring/ support groups

The following groups offer support for people with an ASC and/or their families and friends

Autism Assemble (Working well with autism)

A social enterprise who hold regular social evenings for people with Autism or Aspergers Syndrome aged 18+ in the Marina Bar and other venues in Plymouth.

Usually the meetings are on two Tuesdays a month from about 6.30pm - 10pm.

They also organise other activities and events.

See their Facebook page for dates and details.

Plymouth Autism Hub

The Plymouth Autism Hub provides a safe, friendly space for adults with autism aged 16 and above to socialise and enjoy activities like crafts and board games. There is access to free wifi, free refreshments and sessions on topics like using social media. Transport is available if needed.

The Hub is situated above Moments Café on New George Street in Central Plymouth (next to the Plymouth City Council office) PL1 1RJ.

The meetings are usually from 3pm to 5pm on Tuesdays or Saturdays.

Plymouth Autism Hub activities are free to people with autism and are funded by People's Health Trust, for local people wanting to create fairer places to grow, live, work and age. We hope this project will support adults with autism to lead the project and decide what activities they want to see.

If you have any questions please contact Janet at janet@workingwellwithautism.org. or go to our Facebook page.

Parent Carer Voice

PCV is Plymouth's official parent/carer forum. We are a group of volunteer parents and carers of children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). Together we work in partnership with our local authority to help improve the range of services in education, health and social care for families in the Plymouth area. We organise events like parent training workshops.

Email: Hello@plymouthpcv.co.uk

Tweet us or see our facebook page – Plymouth PCV

'Contact a Family'

Contact a Family provides support, advice and information for families with disabled children no matter what their condition or disability.

In the South West of England, we offer our services through a team of home-based workers and volunteers. Working at a local and regional level, we have up to date information on local services and sources of support for families with disabled children.

Email: helpline@cafamily.org.uk

Telephone: 0808 808 3555

Different Together

Different Together is a safe, supportive and understanding community for the **partners of people** affected by Asperger Syndrome (AS).

www.different-together.co.uk

Email: info@different-together.co.uk

Barnardos Cygnet Parent/Carer Support Programme

This programme is designed for parents and carers of children and young people aged 5-18 years with an autism spectrum condition (ASC). It is delivered over six 2.5-3 hour sessions which cover a number of topics: autism and diagnosis; communication; sensory issues; understanding behaviour; managing behaviour; and choice of topic decided by parents/carers.

www.barnardos.org.uk/cygnet

Tel: 01274 513300 (Call for information on local providers)

Devon EarlyBird Team – Caters for pre-school children/families

The NAS EarlyBird Programme is a three-month programme for parents/carers of a pre-school (not yet of statutory school age) child with a diagnosis of autism spectrum disorder. It combines group training sessions for parents with individual home visits when video feedback is used to help parents apply what they learn, whilst working with their child. The teams offering EarlyBird have been trained and licensed to deliver EarlyBird programmes by the NAS EarlyBird Centre. Please telephone or email the NAS EarlyBird Centre to find out contact details for the EarlyBird team based in your area.

www.autism.org.uk/earlybird

Email: earlybird@nas.org.uk Tel: 01226 779 218

DISCplus

The DISC Plus information service provides information and advice to all families with a child or children with additional needs in Devon. The service is also available to any professional working with families or directly with children. The co-ordinators can help you:

- Get information about local and national services and support available to you and your child;

- Send you a copy of the termly DISC Plus newsletter which has information regarding local and national services, charities and support services for families of children with additional needs;

- Link in to the Facebook page for news of courses, events, and new and changing services for families of children with additional needs.

www.devon.gov.uk/discplus

Email: discplus@devon.gov.uk

Tel: 0800 056 3666

South West Autism Community Interest Company (CIC)

South West Autism Community Interest Company (CIC) aims to provide support for children and young people on the autism spectrum and their families. Due to the local waiting list for diagnosis, a firm diagnosis is not necessary. Our services include social skills, life/independence skills, group work, anxiety management, enabling, intervention work in schools and colleges, tutoring (from a qualified teacher), transition support, parent support, sibling support and training for professionals and parent/carers. The service also provides social skills, independence and life skills, anxiety management, enabling, parent support, sibling support, tutoring, training and workshops for professionals and parents/carers.

<http://www.southwestautismsupport.com>

Email: gmccullagh@sky.com

Tel: 07580 225057

The Devon Autism Centre

Certified Relationship Development Intervention (RDI) consultants offering a full range of high-end services to children and adults including training, outreach and residential services. Training programs are suitable for all levels. It offers a nationwide service and includes independent expert reports, home visits, visits to nursery, school and college, tribunals and educational appeal committees.

www.devonautismcentre.com

Email: info@devonautismcentre.com

Tel: 0844 500 3699

NAS Tavistock and District Asperger Support Group

NAS Tavistock and District Asperger Support Group (NAS TAD AS Group for short!) became part of the National Autistic Society (NAS) network of local groups and branches in 2014. Our groups are: TAD WAVE - Women with Asperger's Voice Exchange, which is our original group for women only and TAD Carers Group - for parents and carers of those with an ASC. These are small, friendly groups and we try and meet monthly in Tavistock for a coffee and a chat. As a group we have three main aims: to provide mutual support of adults with Asperger Syndrome and their carers living in the West Devon area; to raise awareness of the needs of adults with Asperger Syndrome; and to improve availability of Asperger Syndrome information for those living in Devon.

<http://www.nasbranch.org.uk/tavistockanddistrict>

NAS Plymouth Adult Asperger's Branch

NAS Plymouth Adult Asperger's Branch (NAS PAAB) offers support to adults with Asperger Syndrome and autism. They provide weekly support meetings, as well as time and space for people to chat. This enables positive social interaction where individuals can achieve a sense of identity. We arrange social events such as walks, barbeques, cinema outings and quiz evenings periodically throughout the year. We also offer information, support and signposting to other services where possible. Please note that volunteers run this branch and, due to personal commitments, there may be a delay in them answering your enquiry.

http://www.nasplymouthadultaspergersbranch.webeden.co.uk/home/4594252535?preview=Y;use_flash=1

Email: NASplymouthadultaspergersbranch@nas.org.uk

Parents United Through ASC/ADHD

A group of parents/carers with young people or persons in education, on the autism spectrum and attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), diagnosed or going through the process.

www.facebook.com/momanddadunited

Email: h.hardy211@btinternet.com

South Devon Asperger Group

This is a support group for children aged 5-18 years with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), Asperger syndrome and autism and their families.

www.asperations.co.uk

Email: asperations@ymail.com

Contact: Paul Waring - 07719 414729

Friends and Families of Special Children

Provides services for families and carers of children with special needs in the Plymouth area. It is based at Virginia House that is open on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday from 10am-12pm. It aims to provide support for families in the form of groups where adult carers can meet other people in similar situations. It also provides holiday workshops and after school clubs for the whole family, as well as separate social activities for young carers in the Fun and Freedom Club. The group aims to bring about improvements in state-provided services for children with special needs. This includes promoting the interests of children and raising awareness about the gaps in provision both locally and nationally. The group is friendly, informal and supportive. It does not have an emphasis on any specific condition or disability but suggests that, regardless of the type of additional need, each family experiences similar concerns.

Email: info@friendsandfamilies.org.uk

Tel: 01752 204369

14. Mental health and promoting mental wellbeing

Like all people, those with an ASC can suffer from mental health problems. It is thought that every year, one in four people experience mental health difficulties. There is evidence to suggest that people with ASCs are more likely to experience common mental health problems. While there are many different types of difficulties that people with or without ASCs might experience, the two most common things that people struggle with are anxiety and depression. Furthermore, as anxiety can lead to people feeling sad and depressed and vice versa, struggling with a mixture of anxiety and depression is common.

People can seek help for mental health difficulties in numerous ways. First, however, it is good to understand more about different difficulties like anxiety and depression and some common signs that might help you to understand if you are experiencing these types of difficulties and, if so, how you can access support.

If either you or someone else are in urgent need of support:

If you are in urgent need of support for any mental health difficulties, there are a number of different contacts you can call.

During office hours:

- Your GP
- Your community worker (if you are receiving care from a service within Livewell Southwest).

Outside office hours:

- Plymouth Emergency Duty Team: 0845 6000 388
- Samaritans: 08457 909090

If your or somebody else's life is in immediate danger, call 999.

Anxiety

Anxiety is a common but unpleasant feeling that many of us will experience throughout our lives. People can experience anxiety about a range of things, such as meeting other people, experiencing new situations or worrying about their or other people's health.

While anxiety is a normal emotion, sometimes it can reach a level where it has a significant impact on a person's everyday life and may mean that they are not able to do or enjoy the things they want or need to do. If you or others are concerned about anxiety or would like some more information, please refer to the links later in this section.

Some symptoms of anxiety:

Mental experiences:

Feeling out of control
Difficulty 'switching off'
Trouble sleeping



Feeling helpless
Feeling 'on edge' or irritable
Racing thoughts

Physical experiences:

Trembling
Increased heart rate
Feeling nauseous



Sweating
Feeling breathless
Muscular tension

Depression

It is not unusual for someone to feel low, sad or tearful sometimes, especially when something particularly upsetting has happened. When someone might feel sad most of the time and when these feelings go on for longer than you might expect, depression becomes a problem. Some people might also isolate themselves or not do as much as they used to. There are many things that someone might experience if they are feeling depressed. These can include:

Some symptoms of depression:

Mental experiences:

Feeling low
Feeling sad or tearful
Lack of motivation



Feeling irritable
Not enjoying things you love
Feeling lonely

Physical experiences:

Tiredness
Loss of appetite
Poor memory



Feeling sluggish
Aches and pains

Other mental health difficulties

While anxiety conditions and depression are two of the most common types of mental health problems that people experience there are also many others; for example, OCD, eating disorders and bipolar disorder.

For more information about other mental health conditions, please see some of the links listed below. In particular,

Mind <http://www.mind.org.uk/>

and the NHS <http://www.nhs.uk/livewell/mentalhealth/Pages/Mentalhealthhome.aspx>

It is important that if you have concerns about your mental health you seek support. Below are some suggestions about how you can access such support.

Help and support

You can seek support in many ways. We are living in a society where the importance of mental health and well-being is increasingly being recognised with many campaigning for better support, more understanding and reduced stigmatisation of mental health difficulties.

The avenues listed below are just an example of a few. You will be able to find even more links to support by searching online or speaking to a health professional such as your GP.

In addition, some people may find it helpful to talk to friends and family about difficulties or worries they have. They may be a good source of support and it could help them to understand you and how you are feeling.

NHS Services

If you are worried about anxiety, depression or any other mental health difficulties, the first person you can contact is your **General Practitioner (GP)**. They will be able to discuss your concerns with you and may be able to offer you support or refer you to another service to help you with your difficulties, if appropriate. This may involve seeing mental health professionals, such as counsellors, psychological therapists, nurses, clinical psychologists, or psychiatrists.

Plymouth Options (IAPT) Depression & Anxiety Service

Supporting you to manage depression, anxiety, stress, OCD, phobias and life pressures.

At some time in our lives, most of us find ourselves feeling low, worried, fearful or distressed. Plymouth Options offers a range of services to help.

Options is part of Livewell Southwest. It provides a free and confidential service including a range of therapies for adults who may have difficulties relating to depression or anxiety. There are sites across Devon and several different ways you can access this support. You can speak to your GP who can refer you or you can also get in touch directly or complete a self-referral form online.

For more information and to access the service and the self-referral form see the webpage:

<https://www.livewellsouthwest.co.uk/organiser/plymouth-options/>

Contact: Ground Floor 73 Exeter Street, Plymouth PL4 0AH

Tel. 01752 435419

The NHS website also has plenty of information about mental health difficulties, including many links to further support:

<http://www.nhs.uk/livewell/mentalhealth/Pages/Mentalhealthhome.aspx>

Information and Advice - Plymouth (formerly DIAC)

Information and Advice provides a specialist disability service to support people with physical or sensory impairment, disability, long-term health conditions and mental health issues. We have Mental Health Support Worker's who are able to meet with clients and support them in accessing advice and service.

Contact: Ernest English House, Buckwell Street, Plymouth, PL1 2DA

0344 411 1444. Phone lines are open Monday to Friday, 8am - 8pm and Saturday 8am - 1pm

Finally, **Moodjuice** is a site created by NHS Scotland. Not only does it have a huge amount of information on depression and anxiety, but it also contains some self-help information about how you might cope with these difficulties yourself:

<http://www.moodjuice.scot.nhs.uk/>.

Other services

The National Autistic Society

This website contains information about common mental health problems, specifically aimed at those with an autism spectrum condition. Please see the link below.

<http://www.autism.org.uk/about/health/mental-health.aspx>

Mind

Mind is the leading mental health charity in the UK, offer advice and support to all people experiencing mental health difficulties. Its site includes information on different types of mental difficulties, advice on supporting someone else, typical medication and treatments that might be available for some difficulties and legal rights, amongst other things.

Visit the website to find out more or alternatively you can call the helpline in office hours (9am-5pm) for support:

<http://www.mind.org.uk/>

Tel: 0845 766 0163

Mind also has local services in Plymouth. The details for the centre are:

Plymouth and District

- Phone (9.30am-5.00pm, Monday-Friday or leave a message): 01752 513694
- Email: info@plymouthmind.org.uk
- Website: <http://www.plymouthmind.org.uk/>

Rethink Mental Illness

This is another big mental health charity and similarly has lots of advice and information relating to a range of mental health difficulties. It also has a phone helpline. To find out more, the details are:

<https://www.rethink.org/>

Tel: 0845 456 0455

Email: advice@rethink.org

Recovery Southwest

Recovery Southwest is a non-profit organization based in the south-west of England that is raising awareness of the new understanding of how best to deal with mental health issues. As well as offering advice on recovery, it also provides a space for people to share their personal stories about mental health and recovery.

For more information, see the website: www.recoverysouthwest.co.uk

Anxiety UK

This is a charity aimed at supporting those with difficulties relating to anxiety. It has lots of information on the website if you would like some more anxiety-specific support. You can also call during office hours (9.30am-5.30pm) or email:

<https://www.anxietyuk.org.uk/>

Tel: 08444 775 774

Email: support@anxietyuk.org.uk

Depression Alliance

This is a charity aimed bringing people with depression together and campaigning for increased awareness and reduced stigma. You can find the website here:

<http://www.depressionalliance.org/>

Talk to Frank

If you are worried about drugs (including alcohol), you can log on to Frank's website for information, including of taking each drugs, and support. It also has a helpline, live chat sessions online (2pm-6pm, see the website) and advice on what to do in a drug-related emergency.

<http://www.talktofrank.com/drugs>

Phone: 0300 123 6600 (open 24 hours)

Text: 82111

There are also a number of other sites focused around providing **self-help resources** for depression and anxiety.

<https://moodgym.anu.edu.au/welcome>

Promoting mental wellbeing

Even if you are not currently concerned about anxiety, depression or other mental health difficulties, it is good to be aware of your mental wellbeing and ensure you are looking after yourself. There are numerous resources online.

Plymouth City Council is especially keen to promote mental wellbeing. It has developed the **5 Ways to Well-Being** to encourage people to live a happier, healthier and more satisfying life. The five ways are:

1. **Connect**

Connect with the people around you (family, friends and colleagues) and invest time into these relationships.

2. **Keep learning**

Try something different or learn a new skill. Not only can learning something new be fun but it can also boost your confidence.

3. **Be active**

Exercising can make you feel good. Find an activity you enjoy.

4. **Take notice**

Be aware of the world around you and how you are feeling. Appreciate the little things in your environment.

5. **Give**

Do something nice for a friend or a loved one. Not only can this be rewarding for you but it will help you connect with the people around you.

For more information, find the Five Wells to Well-Being link on the Looking After Yourself section of the trust's website:

<http://www.devonpartnership.nhs.uk/Looking-after-yourself.342.0.html>.

Devon Recovery Learning Community

The Devon Recovery Learning Community offer free courses to individuals over 18 years old across Devon. The courses aim to promote well-being and allow people to develop the knowledge and skills to support their mental health.

For more information and a list of courses, see the website:

www.devonrlc.co.uk

15. Budgeting and Finance

The Citizen's Advice Bureau (CAB)

The CAB has numerous pages of information and resources on how to manage money budget and resolve debts.

<https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/debt-and-money/>

The CAB also has a budgeting tool: On this tool, you can enter all your sources of income and expenditures and see how much you have left over monthly to spend, save or pay off debts. It allows you to print a PDF of your generated financial statement. This statement is designed for you to be able to give to creditors but you could also use this for your own personal use.

<https://budgetplanner.adviceguide.org.uk/guidancenotes.html>

My Money Steps

The Citizen's Advice Bureau also recommends a website called My Money Steps, developed by the National Debtline. You can enter all your financial details into their tool if you are worried about paying back debts (of any size) and it will give you advice and a personalized plan of how to deal with any problems. This site also contains some other resources and contact details should you wish to get advice via email or phone

<https://www.mymoneysteps.org/>

The National Autistic Society (NAS)

The NAS have a page on managing money. While some of the information on there is very simple, there are also some links and information on how to budget etc.

<http://www.autism.org.uk/about/benefits-care/managing-money.aspx>

'Managing Money' module

<http://www.autism.org.uk/professionals/training-consultancy/online/managing-money.aspx>

This is ideal for autistic people wishing to learn more information about managing money and other money related topics.

The Money Charity

The Monday Charity's website also has lots of information and resources. It also has information about workshops on different aspects of money management.

<http://themoneycharity.org.uk/>

Barclays Bank

Barclays has a site that is set up specifically at helping people learn to manage their finances called Money Skills. You can view the site and access the resources here:

<http://www.barclaysmoneyskills.com/>

Step Change

Step Change also has lots of information and resources on how to deal with debt amongst other things. They also have a free phone number for financial advice (0800 138 1111). You can find more information on their site.

<http://www.stepchange.org/>

Looking for financial advisors

Devon County Council recommends two different sites which can be used to find independent financial advisors should you wish to. Please note that advisors listed on these site may not have been individually vetted by the council, rather these sites simply may be good tools to help you find someone appropriate. These are:

- Vouched for: <https://www.vouchedfor.co.uk/>
- Unbiased: <https://www.unbiased.co.uk/>

16. Books

Please see below for a list of books about autism that may be of interest. This is just a sample of the increasing number of books being published in this area. The publisher Jessica Kingsley produces a wide number of books about many different aspects of autism.

You can view their catalogue at: <http://jkp.com/>

General books about autism

- **Segar, M. Coping: A Survival Guide for People with Asperger Syndrome.** Written by someone with Asperger Syndrome, it offers advice on topics ranging from body language and conversation skills to finding the right friends amongst many other things. Download it free via the link: <http://www-users.cs.york.ac.uk/~alistair/survival/survival.pdf>
- Attwood, T. (2014). **Been There. Done That. Try This!: An Aspie's Guide to Life on Earth.** Jessica Kingsley Publishers: London.
- Attwood, T. (2008). **The Complete Guide to Asperger's Syndrome.** Jessica Kingsley Publishers: London.
- Baron-Cohen, S. (2008) **Autism and Asperger Syndrome.** Oxford University Press: Oxford.
- Frith, U. (2008) **Autism: A Very Short Introduction.** Oxford University Press: Oxford.
- Shore, S. & Rastelli, L. (2006). **Understanding Autism for Dummies.** John Wiley & Sons.
- Wing, L. (2003). **The Autistic Spectrum: A Guide for Parents and Professionals.** Robinson Publishing

Autobiographies written by people on the autism spectrum

- Tammet, D. (2007). **Born on a Blue Day: A Memoir of Aspergers and an Extraordinary Mind.** Hodder & Stoughton Ltd.
- Grandin, T. (2006). **Thinking in Pictures.** Bloomsbury Publishing PLC.
- Willey, L. (1999). **Pretending to be Normal: Living with Aspergers Syndrome.** Jessica Kingsley Publishers: London.

Diagnosis

- Murray, D. (Ed., 2006). **Coming out Asperger: Diagnosis, Disclosure and Self-Confidence.** Jessica Kingsley Publishers: London.

Relationships

- Stanford, A. (2002). **Asperger Syndrome and Long-term Relationships.** Jessica Kingsley Publishers: London
- Marshack, K. (2009). **Life with a Partner or Spouse with Asperger Syndrome: Going Over the Edge? - Practical Steps to Saving You and Your Relationship.** Autism Asperger Publishing Co.
- Aston, M. (2001). **The Other Half of Asperger Syndrome: A Guide to Living in an intimate relationship with a partner who has Asperger Syndrome.** Jessica Kingsley Publishers: London.
- Cook O'Toole, J. (2011). **The Asperkid's (Secret) Book of Social Rules: The Handbook of Not-So-Obvious Social Guidelines for Tweens and Teens with Asperger Syndrome.** Jessica Kingsley Publishers: London.
- Attwood, T. (2016). **Exploring Depression, and Beating the Blues.** Jessica Kingsley Publishers: London.

- Dubin, N. (2009). **Asperger Syndrome and Anxiety: A Guide to Successful Stress Management.** Jessica Kingsley Publishers: London
- Dubin, N. (2014) **The Autism Spectrum and Depression.** Jessica Kingsley Publishers: London

Books available from Plymouth Libraries

Loving Olivia: Bringing up my autistic daughter – Astor, Liz

Stress and coping in autism – Baron, M. Grace

Not even wrong: adventures in autism – Collins, Paul

Unstrange minds: a father remaps the world of autism – Grinker, Roy Richard

Reason I jump: one boy's voice from the silence of autism – Higashida, Naoki

Autism – Lennard-Brown, Sarah

Louder than words – McCarthy, Jenny

George and Sam: autism in the family – Moore, Charlotte

Send in the idiots: how we grew to understand the world – Nazeer, Kamran

Different croaks for different folks: all about children with special learning needs – Ochial, Midori

Thomas has autism – Powell, Jillian

Songs of the gorilla nation: my journey through autism – Prince-Hughes, Dawn

God of war: a novel – Silver, Marisa

Autism – Snedden, Robert

Little book of the autistic spectrum – Todd, Samantha

Voices from the spectrum – Ariel, Cindy N

Living with autistic spectrum disorders – Attfield, Elizabeth

Asperger's syndrome: a guide for parents and professionals – Attwood, Tony

Autism and Asperger's syndrome – Baron-Cohen, Simon

Essential difference – Baron-Cohen, Simon

Hints and tips for helping children with autism – Betts, Dion. E

Autism and play – Beyer, Jannik

Sensory perceptual issues in autism and Asperger's syndrome – Bogdashina, Olga

Parent to parent – Boushey, Ann

Autism spectrum disorders – Bowler, Dermot. M

Stand up for autism – Derbyshire, Georgina. J

How to understand autism – Durig, Alex

Finding out about Asperger syndrome – Gerland, Gunilla

Will of his own – Harland, Kelly

Autism: a parent's guide – Hawkes, Hilary

Adolescent and adult neuro-diversity handbook – Hendrickx, Sarah

Autism, access and inclusion on the front line – Hesmondhalgh, Matthew

User guide to the GF/CF diet for autism – Jackson, Luke

Parents' education as autism therapists – Keenan, Mickey

Autism and diet: what you need to know – Kessick, Rosemary

Explaining autism spectrum disorder – Lawrence, Clare

Sex, secuality and the autism spectrum – Lawson, Wendy

Understanding and working with the spectrum of autism – Lawson, Wendy

Life with a partner or spouse with Asperger syndrome – Marshack, Kathy

Speed of dark – Moon, Elizabeth

Parenting across the autism spectrum – Morrell, Maureen. F

Girls growing up on the autism spectrum – Nichols, Shana

Could it be you? – Pauc, Robin

Understanding autism in early years – Perepa, Prithvi

Autism spectrum disorders in the secondary school – Plimley, Lynn

That's life with autism – Ross, Donna Satterlee

Autism life skills – Sicile-Kira, Chantel

Adolescents on the autism spectrum - Sicile-Kira, Chantel

Asperger marriage – Slater-Walker, Christopher

Boy who loved windows – Stacey, Patricia

When your child has Asperger's syndrome – Stillman, William

Does my child have autism? – Stone, Wendy

Parent's guide to children with autism – Tilton, Adelle Jameson

Toilet training for individuals with autism or other developmental issues – Wheeler, Maria

How to live with autism and Asperger syndrome – Williams, Chris

Nobody nowhere – Williams, Donna

Teaching young children with autism – Willis, Clarissa

Autistic spectrum – Wind, Lorna

In the key of genius – Ockelford, Adam

Real boy – Stevens, Chris

17. Mobile Apps

Touch screen devices have revolutionised the way individuals with an ASC are able to communicate, learn and develop. An application (app) is a piece of software that you can download to your device. There are thousands of apps available to parents, educators and people with an ASC, from expensive communication solutions to fun games.

Prices vary dramatically, and some of the more complex apps are more of an investment.

Similarly, there are many cheap and free apps that are also very effective in helping people with an ASC develop a wide range of skills. Here are a few suggestions:

(The suggestions below are not endorsed by us nor have they been tested by us. The suggestions are based on various internet site recommendations and some reports from what clients have found useful. Some apps have in-app purchases and not all apps are designed for both Android and Apple devices. The descriptions of the apps listed below are provided by the developers).

Communication- Language

Proloquo2Go -£109.99

'Proloquo2Go provides a full-featured augmentative and alternative communication solution for people who have difficulty speaking. It provides natural sounding text-to-speech voices, high-resolution up-to-date symbols, powerful automatic conjugations, and a default vocabulary of over 7000 items, advance word prediction, full expandability and extreme ease of use.'

Compatible with iPhone, iPod touch and the iPad.

Grace – Picture Exchange for Non-Verbal People- £22.99

'Grace is a non-speaking, simple picture exchange system developed specifically for people with autism. Users can select pictures to form a semantic sentence that they can share by tilting the device to create a full screen view, and pointing at each card to hear the listener read each word (full screen view is not needed on the iPad). Users learn to attempt their own vocalisations with the pictures serving as a back-up or prompt, encouraging independent social interaction. Comes with a basic vocabulary of pictures, which can be fully customized using images from your camera, phone or the Internet.'

Compatible with iPhone, iPod touch and the iPad.

iCommunicate - £5.99 for iPod / £29.99 for iPad

'iCommunicate allows users to create pictures, flashcards, storyboards, routines, and visual schedules, and record custom audio in any language. Add pictures from your camera, phone or the Internet. Helps teach social skills to children and young people with autism.'

Compatible with iPhone, iPod touch and the iPad

Emotions

AutismXpress - £0.00

AutismXpress Pro- £1.19

'Designed to encourage people with autism to recognise and express their emotions through a fun and easy to use interface using basic facial expressions. AutismXpress Pro offers two new games to help people with autism interpret emotions and understand facial expressions.'

Both are compatible with iPhone, iPod touch and the iPad.

Depression and anxiety

Self-Help for Anxiety Management (SAM) - £0.00

'The Self-Help for Anxiety Management (SAM) app from the University of the West of England can help you regain control of your anxiety and emotions. Tell the app how you're feeling, how anxious you are, or how worried you are. Then let the app's self-help features walk you through some calming or relaxation practices. If you want, you can connect with a social network of other SAM users. Don't worry, the network isn't connected to larger networks like Twitter or Facebook, so you won't be putting your feelings on blast.'

Compatible with IPod, Ipad and Android.

Worry Box - £0.00

'Have you ever wished you could put all your worries in a box, leave them there and walk away? The Worry Box app may let you do just that. The app functions a lot like a journal: Write down your thoughts, anxieties, and worries, and let the app help you think them through. It will ask questions, give specific anxiety-reducing help, and it can even direct you to help you reduce your worries and anxiety. It's all password-protected, so you can feel safe sharing the details of your stresses.'

Compatible with Android and Apple devices

CBT Keeper- £0.00, upgrade to remove ads costs £1.27

'Relies on cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) to help the user overcome anxiety and depression. CBT Keeper is a mobile app that teaches simple techniques to help you overcome depression and anxiety. It's built upon the principles of cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT), a proven treatment for depression, anxiety, and many other mental illnesses. CBT works because it helps you change the negative thoughts and behaviors that drag you down.'

Childrens apps

<http://www.b12patch.com/blog/autism/10-great-ipad-apps-for-autistic-children/>

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/technology-18694168>

<http://www.gadgetsdna.com/10-revolutionary-ipad-apps-to-help-autistic-children/5522/>

Apps for teenagers and adults

<http://www.autismeducationtrust.org.uk/Global/News/Apps%20for%20Autism.aspx>

<http://www.moray.gov.uk/downloads/file90494.pdf>

<http://bestandroid2014.com/autism/autism-apps-for-android-20.html>

<http://blog.sfgate.com/lshumaker/2010/09/15/autism-and-the-ipad-choosing-apps-for-teens-and-adults/>

<http://www.autismspeaks.org/autism-apps>

http://researchautism.net/pages/autism_autistic_asperger_spectrum/autism_resources/autism_apps

<https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/autism-apps/id441600681>

Apps recommended by the NHS

Sleepio- £0.00 with in-app purchases

'Sleepio is an online programme that helps people overcome sleep problems. It's based on cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) and evidence suggests it can even help people with long-term sleep problems. The course lasts six weeks, but you get 12 weeks support from the Sleepio community. Throughout the course you will have weekly online meetings with "The Prof", a virtual sleep expert who is there to guide you.

Sleepio is being used by the NHS in a few areas as a self-help

therapy for people who have a combination of poor sleep and depression or anxiety.'

Compatible with Apple and Android devices.

Big White Wall- £0.00 (NHS) or £25.00 per month

'Big White Wall is an anonymous digital service that supports people experiencing common mental health problems such as depression and anxiety. It's available around the clock and is staffed by trained "Wall Guides" who make sure that the community is safe and supportive. Big White Wall is available on the NHS in some areas, or you can join by paying a subscription of £25 per month.'

Compatible with Apple and Android devices.

Brain in Hand (£49 per month or £99 with additional support from the NAS)

www.braininhand.co.uk

Brain in Hand provides people with personalised support from an app on their phone. Features include instant access to pre-planned coping strategies, a diary to help structure time and "recipes" for difficult to remember tasks, a monitor to track anxiety levels and a system to request support if

things don't go to plan. - See more at: <http://braininhand.co.uk/#sthash.tljyyACC.dpuf>

While this app could be considered quite expensive it is possible for some individuals to get funding for this. For more information you can read more about buying the app and funding here <http://braininhand.co.uk/who-we-help/individuals-parents-carers/>

QuickCues- £0.00 with in app purchases at £3.99

'QuickCues is a social script app that helps teens and young adults on the autism spectrum to handle new situations and learn new skills. Social scripts have been used successfully for years, but QuickCues makes these tools mobile and easy to use in everyday situations. With Quick Cues you can add four additional modules each priced at £3.99.

The Communication module comes pre-installed and provides help with conversations at school or work, listening, and talking on the telephone. It also gives tips on reading body language and finding shared interests with others. Available for additional purchase via the In-App purchase are Life Skills Module, Socialization Module and the Coping Module.'

Compatible with Android and Apple devices.