

# What is autism?

- Autism is a neurodevelopmental difference that affects how people communicate, process information, and interact with the world. It is not a medical condition that requires treatment or a "cure" but autistic people often face challenges in life that arise from lack of understanding or accommodation of their differences within society.
- Some autistic people may experience other disabilities such as learning needs, ADHD or mental health concerns which can further impact on their opportunities and experiences.
- While autistic individuals may share certain characteristics, each person has a unique combination of strengths and needs.



## STATISTICS

- More than 1 in 100 people are autistic.
- There are approximately 700,000 autistic adults and children in the UK.
- Autism is often underdiagnosed in females.



## AREA OF DIFFERENCE WITH AUTISM



Areas of difference with autism:

- Autistic people may have differences in the following areas, compared to the majority of other people:
- Social understanding and communication.
- Sensory processing and integration.
- Flexible thinking, information processing, and understanding.
- These differences are variations in how autistic individuals perceive and interact with the world.

## POSSIBLE NEEDS

Autistic people may need:

- Extra time to process information.
- Help to understand social rules and conventions,
- Support to form friendships in environments that do not accommodate their communication styles.
- Consistent routines and predictability, which can help manage sensory and cognitive overload.
- Clear and straightforward communication, avoiding sarcasm and figurative language.
- Adaptations to the sensory environment, such as lower noise or lighting levels.
- Time to immerse themselves in their interests, that can lead to deep expertise and passion.



## STRATEGIES FOR SUPPORT



Support for autistic children and young people should focus on creating environments that are inclusive and accommodating:

- Provide a predictable routine and structure. Explain changes in advance where possible to reduce anxiety and support executive functioning.
- Understand and appreciate your child's strengths and areas where they may need more support. Recognise that these areas are not necessarily weaknesses but simply aspects where different accommodations might be necessary.
- Accept that some of your child's behaviours, such as stimming or repetitive activities, may differ from neurotypical expectations and may be helping your child to relax or enjoy life.
- Help identify and reduce or manage potential triggers that cause distress or discomfort, often related to sensory sensitivities.
- Consider sensory sensitivities, such as noise levels, lighting, and textures, and make adjustments as necessary to create a comfortable environment.
- Reduce demands or break down instructions into manageable steps, supporting the individual's cognitive processing style. Using visual support for communication often helps.