



Autism Spectrum Condition (or 'ASC')

Autism Spectrum Condition is a term which covers several conditions, including both Autism and Aspergers Syndrome. Whilst all people with an Autism Spectrum Condition share certain difficulties, they may be affected in different ways and at varying levels – hence the term 'Spectrum'.

It is important not to assume someone is affected with all the potential difficulties below. You will need to take time to find out from them (and anyone supporting them) how they are affected. These difficulties can be grouped into three main categories:

Communication

- Difficulty with double-meanings or similar sounding words
- Literal interpretation – misunderstanding sayings or sarcasm
- Difficulty using and interpreting tone of voice and body language

Social Interaction

- Difficulty maintaining eye contact (avoiding or staring at another point on the face)
- Withdrawal from social situations
- Not picking up on social cues; using inappropriate topics of conversation or use of personal space

Planning

- Can struggle with activities outside of normal routine
- Finds it hard to prepare for change and plan for the future
- Difficulty coping in new or unfamiliar situations
- May feel a level of anxiety around 'the unknown'

Whether you have a friend, colleague, student or employee with an Autism Spectrum Condition, there are some simple things you can do to make their life easier:

- **MINIMISE DISTRACTIONS**

Remove unnecessary clutter from desks. Allow quiet spaces for meetings.

- **COMMUNICATION**

Provide information visually, as well as verbally. Be clear, precise and direct when communicating and allow plenty of time to give answers to questions. Always avoid sarcasm.

- **ROUTINE**

Set a clear structure and stick to it. Give notice for meetings and an explanation if things need to change.

- **SOCIAL SKILLS**

Be aware they may find social situations difficult and support them to integrate into the team. Do they need a specific 'buddy'? Be prepared to discuss what is appropriate or expected behaviour as they may not instinctively know.