

Unit 17: Understand Supporting Individuals with Autistic Spectrum Conditions

Unit reference number: K/616/7370

Level: 3

Unit type: Optional

Credit value: 3

Guided learning hours: 28

Unit summary

Autism is a lifelong condition that affects both children and adults. It affects how an individual communicates with, and relates to, other people and the world around them. It is a spectrum condition, which means that while all autistic people share certain areas of difficulty, their condition will affect them in different ways. If children with autism are diagnosed early and given appropriate support, it makes a huge difference to their lives and to the lives of their families.

This unit gives you knowledge and understanding about autistic spectrum conditions and how these impact on the lives of individuals and those around them. It will enable you to explore theories and concepts about autism and gain an understanding of the legal and policy framework that underpins good practice in the support of individuals with autistic spectrum conditions.

This unit will also give you an understanding of how to achieve effective communication with individuals with an autistic spectrum condition by making adaptations to own verbal and non-verbal communication style.

Learning outcomes and assessment criteria

To pass this unit, the learner needs to demonstrate that they can meet all the learning outcomes for the unit. The assessment criteria outline the requirements the learner is expected to meet to achieve the unit.

Learning outcomes	Assessment criteria
<p>1 Understand the main characteristics of autistic spectrum conditions</p>	<p>1.1 Explain the main diagnostic features of autistic spectrum conditions, commonly known as the 'triad of impairments'</p> <p>1.2 Explain the meanings of the term 'spectrum' in relation to autism with reference to the notions of sub-conditions and individual variation within the autistic spectrum</p> <p>1.3 Describe the sensory and perceptual difficulties commonly experienced by individuals with an autistic spectrum condition</p> <p>1.4 Describe other conditions that may be associated with the autistic spectrum</p> <p>1.5 Describe how language and intellectual abilities vary between individuals and sub-groups across the spectrum</p>
<p>2 Understand how autistic spectrum conditions can impact on the lives of individuals and those around them</p>	<p>2.1 Explain different ways in which autism can impact on the everyday lives of individuals, their parents/carers and siblings, and others close to them</p> <p>2.2 Explain how autistic spectrum conditions can impact on individuals differently according to factors such as their gender, ethnicity and social, cultural and religious environment</p> <p>2.3 Explain how stereotyped views, discrimination and a lack of understanding of autistic spectrum conditions can compound the difficulties already experienced by individuals and their families</p> <p>2.4 Describe ways of helping an individual and/or their parent/carer/siblings/partner to understand their autistic spectrum condition</p>

Learning outcomes	Assessment criteria
<p>3 Understand different theories and concepts about autism</p>	<p>3.1 Explain the theories about autism related to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • brain function and genetics • psychology <p>3.2 Explain why there are alternative choices of terminology used to describe the autism spectrum</p> <p>3.3 Describe the strengths and limitations of different types of terminology</p> <p>3.4 Explain the contributions of autism rights groups and the implications of their views for the support of individuals with an autistic spectrum condition</p> <p>3.5 Outline current beliefs for cures and interventions for autistic spectrum conditions and for pre-natal diagnosis</p>
<p>4 Understand the legal and policy framework that underpins good practice in the support of individuals with autistic spectrum conditions</p>	<p>4.1 Identify what legislation and national and local policy and guidance exists</p> <p>4.2 Explain how the legislation, national and local policy and guidance applies to the particular needs of individuals with autistic spectrum conditions</p> <p>4.3 Describe how legislation, national and local policy and guidance underpin good practice</p>
<p>5 Understand how to achieve effective communication with individuals with an autistic spectrum condition</p>	<p>5.1 Explain how 'challenging behaviour' can be a way of expressing emotions where there are communication differences</p> <p>5.2 Describe different methods that can be used to develop an individual's communication</p> <p>5.3 Explain how to maximise the effectiveness of communication by making adaptations to own verbal and non-verbal communication style</p>

Learning outcomes	Assessment criteria
<p>6 Understand how to support individuals with an autistic spectrum condition</p>	<p>6.1 Explain why it is important to establish a person-centred plan catering to an individual's specific preferences and needs</p> <p>6.2 Explain why consultation with families/parents/carers is important in person-centred planning and support</p> <p>6.3 Describe different techniques used with individuals with an autistic spectrum condition to learn and develop new skills</p> <p>6.4 Explain how to reduce sensory overload, or increase sensory stimulation, by making adaptations to the physical and sensory environment</p> <p>6.5 Explain ways of helping an individual with an autistic spectrum condition to protect themselves from harm</p> <p>6.6 Explain how needs change for individuals and their families at different stages of their lives</p> <p>6.7 Describe the role that advocacy can play in the support of individuals with an autistic spectrum condition</p>

Content

What needs to be learned

Additional information

The terminology chosen to describe the autistic spectrum in this unit is Autistic Spectrum Condition (ASC), one of several different usages in this field. In diagnosis and other clinical and research settings, the more usual term is Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). Other usages, such as 'autism' as an umbrella term for the spectrum, are also frequently used informally and by organisations such as the National Autistic Society. ASC has been chosen here since it forms a more neutral and less medical phrase than ASD in this context.

Learning outcome 1: Understand the main characteristics of autistic spectrum conditions

Triad of impairments

- Social communication.
- Social interaction.
- Imagination.

Autism spectrum

- Classical autism.
- Atypical autism.
- Asperger's syndrome.
- High-functioning autism.

Sensory and perceptual difficulties

- Sensory sensitivity:
 - o difficulty processing sensory information
 - o over- or under-sensitivity
 - o easily stressed
 - o anxiety.
- Perceptual difficulties:
 - o gestalt perception
 - o fragmented perception
 - o delayed processing
 - o distorted perception sensory shutdown
 - o compensation.

Other conditions

- Active behaviours:
 - o screaming
 - o tantrums
 - o pushing
 - o running away.
- Passive behaviours:
 - o withdrawal
 - o hiding
 - o cowering under an item or object.

What needs to be learned

Specific preferences and needs

- Routines.
- Timetables and structures.
- Levels of sensory stimulation.
- Special interests or rituals, etc.

Language and intellectual abilities

- Confusion when trying to understand what is being said and meant.
- Difficulty in communicating with others.
- Lack of understanding/being understood can lead to underlying emotions:
 - o anxiety
 - o frustration
 - o confusion
 - o anger
 - o fear.

Learning outcome 2: Understand how autistic spectrum conditions can impact on the lives of individuals and those around them

Effects of autism on the individual and their family

- An individual is someone requiring care or support; it will usually mean the person or people supported by the learner.
- Loneliness.
- Lack of friends.
- Few social activities.
- Lack of support.

Autistic spectrum conditions affected by

- Gender:
 - o gender differences/gender bias.
- Ethnicity and social:
 - o discrimination on two fronts – an ethnic minority group background in addition to having an autistic spectrum condition.
- Cultural and religious environment:
 - o communities may not be aware of autism
 - o awareness of rights and relevant services available

Stereotypical views, discrimination and a lack of understanding of autistic spectrum conditions

- Lack of knowledge and understanding.
- Not treating people as individuals.

What needs to be learned

Ways to help

- Sharing information.
- Involvement of other professionals:
 - o health workers
 - o nurses
 - o general practitioners
 - o speech and language therapists
 - o clinical/educational psychologists
 - o occupational therapists.

Learning outcome 3: Understand different theories and concepts about autism

Theories on autistic spectrum condition

- Cognitive impairment theories such as Theory of Mind deficits.
- Empathising-systemising (E-S) theory.
- Executive dysfunction.
- Extreme male brain theory.
- Social motivation theory.
- Genetic theories such as links to Fragile X syndrome.
- Environmental theories such as viral infections.
- Congenital rubella syndrome.
- Biological theories such as metabolic imbalances.
- Exposure to chemicals, including vaccines.

Different types of terminology that may be used for individuals with autistic spectrum conditions

- Pervasive development disorder.
- Asperger's syndrome.
- Mild autism.
- High-functioning autism.
- Pervasive development disorder not otherwise specified.
- Rett syndrome.
- Broad autism phenotype.

Contributions of others

- Hans Asperger.
- Lorna Wing.
- Leo Kanner.
- The National Autistic Society.
- Earlybird.
- Autism Education Trust.

Cures and interventions

- Lack of public understanding of ASD:
 - o measles, mumps and rubella (MMR) vaccine
 - o poor parenting.

What needs to be learned

- Research into cause:
 - genetic links
 - environmental links
 - reasons for increasing prevalence
 - gender difference
 - better diagnosis and improved knowledge by professionals.

Taking into account individual differences

- Gender.
- Cultural and religious.
- Communication.
- Ethnicity and social.
- Environment.

Learning outcome 4: Understand the legal and policy framework that underpins good practice in the support of individuals with autistic spectrum conditions

Legislative frameworks supporting good practice

- Human Rights Act 1998.
- Mental Capacity Act 2005.
- Mental Health Act 2007.
- UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2008.
- Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards Amendment 2009.
- Autism Act 2009.
- Equality Act 2010.
- Health and Social Care Act 2012.
- Care Act 2014.
- Valuing People Now.
- Think Autism 2014 (built on Fulfilling and Rewarding Lives 2010).
- Statutory guidance for local authorities and NHS organisations to support implementation of the Adult Autism Strategy 2015.

How legislation applies to individuals or services

- Train staff who provide services to adults with autism.
- Diagnosis, leading to assessment of needs for relevant services.
- Provide local planning and leadership in relation to the provision of services for adults with autism, including access to direct payments, where appropriate, and personalisation agenda.
- Give preventative support and safeguarding.
- Make reasonable adjustments and ensure equality.
- Provide support for employment for adults with autism.
- Work with the criminal justice system to support adults with autism who come into contact with that system.
- Clinical Commissioning Groups in commissioning services for people with autism.

What needs to be learned

Learning outcome 5: Understand how to achieve effective communication with individuals with an autistic spectrum condition

Challenging behaviour that may be seen when there are communication differences

- Irregular and stereotyped behaviour:
 - o tapping
 - o grimacing
 - o hand flapping
 - o toe walking.
- Obsessive-compulsive behaviour.
- Need for ritual and routine.
- Temper tantrums.
- Oppositional behaviour.

Methods of communication

- Picture Exchange Communication Systems (PECS).
- Sign language, e.g. Makaton.
- Interactive communication boards.
- Communication cue cards.
- Conversation books.
- Voice output communication aids.
- Promotion of communication skills.
- Building on the strengths of the individual.
- Promote verbal communication.
- Increasing language stimulation.
- Increasing literacy skills.

Adaptations to own verbal and non-verbal communication

- Speak clearly and calmly.
- Use appropriate language.
- Apply effective listening skills.
- Use preferred method of communication for the individual.
- Face the individual.
- Use open body language.

Learning outcome 6: Understand how to support individuals with an autistic spectrum condition

Person-centred planning

- Important to recognise that each individual is unique, including:
 - o their responses
 - o sensitivities
 - o behaviours
 - o these may change day to day and over time.

What needs to be learned

Importance of families/parents/carers in person centred planning and support

- Make contribution to the plan.
- Working with professionals.
- Balancing responsibility.
- Support and involvement.

Methods of support to develop new skills

- Breaking a task down into achievable steps.
- Sequencing routines.
- Building on what they can do.
- Praise and reinforcement.

Adapting the physical and sensory environment

- Giving the individual time.
- Speaking calmly to them.
- Making space.
- Asking people to move along and not to stare.
- Turning off loud music.
- Turning down bright lights.
- Minimising triggers.

Ways of helping an individual with an autistic spectrum condition to protect themselves from harm

- Harm may include:
 - being taken advantage of because of lack of social understanding
 - violating the law without realising
 - abuse
 - extreme anxiety etc.
- Provide structure.
- Establish routines.
- Create a predictable environment.
- Teach the person a means of communicating their needs.
- Visual information:
 - visual prompts
 - visual schedules
 - visual communication boards.

How needs change for individuals and their families at different stages of their lives

- Moving home.
- Going to nursery/primary/secondary school/college/university.
- Leaving education.
- Preparing for adulthood.

What needs to be learned

Role that advocacy can play in the support of individuals with an autistic spectrum condition

- A gain in confidence.
- Understanding their rights.
- Have a voice in decisions made about themselves.
- Support of an independent individual who is not judging or assessing them.

Information for tutors

Suggested resources

Books

Marshall T and Baker L – *Learning Disabilities Care - A Care Worker Handbook* (Hodder Education, 2012) ISBN 9781444163261

Nolan Y – *Health and Social Care (Adults)* 3rd edition (Heinemann, 2011) ISBN 9780435031978

Websites

www.autism.org.uk

The National Autistic Society – provides gives information, support and pioneering services for autistic people.

www.skillsforcare.org.uk

Skills for Care information on Autism

Assessment

This guidance should be read in conjunction with the associated qualification specification for this unit.

This unit is internally assessed. To pass this unit, the evidence that the learner presents for assessment must demonstrate that they have met the required standard specified in the learning outcomes and assessment criteria, and the requirements of the assessment strategy.

To ensure that the assessment tasks and activities enable learners to produce valid, sufficient, authentic and appropriate evidence that meets the assessment criteria, centres should follow the guidance given in *Section 8 Assessment* of the associated qualification specification and meet the requirements from the assessment strategy given below.

Wherever possible, centres should adopt an holistic approach to assessing the units in the qualification. This gives the assessment process greater rigour and minimises repetition, time and the burden of assessment on all parties involved in the process.

Unit assessment requirements

This unit must be assessed in accordance with the assessment strategy (principles) in *Annexe A* of the associated qualification specification.

Assessment of all learning outcomes (knowledge) may take place in or outside of a real work environment.