

Unit 25: Understand Supporting Autistic Individuals

Level:	3
Unit type:	Optional (Group B1)
Credit value:	3
Guided learning hours:	28

Unit introduction

Autism is a neurological difference which affects individuals throughout their life from childhood through to later life. It affects how an individual communicates with, and relates, other people and the world around them. Each autistic person experiences the world in different ways, which means that while all autistic people share certain differences, their experience of their autism will vary from individual to individual. If autistic children are diagnosed early and give 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 autism and how this impacts on the lives of individuals and those around them. It will enable you to explore theories and concepts about autism including how autistic individuals have sought to change the narrative and how the world sees them. The unit will ensure that you gain an understanding of the legal and policy framework that underpins good practice in the support of autistic individuals.

This unit will also give you an understanding of how to adapt your communication in order to interact with autistic individuals by making adaptations to own verbal and non-verbal communication style.

Learning outcomes and assessment criteria

To pass this unit, learners need to demonstrate that they can meet all the learning outcomes for the unit. The assessment criteria determine the standard required to achieve the unit.

Learning outcomes		Assessment criteria
1	Understand the main characteristics of autism	<p>1.1 Explain the term neurodiversity and autism as a neurological difference</p> <p>1.2 Explain that autistic people have a range of strengths and areas of difficulty, which fluctuate and change depending on the quality and capability of the environment</p> <p>1.3 Describe common sensory differences that may be experienced by an autistic individual</p> <p>1.4 Describe some common behavioural responses to autistic overload or stress</p> <p>1.5 Describe autistic ways of thinking including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • special interests • monotropism • literal thinking
2	Understand how autism can impact on the lives of individuals and those around them	<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 autism 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 autism 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 autism</p>
3	Understand different theories and concepts about autism	<p>3.1 Explain the development of the concept of neurodiversity and the importance of adopting a strength-based approach</p> <p>3.2 Explain why there are alternative choices of terminology used to describe autism</p>

Learning outcomes	Assessment criteria
	<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 autistic individuals</p> <p>3.5 Outline current beliefs for cures and interventions for autism and for pre-natal diagnosis</p>
<p>4 Understand the legal and policy framework that underpins good practice in the support of autistic individuals</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 autistic individuals</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 autistic individuals</p>	<p>5.1 Explain different forms of communication that an autistic individual may use</p> <p>5.2 Explain how behaviour can be a means of expressing an emotion or unmet need</p> <p>5.3 Describe alternative forms of communication which may be used by an autistic individual</p> <p>5.4 Explain how to maximise the effectiveness of communication by making adaptations to own verbal and non-verbal communication style</p>
<p>6 Understand how to support autistic individuals</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 working in partnership with families/parents/carers is important in person-centred planning and support</p> <p>6.3 Describe different techniques used with autistic individuals 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>

Learning outcomes	Assessment criteria
	<p>6.5 Explain ways of helping an autistic individual 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 autistic individuals</p>

Unit content

What needs to be learned

Additional information

The terminology we use in this unit follows that of the neurodiversity movement. Therefore, we refer to autistic people as neurodivergent and non-autistic people as neurotypical, in this way we avoid the language of deficit and the normal and abnormal. We refer to autistic people as such and not people **with** autism, as autism is a lifelong difference that is a part of the autistic person's identity. This is in line with current critical autism theory and supported by autistic voices.

Learning outcome 1: Understand the main characteristics of autism

Sensory and perceptual differences

- Sensory sensitivity:
 - difficulty processing sensory information
 - over- or under-sensitivity
 - sensory differences may cause sensory overload
 - anxiety.
- Perceptual differences:
 - gestalt perception
 - fragmented perception
 - delayed processing
 - distorted perception sensory shutdown
 - compensation.

Common autistic responses to sensory overload or stress:

- increase in sensory stimulation (or stimming)
- covering ears/eyes
- extreme distress
- screaming
- pushing
- running away
- withdrawal
- hiding.

Specific preferences and needs

- Routines.
- Timetables and structures.

What needs to be learned

- 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 communication with others.
- Lack of understanding/being understood can lead to underlying emotions:
 - anxiety
 - frustration
 - confusion
 - anger
 - fear.

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

Negative effects of the lack of understanding or good support for autistic individuals and their families

- 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
- 'masking' or covering up of autistic traits in order to conform to society's rules.

Factors affecting autism

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

Stereotypical views, discrimination and a lack of understanding of autism

- Lack of knowledge and understanding.

What needs to be learned

- Not treating people as individuals.

Ways to help

- working in partnership with individual and family to find adaptations and solutions that work for the individual.
- Involvement of other professionals:
 - health workers
 - nurses
 - general practitioners
 - speech and language therapists
 - clinical/educational psychologists
 - occupational therapists.

Learning outcome 3: Understand different theories and concepts about autism

The neurodiversity movement

- Led by autistic individuals.
- Movement away from clinical/medical model.
- Social model approach.
- Strength not deficit based.
- Language of difference.
- Importance of accepting individual's own preferred terminology for themselves.
- Monotropism.
- Double empathy theory.

Historical terminology that may or may not be appropriate for autistic individuals

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

What needs to be learned

Historical 'cures' and interventions

- Lack of public understanding of autism:
 - measles, mumps and rubella (MMR) vaccine
 - poor parenting
- 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 autistic individuals

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.

What needs to be learned

- 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.

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

Behaviour as a means of expressing an emotion or unmet need.

- Types of behaviour
- Stimming – purpose and function of self-stimulatory behaviour
- Obsessive-compulsive behaviour.
- Need for ritual and routine.
- Oppositional behaviour.

Behaviours of concern, such as:

- Self-harm
- harm to objects or others around them.

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.

What needs to be learned

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.

Behaviour as a means of expressing an emotion or unmet need

Adaptations to practice

- SPELL Framework
- Capable environments

Learning outcome 6: Understand how to support autistic individuals

Person-centred planning

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

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

- are equal partners in 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.

What needs to be learned

- Asking people to move along and not to stare.
- Turning off loud music.
- Turning down bright lights.
- Minimising triggers.

Ways of helping an autistic individual 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.

Role that advocacy can play in the support of autistic individuals

- 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.

Essential information for tutors and assessors

Essential resources

There are no special resources needed for this unit.

Assessment

This unit is internally assessed. To pass the unit, the evidence that learners present for assessment must demonstrate that they have met the required standard specified in the learning outcomes and assessment criteria.

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.

Centres are responsible for deciding on the assessment activities that will enable learners to produce valid, sufficient, authentic and appropriate evidence to meet the assessment criteria.

The unit is assessed by a portfolio of evidence. Further information on the requirements for portfolios is included in *Section 4 Assessment requirements*.

Wherever possible, centres should adopt a holistic and integrated approach to assessing the skills units in the qualification. This gives the assessment process greater rigour, minimises repetition and saves time. The focus should be on assessment activities generated through naturally occurring evidence in the workplace rather than on specific tasks. Taken as a whole, the evidence must show that learners meet all learning outcomes and assessment criteria over a period of time. It should be clear in the assessment records where each learning outcome and assessment criterion has been covered and achieved.

Suggested resources

This section lists resource materials that can be used to support the delivery of the qualification.

Textbooks

Beadle-Brown J, Mills R, *Understanding and Responding to Autism: The SPELL Framework Self-study Guide (2nd edition)* (Pavillion, 2018) ISBN: 9781912755196

Chan J – *Is it Time to Drop the Term ‘Challenging Behaviour’?* June 2012 Learning Disability Practice 15(5):36-38 DOI:10.7748/ldp2012.06.15.5.36.c9131

Kapp, S (et al) *Autistic Community and the Neurodiversity Movement: Stories from the Frontline* (Palgrave MacMillan, 2020) ISBN: 978-981-13-8439-4

Kenny, L (et al) *Which terms should be used to describe autism? Perspectives from the UK autism community (2015)* sagepub.co.uk/journalsPermissions.nav DOI: 10.1177/1362361315588200

McGill P, Bradshaw J, Smyth G, Hurman M, Roy A – ‘Capable Environments’ Chapter in: Banks R, Bush A (eds) – *Challenging Behaviour: A Unified Approach* (Royal College of Psychiatrists, British Psychological Society and Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists, 2007)

Milton, D. (2017) *"Imagining Otherwise": Challenging Dominant Views Regarding Autism and How to Help Autistic People*. Careknowledge [Online]:1-10.

National Autistic Taskforce *An independent guide to quality care for autistic people* (2019)

Richard Woods, Damian Milton, Larry Arnold & Steve Graby (2018) Redefining Critical Autism Studies: a more inclusive interpretation, *Disability & Society*, 33:6, 974-979, DOI:10.1080/09687599.2018.1454380

Websites

www.autism.org.uk

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

www.skillsforcare.org.uk

Skills for Care information on Autism.

www.nationalautistictaskforce.org.uk

Website wholly run and managed by autistic people.

www.bild.org.uk

Website of the British Institute of Learning Disabilities containing resources and opportunities for professional development.