iMap

What is an **Autism** spectrum condition?

individuals Making autism positive

Some general features of Autistic Spectrum Conditions

Please remember each person is an individual with individual needs.

The ability of an individual can often mask their disability yet we sometimes focus on the disability and ignore the potential of the ability.

One of the first and most widely accepted definition of ASC was formulated by Wing and Gould (1978); they identified a Triad of Impairments in people with ASC:

• *Impairment of social relationships*

• *Impairment of social communication*

• *Impairment of imagination*

Autism arises as a consequence of the interaction of these three impairments; therefore all three must be evident to diagnose Autism. The degree to which an individual is affected by each of the three impairments can vary significantly.

How the triad of impairments may present themselves and affect an individual:

Impairment of social relationships

• **Aloof** – from over-formal or stilted in social contact, to isolative behaviour, including becoming electively mute and complete withdrawal from interpersonal interactions. In extreme circumstances the individual may neglect all aspects of personal care and hygiene.

• **Active but odd** – own needs seen as priority, little ability or desire to live in communal situations with others. Little or no concept of consensus or compromise. Little or no understanding of social rules and societal norms. These difficulties are compounded by deficits in interpreting non-verbal behaviours, abstract concepts and complex language.

• **Passive** – accepts social approaches with indifference, will often comply with all requests, therefore making them vulnerable to exploitation. May show some pleasure in social contact, but make no spontaneous approaches. Has difficulties dealing with stress and changes in routine.

Impairment of social communication

The range of skills varies:

• People with no form of expressive communication and poor understanding

• People with what appears to be perfectly grammatical speech

• Absence of any desire to communicate

• Echolalic and repetitive speech

• Expression of needs only

• Makes factual comments, often irrelevant to the social situation

• Talks incessantly regardless of response by others

• Displays distortions of the rules of language

• Literal interpretation

• Referring to self in third person

• Little understanding of body language or facial expressions

Impairment of imagination

• Difficulty in understanding that other people see things from a different point of view

• Inflexibility in the application of both written and unwritten rules that govern social behaviour

• Repetitive enacting of roles without understanding purpose

• Difficulties in generalising concepts

• Literal understanding of language

• Difficulties in distinguishing between 'pretend' and reality

• Lack of empathy for others

• Impairment of creative imaginative concepts

- Specific cognitive difficulties, including:
  – Theory of mind deficits: e.g. inability to attribute thoughts and beliefs of others
  – Executive function: e.g. difficulty with sequencing, organising
  – Central coherence, e.g. understanding cause and effect

Areas of difficulty often present in autistic spectrum conditions

- Repetitive and ritualistic activities
- Inflexible routines
- Resistance to change
- Poor ability to manage anger and frustration
- Problems with sleeping, feeding and toileting
- Additional fears and phobias
- Problems in gender identity
- Inappropriate expression of sexual feelings
- Anti-social behaviour
- Interpersonal violence
- Severe anxiety
- Inflexibility in application of social rules, particularly where these apply to themselves
- Awareness of the social relationships normal to others and difficulty in achieving the same relationships
- Difficulty in coping with social demands and situations

Getting a diagnosis can have many positive outcomes

- A diagnosis of ASC makes it clear that 'odd' behaviour is the result of a pervasive development disorder, not mental illness or personality disorder
- Parental guilt may be relieved, enabling them to concentrate on seeking help, rather than wondering what went wrong
- Placements can be evaluated as to how they can meet the characteristic needs of the condition, as uniquely expressed in each individual

- Communication can be augmented or tailored to most effectively overcome individual problems in information processing
- The individual can be given emotional support and therapy appropriate to the characteristic needs of the condition and their idiosyncrasies
- Behavioural management and risk assessment can be designed to meet the characteristic problems and needs of the condition
- Making the connections between the behaviours we observe and the cause of those behaviours, creates understanding
- Understanding the cause of the behaviour gives us the opportunity to predict, plan for, and promote the positive and prevent the negative
- It enables an individual to gain insight into their difficulties and find ways to manage them more effectively
- Expectations can be realistically structured and practical plans made for the future

Helpful ways to support people with ASC

- Remove distractions – emphasise what is relevant
- Keep language clear, simple and delivered in a calm manner
- Use visual guides – do not rely on the person's memory
- Find the person's area of interest
- Avoid open-ended tasks or imaginative activities requiring abstract thought or concepts
- Build routines/rituals/special interests into learning
- Use short tasks with frequent breaks
- Re-teach skills in each new setting
- Keep rules/approach consistent
- Use positive instructions

individuals Making autism positive - The iMap Approach

iMap's person centred care planning approach takes careful consideration of the requirements of each service user's needs as identified within the social work assessment, and any other relevant assessment that identifies the care, support and therapeutic needs of a service user. This enables iMap to provide enhanced opportunities for children and adults to improve communication and relationships, continually develop independence skills and assist people to lead fulfilling lives and achieve the best possible outcomes.

iMap promotes an Intensive Interactive approach, so that all staff are trained and familiar with different techniques for working successfully with complex learners. We emphasise communication and empathy for service users and by drawing on SCERTS, PECS and Intensive Interactions staff within all of our supported living and residential care environments are able to provide structure, calmness and clarity to each service user to reduce their anxiety and promote their learning and development.

iMap provides:

- Intensive Interaction focused support to service users
- A SCERTS® informed approach to assist service users to build competence in Social Communication, Emotional Regulation and Transactional Support
- A total communication approach to speech and language therapy, including use of PECS, Makaton and social stories
- Music therapy
- Art therapy
- Multi-sensory experiences
- Behavioural support programme, informed by PROACT-SCIPr-UK® behavioural support techniques
- In house medical support and health liaison.

Any further enquiries please contact us on 01606 301 514 or visit our website at www.imapcentre.co.uk