



You may or may not be aware that World Autism Acceptance Week took place recently. Autism is a lifelong developmental disability which affects how people communicate and interact with the world. Autism is a part of many people’s lives as in the UK alone there are around 700,000 autistic children and adults. If you then consider their families, autism is a part of daily life for a staggering 2.8 million people within the UK. Across the world the prevalence of autism in low- and middle-income countries is unknown for several factors such as support services and professionals are not widely available and there is often no diagnosis process in place.



1 in 100
people are autistic



Just 22%
of autistic
people are in
employment.

“With just a little more acceptance, understanding and a few simple adjustments, more autistic people would be able to enter the workforce and put their amazing talents to use.”

Chris Packham CBE, autistic man and National Autistic Society Ambassador

Autism is a spectrum condition and will affect people in different ways meaning each individual will have varying support needs whether it be full time care and support, small amounts of support with day-to-day activities or being able to live completely independent lives. Below is a list of difficulties that autistic people may experience:

- **Social communication** - For example needing extra time to process information or answer questions.
- **Social interaction** - For example finding it hard to create friendships.
- **Repetitive or restrictive behaviour** - For example any change to a routine can be distressing and can lead to anxiety.
- **Over or under sensitivity to light, sound, taste or touch** - For example background music which other people can ignore or block out may be incredibly loud or distracting so ear defenders may be worn to reduce the discomfort.
- **Highly focused interests or hobbies** - For example Greta Thunberg's intense interest is protecting the environment.
- **Extreme anxiety** – A way of reducing this is recognising triggers and identifying coping mechanisms.
- **Meltdowns and shutdowns** – These can happen when somebody with autism becomes overwhelmed, these are very intense and exhausting experiences.

Where to get information and support

National Autistic Society - <https://www.autism.org.uk/>

Ambitious about Autism - <https://www.ambitiousaboutautism.org.uk/>

Local Council –

- For people under 25 ask your council about their "local offer". This is the name for the support they provide for young people with special educational needs.
- If you are an autistic adult or care for an autistic adult, you can ask your council for a needs assessment. This is used to identify any problems you are having with everyday life and what support or financial benefits you might be eligible to receive.

GP and Autism Assessment Teams – May be able to refer to specialists such as occupational therapists, speech and language therapists or mental health support.

NHS - <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/autism/>