

# Asperger Syndrome

a guide for further education staff

**Researched by**  
Susan Thomson

**Written by**  
Susan Thomson and Anne Chirnside

**With thanks to**  
Celia Barron

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For further hard copies please contact Susan Thomson or Andrée Carruthers at Stevenson College Edinburgh on 0131 535 4600.

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# INTRODUCTION

## Implementing Inclusiveness, Realising Potential

As part of the implementation of the Beattie Report, the Scottish Executive funded a series of inclusiveness projects throughout Scotland. In Edinburgh and the Lothians, 20 organisations were involved in a three year project called 15-24, An Inclusiveness Project, which was managed by Careers Scotland.

The focus of these projects was on support for vulnerable young people in transition. Stevenson Inclusiveness Project (SIP) was one of these.

The Stevenson project aimed to consider the needs of two specific groups of young people: those with Asperger Syndrome, and those with communication difficulties who used augmentative and alternative communication devices. The overall aims of the Stevenson Inclusiveness Project were to develop and promote effective support strategies for these young people, provide related staff training and share good practice.

The project has provided the opportunity to gain expertise, to upskill staff, to reflect on practice, and most importantly – to enhance the college experience for the students we have worked with. Furthermore, the formal and informal staff development means that future students will benefit from the increased awareness and embedding of inclusive practices throughout the college.

In order to meet our objective of sharing good practice, we have compiled these materials which focus on working with students with Asperger Syndrome. They derive from reading research of the relevant literature and collaborative working with specialist agencies, as well as the lessons learnt from hands-on case study work at Stevenson.

We feel we have learnt a lot, and benefited enormously from this project. We would like to share the benefits by offering these materials to colleagues. We hope you find them useful.

## The Materials

The materials have been designed to provide colleagues with information and strategies that may be useful to them in the work they do directly, or indirectly, with students who have Asperger Syndrome.

We have attempted to cover the whole FE experience, and the various sections should reflect that.

The materials divide clearly into two parts. The first part provides information about Asperger Syndrome and the main characteristics associated with it. An awareness of these characteristics is important, not only in helping people understand the reasons for particular behaviours, but also in identifying strategies for addressing difficulties. The second part considers the FE experience, and describes strategies that may be useful in tackling issues that arise.

The materials can be photocopied, but should be acknowledged.

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## SECTION 1

### What Is Asperger Syndrome (AS)?

#### The need for understanding

Just as the student population within FE is very different in terms of academic ability, personality and maturity, so the range of young people with Asperger Syndrome who come to college is likewise very varied. These materials seek to raise awareness of the needs of such young people. While the focus is on understanding the implications of Asperger Syndrome and suggesting practical support strategies, it is very important to look on each student as an individual, with their own unique range of learning needs. Not every young person with Asperger Syndrome will present with **all** the issues highlighted in these materials and it is helpful if staff respond to them as individual people rather than to the label of AS.

Students with Asperger Syndrome are likely to experience some difficulties during their time in further education. In general terms, their behaviour can often seem odd to their peers. They may lack social skills, tend to be inflexible and are sometimes highly anxious. While the degree to which this affects their behaviour in college will vary from one person to the next, they are vulnerable, and sometimes they behave inappropriately.

However, students with AS have strengths and abilities and can achieve if they are understood and supported appropriately. Asperger Syndrome is sometimes described as a 'hidden disability', but if we are to support these students effectively, we need to gain some understanding of the origin of their difficulties. Students with AS may not be able to explain their situation, or offer a solution.

The more understanding the staff who are involved with them have, the more able they are to identify and implement effective strategies.

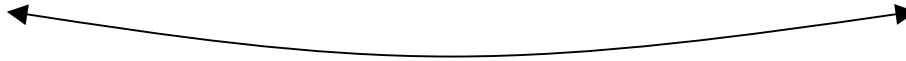
## Asperger Syndrome

Asperger Syndrome is a lifelong condition which is at the high end of the autistic spectrum and is more prevalent in boys.

### The Autism Continuum

Low Functioning Autism

Asperger's Syndrome

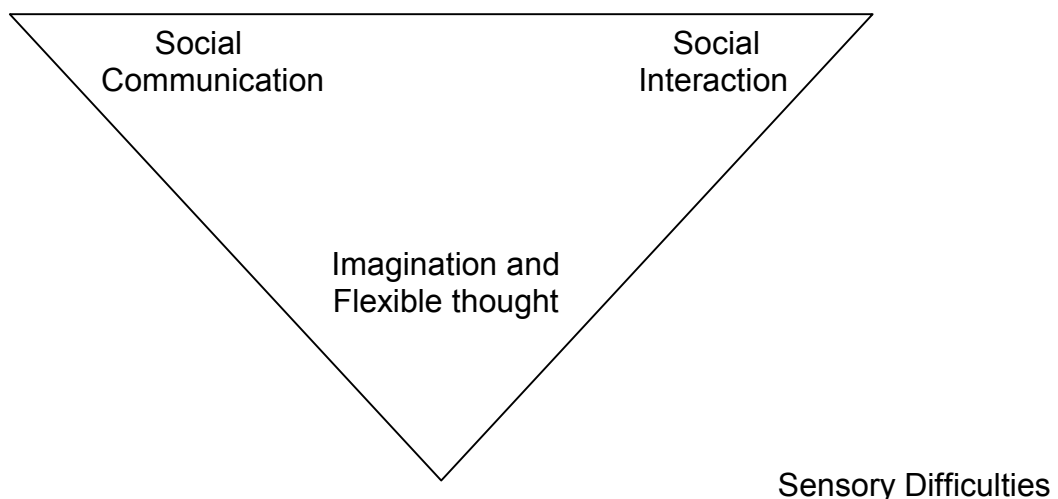


The low functioning child with autism 'lives in a world of his own'.  
 (Van Krevelen, Wing 1991)

The high functioning child with Autism 'lives in our world but in his own way'  
 (Williams, 1995)

It is described as a developmental disorder. People affected by it are said to have a triad of impairment affecting social interaction, communication, imagination and flexible thought. As a result, the individual with AS is likely to find unfamiliar social contacts stressful. They may have difficulty understanding the thoughts of others, might misinterpret language and in most situations will find change very difficult. However, it is important to recognize that each person with AS is different. Some people may be profoundly affected by one characteristic, yet show very little of another. For example, some people with AS seem to have an obsessive interest in a favourite subject while in others, this is not evident. These obsessive interests may change over time.

### The Triad of Impairment



Asperger Syndrome does not affect a person's intelligence. Most people with AS have average to above average intelligence, and often have superior rote memories.

Although not part of the Triad, many people with AS also have sensory difficulties, eg touch sensitivity. There is more on this in Section 3.

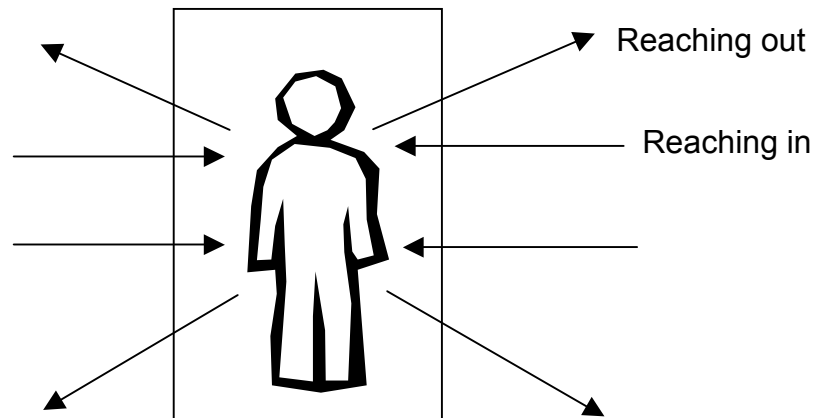
## Associated Disorders

Some people also have a dual or triple diagnosis. Associated disorders are:

- ADHD (Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder)
- ADD (Attention Deficit Disorder)
- Dyspraxia,
- Dyslexia
- Depression
- Tourettes Syndrome.

## Our world, their world

We all live within our own comfort zone, our box. As social beings, we reach out from our box and invite people in. People with AS are unable to do this. They tend to have a preference for their own thoughts over human interaction. In order to interact with them, we must reach into their box, and help them trust us enough to let us in. Many people with AS find it difficult to trust, therefore building a relationship with them can take much longer than with other students.



## SECTION 2

### The Strengths Associated With Asperger Syndrome

#### Good Students

Many people with AS make good students. They like predictability in their lives and therefore, in their quest for this, tend to be punctual, reliable and dedicated. Most people with AS want to do the right thing and they usually appreciate rules. They don't want to appear different in a negative way to others. However many who have come to terms with their disability revel in their difference and celebrate being an intelligent, unique and often creative individual.

Each person with AS is different, but many share some specific characteristics which can often lead to great success and achievements later in life. Bill Gates is said to have AS, as did Albert Einstein and Sir Isaac Newton. If these strengths can be identified, and employed in the pursuit of their studies, it can result in students having a more positive experience, as well as achievement of goals. If their strengths are recognised and they are encouraged to make use of them, the young person with Asperger Syndrome can be a very good student in the group.

Many have an extraordinarily good rote memory when they are interested in a subject and this can be used to good advantage on their course. The challenge for their lecturer is to encourage that particular interest to develop and be used in a positive way.

❖ *John was on a NC Motor Vehicle course. His lecturers were concerned that he did not seem to be making much progress and were frustrated by his apparent lack of concentration in class. One day, quite by accident, the lecturer in the practical workshop class discovered he had a real passion for tyres and could recite the make and model number for practically every tyre produced in the last 5 years. When he investigated further, he discovered that John had an amazing memory for details like this. Once his tutor realised that John's difficulties on the course were not related to lack of ability as he had previously thought. He shared this with the other lecturers who worked with John and who had also regarded him as a student with low ability. By showing an interest in his skills in this area and encouraging him to widen his area of interest, they were able to help John to use his memory skills in other parts of the course. His lecturers needed patience, but by the end of the course, John was making progress and passing units.*

## Positive Attributes

People with AS are likely to have **some** of the following positive attributes:

- an extraordinarily good rote memory for subjects that interest them
- reliability
- dedication, loyalty
- attention to detail, precise and punctual
- honesty, no guile
- respect for rules – want to do the right thing
- original and creative thought patterns
- may have a wide vocabulary
- may revel in their difference
- may find it easier than others to master the formal style required for writing academic essays and reports

## SECTION 3

### The Main Characteristics Of Asperger Syndrome

Asperger Syndrome affects people's **social communication, social interaction** and **imagination**. The majority of difficulties that arise for students can be traced back to these features. As a result, people with AS often feel confused, and unable to understand what is going on around them. These difficulties produce enormous stress, and high anxiety, which in turn may lead to inappropriate behaviour.

#### Literal interpretation of language.

People with AS tend to interpret language literally. Their language processing skills have been likened to the way computers process language. Computers respond exactly to the data that is input – they can't read between the lines. People with AS understand the words that are said, but may miss the meaning of the message. A statement like 'The papers are all over the floor' is usually a request to pick them up. Someone with AS would interpret the statement as a description. People with AS often don't understand metaphors, idioms, similes, sarcasm, jokes etc.

❖ *When a student on a higher level course heard the lecturer say, 'There are many ways to eat a mammoth,' he responded very seriously with 'Why would we want to eat a mammoth?'*

#### Body language

A significant amount of our communication is non verbal. People with AS have difficulties reading body language, and miss the signals many of us take for granted. Just think what a shrug can convey!

#### Facial expression

Many people with AS don't automatically recognise facial expressions. Some have been taught to recognise them in a mechanistic way eg an upturned mouth means someone is happy, and a down turned mouth means someone is sad.

❖ *One student wondered why her classmate, whom she considered to be a new friend, was becoming increasingly angry with her. It transpired her friend had a down turned mouth, and she constantly asked him why he was sad. Understandably, he was losing patience telling her he wasn't.*

## Prosodic features: tone, stress, intonation

We convey a lot of meaning through the use of tone, stress and intonation. Many people with AS don't recognise the function of these features, so they may miss crucial distinctions. Some people with AS talk in a monotone voice because of this.

A very good example of how we use these features to convey shades of meaning is given by Tony Attwood (1998):

- |  |                            |
|--|----------------------------|
| • I didn't say she stole my money.         | someone said it            |
| • I <b>didn't</b> say she stole my money.  | I definitely didn't say it |
| • I didn't <b>say</b> she stole my money.  | I implied she did          |
| • I didn't say <b>she</b> stole my money.  | someone else stole it      |
| • I didn't say she <b>stole</b> my money.  | she did something with it  |
| • I didn't say she stole <b>my</b> money.  | she stole someone else's   |
| • I didn't say she stole my <b>money</b> . | she stole something else   |

A person with AS would find it difficult to relate emphasis to meaning.

## Auditory language processing

Many people with AS take longer to process, interpret and understand information presented orally. They may not be able to process at the rate of delivery, and so get left behind.

## Good language, but poor communication skills

Students with AS may have well developed speech, with a wide range of vocabulary and good grammar. However, they may speak in a very precise, pedantic way and tend to talk 'at' people, rather than 'to' them. As a result of the difficulties described above, they often miss intended meanings. No wonder they often feel confused.

## Understanding the rules of social interaction

The rules of social interaction and appropriate behaviour are complex, and are developed subtly throughout childhood. By adulthood most of us have learnt and understood them, even if we do not always comply with them! People with AS have great difficulty grasping these complex rules, and frequently misinterpret social cues. They tend not to like physical contact, they can appear egocentric and insensitive to others, and they can lack tact. They tend to be socially naïve, and are easily taken advantage of.

❖ *A member of staff in FE saw John and his classmates trying to tip over a juice machine. When the staff member appeared, all John's classmates ran off. When asked what he was doing, John openly said "I'm trying to get juice out of the machine". John had been asked to do it by the people in his class, and, not realising the implications, innocently took part.*

Some people with AS have a better social awareness than others. This depends on how they are affected by AS, and on the social teaching they have received. However, most people with AS learn social interaction in an 'academic' way, just like learning the content of academic subjects. Therefore, social guidance needs to be ongoing, and integrated into every part of their lives.

❖ *Chris came to FE to study for a Higher as part of a school link partnership. He told his support tutor on his first day "It's hard to concentrate because I'm trying to look at the other people in my class to find out how I am supposed to act in college"*

## **Conversational Skills**

Initiating and sustaining conversations can be extremely difficult for people with AS.

❖ *Gary went to his support tutor's room several times telling her things that didn't make sense to her, before she managed to direct his conversation to the real reason he was visiting her.*

Some of them appear to be unaware that conversation should be a two way, cooperative venture. They have little awareness of taking turns in a conversation, and may monopolise it, talking excessively about their favourite subject or obsession. If the subject is changed, they will try to bring the conversation back to their preferred choice. They may be unaware that the other person is bored, or wishes to speak. However, if they meet with people who share their interests, they can have a successful experience.

❖ *Robert was on a science course, and told his support tutor that he felt he fitted in with his peers for the first time in his life, as everyone on the course was on his wavelength.*

## **Eye contact**

Many people with AS find making eye contact unnatural, and difficult. For them, making eye contact can distract from listening and processing the language. By the time students come to FE, most have managed it to some extent, but some are never comfortable with it. Some students may use eye contact inappropriately, and gaze at the speaker in an intense way.

## Social Implications

The confusion and stress that results from the difficulties described can often result in inappropriate behaviour which may be misunderstood by others because they are not aware of the reasons behind it.

❖ *David came to a college open day with his mother so that they could find out about courses which might interest him when he left school. David found the experience very stressful. He was anxious about leaving the school he had been attending for several years – it felt secure. The college seemed very large compared to his school. The room was a large lecture theatre, packed with people milling around a number of tables to pick up information. When a lecturer asked him what he was interested in, David simply shrugged his shoulders and grunted. His mother ended up doing all the talking. The lecturer was unimpressed and very quickly formed an opinion of a young man who really wasn't interested in coming to college*

Because they struggle to understand the world around them and are not confident in using social skills, which many of us take for granted, the behaviour of people with AS in social situations can frequently be misunderstood by others and may appear as reclusive, arrogant or aggressive. Many function in a state of confusion, not understanding why they get into fights, why they are bullied, or why people exclude them.

The world is a confusing place for young people with Asperger Syndrome. They are often desperate to make friends, but haven't yet learnt how to develop good social relationships. They may be desperate to be included, but ignore their peers when they say hello, or walk away in the middle of a conversation. Other people sometimes perceive them as rude, or slightly eccentric and because of this don't want to befriend them. In a college setting, they can be taken advantage of, in their desire to fit in with the group.

*"Many people with Aspergers Syndrome do not make the connection between their actions and others" (Myles and Southwick (1999 p 10)*

❖ *Rhona spoke to her tutor in a state of anxiety because no one in her class was speaking to her and she couldn't understand why. On quizzing her, her tutor learnt she had sent letters to all of her classmates telling them what she thought about them (good and bad). She felt she had to tell the truth, therefore, it was her right to let them know how she felt about them*

## **Imagination**

Impaired imagination can have a pervasive effect on the way people function. It can make abstract thought very difficult. It can also cause the person to have restricted interests and obsessive ritualistic behaviour.

## **Awareness of thoughts and feelings**

Showing empathy can be difficult for many people with AS because they can't imagine what someone else might be experiencing. Coupled with their difficulties in fully understanding social situations, the person with AS can sometimes appear insensitive.

Very often people with AS don't communicate well with others because they presume that if they know something, everyone else knows it too. Some find it hard to understand that everyone in a room has different thoughts.

In addition, many people with AS have poor awareness of their own feelings, and may find it difficult to articulate their feelings.

## **Transferring learning**

Many people with AS cannot transfer social learning from one setting to another. For example, if they are taught social skills in a community setting, they may not transfer the learning into the FE setting. Many people with AS learn *the experience*, they don't learn *from* it.

## **Making choices and decisions**

Making choices and decisions can be very difficult for students with AS because they cannot imagine what the different options would mean. They only know what they have experienced. When we make decisions, we usually consider the consequences of the different options. People with AS would have difficulty imagining what the consequences might be.

## **Coping with change**

Impaired imagination produces a fear of change. If you have difficulty imagining the unknown, it makes sense to hang on to what you do know, even if it no longer serves a purpose. The result is that people with AS tend towards rigidity and inflexibility. They feel safe with structure and routine. They need routine to feel comfortable and secure. Change of any sort can be extremely difficult and produce very high levels of anxiety. Even the thought of a forthcoming change to their routine can cause great distress.

## **Sensory Difficulties**

People with AS may experience some of the following sensitivities:

- Sound, eg sensitivity to certain volumes or pitches
- Touch, eg sensitivity to certain fabrics
- Visual perception, eg sensitivity to certain types of light or colour
- Taste eg distortions in certain tastes
- Smell - may experience nausea from some smells
- Rhythm, eg may not be able to 'keep the beat'
- Inner ear – may affect balance
- Proprioception (the sense that allows us to locate our body position in space) - may have difficulties fastening coats, cleaning teeth, etc

## SECTION 4

### Communicating Effectively With A Student With Asperger Syndrome

Communicating effectively is a crucial element in working with all students, but it brings specific challenges in working with students who have Asperger Syndrome. It is important to try to build a relationship of trust, but that cannot be done without successful communication.

#### Strategies for Effective Communication:

- Be directive – say exactly what you mean and give instructions in a clear, directive way.
- Don't expect or demand eye contact. It is too stressful for some students.
- Be aware that body language, facial expressions, sarcasm or jokes as forms of communication might be misunderstood.
- Formulaic questions get formulaic answers. If you ask 'How are you?' you are likely to get the response, 'Fine', even if the student is not fine, because that is how they have been taught to respond.
- If you are giving a list of instructions, give the student with AS time to digest one instruction before issuing another. It might be useful to write them down.
- If a student with AS is acting inappropriately, tell them sensitively, but in a direct way. Sometimes staff are reluctant to challenge inappropriate behaviour because they recognise the student has a disability. However, students with AS want to know the rules, and feel more secure when they do.
- Remember that most students with AS will interpret what you say literally. "*Can you shut the door?*" might elicit the response "*Yes, I know how to do that*". So if you talk about students hanging around in the stairwells, you might alarm someone with AS. Try to avoid using metaphors, similes, colloquialisms, sarcasm, eg *you really need to keep your eye on the ball, you need to pull your socks up*.
- If you realise you have said something which the student has misinterpreted, explain what you meant.

❖ *Craig wanted to go to a lecture, but didn't like crowds. Trying to encourage him, his lecturer said it would be dark so he would be invisible. Craig looked puzzled and said, "I don't think so!" His lecturer quickly realised that he had taken her literally, and explained what she really meant*

- Questions that are too open can lead to misunderstanding eg “How did you find the lecture?” might elicit the response “I followed the rest of the group to the right room”. Questions that are more concrete, and closed are easier for the student eg Was the lecture interesting? Which part did you find most interesting?
- If you are asking the student to make choices or decisions, remember they need concrete examples, because they may be unable to imagine what the different options mean.
- If a student with AS also has a learning disability, he may have problems sequencing events. He may live only for today. He may need prompting to remember what he did last week, and not be able to imagine what will happen next week.

## SECTION 5

### Transition Into College For Students With Asperger Syndrome

Transitions can be extremely difficult for people with AS, if they are not given appropriate support, because of their fear of change, their inflexibility and their difficulty with social relationships. As the time to leave school approaches, they are aware that they will be leaving all that is familiar, and moving into the unknown. Their level of anxiety will be very high. The transition process, therefore, needs to be handled sensitively.

#### FE can provide a positive experience

FE can be a very positive experience for many students with AS. Sometimes they have been bullied or teased relentlessly at school because they appear different, and as a result display disruptive behaviour which leads to further difficulties. In FE, they meet with a greater mix of people and age range. Therefore, they may not stand out so much. It is easier to feel comfortable with being different.

#### Bridging the familiar to the unfamiliar

It is best if the familiar to the unfamiliar can be bridged by the continuity of a named person in college. Indeed, if the student has to deal with a variety of different college staff without one key person taking 'ownership' of the support, the transition process is likely to break down. Social relationships are so difficult for students with AS. They take a long time to trust people and understand their roles.

In an ideal situation, the named person might meet with the student in school. In many cases, however, this will not be possible and so the first meeting may have to be in the college. When the student visits the college for the first time, prior to starting his course, he is likely to want someone familiar, from school or his family, to accompany him.

It is important to obtain prior information about the course(s) the student is interested in, and the level of support the student has had at school. (Appendix One provides an example of a proforma which may be useful).

#### The first meeting

At the first college meeting with the student, it is useful to

- explain who you are, what your role is, and what you plan to do
- give information about the course(s) the student is interested in, making it clear what is expected of students on these courses
- establish that they would be comfortable with this information, including the size of the group
- obtain additional information about the support the student has had at school
- ask the student if he has any questions
- show the student round the college as a first step in familiarisation
- find out if the student can travel on public transport independently. Many people with AS learn only one bus route at a time.

## Level of support

The level and type of support a pupil has had at school may not be appropriate in the college setting. To some extent, the level of support required depends on the nature of the college programme. A programme which is highly structured with very stable elements, and which includes substantial tutorial support is likely to present fewer difficulties than other programmes which might assume a certain level of personal independence in students and which may not have the same degree of tutorial input. The structure of such programmes may mean that some additional one to one support is required. A buddy or mentor might be appropriate, but that person needs to have awareness training. For students with AS who are on an advanced level course, and may therefore meet the criteria for eligibility for the Disabled Student's Allowance, it may be possible to provide funding for a buddy, if that is appropriate to the individual student. In some cases, the college support service will be able to provide an adequate level of support. It depends on the needs of the individual student.

## Making course choices

It is important to consider each of the different course options in detail with the student. The consequences of each choice need to be described and discussed. So, for example, if the choice is between doing a Highers programme or joining an HNC Sport and Leisure, the student needs to know the differences in group composition, type of work and activity expected, assessment methods, and outcomes. If the course is vocational, he needs to know what the vocational implications could be eg would the course lead to a job which involved a high level of social interaction, such as a tourist guide? It might be helpful for the student to take the information away, and discuss it with his family, or with a trusted person at school.

❖ *John applied for a Business Management course. When he came out of the interview, he told his support tutor that the interview had gone well and he really wanted to become a business manager. After further conversation, it became clear to her that John didn't really understand what a business manager was, and so didn't understand where the course might lead to vocationally*

People with AS tend to be very clear about what their interests are. If they are not interested in something, they will not want to do it and this could present difficulties with the range of subjects within a course. Students with AS need to be clear at the beginning that they will be expected, like other students, to attend **all** core elements of a course.

❖ *David was very keen to do a Photography course, but couldn't see why he had to do Communications on the timetable. He couldn't understand that he was in danger of failing his course because he refused to attend that class. His support tutor had to patiently explain on several different occasions that he might not be able to get a job as a photographer because he didn't have the full qualification. It was only then that David saw the point of going to the Communications class*

Nevertheless, like any student, if the person with AS is not interested at all in a particular course or college, then they are unlikely to succeed, regardless of how useful the course might seem to parents, teachers etc.

As with many other vulnerable students, academic success may take longer to achieve for some students with AS. They may have to work on other essential goals before they are able to show academic success.

❖ *Jonathon enrolled for a media course and in general academic terms, some might consider that the year wasn't a success. However, Jonathon had made important progress in other ways. As he went through the year, he began to learn to fit in with his peer group, and work collaboratively in small groups. He could join in group discussions, and go for a coffee break with the other students. These were all things which had been very difficult for him at school. It was only in his second year at college that Jonathon demonstrated his academic ability and gained good grades.*

Supported courses that offer components with social interaction and personal and social development can be a good stepping stone, and can provide time for the student to become secure and comfortable in FE. Allowing an extra year for these kinds of achievement can be helpful, but there could be funding issues and it is important to explore funding implications from an early stage.

### **Admissions procedures**

If a student has appropriate entry requirements, and wishes to apply for a course, then he needs to be given information about the process of admission. He may require some assistance to complete the application form. A course interview is likely to be very stressful for the student. He may wish to be accompanied by someone he trusts or the named person from the support service.

The interviewers need to be aware of the risk of forming the wrong impression of a student because he/she may display

- poor eye contact
- inappropriate or monosyllabic answers
- reduced concentration
- inability to understand nonverbal communication
- a pedantic or 'odd' way of expressing himself

It is very easy for the interviewer to misread these signals and form a negative opinion of the person's suitability for the course.

Interviewers should also be aware that the student is likely to interpret everything literally, and so may misunderstand some of the communication, particularly if metaphoric language is used.

❖ *At interview a tutor told Hector that he was going to put her head together with another lecturer to discuss his application. Hector was very puzzled by this.*

It is essential that interviewers recognise that these poor social skills do not mean the student cannot achieve academically.

### **Familiarisation with the college**

Orientation round the college can help reduce the anxieties produced by the change. This should include visits to classrooms the student is likely to use, the canteen, library, relevant staff workrooms, toilets etc. If the student will use more than one campus, this should also be included. Labelled diagrams and maps can be useful here.

Time spent on orientation prior to the student joining a course helps to increase what is familiar, and reduces the number of new things the student has to deal with when he begins his programme.

For the same reasons, it is also beneficial if the student can be introduced to some of the key staff prior to beginning his course.

### **Staged transition**

For some students with AS, a staggered transition into college can be enormously helpful. This allows them to experience the unfamiliar world of college from the secure setting of the school. The ideal situation is when a student can infill into an appropriate college course once or twice a week, while still remaining at school. It is important at the beginning to consider what the progression route is. An infill programme aimed at preparing the student for college is of little use if there isn't a suitable course to progress onto.

A positive staggered transition is more likely if

- a named college person, known to the student, coordinates the transition programme
- the student is given prior orientation as above
- an appropriate level of support is provided
- the student has realistic expectations of what college might be like

❖ **An example of staged transition**

*Steven was in 5<sup>th</sup> year at a mainstream school when his guidance teacher approached his local college to enquire about a staged transition for him. Steven had a one to one support worker for behavioural management in most subjects at school. Steven, his support worker and guidance teacher visited the named person for people with AS at college. Here it was explained to him what was expected of him in terms of work output and behaviour. He was also given a tour of the college and introduced to the lecturer he would be working with. Steven was interested in computers so he attended college twice a week to complete his European Computer Driving licence. The course he infilled into was for students with additional health needs, and because this was a small group which was well structured and supported, he attended alone.*

*The school began to reduce his one to one support as he was unlikely to get this level of support in FE, and so it was important that he got used to working alone while still having the security of school. This worked well for Steven. In 6<sup>th</sup> year, he increased his time at college, continuing in his supported class and also infilling into a mainstream computing class. He now had no additional support in school.*

*When he left school after 6<sup>th</sup> year, he moved smoothly into a mainstream computing course. He knew the building, the staff and most of all what was expected of him in college.*

## SECTION 6

### Strategies For Guidance And Support Staff Working With Students With Aspergers Syndrome

Some students with AS will attend college and complete their course with the minimum of support. They may find college is a much more conducive environment than school, and only need a low level of support. Sometimes it is enough if they know support is there to be accessed when they need it. Other students need much more individual support to help them cope with their course. This type of one-to-one support may be provided by different people in different colleges, but it should be someone who is easily available and who the student trusts. It is important to carry out a needs assessment prior to the student beginning a course.

(Appendix One provides a proforma which may be useful for this process).

#### Named person

The importance of providing a named person who can build a relationship of trust with the student has already been emphasised, and is stressed again here. The problems resulting from poor social communication and interaction, combined with difficulties in coping with change, make life difficult for the young person with AS and can lead to behaviour which is hard for lecturers to understand.

However a proactive approach, with support provided by someone who understands the condition can often pre-empt difficult situations, particularly if that person has developed a trusting relationship with the student. Obviously, this named person needs to have an awareness of Asperger Syndrome, or the willingness to learn.

It is helpful if this member of staff can be the named person for internal and external contact regarding students with AS, but this may not always be possible.

For the student, continuity of support is vital, along with the knowledge that someone is there if they need them. Indeed, research has shown that in some cases, if students are confident the support is there for them, they may not actually use it much.

❖ *Chris would rarely meet with his support tutor who, as a result, felt she was not adequately supporting him. However, Chris told a senior member of staff how well he was being supported. Just knowing his support tutor was available to him was enough to sustain him, and help him feel supported.*

## Information sharing

It is clearly important for all relevant staff to have information about the implications of the student's condition, his strengths, and possible difficulties. However, this can only be done with the student's permission, and the student must be involved in the process. The student can be asked what he would like other staff to know, and a document can be drafted for confidential circulation to relevant staff.

(A proforma Information sheet for staff is offered in Appendix Two).

Teaching staff will also find it helpful to have some strategies suggested. More information on this is given in Section 8.

The support process works best when all three partners, the student, the teaching staff and the support tutor actively co-operate. This is the case for all students. However, the 'go between' function of the support tutor is particularly important for students with AS, because they often cannot articulate their difficulties. The support tutor, because of the nature of their role, may have more time to build a trusting relationship with the student and so may have more chance of discovering the origin of any difficulty, and thus identify strategies for tackling it. The student also needs to be reminded that others are not aware of the thoughts in his head, and that he needs to tell people what is going on.

In the case of some students, it may be helpful, with their permission, to provide information to other staff in the college. For example, staff in the library or canteen may need information if they are to understand and assist the student. It is not always necessary for confidential information to be given. Information could be more generalised, in terms of what type of behaviour they might expect from students with AS, together with some practical tips. However, if a particular student has displayed odd or unusual behaviour, then staff may need strategies for dealing with those specific behaviours

## Managing Stress and Anxiety

For most people with AS, the social world is a stressful place. When the demands of a college course are added, they can sometimes feel overloaded. High levels of stress and anxiety can boil over into frustration, so it is important to be alert to the signs.

As staff get to know a student, they will come to recognise some of the triggers and signs of stress. Some typical signs are hand flapping, talking to themselves, pacing, or hovering around a staff member they trust. Some students may complain of feeling unwell, or may stop attending classes. If the stress tips over into frustration, then behaviour may become inappropriate or, in some cases, aggressive

Helping the student manage their stress is one of the most important ingredients of support, but we have to engage with them first. Some useful tips for staff are:

- Remain patient and calm
- Acknowledge the student's difficulties
- Make it clear you are there for the student, but do not start talking at length - they may talk if you don't

- Remove the student from the stressful situation
- The student may be using ritualistic behaviour like hand flapping as stress management. Don't tell them to stop it, unless they are a danger to themselves or others
- When the time is right, ask the student direct, closed questions to help you understand what is going on for them. For example, 'It looks like something is making you anxious, tell me what it is.'

Strategies to help students manage their stress include:

- Helping them recognise the signs
- Providing a bolt hole where they can go to cool down
- Ensuring the student has someone they can go to for help
- Helping the student identify actions that might alleviate their tension, eg taking a certain number of deep breaths or focusing on their special interest
- Working with the student to develop a written plan of actions they should take if things go wrong, and they become stressed.

### **Bolthole**

It can help students to manage their anxiety and stress if they know there is a quiet room they can go to for 'time out'. Ideally, this room should be located close to the work base of the student's support tutor. Just as the knowledge of a named person for support can provide security, so can the knowledge of an accessible bolthole. Therefore, if it is not used, it does not mean it is not needed!

### **Encouraging Appropriate Behaviour**

If a student is acting inappropriately, it's important to discover why they are behaving as they are. They probably do not realise their behaviour is inappropriate. Sometimes what seems like inappropriate behaviour may in fact be a response to frustration and stress caused by a lack of understanding of situations and so it's important for support staff to try to get to the root of the problem.

They may need to be reminded of general rules which other students abide by eg not taking food into a computer class. Generally, students with AS like rules, although they tend to apply them rigidly. For example, some students react badly to staff or students arriving late for class.

If the behaviour is inappropriate because it breaks social conventions, then working with the student using social cue cards, or social scripts can be helpful. It is important, though, to make sure the student wishes to develop this kind of strategy. He may need an explanation of how these strategies will be useful for him. The basis of these strategies is that they can provide written information for the student about how to behave in particular social situations.

Producing them requires discussion about the nature of the difficulty, who is involved, why things might go wrong, and what might be a way of dealing with such a situation. **Social scripts** tend to deal with situations in a more general way, eg how to behave in the college library, where a series of appropriate behaviours would be listed. **Social Cue Cards** might be more appropriate for specific situations where one particular behaviour is targeted, such as the effect of making tactless remarks to peers. They should provide the student with succinct written information about how to behave in an appropriate way in that particular social situation. For example, 'when you do ..... your lecturer and the others in your class don't like it. But if you did....., then everyone would like it.' Social scripts can be invaluable for many students with AS regardless of their level of ability.

### **Formal and informal staff development**

In response to recent legislation and initiatives, many colleges now provide formal staff training in disability awareness. It is important that Asperger Syndrome be included in this type of programme. All staff who come into contact with students can benefit from general awareness of the characteristics associated with Asperger Syndrome, as well as some general tips on how to respond to such students.

However, there is no doubt that information is most effective when there is a perceived need for it. It is greatly beneficial if all college staff can have access to someone with specialist knowledge of Asperger Syndrome, who can give them information and advice **when** they need it. This person is most usually part of the guidance or extended learning support service

### **AS awareness for peers**

Some people with AS might decide they want to tell their class they have AS. It is important to discuss with the student before hand, how and when they might do this.

### **More Intensive Support**

Some colleges may be able to give more intensive support to their students with AS.

### **Setting up groups**

Students with AS often have quite a poor awareness of Asperger Syndrome. It can really help some people to discover more about what it means, and to hear from other students with AS what it is like for them. Informal meetings can also allow for some social skills work based on real incidents. However, meetings can only be arranged if students want this. The ideal situation is when students share interests. Setting up such meetings, and being present initially to facilitate, can start off a real friendship.

### **Personal Passports**

It can be very hard for some students to articulate their strengths and difficulties. A personal passport can be a useful source of information. It is helpful if the student has been involved in producing it, and also knows how to present it. Students may come into FE with valuable personal passports, but not be able to tell relevant staff they have one.

If a student does not have a personal passport, it may be appropriate to help him develop one. It should contain information about the student's strengths, interests, dislikes, difficulties, coping strategies and record of achievements. The information must be agreed with the student, and the student should understand why it could be helpful for others to receive this information. .

For students who are quite able to express themselves, a personal passport may still be valuable as an 'aide memoire'. It might contain, for example, a list of their qualifications, or other information which is easily forgotten, such as a social script on how to make friends. Having this information with them can help reduce anxiety.

## Section 7

### Alternative Assessment Arrangements

#### Discussing special exam arrangements

Students with AS may have had alternative assessment arrangements at school, but may not realise they can also apply to college. They are unlikely to be able to initiate a request for special exam arrangements so it is important that teaching and support staff are involved in discussing possible special arrangements.

Alternative assessment arrangements are to ensure that the student, in recognition of the disability, has a fair opportunity to demonstrate the standards required for the assessment. However it is important to ensure that the alternative arrangement does not place the student with AS at an unfair advantage to other students sitting the same assessment. Alternative assessment arrangements must not compromise the credibility of the award.

#### Preparing for exams

Exams present a change to routine, and therefore the student with AS needs to be prepared for this. They need to know the date, time and duration of the exam(s). They also need to know where the exam(s) will be held, and preferably visit the room in advance. It will be helpful if they are told what sort of behaviour is expected during the exam – exam etiquette. They may have anxieties about other aspects of the exam, and it is important that they are given the chance to discuss these fully before the exam.

#### Literal interpretations

The tendency of students with AS to interpret language literally can pose problems in grasping what is being asked in exam questions. They have great difficulty “reading between the lines” or in situations where they are required to form an opinion from a number of different sources eg in an interpretation question in English or Communications.

#### Possible arrangements

Possible helpful arrangements for students with AS and other related disorders, which are permitted by SQA include:

- a separate room, if concentration might be an issue
- the use of a prompter to ensure that the student is focussing on the examination. This would normally be someone known to the student who can recognise when his/her attention is no longer on the examination task. The prompter should do no more than draw the student’s attention back to the task
- alternative wording of an outcome, where the wording may cause difficulties for someone with AS. The suggested alternative outcome must still allow the candidate to demonstrate all of the competences required by the unit

- the use of a computer to assist the student to access the assessment material and / or produce written responses
- extra time
- rest periods/ supervised breaks
- a reader to read the assessment material
- a scribe to write the student's dictated responses
- transcription of a student's completed work where writing may be illegible
- the use of a tape recorder to record responses
- referral to the principal Assessor, to ensure that particular difficulties with writing have been considered by the marker.

### **Sourcing information**

Special assessment arrangements can be used in the internal assessments of Units, the internally assessed components of Courses and in external Course assessments. Procedural requirements for applying for arrangements may vary between internal and external assessments.

Detailed information of SQA alternative assessment arrangements are contained in the document *Guidance of Special Assessment Arrangements* which is available from the Scottish Qualifications Authority at either

Hanover House  
24 Douglas Street  
Glasgow  
G2 7NQ

or

Ironmills Road  
Dalkeith  
Midlothian  
EH22 1LE

The document can also be requested by telephoning the Customer Contact Centre on 0141 242 2214 or emailing [customer@sqa.org.uk](mailto:customer@sqa.org.uk).

The exam board will require evidence of a student's disability and information about how he / she has been supported throughout the course before agreeing to a special assessment arrangement.

Other exam boards may have different regulations for alternative assessments, and should be contracted for further information.

## SECTION 8

### Strategies For Teaching Staff Working With Students With Asperger Syndrome

Teaching students with Asperger Syndrome can bring particular challenges which if handled sensitively and with understanding can lead to success for the student and satisfaction for the lecturer. It is important that teaching staff do not automatically assume that students with Asperger Syndrome will be “problem students”. Like any student, they bring strengths as well as weaknesses. If those strengths are harnessed and the weaknesses are recognised and understood, students with AS can have a very positive learning experience in an FE college.

Teaching staff cannot be expected to be experts in each and every disability. They need to be provided with succinct, useful information, as well as some ideas for strategies in general. In addition, they should be given specific information about individual students, as agreed by the student (see Appendix Two for an example of a proforma). Ideally, teaching staff should also be able to obtain advice from a student’s support tutor, as and when they need it, to deal with particular situations. It is always best to provide information when someone needs it! The more that staff are informed and supported, the better experience it will be for both the lecturer and the student.

#### Social interaction

Students with AS have great difficulty with the unwritten rules of social interaction. They can be completely unaware of things other students take for granted.

❖ *Richard upset everyone in his class by constantly referring to their weight, height etc. No-one wanted to work with him, and he was becoming ostracised by his classmates. Richard had no idea why his classmates were acting like this towards him.*

These situations can be avoided.

- Tell the student what behaviour is expected of him in the different teaching situations - a lecture, groupwork, assessments etc
- If possible, and if the student wishes, encourage peer awareness
- Do not force interaction with others
- Do not force eye contact
- For groupwork, carefully select the members of the group, and give everyone clear roles. The student with AS needs to know exactly what his part is.
- If the student with AS has been insulting or insensitive, explain how that behaviour makes others feel, and tell them what would have been appropriate. If possible write it down for them, so they can refer to it.

- If the student interrupts inappropriately, or tries to dominate the discussion, explain that their ideas are welcome and important, but you need to hear the views of other students too. It is important not to discourage enthusiasm, but they need to know that they must allow other students to participate.
- If they find it difficult to adhere to acceptable group behaviour, then help them by agreeing a discreet cue which they will understand eg raising your pen.
- If appropriate show them the written rules.
- Be direct and clear in all instructions to the student.

### Social communication

The student with AS may have an excellent vocabulary and give the impression they understand what they are talking about, but they may simply be repeating something they have learnt by rote.

- Do not assume the student always understands what they say or appear to read fluently. Implicit information is likely to be missed.
- The student may interpret language literally which might lead to misunderstanding
- If a student appears uncooperative, try to find the reason behind the behaviour

❖ *A Computing lecturer had expressed his concerns about Joe's behaviour which he described as disruptive because Joe was walking round the class, inappropriately interacting with other students (touching students' name badges) and refusing to do any work. When this was investigated by his support tutor, Joe explained that no one had asked him to do any work in this class. The lecturer had only told him to look over his work and this is what he was doing.*

- Be consistent and directive in approach
- Be aware that if you use nonverbal means of communication, or metaphors, idioms, sarcasm or humour to convey meaning, then the student with AS may not grasp your meaning. You will need to provide the literal interpretation.

❖ *Karen's lecturer said laughingly, "Someone got out of bed on the wrong side this morning!" Karen immediately answered "No I didn't, my bed is against the wall". The rest of the class started to laugh and Karen recognised she had said something wrong, but was not sure what. She felt embarrassed and humiliated.*

## **Coping with change**

People with AS can be overwhelmed by even small changes to routine which others would not even think about. In the FE environment, it is not possible to avoid changes to routine, such as unexpectedly needing to re-room a class, but a lecturer can help the AS student cope with change.

- If possible, prepare the student for changes by letting them know in advance, and answering any questions they have about the changes
- Be alert to the effect of small changes to routine on the student which may be outwith your control
- Avoid surprises
- With sensitivity, encourage them to be more flexible

## **Personal Needs**

- It is helpful for the student to have a named person he can go to for additional support when he needs it. This may be a support tutor or a personal tutor
- If you are aware of the student's difficulties, and are alert to the signs of stress, or frustration, you can be more supportive
- If the student is becoming upset, you can encourage them to leave the room and find their support tutor or a suitable "bolthole"
- Students with AS become very upset if someone displays anger towards them. It is better to tell them you are angry, and why, in a calm, even voice

## **Recognising and managing stress and anxiety**

For additional information about recognising stress and anxiety see Section 6.

Although it would never be possible to remove the potential for stress entirely, there are some actions that can help prevent stress occurring. Many of these have already been mentioned, but the most useful are:

- Preparing the student for any changes
- Ensuring the student is clear about roles and structures
- Helping the student identify appropriate behaviours
- Providing secure support in terms of a named person and bolt hole

## Organisational skills

Students with AS find it difficult to prioritise workloads, meet deadlines, or organise their course materials.

- they may find it difficult to keep appointments if they don't understand why they need to be there
- changes to timetables can cause significant difficulties

There are a variety of strategies which can help.

- Provide timetables with all relevant information such as room and lecturer's name clearly shown.
- If they have to annotate a timetable, it should be checked for accuracy.
- It is helpful if they can have study schedules and 'to do' lists. This kind of activity could be done with learning support staff.
- They should be encouraged to file course materials as they are given out, and strategies for organising their course materials should be identified. This could be done with the whole class if appropriate, but if not, learning support staff could be involved.
- Mindmapping software like Inspiration or Mindmanager can be helpful for students with AS. It encourages brainstorming which can lead to organising and prioritising of information or activities

## Handling difficult situations

When students with AS hit a problem, no matter how seemingly small to others, they tend to deal with it by avoiding or ignoring the issue. This can sometimes lead to uncooperative behaviour such as poor attendance, or not completing homework. They are unlikely to be able to voice the difficulty, but a sensitive lecturer who has a good relationship with all his students, can often get to the bottom of it through informal conversation. Often the source is a minor matter which can quickly be resolved once it is understood.

## Academic performance

The combination of literal interpretation of language, impaired imagination and a poor ability with abstract thought produces difficulties with many ordinary academic tasks. Without appropriate support, the difficulties associated with AS may make it more difficult for students to achieve academic success within the same timescale as other students. Lecturers have an important role here.

- In general, it is helpful if information can be presented in concrete terms, and illustrated with visuals.

- It is important to be aware of ambiguities and implied information in handouts and instructions. Students with AS cope better with precise and explicit language. In some cases, it may be possible to reword a task or clarify the language, but for some assessment materials, you may need to consult with SQA about rewording the instructions without interfering with the spirit of the instrument of assessment. A good example of this is assessments in Communications where the aim may actually be to check comprehension of implied information. In cases where it is not possible to reframe the questions, the most important thing is to be aware of the difficulty the student might have, and if possible, try to find alternative ways of eliciting the required response.
- Some tasks call upon students to exercise imagination, eg case studies or demonstrating knowledge by imagining a situation which exemplifies certain abstract principles such as drawing a plan of a model office. These sorts of tasks can be extremely difficult for students with AS. Sometimes, the student can be helped by seeing examples of the types of response required. In other cases, a more targeted and individualised solution needs to be found. This is something that study support staff may be able to assist with.

❖ *Julie was asked to design an office layout as part of her Office Skills course. She said she couldn't do this because she couldn't draw. When questioned about her response, Julie explained she couldn't draw what wasn't there. Julie's lecturer took her around college and showed her actual examples of working offices. Julie was then able to design an office based on the examples she had seen*

- Sometimes the student with AS cannot see the point of a particular task or method. This is often because they do not realise the purpose of the task is to allow students to demonstrate their learning. For example, they may not see why they should put down all their workings in a maths problem. It usually helps if the purpose can be explained to them.
- It is important not to assume that the student with AS is aware he is behind with his work, or has failed or passed an assignment. Information needs to be made explicit. What might be perfectly clear to other students, may not be to the student with AS. It may be helpful to give the information in writing.
- Students with AS may need more time and practical help to make choices
- Information overload can often be a problem for students with AS. It is important not to give too much information orally at one time.

### **Coping with assessments**

Because of the communication difficulties associated with AS, it is sometimes difficult for students to demonstrate their understanding of a subject in an assessment. They may have difficulty interpreting questions accurately, or may go off at a tangent and give unsatisfactory responses even when it is clear to a lecturer that they know the answer. Some will be disadvantaged by the speed of their writing or by untidy handwriting. People with AS will have difficulty with implied information, struggling to

“read between the lines” so that they can come to their own conclusions from the information given. The fact that they are likely to interpret information in a very literal way may affect the way they respond to an assessment question. Another difficulty could be related to concentration when they might find it hard to keep focussed throughout the assessment. Restricted imagination may also affect the way they answer questions. Some students with AS also have associated difficulties of dyslexia and dyspraxia.

With this in mind, it may be possible for teaching staff to amend or redraft their internal assessment questions, provided this does not affect the spirit of the assessment procedure, or formally request alternative assessment arrangements from the exam board. It is likely that there is already a named person in college who is responsible for applying for alternative assessment arrangements for other students with disabilities and subject lecturers may be able to discuss alternative arrangements with them.

Detailed information of these are given in Section 7.

### **Motivation**

Students with AS might not be motivated for work they perceive uninteresting and as a result may not attend classes. Like most students, they are better motivated if they understand the reason for an activity, but may have difficulty accepting that they cannot be selective about which parts of the curriculum they do.

- It will help if the lecturer explains sensitively, but firmly that there are essential core requirements which are not debatable.
- It will help if he knows that he is expected to complete this work as part of his course, and he needs to have explicit guidelines about what is expected, as well as a clear time limit.
- If there are concerns about attendance, it is important to explore the reasons why they are not going to class as it might be completely unrelated to the subject content or what is going on in the classroom.

Some students with AS may appear very absorbed in a particular interest and this can sometimes get in the way of other work. A lecturer may be able to find a way to harness that interest profitably.

❖ *Gordon was a student on NC Computing. He was extremely interested in learning to create his own webpage, almost to the exclusion of the other subjects in the course. His lecturer reached an amicable agreement with Gordon that he would help him with this, once all his other work had been completed. He was also encouraged to show other lecturers and his support tutor the end result. In handling Gordon like this, his lecturer ensured that he was still able to fulfil his specific interest and get some positive feedback, while at the same time completing other course requirements.*

## Concentration

Students with AS can be distracted by both internal and external stimuli. They need help to work out what is relevant, or what should be prioritised. Other support staff can share the responsibility for this with the subject lecturer.

- Individualised study support can help, by providing additional time in a quiet and less distracting setting. Liaison between study support staff and teaching staff is essential for success, since the student himself may not be able to explain his difficulties
- In class, the student may need to be frequently refocused and prompted
- Precise instructions, with a time limit for completion can help keep the student on task

## Completing homework

❖ *Three students with AS were on different courses, and all were getting into trouble for not handing in their homework. They all said there were too many distractions at home and they would prefer an empty room in college which offered no distractions. One said he could not read his own handwriting. They all said that when they thought about the homework required, they could not break it down into small steps and therefore the work became too big to cope with. Therefore the work wasn't done, and this caused them great anxiety*

- If homework is given out at the end of the class, the student may miss the information because he is concentrating on gathering up belongings and thinking about where they are going next. Either set homework tasks earlier, or make sure the student has heard and understood the instructions about homework
- If a student is not completing homework, it could be because they have not written it down properly. Many have messy handwriting, often due to the associated disorders of dyspraxia or dyslexia. Written instructions can help.
- If the student has to complete a large piece of work or a project in their own time, try to break that down into smaller goals to be completed one at a time, with a clear date for completion
- Write homework tasks into a slot on the timetable
- Many students with AS are easily distracted and working at home may not be easy to manage. If possible, arrange for them to complete homework in a quiet place in college such as the library
- For those with very rigid thinking, college work needs to be completed in college, not at home. They will benefit from a quiet place in college to complete their work.

## **Residential and Placements**

Both residential and placements represent major changes to routine, and can be enormously stressful for students with AS. They need to be well prepared for these new experiences, and should be given clear information about timescales, where they are going, who will be involved, what sort of activities there will be, and what will be expected of them. Photographs and other visuals can be very helpful in preparing the student. In the case of a placement, a familiarisation visit to meet key staff is advisable. This would also be helpful for residential, but may not be possible.

In addition, relevant placement or residential staff need preparation too. They should be given information that will allow them to interact successfully with the student and help make the experience positive for all concerned. Any information passed to these staff must be agreed with the student.

Travel to placements also needs to be considered. For some students, travelling independently to a new place can cause considerable anxiety.

If the student becomes too stressed, he may refuse the activity. Careful preparation can allay anxiety.

### **Self travel**

Some students cannot self travel freely. They need to be taught each bus route before they can manage it alone. In addition, they need to be taught coping strategies in case something unplanned happens, such as the bus not turning up, or it being full.

The responsibility for teaching self travel may not fall to the college. However, useful strategies for assisting with self travel are:

- Providing photographs of landmarks on the route
- Going over bus timetables and maps of the route
- Developing and writing up coping strategies for unplanned events

## SECTION 9

### Exit Guidance

Just as the student with AS required assistance with the transition into FE, he is also likely to need support to help him move onto the next stage. He may find it difficult to decide what his next step will be. When he has decided, he may find applying for courses or jobs difficult. Without support, the student with AS may drift aimlessly, and become isolated. Support for the transition out of college may be provided by different people in different colleges, but in the case of students with AS, it is important that a familiar and trusted person is involved in the process.

- As the student reaches the end of their course, check they are fully aware of the course completion date
- Help them develop a plan for their next step
- Some students may wish to progress onto a higher level course in college but be unable to, because they have not passed all the elements of their current course. They may not fully grasp this, and may need help to accept this, and plan what they will do next
- If the student is progressing onto an educational course in another institution, make contact with the relevant support adviser, with the student's permission. If possible arrange for the student to meet someone who might become their named person in that institution.
- There are some agencies who work with vulnerable students, and assist them make the transition into employment. If appropriate, and with the student's permission, refer the student to such an agency. If possible, identify a named person in the agency. (see information on page 49)
- Assist the student with application forms, and encourage 'helpful' disclosure.

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Vermeulum, Peter (2001) *Autistic Thinking-This is the title*. Jessica Kingsley Publishers Ltd, London

Vermeulen, Peter (2000) *I am Special*. Jessica Kingsley Publishers Ltd, London

Willey, Liane Holliday (1999) *Pretending to be Normal*. Jessica Kingsley Publishers Ltd, London

Winner, Michelle Garcia (2000) *What Makes the Person with Social-Cognitive Deficits Tick?* Jessica Kingsley Publishers Ltd. London

#### Fiction

Hatton, Mark (2003) *The Curious Incident of the dog in the Night Time*. Vintage, London

## Information, Support Groups and Web Sites

The following organisations offer extensive advice, support and assistance:

National Autistic Society

393 City Road

London

EC1V 1NG

[www.nas.org.uk](http://www.nas.org.uk)

National Co-ordinator (Scotland)

Robert McKay

Telephone 0141 221 8090

Scottish Autistic Society

Head Office

Hilton House

Alloa Business Centre

The Whins

Alloa

FK10 3SA

[www.autism-in-scotland.org.uk](http://www.autism-in-scotland.org.uk)

Telephone 01259 720044

The following agency offers an information service for professionals and parents:

Oasis

Brock H

Gigg Lane

Brockenhurst

Hampshire

SO42 7RE

[www.udel.edu/bkirby/asperger/](http://www.udel.edu/bkirby/asperger/)

Helpline 090 68 633 201

**The following is a social group for adults with Asperger's Syndrome, who live in the Edinburgh area:**

Edinburgh and Lothian Asperger Society (ELAS)  
[www.elas-scot.org.uk](http://www.elas-scot.org.uk)  
Telephone Mike and Isabel Bruce 0131 229 6101

**The following Voluntary Organisation provides employment consultancy and support to work ready adults who have Asperger Syndrome:**

Moving Intowork  
57 Norton Park  
Edinburgh  
[www.intowork.org.uk](http://www.intowork.org.uk)  
Telephone 0131 475 2600

### **Benefit Agencies**

People who have Asperger's Syndrome are usually eligible for benefits. Students with AS who are under 20 years of age, can claim Incapacity Benefit in Youth depending on the amount of hours they are in class. Incapacity Benefit is non means tested.

Organisations who help individuals find out what benefits they are entitled to, and complete forms are:

The Action Group  
Norton Park  
57 Albion Road  
Edinburgh  
EH7 5QY  
Telephone 0131 475 2315

FAIR (Family Advice and Information Resource)  
25-27 West Nicolson Street  
Edinburgh  
EH8 9DB  
Telephone 0131 662 1962









# Appendix II - Information for Staff

## Support for Learning Details

Student:	
Course:	
Tutor:	

Nature of difficulties:

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Reasonable adjustments:

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Special assessment/Exam arrangements:

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