

Asperger Syndrome

What is Asperger Syndrome?

Asperger syndrome (AS), also known as **Aspergers**, is a developmental disorder characterised by significant difficulties in social interaction and non-verbal communication, along with restricted and repetitive patterns of behaviour and interests.

How might this effect someone at the interview process or in the workplace?

Interviews do not always allow people to present their skills and talents as well as they would like. This can be especially the case for people with Aspergers who have difficulty with social cues and communication.

At interviews, employers are looking for candidates that come across as bright, enthusiastic and capable. This is not something people with Asperger excel at, especially in a stressful interview situation. People with Aspergers can come across as very truthful and honest interpreting questions in a very literal way. Because of this, it can be easy to miss the real talents hidden underneath.

In an interview or in the workplace, a person with Aspergers may have difficult with the following:

- Dressing appropriately, or in a way that would be expected.
- Making eye contact for the appropriate amount of time
- Engaging in small talk
- Answering open ended questions and having to think of answers on the spot
- Problems with social skills, connecting with others, making friends
- Difficulty with empathy and understanding another person's point of view
- Understanding the tasks they've been set unless they've been outlined in a clear way.

Interview and Workplace adjustments

At interview stage Into Work would advocate different adjustments depending on the person's capabilities.

- Assistance with disclosure
- Liaising with the interview panel beforehand is helpful - asking for workplace adjustments such as a less formal interview.
- Sourcing information from the panel about the format of the interview
- Asking for the questions beforehand
- Arranging a work-site visit beforehand to check out the environment
- Arrange to speak with a manager about the job

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- Ask the panel if they would consider assessing the person through a work-trial
- Discuss the job role in depth, find out what the core-tasks are
- Advising the panel about how they ask the questions

Once someone secures employment Into Work can advocate on their behalf and get the employer to consider the following options:

- Workplace adjustments, consider the environment i.e. sounds, smell, lights and location of the desk
- Build in a longer induction if required
- Build in a good structure to the person's day with predictability and consistency with their routine
- Provide an Employment Adviser to act as a job coach in the initial stage. This person could help with disability awareness training and suggest ideas for workplace adjustments if required.
- Identify a mentor for the individual in the workplace
- Build in regular feedback/supervision sessions providing feedback to the person about their progress

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