

Transition toolkit

Helping you support a child through change



By Alice Stobart

Contents

Introduction	3
Autism and transitions	4
Considerations for success	5
Transition teams	6
Practical strategies to support transitions	7
The transition into an Early Years placement	7
The transition from Early Years to primary school	8
The transition from primary to secondary school	9
Transition Packs	10
Prompt Cards	11
Role of parents/carers	12
The transition from secondary school to college /Further Education	13
The strengths of many students with autism	15
Some common difficulties for students with autism at college / university	16
How can tutors help?	17
What other help is available at University?	18
Further information	19
Resources and useful websites	20



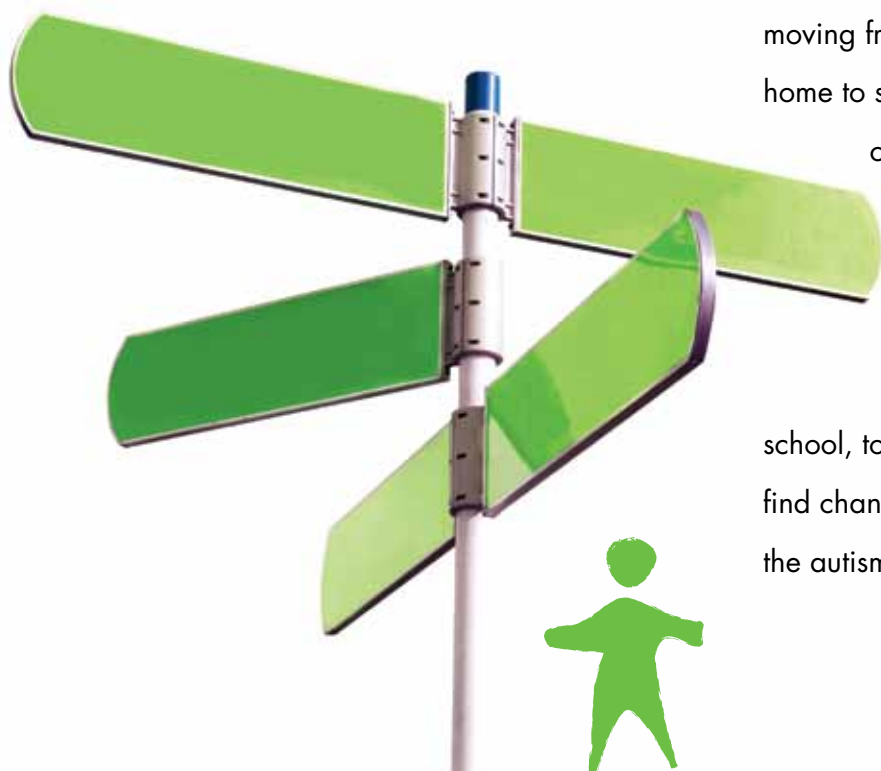
Introduction

There are many resources and links on the internet, websites and as well as publications offering advice and guidance in supporting people on the autism spectrum through major transition points in their lives.

This toolkit is a summary of the common issues surrounding transition for young people on the autism spectrum, as well as a guide to the considerations that should be taken by those supporting them. We offer some practical strategies to support transition periods as well as provide a list of useful links to other organisations and support materials.

The ideas and strategies suggested in this toolkit will need to be adapted to be applicable in different situations and with different ages and levels of understanding. However, whether supporting a child moving from nursery to primary school, a pre-adolescent moving from a primary to a secondary setting, or a young person entering college or a work placement, the principles for support remain the same. Where there are specific considerations for particular transition points, these are clearly identified.

Transition is not just about major changes that occur in phases throughout life. There are many transitions that occur during a typical day. For example, from one task to another; moving from one room to another; from home to school/ college; inside to outside; classtime to breaktime. As life moves from babyhood to childhood to adolescence to adulthood, so are there many transitions: from home to nursery, to school, to secondary school, to college, to life beyond. Many people find changes difficult, even more so those on the autism spectrum.



Autism and transitions

Change is difficult for many people on the autism spectrum. This is because of an impairment in flexibility of thought, and anxiety linked to the unknown, common in many people with autism. People on the autism spectrum have difficulties in predicting what might happen in a new setting so prefer to stick with what is familiar. Difficulties in social understanding mean that a person with autism is likely to take longer to understand the expectations and social rules of a new environment or social situation. And due to difficulty in 'reading' and interpreting social cues, a person with autism may not know how to respond or how to behave in many common social environments.

The need for routine and familiarity leads to anxiety when interruptions occur. Many people on the autism spectrum have rigid thought processes, and high levels of anxiety are linked to unpredictability. They respond best to a consistent approach, and this is

likely to be interrupted during a transition period which can include working with new staff teams.

People with autism often have an intense focus once engaged with a task, and it can be difficult for them to disengage from one task and re-engage in a new activity, particularly if the previous task was not finished; thus on-going projects in secondary school or college can cause anxiety.

The sensory processing differences that many people on the autism spectrum experience can also contribute to the difficulties associated with transition periods as the person may quickly become overwhelmed with sensory stimulus in a new environment. They may have adjusted to the sensory environment in one setting, and the unfamiliarity of new stimulus could well be distressing in the initial stages of a transition.



Considerations for success

Learn about the individual:

It is vital that information is shared from one setting to the next during a transition phase.

- ▶ All staff need to have an understanding of autism and training should be put in place to ensure this. They need to understand how autism affects the individual. A pupil profile is a document which outlines key facts about an individual and highlights points to consider.
- ▶ Staff need to understand how the person communicates. Considerations may be their need for explicit, often visual, instructions; the need for tasks to be broken down into manageable steps, and that their processing time may be slower than that of their peers.
- ▶ Staff need to be aware of, and consistently implement, special measures to support an individual. These may include movement breaks/ time out cards, specific strategies such as a different lunch routine or a visual schedule. There needs to be a good match between the person's needs and the support given to meet them.
- ▶ It is important that staff have realistic and appropriate expectations of the young person on the autism spectrum. The profile of the person may initially make it difficult to gauge their capabilities or they may have extreme ability in some areas, whilst experiencing real difficulties in others. The best ways to gather information about a young person include: observation and/ or discussions with the individual; discussions with their parents/ carers, and other professionals who have worked with them personally; past reports and supporting documents.



Transition teams

The role of a transition team is to ensure information about an individual is shared, and plans are implemented to facilitate as smooth a transition period as possible. The team should consider what support should be provided to reduce anxieties where possible. The team can be made up of a variety of individuals, most often including parents/ carers, staff/ professionals from the previous setting, and staff and professionals from the new setting. Often 'outside' professionals who are not from either setting but who will support the young person across settings will be included in the transition team (for example, social worker/ educational psychologist/ therapists etc).

The role of the transition team is to exchange information through individual profiles, Behaviour Support Plans (BSPs), Individual Education Plans (IEPs), and documents explaining any support strategies, for example, social skills groups, communication support etc. The transition team should work together to prepare an individualised 'transition pack' for the young

person, with information and materials (presented in an appropriate format making it easy for them to access) to help them understand the transition process and familiarise them with any changes. Visits to the new setting, photos, maps, a workbook, staff information, prompt cards and Social Stories™ should be included in the individual's 'transition pack' to help prepare the young person for the move.

It is important that an holistic view is taken, considering all aspects of the young person's life including living arrangements (if these are to change), opportunities for work experience, education, leisure opportunities, opportunities for social interaction and to have an accessible and meaningful social life. The provision for advocacy should be carefully considered, as well as the type of support needed and valued by the person themselves. This kind of holistic planning is in line with good practice in Person Centred Planning (see PCP toolkit on AET website).



Practical strategies to support transitions

In addition to this toolkit we recommend the materials and advice given by the following organisations and programmes:

- ▶ The Inclusion Development Programme
- ▶ Mencap Transition Guide
- ▶ Transition Information Network
- ▶ NAS Help! and Early Bird Programmes

(See Resources section on page 23 for further details).

Below are some strategies and considerations specific to different transition phases

Inclusion Development Programme

mencap

Transition Information Network

The National Autistic Society help!

The transition into an Early Years placement:

- ▶ Early bird and HELP! Programmes for parents. Useful for nursery staff/ 1:1 support staff to attend the programme with parents
- ▶ Inclusion Development Programme materials (see National Strategies website - <http://nationalstrategies.standards.dcsf.gov.uk/node/289529>)
- ▶ Home visits
- ▶ Visits to nursery with parents/ carers. Sample various sessions e.g. snacktime, playtime, circletime etc
- ▶ Photobook with relevant staff pictures, photos of activities and areas in nursery setting e.g. sandpit, lunch table, doll's corner etc
- ▶ Autism specific training for staff
- ▶ Pen portrait of child to be drawn up with parents



The transition from Early Years to primary school:

- ▶ Help! and Early Bird Plus programmes for parents
- ▶ Access Inclusion Development Programme resources/materials
- ▶ Transition visits into new school, child to be accompanied by a familiar adult, and sample various sessions including structured lessons, assembly, lunch and play
- ▶ Transition pack to be developed for the child, including photos and a “all about my new school” booklet
- ▶ Opportunities to meet teacher, Teaching Assistant/ Learning Support staff
- ▶ Transition planning with parents and Early Years staff should include a pupil pen portrait, Behaviour Support Plan, sharing of documents/information and two way transition visits (i.e. primary staff to visit child in Early Years setting and vice versa)
- ▶ Focus on “learning to learn” behaviours (Individual Education Plan targets should reflect this) for example listening to teacher, adult directed tasks, sitting for longer periods etc
- ▶ Annual class to class transition to be facilitated with the following considerations: information transfer; visits; personal introductions; visual reminders of new expectations/ changes/ but also what will remain the same (for example same peers, same dining room etc); transfer of attachment/ allegiance; transfer of classroom; support on first day; allowance for purposeful return (e.g. delivering note to previous teacher)



The transition from primary to secondary school:

We recommend the Inclusion Development Programme materials/ resources for secondary schools (<http://nationalstrategies.standards.dcsf.gov.uk/node/289529>) and the board game "Moving on up" (<http://www.therapeuticresources.com/86-5286text.html>)

Staff should consider which of the following might be appropriate for an individual (many may apply to other transition phases too, with a few adaptations!)

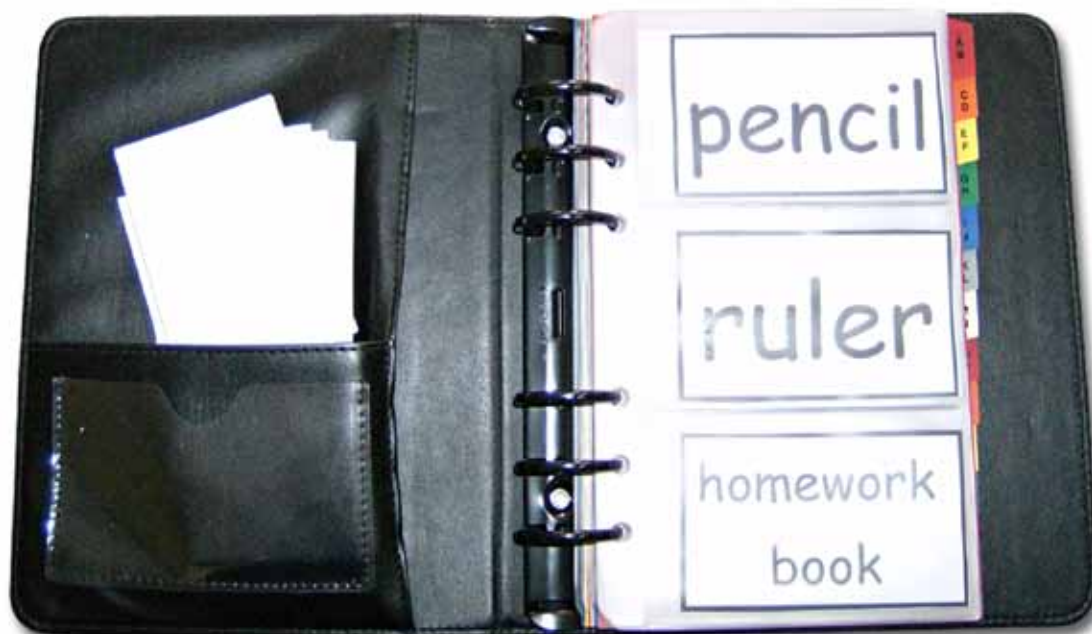
- ▶ Provide a map of the new school building; colour code subjects and classrooms; highlight important areas e.g dining hall, locker, hall, form room
- ▶ Make the timetable easy to use for the individual
- ▶ Create daily checklists so the correct items are taken to/ from school according to daily activities
- ▶ Create a user-friendly diary for organising home work
- ▶ Set up a "buddy-system" with a designated peer/ group to help the individual move between classes
- ▶ Assign a member of staff as a "mentor" to help in times of 'crisis' (for example to call upon if pupil becomes anxious over losing dinner money). The same person could be the home-school liaison
- ▶ Plan for a consistent approach between all lessons. A staff communication system (in diary form) may be useful to pass on information. Remember to consider a Behaviour Support Plan or Pupil Profile
- ▶ Make provision for a "chill out" space for an individual to withdraw to when necessary
- ▶ Consider procedures for break and lunchtimes which can often be the most stressful time of the day. Options include a "circle of friends" or a lunch club as a way to structure these times. However, be vigilant about bullying, pupils on the autism spectrum can be easy targets.



The Transition pack should include information about the following:

- ▶ **New environment** - maps, locker, bells
- ▶ **New expectations** - break/ lunch times, transition between classes
- ▶ **New vocabulary** - 'tutor group', 'head of year', subject-specific vocabulary
- ▶ **Key people** - mentor, form tutor, SENCO, who/ how to ask for help
- ▶ **Quiet area** - library, allocated area for stress management
- ▶ **The timetable** - how to use it, formatted for the individual's understanding
- ▶ **Systems for organization** - diary, checklists for materials and books
- ▶ **Homework** - expectations and explanations
- ▶ **Transition workbook** - addresses differences between primary and secondary school, and new experiences with a step-by-step approach (see www.autismtoolkit.com/Transition%20Workbook.doc)
- ▶ **Personal Profile** - written by pupil (with LSA/ parent/ teacher support), includes all the information new staff should know about the pupil

Planner/ Filofax - practise using this towards the end of Year 6 so the individual is familiar with using a system for recording homework, remembering equipment and books, and communicating messages between home and school.



Prompt cards

Prompt cards are useful if designed to address an individual's specific anxieties about a particular change or transition. They can be used in the upper stages of primary school through to adulthood.

Example:

If I can't find my way to class

- ▶ I will get out my map in my Filofax and try to work it out
- ▶ I will try to ask someone in my class
- ▶ I will ask a teacher
- ▶ I will ask the secretary in the school office

If I arrive late

- ▶ I will go to the school office and tell the secretary I have arrived at school
- ▶ She will mark the register
- ▶ I will go to my lesson

If I forget my homework

- ▶ I will tell my form tutor
- ▶ I will tell the subject teacher when I get to the lesson
- ▶ The teacher will tell me where to put my homework when I bring it in tomorrow

People who can help me

- ▶ Mr Davis - form tutor
- ▶ Mrs Singh - SENCO
- ▶ Miss Robbs - LSA
- ▶ Jason - mentor
- ▶ Miss Everson - secretary

Role of parents/carers

- ▶ Meet regularly with the 'Transition team' to express any concerns/anxieties or update them on any relevant developments at home
- ▶ Use countdowns and calendars to indicate run-up to starting at the new school
- ▶ Familiarise child with new uniform, school bag, Filofax/planner etc
- ▶ Practice the journey to school
- ▶ Visit the school with your child
- ▶ Establish links with a contact person at the school
- ▶ Establish a homework routine/system for meeting deadlines



The transition from secondary school to college/Further Education:

Joshua Muggleton is a 20 year old Psychology student at St Andrews University. He has a diagnosis of Asperger syndrome. He wrote the following about his view on supporting transitions for young people on the autism spectrum, based on his own experiences:

Transition from secondary school to college is probably the hardest area for me to comment on as I had a very unusual transition. However, I think it can be reasonably simple. Firstly, thought needs to be given to induction - plenty of time to look around the college, and sort out time tables well in advance. There also needs to be thought as to what to wear (if coming from a secondary school with a uniform policy): what is acceptable and what is not?

Equally, it might be worth observing classes to see the very different structure. So, for example, if the student is going to study A level Maths, Business and Psychology, it might be useful for them to sit in at the back of one class of each of those subjects to see how student-teacher interaction differs from school.

Thought also needs to be given to the admin/personal side. If having a 1:1 support worker would be useful/is being put in place, then time to get to know that support worker in a relaxed non educational setting is important, for example meeting up at a cafe (home is not a good idea, it needs to be neutral ground). The support worker needs to get to know the student, the parents/carers, and what both want. For me, it was mostly just having someone who could take notes for me, and to simply be there as security, although it will be different for everyone. Keep in mind that the student may want some distance between themselves and the support worker to try and seem "normal".

It is also worth having the support worker get to know the lecturers, after meeting with the student. This allows them to work out what they are going to need to do, and then talk to lecturers on how to do it in a way that works for them as well as the student.

Some thought to training for all staff should be given. Something like a 2 hour session on Asperger syndrome can give staff some knowledge before hand. However this needs to be arranged early - inset/training days get booked up well in advance!

Thought to a quiet area should also be given, if that is something the student would find useful.

It is worth looking into organisational tools. College lectures are very different from lessons at school, and there is a lot more self-study. If this gets timetabled into a weekly schedule, it means it is more likely to get done. It also allows the student to keep on top of work and deadlines. It is quite common to be set big pieces of work (say 5000 words+) that make up a significant portion of the grade, but where lecturers have minimal intervention - this needs to be broken down so it is seen as lots of little tasks, not one big one.

As for transition into life and work, a lot of the same principles apply: advanced orientation, time spent observing the new social rules, peer/ staff awareness, support worker orientation/ introductions, help with scheduling/ organising etc. Often the key difference with transition into life is more home based - work is comparatively highly structured and so is less of a problem area. Firstly, if the individual is moving away from home, to a new town, they may have to learn new schemas. Often (and in my case), people have learnt schemas for how to interact with people, how to shop, how to use public transport ONLY for where they live. They may have to come up with new schemas when they move somewhere else. For example, I learnt exactly when to press the "stop" button on a bus when I wanted to go from home into town and vice versa. At St Andrews, I had to learn NEW places to press it, which took a while.

It may be that life skills training done at home needs to be repeated in the new home.

Often the biggest problem is home organisation: when to change the bedding, when to pay bills, how to manage money, when to do the laundry etc. What I generally advise for this is creating a monthly schedule. For example, the first weekend of every month bills are paid, every 2nd and 4th week the bedding is changed,

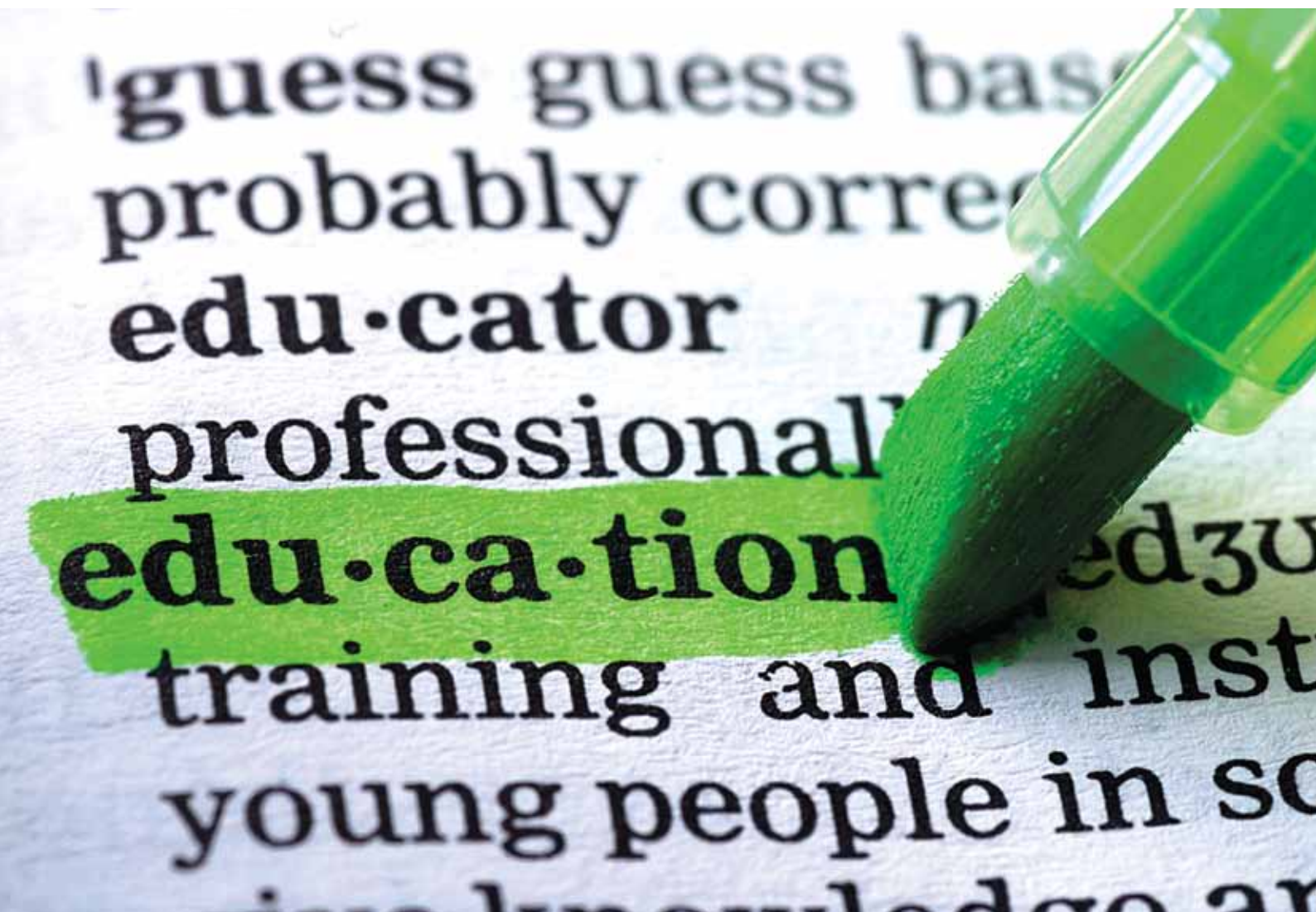
every Wednesday and Saturday the laundry is done.

Also remember that things often taken for granted may not be known by a person on the autism spectrum - for example how to do laundry, how to boil an egg, how to load a dishwasher.

Food is also often troublesome. Often people fall into habits which are not great. I know one young man with Aspergers who for every day had new potatoes, boiled frozen mixed veg, and either breaded fish, chicken, or

on weekends, pork. This may be simple, but some more variety is needed. Doing something like creating a 2 weekly or 4 weekly schedule of what to eat is sometimes needed (including recipes!). This also needs to be factored into shopping. It is worth working out exactly what is eaten in a 2/4 week period, and making a rolling shopping list based on that, so they know when they go shopping exactly what they NEED to buy, as well as how much they can spend on things they WANT to buy.

People on the autism spectrum, including those with Asperger syndrome, have many strengths, for example they can demonstrate the ability to study an area in great depth. Their motivation in researching a specific topic and pursuing their goals reflects their ability to focus and study in-depth. This ability positively contributes to the student's learning experience at University. However, they may need some support to understand the various social interactions that may be required at University.



The strengths of many students with autism:

- ▶ **Intense concentration when studying**
- ▶ **Original ideas**
- ▶ **Independence**
- ▶ **Attention to detail**
- ▶ **Capable of extensive research**
- ▶ **An affinity with computers and other technology**
- ▶ **Can be reliable concerning deadlines and tutorials**



Some common difficulties for students with autism at college/ university:

- ▶ Difficulties in interacting with other students and tutors, particularly when participating in group work.
- ▶ Misinterpreting social interaction causing distress or confusion.
- ▶ Anxiety, especially in situations where the student is unsure of what is expected of him/her.
- ▶ Problems in forming and maintaining friendships that may lead to a sense of isolation and depression.
- ▶ Literal interpretation of language, metaphors, clichés and jokes can cause confusion.
- ▶ Sensory over-load, such as sensitivity to bright light, which may lead to discomfort when using computers.
- ▶ Easily distracted so important information may be lost within a lecture or presentation.
- ▶ Motivational problems may result in the student's lack of application concerning some aspects of the course.
- ▶ Written work that shows weakness in structure and organisation; phrases and vocabulary are sometimes inappropriate.
- ▶ Confusing irrelevant with relevant information resulting in assignments that do not address the question posed. All information seems to be of equal importance.
- ▶ Focusing on inappropriate details again may lead to results that do not reflect accurately the student's ability.
- ▶ Poor organisational skills in academic and personal lives, which may cause the student to miss tutorials and important appointments.
- ▶ Reliance on routine and dislike of sudden change. Revised exam or timetable changes may cause a feeling of panic.

How can tutors help?

All students are different and tutors will need to be prepared to get to know the individual and plan strategies which support their concerns. The following considerations may be helpful:

- ▶ In order to diminish any anxiety the student may have, tutors should be prepared to meet the student before the course to discuss their concerns and requirements.
- ▶ Clear and detailed written information about each aspect of the course should be provided, together with practical arrangements, deadlines and assessment requirements. **Visual information is processed more effectively than verbal information.**
- ▶ The student can be helped to explore personal supportive strategies, which may include ways of reducing stress, getting enough rest, exercise and practising self-care.
- ▶ A Learning Support Assistant, mentor or 'buddy', in addition to tutor support, may prove very beneficial, especially when dealing with difficulties in understanding the boundaries of social interaction.
- ▶ The student needs to prioritise and plan work effectively. A diary and wall chart with details of tutorials and deadlines to improve organizational skills can be invaluable. It would be beneficial to encourage listing details of all goals to be achieved from short term to long term.
- ▶ A student on the autism spectrum may not know they should study in their own time. It would be helpful if this is made explicit.
- ▶ Tutors can help by providing clear, concise written instructions highlighting the relevant points. Bulleted lists of the main points of tutorials or discussions can encourage the student to focus on the relevant information.
- ▶ The student may benefit from written handouts prior to lectures allowing familiarisation with key concepts and terminology. This enables the student to follow the lecture focusing upon the main points.
- ▶ It would be helpful to discuss what is required in writing essays to ensure the student is focusing on the correct line of enquiry; examples of essays and other course work can provide clearer guidance of good practice.
- ▶ A fellow student 'buddy' could help with note taking or group work.
- ▶ The student may find e-mail communication more comfortable and effective than speaking directly to the tutor.
- ▶ Tutors can help by giving specific, concise instructions using clear, unambiguous language.
- ▶ Be aware of sensory issues such as bright sunlight or the colour of ink used on whiteboards. The student may feel more comfortable when using coloured overlays when reading text.
- ▶ Concrete realistic goals together with encouragement and praise can assist motivation.

What other help is available at University?

Each University is different but some common support is available for students on the autism spectrum.

- ▶ Students with autism may be entitled to additional funding for extra study-related needs, i.e. Disabled Students' Allowances (DSA). Students can contact the Additional Needs team in Student Services for more information.
- ▶ Students with autism may have individual note-taking, mentoring support &/or study skills support with a specialist tutor, arranged by Student Services. It may be helpful to liaise with them.
- ▶ Students with autism are usually entitled to apply for extra time in exams and class tests and may require access to either a word processor or scribe. The student is required to apply for adjustments in formal examinations through the Additional Needs team in Student Services.
- ▶ Assistance and adaptive technology are available through the Extra Library Support and Assistance team (ELSA) for example: <http://library.northampton.ac.uk/elsa>.
- ▶ The Centre for Academic Practice, CfAP, at some Universities can assist students develop their writing style and key skills.



Further information

University Students with Autism and Asperger's Syndrome:

www.users.dircon.co.uk/~cns/

Harpur, J., Lawler, M. and Fitzgerald, M. (2002) Succeeding in College with Asperger Syndrome:

A Student Guide. London: Jessica Kingsley.

Jamieson, J. and Jamieson C. (2004) Managing Asperger Syndrome at College and University:

A Resource For Students, Tutors And Support Services.

National Autistic Society:

www.nas.org.uk

Asperger's Hub:

www.healthhubs.com/asperger/

Autism Helpline:

Tel: 0870 600 8585



Resources and useful websites

EDUCATION

The Autism Education Trust

<http://www.autismeducationtrust.org.uk/>

Inclusion Development Programme

<http://nationalstrategies.standards.dcsf.gov.uk/primary/features/inclusion/sen/idp>

NAS information on Education

www.nas.org.uk/nas/jsp/polopoly.jsp?d=303

For advice on the Early Years/ starting school:

www.attentionautism.com

Special Educational Needs Code of Practice

www.teachernet.gov.uk/docbank/index.cfm?id=3724

SEN Toolkit

www.teachernet.gov.uk/wholeschool/sen/teacherlearningassistant/toolkit/

Special Educational Needs: A guide for Parents and Carers

www.teachernet.gov.uk/docbank/index.cfm?id=3755

Transition Information Network

www.transitionsupportprogramme.org.uk

www.transitioninfonetwork.org.uk

NAS Education Advocacy – including Tribunal Support Scheme (0845 070 4002)

www.nas.org.uk/nas/jsp/polopoly.jsp?d=143&a=3435

IPSEA – Independent Panel for Special Educational Needs – SEN Helpline: 0800 018 4016

www.ipsea.org.uk

Mencap for Transition Guide

www.mencap.org.uk

Resources and useful websites

EDUCATION

ACE – Advisory Centre for Education – Help line: 0808 800 5793

www.ace-ed.org.uk

Parent Partnership – telephone: 0118 974 6240

www.parentpartnership.org.uk/

SENDA – Special Educational Needs and Disability Act 2001

www.hmso.gov.uk/acts/acts2001/20010010.htm

SENDIST – Special Educational Needs and Disability Tribunal

- Discrimination Helpline: 020 7925 5750

www.sendist.gov.uk/

ASD Transition Toolkit

www.autismtoolkit.com/

DfES Guidance on Autistic Spectrum Disorders – Current available guidance

www.teachernet.gov.uk/wholeschool/sen/asds/

Skill – National Bureau for Students With Disabilities

www.skill.org.uk/

Connexions – This service aims to provide a single point of access for all 13-19 year olds to help them prepare the transition to work and adult life.

www.connexions.gov.uk/

Social Stories™

www.thegraycenter.org/socialstories.asp?catID=3

Website offering some free picture cards to print out and use as communication tools

www.do2learn.com

TreeHouse – TreeHouse is the national charity for autism education. We believe that education is key to transforming the lives of children and young people with autism, and the lives of their families. TreeHouse runs a special school for children and young people with autism; provides information and training for parents and professionals; commissions research and campaigns for change. Our vision is that children and young people with autism achieve their potential and live the life they choose.

www.treehouse.org.uk

Talk about Autism – Talk about Autism is a new campaign by autism charity TreeHouse, supported by TalkTalk. The campaign aims to increase public understanding of autism.

www.talkaboutautism.org.uk

Resources and useful websites

ASD RELATED

Prospects – the National Autistic Society employment and training service for people with autism and Asperger syndrome who wish to work

www.nas.org.uk/nas/jsp/polopoly.jsp?d=473&a=2348

Berkshire Autistic Society: Support into Employment Project

www.autismberkshire.org.uk/BlueTrim%20Files/employment.htm

Thames Valley Employers Network on Disability (TVENOD) – A registered charity and a company limited by guarantee. Formed in 1992 and led by employers, the Network promotes awareness of the issues relating to the employment of people with disabilities. It is based in Reading and serves the Thames Valley area.

www.tvenod.org.uk

Shaw Trust – a national charity that provides training and work opportunities for people who are disadvantaged in the labour market due to disability, ill health or other social circumstances

www.shaw-trust.org.uk

Skill: National Bureau for Students With Disabilities

www.skill.org.uk

Connexions – service aiming to provide a single point of access for all 13-19 year olds to help them prepare the transition to work and adult life

www.connexions.gov.uk

Resources and useful websites

EMPLOYMENT

National Autistic Society

www.autism.org.uk

Public Autism Resource & Information Service (PARIS) – NAS Information Service

www.info.autism.org.uk/Pages/Index.aspx

Asperger and ASD UK on-line forum

www.asd-forum.org.uk/forum

Autism Connect

www.autismconnect.org

OASIS – Online Asperger Syndrome Information & Support

www.udel.edu/bkirby/asperger/

Websites by or for people with an ASD

www.nas.org.uk/nas/jsp/polopoly.jsp?d=119&a=3794



Choosing a secondary school: questions for parents/carers to ask or consider

- ▶ How does the school define 'inclusion'?
- ▶ How does the SEN department operate?
- ▶ When/how are pupils offered additional support?
- ▶ How are Learning Support Staff assigned to pupils / classes?
- ▶ How does 'pastoral care' operate in the school?
- ▶ How does the Behaviour policy operate with SEN pupils? What sanctions are used?
- ▶ How many pupils are in each year 7 class?
- ▶ Who is responsible for statements and writing Individual Education Plans (IEPs)? How is progress of the IEP reviewed and who will be involved?
- ▶ What support is there for homework?
- ▶ What systems are in place for communicating with parents of SEN pupils?
- ▶ What additional systems are in place for transition of year 6 pupils with SEN?
- ▶ Ask for a copy of the school SEN / inclusion policy and behaviour policy.

Autism specific:

- ▶ What autism training have staff received?
- ▶ What experience / knowledge does the school and specifically the SENCO have of autism?
- ▶ Does the school run a social skills programme?
- ▶ How would your child be encouraged to participate in clubs / social situations?
- ▶ Would your child have a 'buddy' / 'circle of friends' scheme?
- ▶ How would the peer group be supported to understand your child's difficulties?
- ▶ How would the school support your child's organisation skills?
- ▶ Is there additional support / alternative arrangements for lunch and break times?
- ▶ How would your child's sensory needs be addressed?
- ▶ Who would be responsible for ensuring your child's needs are met, disseminating information and ensuring a consistent approach?
- ▶ Can the pupil/staff liaison ensure all staff know of your child's needs / difficulties and related support strategies?
- ▶ Could the school provide a quiet area for 'time out' / calming?

School Provision Checklist

Pointer	Check	Comments? (Continue on an additional sheet if necessary)
1. Does the school have whole school awareness training in autism?		
2. Are all staff aware of the associated difficulties of being on the autism spectrum? e.g. sensory sensitivities, sleep disturbance and dietary needs?		
3. Does the school have a named person to co-ordinate information about the children on the autism spectrum?		
4. Does every child on the autism spectrum have an Individual Education Plan (IEP)?		
5. Does the IEP focus on targets relevant to the child-specific areas of recently assessed need?		
6. Are all staff who teach a child on the autism spectrum aware of their individual needs and do they have access to Individual Education Plans?		
7. Does the school offer, in consultation with the child, parents and professionals, a curriculum adapted to the child's needs and is this reflected in the child's statement where applicable?		
8. Are individual behaviour plans developed for a child on the autism spectrum which include consistent positive reinforcement and behaviour motivators?		
9. Is account taken of individual children's special interests?		
10. Is the behaviour management system designed to take account of the child's understanding of behaviour and their personal motivation?		

School Provision Checklist

Pointer	Check	Comments? (Continue on an additional sheet if necessary)
11. Is a method of incident recording in place?		
12. Is there a quiet room/area available to use as a means of calming when necessary?		
13. Has a risk assessment been carried out which takes account of the lack of awareness of hazards a child on the autism spectrum might have?		
14. Is the child aware of his/her diagnosis?		
15. Are other peers aware?		
16. Does the school facilitate positive relationships between the child and their peers? E.g. 'circle of friends' or 'buddy schemes'.		
17. Within the school's general anti-bullying policy are staff aware of the vulnerability of children on the autism spectrum to bullying?		
18. Have attempts been made to reduce distraction in the learning environment or to provide the pupil with a "work station"?		
19. Are workspace areas clearly defined? E.g. Art table, lunch table etc.		
20. Has the school attempted to reduce overwhelming sensory stimulation? E.g. strip lighting, acoustics etc.		

School Provision Checklist

Pointer	Check	Comments? (Continue on an additional sheet if necessary)
21. Are visual supports (signs and symbols) in use?		
22. Are strategies in place to lessen the child's anxiety levels especially when moving between classes or phases of education, in group work or at other busy times?		
23. Are there any break time / lunch clubs set up or strategies in place to support pupils on the autism spectrum during break / lunch periods?		
24. Do teachers adopt autism-friendly communication strategies? (visual cues, lists, key subject words and use of language should be considered)		
25. Are expectations of the child made clear in every lesson?		
26. Are there opportunities to ensure that skills taught in one part of the day are generalised and transferred into other situations and settings?		
27. Is homework clarified for the child on the autism spectrum according to the child's skill levels and, where appropriate, is this explained to parents or care staff?		
28. Do the school and the child's home coordinate with community support services to enhance the coping skills of the child and the family beyond the school day?		
29. Are there home-school books in place?		
30. Is there a system in place to email parents newsletters in order to ensure they are kept informed and able to return reply slips?		

Suggested programme for transfer from primary to secondary school

Year 5:

▶ **Summer term**

- Identify child's needs in secondary education at annual review
- Parents begin visiting secondary schools

Year 6:

▶ **Autumn term**

- Parents and child visit secondary schools
- Admission form completed indicating preference for secondary school

▶ **Spring term:**

- Secondary placement allocated
- SENCOs of primary and secondary schools begin liaison process and schedule transition meeting / visit dates

▶ **Summer Term:**

- Continuing liaison between schools and transfer of information
- Supported visits to secondary school arranged for child (include meeting relevant staff)
- Annual review outlines nature and extent of support required for child
- Initial Learning Support Assistant time allocation for transition period confirmed
- Transition meetings / training for relevant secondary staff as necessary (autism specific / supporting individual pupil)

Year 7:

▶ **Autumn term:**

- Transfer to secondary school
- Any training for secondary staff / peer group delivered
- Meeting with parents, SENCO, form tutor, Learning Support Assistant to monitor transition and settling in period
- Home-school communication begins via diary / email as agreed

▶ **Spring/Summer terms:**

- Ongoing communication between home and school as appropriate
- Support team meetings as necessary

Transition Plan/Checklist (for schools)

Transition Plan for: [Name of child] _____

Name of primary school: _____

Name of secondary school: _____

Primary school main contact: _____

Secondary school main contact: _____

Pointer	Agreed dates/relevant information/comments
Dates of transition meetings:	
People to attend transition meetings:	
Dates of visits to secondary school:	
Support for visits (people / materials required):	
New support staff / team identified:	
"Buddy" identified:	
Statement / pupil information received by secondary school(including pupil profile):	
Secondary school accessed training / literature on autism:	
Peer awareness of autism:	
Curriculum support needs:	
Communication support needs:	
Social understanding support needs:	
Any other support needs / agreed modifications or arrangements:	
Lunch and break visits:	
PE / Clubs / Games visits:	
Assembly visit:	
Learning Support Assistant / SENCO visit:	
Curriculum visits (list lessons visited):	
Pupil Transition Pack compiled for individual needs / given to pupil (maps, photos, rules, timetable etc):	
Homework system agreed:	
Any other individual arrangements / modifications agreed:	



Transition toolkit

Helping you support a
child through change

By Alice Stobart