

# Inclusion Health and Neurodiversity - Top Tips

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# Terminology



# Autism and homelessness

- Approx. 1.1% of general pop are autistic (ONS, 2020)
- Homeless 12% but possibly higher (Churchard, 2019)
- For every 3 known cases in general pop., 2 further may be undiagnosed (Baron-Cohen et al, 2009)
- Lack of social networks limits opportunities for sofa surfing
- 70% are not getting required support from social services (NAS, 2017)
- Approx. one third of autistic adults has ADHD (Lai et al, 2019)
- Between 50-80% of autistic adults are vulnerable to bullying/exploitation and 'mate crime' (Stone, 2019, Doherty, 2020, NAS, 2014)



# Autism and learning disability

- Between 40-60% of autistic adults do not have LD  
(MacKay, 2017, National Disability Authority, 2018)
- Research into homelessness and neurodiversity focus on LD
- Those with no LD at higher risk of homelessness than general pop.  
(Winn, 2018, Pritchard, 2010)
- “High functioning” or “low support needs” - lack of support from services
- Lack of suitable housing options

# Accessing healthcare

- 80% of autistic adults report difficulties visiting the GP vs 37% in general population
- 69% reported untreated mental health problems
- 63% reported untreated physical health issues
- Life expectancy reduced by a mean of 16 yrs

Source: Doherty et al 2022



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Mental Health Foundation

# Autism and homelessness

## Autistic Adults



Risk of mental health issues



Difficulties with independent living



Lower occupational attainment



Increased risk of social isolation



Increased risk of substance use



ACE and Trauma

## Risk Factors for Homelessness



Risk of mental health issues



Difficulties with independent living



Lower occupational attainment



Increased risk of social isolation



Increased risk of substance use



ACE and Trauma

# Key Traits/Characteristics

Social  
Communication /  
Interaction

Body Language

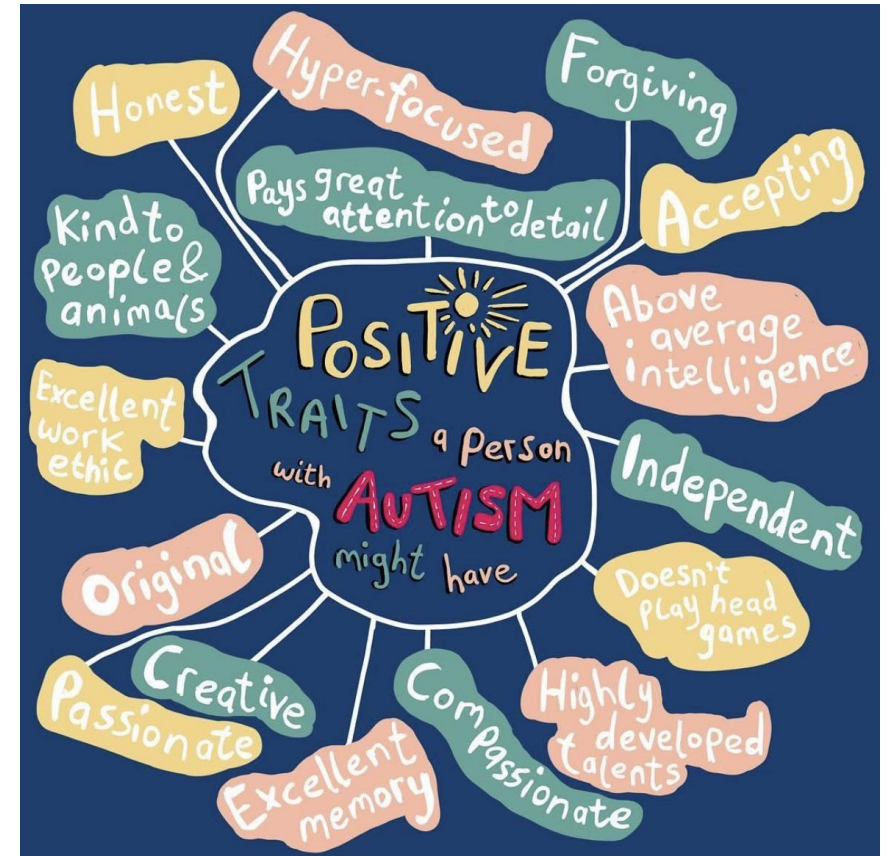
Focused Interests

Relationships

Sensory  
Differences

Anxiety

Repetitive/  
Restrictive



# Considerations

Sensory  
Differences

Communication  
Needs

Executive  
Functioning

Emotional  
Regulation



Gustatory  
(Taste)

Auditory  
(Sound)

Visual (Sight)

Olfactory  
(Smell)

# Sensory Systems

Tactile (Touch)

Interoception

Proprioception

Vestibular

# Communication needs

- Verbal and non-verbal
  - Situational mutism
- Body language, facial expressions, tone of voice
- Use of language:
  - Literal meaning, figurative speech
- Processing time

# Emotional regulation

- Meltdowns (shouting/fearful) or shutdowns
- Anxiety
- Impulsive behaviour
- Difficulty making decisions
- Lack of emotional awareness
- Feeling judged
- Not being understood
- Not enough time to process/stay regulated

# Executive Functioning



# Recognising Autism/ADHD



AQ10 - Autism Quotient Test



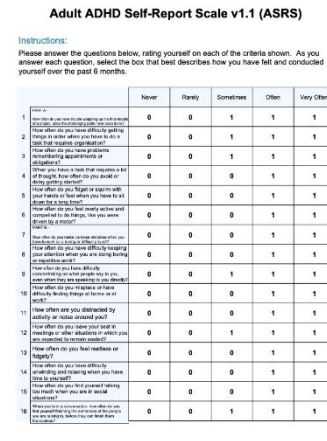
CAT-Q - Camouflaging Autistic Traits Questionnaire



Adult ADHD Self-Report Scale v. 1.1 (ASRS)



Resources for Autism Toolkit:  
- Checklist of Autistic Traits Tool



# Top tips

## Communication

- Check preferences
- Provide more time
- Consistency:  
staff/time/location
- Provide information in  
small chunks
- Avoid idioms/metaphors
- Discuss their interests
- Next steps (written)
- Say before you do
- Adequate notice of any  
changes
- Minimise choices
- Fulfil promises

## Environment

- Clear signage
- Quiet spaces
- Other sensory factors:  
Lighting, strong smells
- Logging preferences on  
the system
- Avoid sensory overload  
(clutter, visual distractions)

## Emotional Regulation

- Allow fidget toys/other  
support aids
- Be aware of any sensory  
differences e.g. tactile
- Minimise waiting times
- Self-soothing  
methods/ 'stimming'  
such as repetitive  
movements
- Offer movement breaks

# THANK YOU!

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# Autism and multiple disadvantage - bringing about systems change

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# Applying an 'autism lens' across homelessness services in Westminster

- 2014 - dawning awareness of prevalence among rough sleepers
- Started with rough sleeping teams - bitesize training
- Added a screening question/prompt on assessments
- Created a regular 'advice clinic' format for workers to meet with the WCC Autism Assessment Psychologist to discuss strategies
- PHD research - 12% of long term UK National rough sleepers showed traits
- Led to the creation of the toolkit:
- [Autism and Homelessness Toolkit Edition 2.pdf \(kxcdn.com\)](#)

# Autism and multiple disadvantage forum

## - MEAM work strand

The MEAM perspective:

- thinking beyond an organisational lens
- making the system visible

**Helped create permission and space for this work**

- Came up with a remit: targeting - people with autism but not co occurring learning disabilities, who are facing lots of difficulties at the same time e.g. mental health, substance misuse, homelessness, criminal justice interactions etc. The aim of the group is to improve join up among services to better support people, putting people with autism at the heart of this work

**Collaborations** included: floating support, libraries , criminal justice, prevent programme, leaving care team, autism diagnostic service, westminster employment service, CMHTs, hospitals, Housing Options, outreach, supported housing, counselling, adult education etc

# Quick Wins

Created opportunities to get together  
Pulled together and circulated good directories of services  
Put out lots of free bitesize training opportunities

# Greatest Hits

Putting autism awareness in the floating support specification  
Autism aware tenancy sustainment clinic  
Westminster Employment Service Autism friendly statement (with social value link up)  
Autism Champions programme  
Research collaborations

# Work in progress

Transition from young persons services to adult services  
Care Act Assessments  
Mental health services and autism

# Strategic link up is improving....

# Top Tips on creating systems flex and change on autism and multiple disadvantage

- Get started and spread awareness - don't be overwhelmed -great guide to culture change: John Kotter 'Our Iceberg is Melting'
- Have autistic people at the heart of your work and make the autistic voice heard
- Really pay attention to all forms of communication - think about your words, your info leaflets, forms , etc
- Infuse your work with a strengths based and trauma informed approach