



INFORMATION SHEET

Age Group: **Children / Adolescents and Young Adults / Adults**

Sheet Title: **What is Asperger's Syndrome**

Social interaction

The ability to pick up non-verbal cues or 'read minds' is often lacking in people with this condition. Consequently, they may appear self-focused and lacking in empathy, when in fact, they are simply trying to navigate social situations. This means that they continually struggle to make and sustain personal and social relationships.

Social Communication

People with Asperger's Syndrome often have good language skills, but find it hard to grasp the underlying meaning of conversation and understand jokes, idioms, metaphors and sarcasm. Their voices often sound monotonous and their language pedantic and idiosyncratic. They often have narrow interests which dominate their conversations and they find it difficult to have a mutual sharing of ideas and feelings.

Imagination and flexibility of thought

People with Asperger's Syndrome find it hard to think flexibly and in abstract ways. This manifests itself in several ways: an inability to understand other people's points of view, taking things literally, and difficulties applying knowledge and skills across settings with different people.

Difficulties with Sensory Stimuli

People with Asperger's Syndrome are sensitive and even hyper-sensitive to certain sounds or sensory stimuli, such as noise, smell and light. This can lead to a feeling of being 'overloaded' and often results in angry outbursts. This often means they live



in fear of unexpected sensory stimuli which can lead to great anxiety. It is essential to identify these sensory stimuli in order to avoid angry outbursts and anxiety.

Motor Difficulties

Motor skill impairment is reflected in clumsy, awkward and gauche movement as well as coordination problems. These can lead to difficulties in activities such as writing, drawing and sports.

Organisational Difficulties

Most people with Asperger's Syndrome need a highly structured environment, relying on the help of others to create a sense of order in their lives. Unpredictable situations and changes can cause them considerable distress, whilst their poor organisational skills can cause them further confusion and anxiety as they try to manage their lives.

The effects of living with Asperger's Syndrome

Collectively, the characteristics of Asperger's Syndrome contribute to the extreme isolation experienced by those with this condition. Often misunderstood and rejected, they have very low self-esteem which is usually expressed by anger and blame at the world around them.

Asperger's Syndrome is often not recognised or diagnosed. It is common for children to attend mainstream schools, where they find the day-to-day life complex and difficult to deal with. They find it hard to make friends because they are seen as different by their teachers and their peers, and as a result, they often experience loneliness and bullying.

Children and young people with Asperger's Syndrome may also show signs of Attention Deficit Hyperactive Disorder (ADHD), Dyspraxia and Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD) as well as difficulties with impulse control and anger management.