

What is Autism?

“Autism is a lifelong, developmental disability that affects how a person communicates with and relates to other people, and how they experience the world around them.” www.autism.org.uk

Because autism is a spectrum disorder (ASD), each person with autism has a distinct set of strengths and challenges. The ways in which people with autism learn, think and problem-solve can range from highly skilled to severely challenged. Some people with ASD may require significant support in their daily lives, while others may need less support and, in some cases, live entirely independently.

World Autism Week started on the 1st April 2019 with many fundraising events planned, with the hope to raise awareness and support for the disorder. More information on these events can be found on the NAS's website below.



Autism's Core Symptoms

Autism's core symptoms simplified are stated below although huge variations of these can occur for each individual:

- **social communication challenges**

For example, they may not understand or appropriately use spoken language, gestures, eye contact, facial expressions and tone of voice.

- **restricted, repetitive behaviours**

Repetitive body movements or motions with objects, staring at lights or moving objects and ritualistic and repetitive motions. www.autismspeaks.org



Scan this QR code for a really useful video by the National Autistic Society that helps explain what autism is:

<https://www.autism.org.uk/about/what-is/asd.aspx>

There is also some really useful information from the National Autistic Society for employers and employees with advice on how to support people with autism in the work place. **Do you know how you could support a colleague with autism at work?**

Autism and Celebrities



Autism affects 700 thousand adults and children in the UK alone, and being a celebrity doesn't mean that it doesn't affect you. Ann Hegerly, better known as The Governess from the Chase, has recently found her autism at the centre of every day conversation during her time in the I'm a Celebrity Jungle. It was clear to see that Ann found a lot of the tasks and also the environment difficult to be a part of however, demonstrated just how tough she was by battling through so many challenges. Recently Ann has been interviewed by the National Autism Society to discuss what affects and helps her autism. (Scan the above QR Code to see this interview).

Autism in the News

Two autistic brothers, Adam and Guy, were looking for work when one had the idea of opening a comic shop. It turned out to be an inspired choice!

To start, their mother Angela knew that statistics were against them and was a little worried herself as to how they would cope with the challenges of tills and customers, let alone make enough money to stay open! Eventually she used her savings to buy a quaint Tudor shop in Huntingdon and seven years ago Niche Comics was born. The shop has several different adjustments from a normal shop, including a till that requires no data input to help the brothers with their confidence in handling stock and payments.

Like many people with autism, Adam and Guy love comics for their world of rich detail and visual expression that is easy to read and the shop is now not only doing well but is a safe place for other people with autism to come.

Adam now gives talks to children with learning difficulties and Niche Comics offers work experience to help autistic people gain invaluable life and retail skills for future employment.

