

What is autism spectrum disorder?

Autism spectrum disorder (ASD) is a lifelong developmental disorder characterised by difficulty with social interaction and communication, and a narrow set of interests and repetitive behaviours.

Autism is a spectrum condition. This means that while all people with autism share the same difficulties, the condition affects everyone differently and so they will need different levels of support. Anxiety disorders are common alongside the condition, and people may also experience other mental health conditions like depression.

People with autism find it difficult to understand other people's emotions and feelings, often struggle to make eye contact, like a rigid routine, and may also be over or under-sensitive to sounds, touch, tastes, smells, light or colours. Many people with autism have learning disabilities although people with a type of autism called Asperger syndrome are of average or above average intelligence.

Children may play in a repetitive and unimaginative way, language development may be delayed, and they may repeat words or phrases spoken by others (either immediately or later).

We don't know what causes autism, but we do know that several factors, genetic and environmental, affect brain development and play a role in increasing the risk of autism.

Autism is not an 'illness' and cannot be 'cured'. There are however many interventions that can be helpful for people with autism to enable learning and development.

How we can support you (Autism Customers):

Our objectives:

Our Autism care package is aimed at:

- Delivering care and support to Customers by trained, competent, compassionate and knowledgeable staff.
- Supporting the national agenda to improve awareness, support earlier diagnosis and intervention and provide a higher quality of Care for people with autism.
- Improving the Customer's autism journey and providing a autism-friendly environment.
- Ensuring that Willboag Ltd supports Customers and their families, friends and carers.
- Raising the standards of Care and promoting meaningful activity provision.

Principles:

We work in line with national guidelines to ensure that all staff deliver their roles with the following principles in mind:

- Maintaining the human value of people with autism, regardless of condition, age or cognitive ability
- Treating Customers as individuals
- Seeing the Customer's perspective
- Sustaining and promoting relationships and interactions in order to enhance wellbeing
- Supporting carers and families and enhancing their relationships with the Customer

Our Model:

Relationship Based Care:

Relationship-Based Care (RBC) is a model of delivering healthcare that has transformed the practice of nursing by returning to basic purpose: caring for and connecting with all other human beings. Therefore, this is not just about meeting the holistic needs of the Customer but taking into account their families, loved ones and friends.

Support provided is holistic and cover physical, emotional, spiritual and cultural needs. A full life history will be completed to ensure that staff can:

- Build a better understanding of who you are
- Identify what and who is important to you
- Have a foundation to build meaningful conversations and social stimulation from
- Empower you in relation to health and wellbeing
- We will involve you as much as possible in building your life history and this can be captured over a period of time as we get to know you better. Families and loved ones also play a valuable part in the production of the life history and we will ensure that they are involved.

Advanced Care Planning and Legal Powers

Where possible, we will support you to consider completing:

- An advance Care Plan in readiness for when your autism journey progresses and you may be unable to share your views, wishes and beliefs about the future.
- A Lasting Power of Attorney (a legal document that allows people to state in writing who they want to make certain decisions for them if they cannot make them for themselves, including decisions about personal health and welfare).
- A Preferred Place of Care (which allows people to record decisions about future care choices and the place where the person would like to die).
- For Customers who do not have any of the above in place and who do not have the capacity to be involved, a multidisciplinary approach may be taken to complete a version in their best interest. Consideration will be given to the use of an advocate.

Medication

We will work with you and your GP in relation to ensuring that medications are reviewed at least every 6 months or sooner if new medications are introduced.

We will monitor for any side effects of new medication introduced to help manage the autism and act upon any concerns in a timely manner by discussing with your GP.

Where antipsychotics are prescribed, we will work with your GP to aim to keep them in use for short periods only.

Transfers and Discharges

We recognise that any change in environment is known to disrupt Customers with autism and can escalate symptoms. Here at Willboag, we make every effort to meet the changing needs of our autism Customers.

We will provide timely, appropriate access to existing and new support services and healthcare professionals will be provided as a means of managing changes to health for as long as possible.

Where it is deemed that a hospital transfer is necessary, we will provide the following:

- Details of the current Care Plan
- A copy of the medication administration records
- Where applicable, copies of any high-risk behaviour assessments and management plans
- etc..

Support for Carers

Our staff are trained to support you and your caregivers, family and friend in the following ways:

- Taking the time to listen to concerns and fears
- Providing information and support
- Signposting to other professionals, so that carers can be offered an assessment of their own needs
- Ensuring that they feel involved in the ongoing care and support of the Customer