

Employment – Making it work

Cath Leggett

Research and statistics



- 43% have left or lost a job because of their condition (NAS, 2012)
- Autistic adults should be offered individualised support if they are having difficulty maintaining employment (NICE, 2012)
- Only 16% of autistic people are in full-time employment compared to 48% of disabled people (DoH, 2009)

Autistic graduates and employment



Student unemployment rate 6 months after completing course

- Non-disabled graduates - 8.8 %
- Disabled graduates - 11.4 %
- Graduates with autism - 26%

Graduates with autism who do find jobs are **less likely to end up in graduate level employment** than other graduates.

Barriers



- Autistic people often start their careers later
- Interviews can be difficult because of non-verbal communication differences
- May prefer different methods of communication
- Low self-esteem / anxiety – and the concept of “selling yourself”
- Opportunities are not always made equally available – telephone interviews, testing centres
- Occupational choice/career planning
- Unrealistic expectations
- Job searching and job description
- Application form
- Lack of experience
- Lack of effective disclosure
- Overlapping conditions
- There may still be a stigma attached to autism

Guess the job.....



Wet leisure assistant

Family protection consultant

Worldwide marine asset financial
analyst

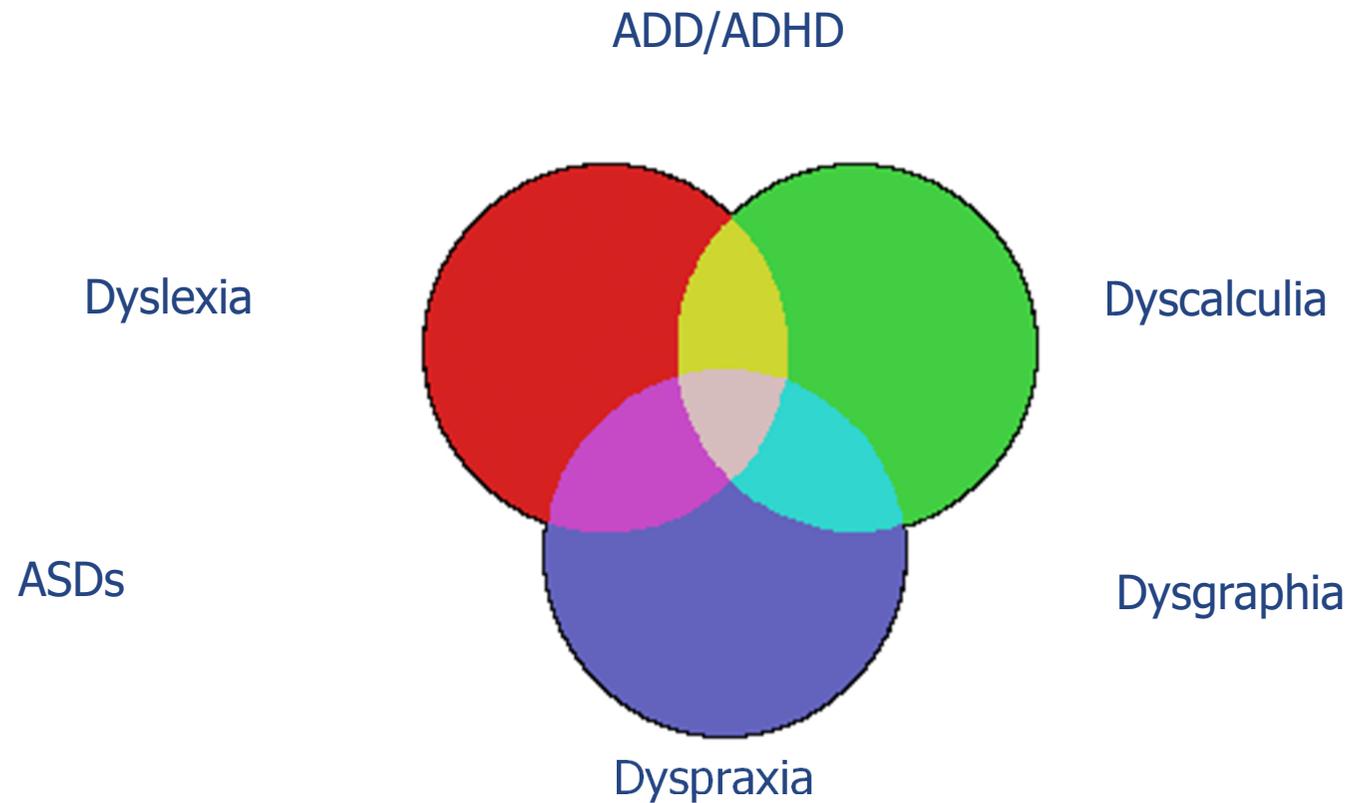
Modality manager

Information adviser

Coordinator of interpretive teaching

Overlapping conditions

Dr Amanda Kirby, Dyscovery Centre,
University of Wales, Newport



Disclosure



Have a think about the below questions...

- When should an autistic person disclose?
- Who should be told about an autistic spectrum condition?
- What may prevent someone from disclosing?
- What may encourage someone to disclose?

Disclosure is a highly personal decision and there is no legal obligation for an autistic person to disclose, however it can be beneficial in terms of gaining understanding and support from others, increasing confidence and wellbeing, and also in ensuring that reasonable adjustments are implemented.

Supporting effective disclosure



- Explore the benefits of disclosing with examples and case studies
- Explore when it is appropriate to disclose
- Explore examples of potential reasonable adjustments that could be implemented
- Develop a written autism profile which focuses on the strengths they bring to the team and outlines and simple, supportive adjustments

Disclosure document



I have autism, a disability which affects the way I communicate and I interact with others. This means that I may need support with.....

It also means I have strengths in certain areas. These are.....

There are some simple adjustments that would be helpful. These are.....

Autistic strengths – The benefits of employing autistic people



Focussed

Logical

Different way
of thinking

Loyal

Technical

Creative

Excellent
memory

Knowledgeable

Attention
to detail

Reasonable adjustments



It applies to people such as employers, service providers and education providers and is intended to make sure that disabled people do not face substantial difficulties in employment, education or when using services.

- An adjustment is related to a particular individual, their experience of their impairment and the situation they are in. There are four tests of reasonableness.
 - 1. The effectiveness in preventing disadvantage**
 - 2. The practicality of the step**
 - 3. The financial and other costs and the extent of any disruption caused**
 - 4. The extent of an organisation's financial and other resources**

Job seeking adjustments and support



- The National Autistic Society’s “finding work” handbook
- Working with a job-coach, specialist careers service or supported employment organisations
- Assess strengths and needs - and develop an ambitious but realistic approach to what environment, role and working conditions will ensure success – based on work experiences or experiences during education
- Interpret and translate job descriptions with support where needed – including defining the working conditions and location, pay and benefits and employer expectations
- Research autism friendly employers – look for existing diversity within the organisation – disclosure is a good litmus test!

Best practice support strategies



- Find out preferred form of communication
- Consistent and frequent support
- Sessions in a calm non-stressful environment
- Give time to process information
- Clear, specific, precise instructions - use less language
- Don't assume implicit communication will be understood
- Summarise session and action points in email/text/writing
- Be supportive, direct, motivational and positive

“It helps if I’m given lots of praise and encouragement – for me too much emphasis on mistakes and shortcomings can be counterproductive.”

Interview adjustments



- Provision of interview information in a meaningful, clear format for the candidate, including timings, dress code, location and the structure of the interview
- Rephrasing of unclear questions – ask the interviewer not to use hypothetical questions if relevant and provide interview questions in advance
- Request support for the interview – to make language adjustments and for rephrasing questions and to help prompt the candidate
- Ask for adjustments for non-verbal communication
- Ask for an alternative selection process such as a work trial
- Ask for environmental adjustments, including a quieter and more private place to wait before the interview

Interview preparation and support



- Access to filmed mock interviews
- Research on the interview location and employer
- Prepare responses to interview questions in advance and practice
- Disclose to interviewers prior to an interview
- Ask in advance for reasonable adjustments if needed
- Design and implement an interview preparation checklist.....

Interview preparation checklist



- Adjusting routine/sleep patterns in advance – practice getting up and preparing to travel
- Practice packing a bag for the interview with everything that is needed – including a sensory kit, refreshments, travel cards/money, notebooks and interview question responses
- Dress code – check what’s expected and prepare the interview outfit – practice wearing it for the same duration as the interview
- Travel arrangements – routes/timings for public transport – practice travelling prior to the interview day

Are any adjustments that have been requested agreed and in place ?

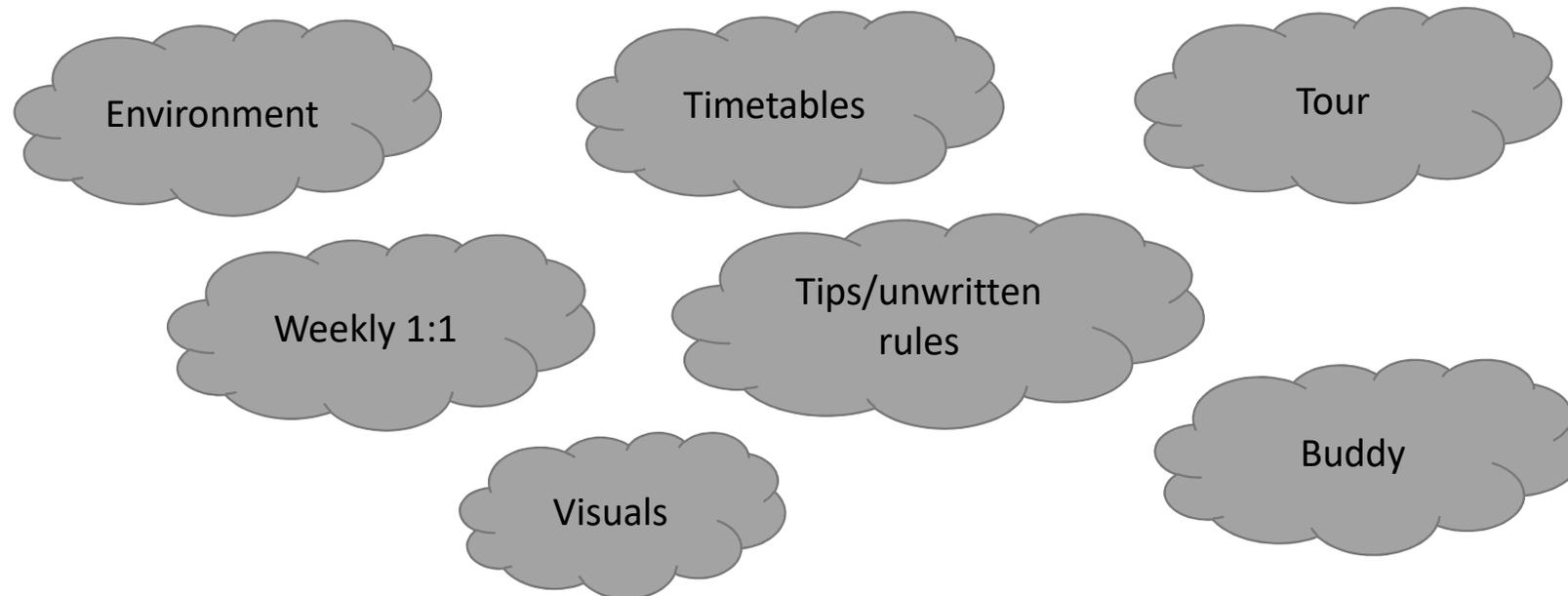
Barriers to sustaining employment



- Unwritten rules
- Social interaction
- Understanding of instructions and language
- Organisation of workload/Time management/Prioritisation
- Team meetings
- 1:1 meetings
- Transferring and linking skills
- Environmental
- Lack of understanding
- Ineffective induction

Induction adjustments

Within the workplace induction, managers should plan:



Clarifying expectations & unwritten rules



Clarify any policies that influence work environment such as...

- Clear desk policy
- Equal opportunities
- Internet and email use
- Anti-bullying and harassment

Clarify what is expected of employees, for example....

- Working hours - state working times and lunch breaks
- Dress code or expectations and any exceptions
- Personal use of internet
- Identify Workplace guides

Common in-work adjustments



- Adjusting working hours
- Providing adapted equipment and environmental adaptations
- Providing written instructions for tasks and checklists (a working file)
- Assistive resources (eg. visual reminders/checklists/activity planners)
- Advanced notice of changes and support with timetabling and prioritising tasks
- Support network
 - Regular meetings with manager
 - Buddy/mentor]
 - Workplace support from external specialist / assessment from OT or NAS
- Adapted appraisal targets
- Training – accessible to the individual
- Adaptations to role
- Environmental adjustments – home working, quiet rooms, equipment

Further resources and information

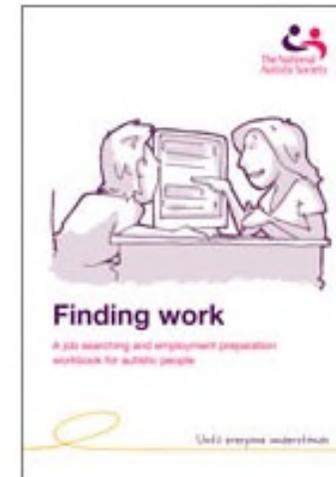


The National Autistic Society's "At Work" pages:
<https://www.autism.org.uk/services/work.aspx>

Employment training team:
Phone: 0141 285 7117

Finding work handbook:

<https://www.autism.org.uk/products/core-nas-publications/finding-work-digital-workbook.aspx>



Thank you



Any questions?

