



Autism Handbook For Schools



2025-2026

Hertfordshire Autism Handbook



- 1) Foreword by Dean Beadle
- 2) Introduction.
 - purpose of the handbook
 - statement of shared understanding, principles and approaches
 - names of special schools
- 3) What is an Autism Spectrum Condition?
- 4) Amwell View School's approach.
- 5) Nationally recognised teaching frameworks and approaches.
 - SPELL
 - Intensive Interaction
 - PECS
 - TEACCH
 - Social Stories®
 - SCERTS®
 - AAC
 - Sensory Integration
 - ELKLAN
 - HERTS STEPS

What is a good school? That's *the* million dollar question, and one that's almost impossible to answer. I'm lucky enough to have met staff from schools across the country that successfully meet the needs of their students on the spectrum. Whilst these settings are all quite different, their approach and principles follow a similar philosophy:

- being positive about the child and having a can-do approach
- making the student the centre of all approaches and valuing student opinion
- working in collaboration with parents
- using special interests as a teaching tool
- assessing and meeting sensory needs
- teaching social skills as well as academic topics
- working on ways to minimise sources of anxiety for pupils

Whilst my own experiences of school were mixed, I ultimately found myself in a school where all of the above strategies and approaches were being used. I was made to feel like a key stakeholder in my own development. I was also empowered to see what my abilities and strengths were as opposed to just focusing on my challenges. It was in those years that I fully grew as a person and developed the strategies and social understanding I needed to go into adulthood. To me that is exactly what a good school is: one that doesn't just equip students with skills for the classroom but empowers them with skills for life.

I congratulate Hertfordshire on the launch of their autism handbook for schools. It is only through the sharing of successful strategies, resources and approaches that we can spread good practice county wide, and this handbook will do just that.

Dean Beadle

Dean Beadle is an international lecturer who shares his personal experiences of life on the autistic spectrum.

This handbook describes how Hertfordshire Special Schools address the needs of children and students who have Autism Spectrum Conditions (ASC). It has been written jointly by the special schools and Hertfordshire Local Authority to provide information for parents, school staff and other professionals.

All Hertfordshire Special Schools share a common understanding of Autism Spectrum Conditions and work to the same principles. They all draw upon a range of effective teaching methods to provide a holistic approach, taking into account the full range of children's educational, social and emotional needs. Nevertheless, each school is unique in character and in the curriculum it provides which adds to the richness and diversity of provision in Hertfordshire. This handbook therefore reflects both the individuality of the schools as well as their shared values, approaches and understanding of Autism.

We believe that:

- *No two children with autism are the same. Each child is unique therefore support should be tailored to meet individual needs and the same child may need different approaches at different times.*
- *A holistic approach is best for children meaning that we draw on a range of approaches to address all aspects of a child's development. No single approach provides for all of an individual's needs.*
- *Communication needs should be addressed in every aspect of the curriculum and daily school life.*
- *We need to develop each child's understanding of the world around them and develop their thinking to enable them to deal with change and the unexpected.*
- *Working alongside families is critically important in developing life skills.*
- *Continuity and consistency are essential in supporting children at times of transition (both micro and macro).*
- *Sensory issues can be effectively addressed through adaptations to the learning environment and provision.*

It is estimated that at least 1 in 100 children under 18 in the UK has an Autism Spectrum Condition (ASC). An ASC is a lifelong developmental disability that affects the way a person communicates with, and relates to, other people. It also affects how they make sense of the world around them. It is a spectrum condition which means that, while all people with autism share certain difficulties, their condition will affect them in different ways. More boys are diagnosed with an ASC than girls: a ratio of 4:1. Some people with autism are able to live relatively independent lives but others may have accompanying learning disabilities and need a lifetime of specialist support. A small percentage – perhaps 2% of people with an ASC may have a particularly special talent, for example, with numbers, in music or in art. The three main areas of difficulty (sometimes known as the ‘triad of impairments’) are:

1) Difficulty with social interaction

This includes recognising and understanding other people’s feelings and managing their own. People with an ASC may:

- *not understand the unwritten social rules which most of us pick up without thinking: they may stand too close to another person for example, or start an inappropriate subject of conversation*
- *appear to be insensitive because they have not recognised how someone else is feeling*
- *prefer to spend time alone rather than seeking out the company of other people not seek comfort from other people*
- *appear to behave ‘strangely’ or inappropriately, as it is not always easy for them to express feelings, emotions or needs.*

Some may want to interact with other people and make friends, but may be unsure how to go about this. This range of difficulties can lead to problems in the classroom and the playground, with making friends and, in turn, bullying.

2) difficulty with social communication

This includes using and understanding verbal and non-verbal language, such as gestures, facial expressions and tone of voice. Many people with an ASC have a very literal understanding of language, and think people always mean exactly what they say. They can find it difficult to use or understand:

- *facial expressions or tone of voice*
- *jokes and sarcasm*
- *common phrases, sayings and metaphors; an example might be the phrase ‘It’s cool’, which people often say when they think that something is good, but strictly speaking, means that it’s a bit cold.*

Some people with an ASC may not speak, or have fairly limited speech. They will usually understand what other people say to them, but may use alternative means of communication themselves, such as sign language or visual symbols. Others may have good language skills, but may still find it hard to understand the give-and-take nature of conversations, perhaps repeating what the other person has just said (this is known as echolalia) or talking at length about their own interests. It helps if other people speak in a clear, consistent way and give people with autism time to process what has been said to them.

3) difficulty with social imagination

This includes the ability to understand and predict other people's intentions and behaviour and to imagine situations outside their own routine. This can be accompanied by a narrow repetitive range of activities.

People with an ASC may find it hard to:

- *understand and interpret other people's thoughts, feelings and actions*
- *predict what will happen next, or what could happen next*
- *understand the concept of danger, for example that running on to a busy road poses a threat to them*
- *engage in imaginative play and activities: children with autism may enjoy some imaginative play but prefer to act out the same scenes each time*
- *prepare for change and plan for the future*
- *cope in new or unfamiliar situations.*

Difficulties with social imagination should not be confused with a lack of imagination. People with autism can be very creative and may be, for example, accomplished artists, musicians or writers. Many have very particular special, all-absorbing interests about which they may be very knowledgeable.

Sensory issues and routines

People with an ASC may also experience over- or under-sensitivity to sounds, touch, tastes, smells, light or colours. Many, too, prefer to have a fixed daily routine so that they know what is going to happen every day and love to keep to fixed rules. Some enjoy repeating the same activity over and over again. The daily 'hurly burly' of school life can be extremely stressful for pupils who display any or all of these particular characteristics.

Asperger syndrome

Asperger syndrome is an Autistic Spectrum Condition. People with Asperger syndrome or high-functioning autism are often of average or above average intelligence. They have fewer problems with speech but may still have difficulties with understanding and processing language. People with Asperger syndrome do not usually have learning disabilities but may have specific learning difficulties, including dyslexia.

Other conditions

People on the autism spectrum may also have other co-existing conditions, for example, epilepsy, ADHD or dyspraxia, or moderate or severe learning difficulties.

Our principles and approach to pupils with Autism Spectrum Conditions (ASC)

At Amwell View we believe that the young person is at the centre of all we do and that every pupil is to be respected, valued and nurtured. We summarise this in our motto –

‘Whoever we are, whatever we do, we can get better in the context of our own ability’.

We recognise that pupils with ASC require specialist support and provision. We cover the National Curriculum subject areas focusing on pupil engagement, understanding, skills and experience with a long term view of generalising learning into a range of situations and settings. The key areas for pupils with ASC at Amwell View School are: Communication and Interaction, Cognition and Learning, Social, Emotional and Mental Health, Sensory and Physical Needs and lastly, Self-Help and Independence. We continually assess the needs of our pupils noting motivation, involvement, processing time and most importantly, fostering independence. We work with families and pupils around behaviour and self-regulation and also to support the pupils with ASC to develop flexibility in their thinking. We encourage pupils with ASC to learn in a supportive and understanding learning environment designed to take their specific needs into consideration.

The school promotes and follows a regular hand washing regime and hygiene procedures during a school day. Lunchtimes have some classes eating in the hall and others eating in their classes, transitions are reduced during this time and pupils engage with their peers in their classroom. Any changes are supported with visual and staff support, helping pupils to adapt and engage with all the learning opportunities offered each day.

At Amwell View School there is a lead teacher for the ASC provision and two other experienced teachers directly supporting the provision. The lead teacher has experience working with pupils with ASC, trained in assessing pupils using the CARS reporting scale, using the AET progression framework to chart progression in attention, implementing TEACCH learning structures, picture / symbol exchange approaches, using SCERTS to support and track communication progress, leading groups in Attention Autism sessions, and behaviour strategies alongside a range of sensory strategies, such as sensory massage stories, that are helpful for pupils with ASC. Again the autism team teachers supports staff with a range of ideas, review strategies and opportunities to reflect on outcomes and behaviours.

Amwell View School provides clear and structured learning environments. We ensure pupils with ASC are supported visually with consistent and clear expectations and understand how to support our pupils' sensory needs throughout the school day. We encourage learning in a variety of settings and promote regular exercise, using specialist exercise equipment based both indoors and outdoors and mindfulness activities throughout the school day. We are committed to encouraging pupils with ASC to become as independent as possible as they move up through the classes in the school – lower school to upper school. We

work towards supporting pupils with ASC to access a range of learning opportunities that best suit their needs whilst facilitating and supporting further opportunities to be an active participant in the school and the wider community outside the school gates.

Communication for children with ASC at Amwell View

Children with ASC often have difficulties in understanding speech. They may not give good eye contact. Staff use Makaton signing, key word phrases, pictures, symbols and activity cues as they speak to encourage the children to look and thus enhance and increase attention and listening abilities.

When pupils cannot speak they often respond well to learning to communicate their needs by using activity cues, real objects, symbols and pictures, such as True Object Based Icons (TOBIs). We use symbol and picture exchanges with many of our children. In this way they can begin to see the point of communicating by first learning to choose what they want to eat, drink or play with. Pupils also have access to pictures and symbols using iPads and SMARTboards which assist pupils to actively participate in lessons, share information and clarify understanding.



Reading

We use these pictures as a way to enable many of our pupils to access text and to learn to read. We encourage them to match the photographs to symbols that mean the same thing. Eventually many of our pupils with ASC learn to read and communicate through the use of symbols:



Using Communicate in Print to create resources means the pupils can read the instructions in their learning and become more independent

Many of the pupils with ASC are using visual supports to help them each school day. This is especially evident in lessons, transitions around the school and off-site and completing learning activities - enhancing opportunities to communicate purposefully in a range of settings. Pupils also use Now/Next symbol boards to help them anticipate the learning activity going on and what is going to happen after that. Visual systems are also used in specialist lessons (i.e.) PE, Music and Science to help our pupils with ASC communicate clearly with others.

Support for Positive Behaviour

Pupils with ASC often need a great deal of structure and sameness in order to function well. They generally dislike change and need to know exactly what will happen in the day. We use visual timetables in order to help the children to maintain their awareness of the events of the day. All our classrooms have a visual timetable and some of our pupils use individual timetables, Now / Next boards, and visual countdown boards. These help pupils anticipate and understand what will be happening in their school day.



A left to right, morning and afternoon schedule, that spans a day.

Some children with ASC may need their own space and we ensure pupils are provided with areas that are visually uncluttered, clear and calm spaces for the children to learn in or come back to if they are feeling stressed or upset.

On occasion, some pupils with ASC may present a range of behaviours that may inhibit their opportunities for learning, restrict the quality of their relationships and may even place themselves and others at risk of harm. We work hard to provide consistent approaches to overcoming these barriers and to support such emotional difficulties. Amwell View has a comprehensive behaviour support package and we subscribe to the Therapeutic Thinking ethos. These pupils will have a behaviour plan, describing positive behaviour strategies, which is always discussed with parents.

We are committed to working with parents. Each child has a home school email through which parents and teachers communicate. The school uses the online platform Tapestry to share learning photos and videos with parents. Parents are also encouraged to use Tapestry to share achievements and activities from home. The lead Speech and Language Therapist will meet with parents on request in order to discuss and support

communication and related behavioural issues in the home ensuring the responses are consistent and supportive.

Social issues

Many of the pupils with ASC at Amwell View need help to understand social rules. We employ a range of techniques in order to help them deal with this difficulty. We use our knowledge of early child development in order to encourage the children to interact and make positive relationships. When appropriate we employ Intensive Interaction to build relationships with the pupil.



The pupils are encouraged and enabled to be with their peer group. They are also given many opportunities to learn social skills outside of the school environment within the local community which will equip them for adulthood.

We also use techniques such as role play and social stories in order to help the children to rehearse and understand social rules. We write social stories in order to support pupils who are finding situations difficult to cope with both at school and home.

Often we can encourage children with ASC to gain social understanding through computer programmes. Each class is equipped a computer, a SMARTboard and iPads on which we can put specific programmes to help teach pupils with ASC using symbols and visual learning techniques.



Sensory Integration

This term simply means that we take account of the fact that pupils with ASC may very well have a co-existing sensory processing disorder. Each pupil is assessed and the outcomes we gain from this assessment helps to inform a pupil profile and / or sensory integration plan noting what they like, dislike and how to best support the pupil. The plan contains a list of activities that will support the pupil to overcome their sensory difficulties and dysregulation. When you visit the school, you may see pupils sitting in a small tent for a quiet space, sitting on a stool that wobbles or using peanut balls as a form of relaxation and deep pressure. Classes at Amwell View offer regular opportunities for massage to assist pupils to regulate their responses to daily activities. Classes integrate yoga and movement into daily lessons. These activities have been proven to help calm and encourage children to manage their own state of well-being.

Being aware of students' sensory integration difficulties is key in the organisation of our classroom environments. Taking account of students' sensory processing difficulties – we provide time throughout the day for them to have some calm guided time to prevent sensory overload or take part in calming, deep pressure activities, such as using weighted blankets and jackets, squeeze vests, the peanut ball, yoga breathing or having a hand or back massage as part of their sensory diet.



We understand that our pupils may arrive agitated and anxious, needing our support to self-regulate and achieve a readiness to engage in activities and sessions that are on offer. At Amwell View each class is structured to encourage and maximise pupils' confidence and understanding, utilising sensory resources and strategies throughout the day, including mindfulness. This structure and sameness in lessons is specialist and differentiated to support the pupils to acquire knowledge and skills they can learn to independently apply as they move up through the school. Our provision offers learning opportunities suited to the individual with ASC in the classroom and in the wider community of the school, at home and beyond.

At Amwell View our school has an Early Years Provision, Lower School, Upper School, Satellite classes at Tonwell Site and Post 16 Provision which includes our Community Class in the village. We celebrate the achievements of all our pupils, foster a community of friendship and work together as a team to offer the very best for each pupil. All pupils access specialist teachers in purpose built rooms for: PE, Dance, Music, Music Therapy

and Science. We also have a designated Design Technology area and a swimming pool. Timetabled sessions in our sensory studio are in small groups or for individuals focusing on a circuit of motivating activities working to extend engagement, attention and communication.

Our curriculum

We have a varied and rich curriculum. We work hard to enable our children with ASC to access the curriculum. We plan visual and practical ways to learn, understand and apply this knowledge across the curriculum. We make use of outdoor learning, subject focus weeks, off-site trips and visitors to provide depth to the learning so pupils with ASC have opportunities to learn in a variety of contexts.

We have a Community Classroom in the Village High Street, next to our Charity Shop. This classroom is set up for our Post 16 pupils to interact and learn in the community and run a section of the Charity Shop. In addition, the Community Class lead the responsibility of a local allotment on behalf of Amwell View. Classes are encouraged to visit and help maintain the area. We also have a recent addition to the school provision with satellite classes at Tonwell site where pupils experience a similar timetable of curricular activities alongside community activities and experiences.

The main school site has a swimming pool, large sports hall, fitness suite, large soft play room, music and music therapy room, fitness suite, sensory studio, library, dance studio, hair salon, booster room, food technology and science rooms, The Hatch where pupils can practice a variety of skills via shop role play activities and use The Bay area to wait as a class and a newly built Rebound Therapy Room. Outdoor resources include: climbing wall, adventure playground, outside exercise equipment, play area with activity trays, sensory activities posted around the school building, two outdoor sunken trampolines, quiet area with trees, The Dell (forest area), The Bay and an astro-turf playground containing fenced in areas for classes to use for activities and quiet spaces to regulate. Our pupils participate in off-site swimming, horse-riding and Hertfordshire SLD sports activities across the Key Stages. Teachers plan outings to use the local amenities, museum visits, and participate in mainstream performances for Dance and Music.

Our pupils are taught using a multidisciplinary model. They have access to therapists to support their individual needs. This can include Specialist Speech and Language Therapists and Occupational and Physiotherapists. These specialist teams liaise with both class teams and parents to support access to the curriculum by providing opportunities for communication, reducing sensory difficulties and providing physical support in the classroom.



Each student at the school has an individualised set of objectives they are supported in negotiating their personal goals; with priority given to supporting students to gain the skills, confidence and understanding to become as independent as possible when they leave us aged nineteen. There is a full and extensive transition process when pupils move classes and again when they are preparing to leave school to attend college. Amwell View offers parents support with the preparation for college transition and activities on offer when they have finished school. We host a popular transition evening with services, colleges and groups attending to provide information on what they offer, contact information to view facilities and assistance with filling in forms and applications.

There is a Life Skills program that makes use of the Salon and Food Technology Rooms for pupils across the school. This program helps to desensitise pupils to a salon environment in the build up for parents to take their young person for a haircut. In food technology, pupils focus on health and safety, essential utensil use and making healthy choices. Travel training is also delivered for pupils who can access local transport to go on off-site visits.

The Post 16 Provision for Young People focuses on relevant Life Skills which sometimes links with the AQA Unit Award Scheme. Their final year at Amwell View focuses on preparing for the changes ahead, passing on vital information to the service providers and supporting them, ensuring a smooth transition for all. Years 13 and 14 pupils also focus on working together as a team following a business model to prepare items in the school and the school Charity Shop.



Support for parents and families

Amwell View supports parent meetings to extend a warm welcome to new families, discuss on-going challenges and issues related to ASC and other disabilities. On occasions, parents and families are invited to attend training for sensory integration and autism given by specialist guest speakers or the school signpost events and speakers related to the Mental Health

and Wellbeing Support Team offering parents support with sleeping and meet ups for parents of pupils who are using VOCAs (Voice Output Communicatoin Devices). Amwell View hold events throughout the school year and invite parents to attend class achievement assemblies, Harvest Festival, school show, celebration assemblies, swimming galas, sports days.

Amwell View also host a family oriented Christmas event, 'Amwell View Christmas Carols' and a transition focused session for parents of Year 11 pupils. Staff at Amwell View are very proud of the provision we offer our pupils and have been awarded Outstanding in our last five inspections.



References and useful addresses

Picture Exchange Communication systems

Bondy, A and Frost, L. (1994) The Delaware autistic program, in SL Harris and JS Handleman (Eds) *Preschool education programs for children with autism*. Austin: Pro-Ed

Individual schedules

Mesibov, G and Howley, M. (2003) *Accessing the Curriculum for Pupils with Autistic Spectrum Disorder*,. London: David Fulton

Intensive Interaction

Hewett et al. (2011) *The Intensive Interaction Handbook* London: Sage

General reading

Jones, G. (2002) *Educational Provision for Children with Autism and Asperger Syndrome Meeting Their Needs*, London: David Fulton.

Jordan, R. (2001) *Autism With Severe Learning Difficulties*, London:Souvenir Press

Williams, D. (1996) *Autism: an inside out Approach*, London: Jessica Kingsley

Wing, L. (1996) *The Autistic Spectrum*, London: Robinson

NAS (The National Autistic Society) online at <http://www.nas.org.uk>

www.understood.org

Amwell View School 'Transition' booklet

Ofsted Report for Amwell View School and Specialist Sports College, 2018

SPELL (Structure; Positive approaches; Empathy; Low arousal; Links)

SPELL is a framework to support people with ASC and has been developed by The National Autistic Society (NAS). It is used to maximise life and learning opportunities for children and adults with ASC. These principles underpin consideration of the environment, teaching and learning, organisation and training. The framework aims to reduce the disabling effects of ASC, and to use areas of strengths to provide learning and understanding by considering the interactive nature of all areas of SPELL.

- **Structure**

Children with ASC benefit significantly from strategies to show them what they should be doing, how long they should be doing it for, and what will happen next. The structure can be imposed by the environment, a symbol, or the written word at the child's level of understanding. By giving structure, the impairment in ability to imagine or predict is reduced, thereby reducing anxieties and allowing the child to focus on learning or the task in hand.

- **Positive**

A child should be supported in an environment which recognises the learning potential of children with ASC and enhances and uses their skills and prior learning. Activities should be motivating and challenging but achievable, thereby enhancing the child's self-confidence. A thorough assessment of the child will promote a positive use of communication and relationships, so allowing the child to process, understand, retrieve and use information.

- **Empathy**

The need to respect a child with ASC and see the world as much as possible from their perspective will encourage a teacher to teach in a more 'ASC-friendly' environment. For example this could ensure the teacher recognises the need to differentiate the teaching of a skill such as reading, from teaching the child about group dynamics in a whole-class English or literacy session. The need for specific knowledge about the child and their learning skills is therefore essential to inform teaching in achievable steps

- **Low arousal**

There is a lot of autobiographical information documenting over-stimulation of the sensory processing system. In turn such over-stimulation leads to distraction and possibly anxiety. The need to understand the effects of distractions on learning or processing from the child's point of view must also be considered. It may be necessary to reduce or eliminate some elements of stimulation (i.e. buzzing or flickering lights, vibrant wall displays or noisy dining halls) to allow for a calm, predictable and supportive environment.

- **Links**

The development of a consistent, supportive framework for parents and professionals to inform and plan together is absolutely vital. Links between agencies, and links within the community, are vital to promote inclusion and entitlement to equality of opportunities.

INTENSIVE INTERACTION

Intensive Interaction is a practical approach to interacting with people with severe or profound and multiple learning disabilities and/or ASC. There is nothing difficult or expert about Intensive Interaction, it is a very practical approach to communication and socialising with people who do not find it easy communicating or being social.



The approach helps the person with learning difficulties and their communication partner to relate better to each other and enjoy each other's company more. It helps them develop their communication abilities. In Intensive interaction the carer, support worker, speech and language therapist or teacher works at being a better communication partner and so supports the person with learning disabilities develop confidence and competence as a communicator.

The fundamentals of communication are:

- enjoying being with another person
- developing the ability to attend to that person
- concentration and attention span
- learning to do sequences of activity with the other person
- taking turns in exchanges of behaviour
- sharing personal space
- using and understanding eye contacts -----.
- using and understanding facial expressions
- using and understanding physical contacts
- using and understanding non-verbal communication
- using vocalisations with meaning
- learning to regulate and control arousal levels
- emotional understandings and outcomes
- brain developments — neural links

face and mind

'reading'

Intensive Interaction is child or person-centred — it is based on the child or person's current behaviour and interests (even if they have a severe or profound and multiple learning difficulty and/or ASC).



PECS (Picture Exchange Communication System)

PECS was developed in 1985 as a unique augmentative/alternative communication intervention package for individuals with ASC and related developmental disabilities. PECS has received worldwide recognition for focusing on the initiation component of communication. PECS does not require complex or expensive materials. It was created with families, education settings, and resident care providers in mind, so is readily used in a range of settings

PECS begins by teaching an individual to give a picture of a desired item to a “communicative partner”, who immediately honours the exchange as a request. The system goes on to teach discrimination of pictures and how to put them together in sentences. In the more advanced phases, individuals are taught to answer questions and to comment.

The PECS teaching protocol is based on B.F. Skinner’s book, *Verbal Behaviour*, such that functional verbal operant are systematically taught using prompting and reinforcement strategies that will lead to independent communication. Verbal prompts are not used, thus building immediate initiation and avoiding prompt dependency.

PECS has been successful with individuals of all ages demonstrating a variety of communicative, cognitive and physical difficulties. Some learners using PECS also develop speech. Others may transition to a voice output system. The body of research supporting the effectiveness of PECS continues to expand, with research from countries around the world.



TEACCH (Treatment and Education of Autistic and Communication related Handicapped Children)

TEACCH (Treatment and Education of Autistic and Communication related handicapped Children) is an evidence-based service, training, and research program for individuals of all ages and skill levels with Autistic Spectrum Disorders. TEACCH was developed at University of North Carolina (UNC) Chapel Hill in the early 1970s by Eric Schopler and colleagues. The TEACCH method can be implemented in any school setting. TEACCH methods are based on the premise that people with ASC are predominantly visual learners, so intervention strategies focus on physical and visual structure, schedules, work systems and task organisation. Individualised systems aim to address difficulties with communication, organisation, generalisation, concepts, sensory processing, change and relating to others.

At the core of TEACCH is the idea of structured teaching. Structured teaching is comprised of 3 components: physical organisation, scheduling, and teaching methods. The developers of the TEACCH method have based their model on the idea that to effectively teach students with ASC a teacher must provide structure. This means they should set up the classroom so that students understand where to be, what to do, and how to do it, all as independently as possible.

Physical Organisation

The classroom should be clearly laid out so the students know where they are supposed to be and what they're supposed to be doing. There should be adequate space for independent and group work and the work areas should be arranged in the least distractible setting. The work areas should be clearly marked so the student can independently find their way to different locations within the classroom independently and the boundaries within those areas should be clearly marked.

Scheduling

There are two levels of scheduling which are both important to the structured teaching method. First is the daily classroom schedule. This schedule allows the teachers and students to clearly know what will be happening during the day. In addition to the daily overall schedule, individual students should also have smaller schedules within scheduled activities to clearly define the expectations during the class period. The individual schedules should help the student transition by letting them know where to be and what to do, and it should inform them about where and when to begin and end tasks. Lastly, there should be a clear and consistent signal in the classroom which indicates time for a transition (i.e. timer, teacher instruction, student monitors clock, etc.).

Teaching Methods

The teaching methods used in the TEACCH method are all behaviourally based. The goal for all programs is to maximise independence. Antecedent strategies utilised include getting student attention before giving instructions, using clear and concise language, presenting materials in an organized manner.

Social Stories[©]

Social stories are short descriptions of a particular situation, event or activity, which include specific information about what to expect in that situation and why.

Social stories have a huge range of applications, including:

- to develop self-care skills (e.g. how to clean teeth, wash hands or get dressed), social skills (e.g. sharing, asking for help, saying thank you, interrupting) and academic abilities
- to help a person with ASC to understand how others might behave or respond in a particular situation, and therefore how they might be expected to behave
- to help others understand the perspective of a person with ASC and why they may respond or behave in a particular way
- to help a person to cope with changes to routine and unexpected or distressing events (e.g. absence of teacher, moving house, thunderstorms)
- to provide positive feedback to a person about an area of strength or achievement in order to develop self-esteem
- as a behavioural strategy (e.g. what to do when angry, how to cope with obsessions).

The following is an example of a social story from Carol Gray's 'The new social stories book' (1994).

"Nightmares - Sometimes I may have a nightmare when I am sleeping. Nightmares are the same as a dream, but more scary. Events in nightmares do not really happen. They are like pictures in my mind. It is all right if I am scared. I may try telling myself it is all in my mind. It is only a dream. Adults can help children with nightmares, too. It is okay to ask an adult for help with nightmares. When I wake up, I will see that I am all right."

How do social stories help people with ASC?

- When writing a social story for a person with ASC, a teacher needs to think about how that person perceives different situations. This in turn can increase a teacher's understanding and empathy.
- Many people with ASC are good at visual learning, and like social stories because they're written down. Social stories can also be illustrated.
- Social stories present information in a literal, 'concrete' way, which may improve a person's understanding of a previously difficult or ambiguous situation or activity.
- Social stories can help with sequencing (what comes next in a series of activities) and 'executive functioning' (planning and organising) - difficulties experienced by many people with ASC.
- By providing information about what might happen in a particular situation and some guidelines for behaviour, you can increase structure in a person's life and thereby reduce anxiety.

Although originally designed for children at the higher functioning end of the spectrum, social stories can also be helpful for young people and adults. In addition there is research to suggest that people with ASC who experience greater difficulties and associated learning disabilities may benefit from the use of social stories.

SCERTS is an educational model for working with children with ASC spectrum conditions (ASC) and their families. It provides specific guidelines for helping a child become a competent and confident social communicator, while preventing problem behaviours that interfere with learning and the development of relationships. It also is designed to help families, educators and therapists work cooperatively as a team, in a carefully coordinated manner, to maximize progress in supporting a child (Prizant, Wetherby, Rubin, Laurent, & Rydell, 2006).

The acronym “SCERTS” refers to the focus on:

“SC” - Social Communication – the development of spontaneous, functional communication, emotional expression, and secure and trusting relationships with children and adults;

“ER” - Emotional Regulation - the development of the ability to maintain a well-regulated emotional state to cope with everyday stress, and to be most available for learning and interacting;

“TS” – Transactional Support – the development and implementation of supports to help partners respond to the child’s needs and interests, modify and adapt the environment, and provide tools to enhance learning (e.g., picture communication, written schedules, and sensory supports). Specific plans are also developed to provide educational and emotional support to families, and to foster teamwork among professionals.

The SCERTS model targets the most significant challenges faced by children with ASC and their families. This is accomplished through family-professional partnerships (family-centred care), and by prioritizing the abilities and supports that will lead to the most positive long-term outcomes as indicated by the National Research Council (2001; Educating Children with ASC). As such, it provides family members and educational teams with a plan for implementing a comprehensive and evidence-based program that will improve quality of life for children and families.

The SCERTS Model includes a well-coordinated assessment process that helps a team measure the child’s progress, and determine the necessary supports to be used by the child’s social partners (educators, peers and family members). This assessment process ensures that:

- functional, meaningful and developmentally-appropriate goals and objectives are selected
- individual differences in a child’s style of learning, interests, and motivations are respected
- the culture and lifestyle of the family are understood and respected
- the child is engaged in meaningful and purposeful activities throughout the day
- supports are developed and used consistently across partners, activities, and environments
- a child’s progress is systematically charted over time
- program quality is measured frequently to assure accountability

AAC (Augmentative and Alternative Communication)

The term AAC (Augmentative and Alternative Communication) covers a huge range of techniques which support or replace spoken communication. These include gesture, signing, symbols, word boards, communication boards and books, as well as Voice Output Communication Aids (VOCAs). It refers to any form of communication that people use if they are unable or unwilling to use standard forms of communication such as speech.

AAC users should not stop using speech if they are able to do so. The AAC aids and devices are used to enhance their communication, not to replace or inhibit their existing skills.

For individuals with ASC, an augmentative communication system should:

- increase participation in the classroom, work, community and home
- address IEP, work and personal goals
- support timely and interactive communication
- provide meaningful language to the recipient
- support language and literacy learning
- encourage successful day to day, face to face, real time interaction
- be age and level appropriate
- provide positive behavioural supports

AAC can be divided into two groups: unaided and aided.

- Unaided AAC strategies rely on the user's body to convey messages. Unaided strategies include gestures, body language, and/or sign language. Keep in mind that unaided communication strategies must be understood by others in order to be effective.
- Aided strategies require the use of tools and/or equipment in addition to the user's body. Aided communication methods can range from paper and pencil to communication books or boards to devices that produce voice output and/or written output. Electronic communication aids allow the user to use picture symbols, letters and complete phrases to create messages. Some devices can be programmed to speak more than one language.

One of the goals of AAC intervention is to determine the communication, behavioural and social needs, identify strengths and match those strengths to possible solutions. While communication may be challenging for some individuals with ASC, they possess many strengths that lend them to being able to successfully use different types of communication strategies.

SENSORY INTEGRATION

Many people with an ASC have difficulty processing everyday sensory information such as sounds, sights and smells. This is usually called having sensory integration difficulties, or sensory processing disorder. It can have a profound effect on a person's life.

A sensory diet is an individualised plan that is designed to meet sensory needs in order to function optimally. This means maintaining attention and arousal for daily tasks and having adaptive responses, both emotionally and physically. Each individual has different sensory needs. Implementing a sensory diet is a sensory strategy often used in schools and homes to allow individuals to improve their processing and to improve interactions within daily tasks.

The 7 Senses are:

1. Tactile or Somatosensory System— sense of touch
2. Visual System— sense of sight
3. Auditory System—sense of hearing
4. Gustatory System—sense of taste
5. Olfactory System—sense of smell
6. Vestibular System— sense of balance
7. Proprioception System— sense of body position

The term '**Sensory Processing**' refers to our ability to take in information through our senses (touch, movement, smell, taste, sight, hearing, and balance) organize and interpret that information and make a meaningful response. The seven senses are fundamental to a child's ability to learn & function in any environment.

Sensory processing from the seven senses is highly specific BUT also interdependent; each sensation is affected by each other. The Central Nervous System functions as interactive whole as one part of the system biases another. For example, hypersensitivity in one sensory system can bias the whole system towards hypersensitivity.

There are several dimensions to the sensory integration system. The **tactile system**, which is the portion that processes stimuli in the form of touch, has two levels. The first is discrimination, which allows a child to determine where the touch occurs on the body and what is touching the body. The second level alerts the child's central nervous system and tells it when the body is in contact with danger. This second level is sometimes called the "fight or flight" response.

These two levels must work harmoniously as they are important for the interpretation of information and for survival. Dysfunction at either of these levels is called tactile defensiveness and can manifest itself in the following ways: difficulty with fine motor tasks such as letter formation (writing) or articulating sounds; being touched by others; dislike for the texture of clothing; dislike of the texture or flavor of certain foods; overactivity or

underactivity; dislike of “dirty” hands; a high tolerance for pain; the need to touch another person or object constantly.

Another important dimension of the central nervous system is the **vestibular system**. This system involves the body’s sense of movement and gravity or the relationship between one’s own body and the earth, i.e., what way is up, down, left, right, horizontal, vertical, etc., and where is the body in relationship to other objects such as a ball, the sidewalk, or stairs. This system also tells the body whether or not it is moving, how fast it is moving and in what direction it is moving.

The last of the three dimensions is the **proprioceptive system**. Through this system the child receives information from the muscles, joints, and tendons telling the body where it or the particular body part is at any given moment. A typically developing child begins to demonstrate praxis, or the ability to take in sensory information and organize, plan and execute physical responses, at around 7 to 8 months of age. These abilities include: imitation (through vocalizations, facial expressions, and body movements such as sticking out one’s tongue); initiation (beginning an activity that requires a physical response); construction (the ability to put objects together or organize them in different ways or remember supplies that are needed for a task); feedback (creation of muscle “memory”); grading (the ability to vary the intensity of one’s motor response); timing and sequencing (performing motor responses in the correct order, at the right time and without stopping); and motor planning (the ability to create, use and combine motor skills to perform new and more complex tasks with practice). Children who have difficulty with one or more of these aspects of praxis often appear to be clumsy, accident prone or uncoordinated.

When creating a sensory diet, occupational therapists (OTs) will be a part of the process. OTs are trained to be able to assess and treat sensory processing and integration differences. OTs will assess individual systems and processing using evaluation tools, observations, and interviews. Implementing a sensory diet requires the preparation of activities and consistent monitoring and data collection to adjust for responses. Remember that the goal is for an individual to respond adaptively, which means being able to successfully meet the demands of tasks and activities within the current setting or environment.

Rebound Therapy

The phrase "Rebound Therapy" refers to the use of trampolines in providing therapeutic exercise and recreation for people with a wide range of special needs including those who have ASC.

Rebound Therapy is used to facilitate movement, promote balance, promote an increase or decrease in muscle tone, promote relaxation, promote sensory integration, improve fitness and exercise tolerance, and to improve communication skills.

Play equipment

Specialist play areas are created to enhance both the physical and sensory needs of the pupils. Equipment that creates opportunities for balance and coordination, equipment that challenges physical abilities and equipment that encourages collaborative play are built into the school’s sensory curriculum.

ELKLAN

Accredited training in speech language and communication for school staff

ELKLAN has been set up by two experienced speech and language therapists, Liz Elks and Henrietta McLachlan to provide training and resources for all those seeking to support and understand children of all ages with a wide range of communication difficulties. We are pleased to offer these courses in Hertfordshire. ELKLAN has developed a highly successful accredited ten week course for teaching assistants called 'Speech and language support in the classroom'; this is accredited through the Open College Network.

Elklan: Supporting verbal children with ASC

Session 1 What is ASC?

- *Understand the triad of impairment as it relates to ASC spectrum disorder.*
- *To know the different types of difficulties falling under the general heading of ASC spectrum disorder.*
- *To understand how each area of the triad of impairment affects the child within their setting, educational and at home.*

Session 2 Using structure with children with Autism Spectrum.

- *Understand what is meant by visual and physical structure when working with children with ASD and why it is so important to use it.*
- *Understand some of the barriers to using structure*
- *To explore ways of adding physical structure to the setting in which participants work*
- *To explore ways of adding visual structure to the setting in which participants work.*

Session 3 Developing communication.

- *Be aware of the value of specific strategies aimed at improving understanding and to be able to use them meaningfully within the work setting with the child with an ASC.*
- *Be aware of the value of social stories for children with ASC and be able to use them meaningfully within the everyday situations.*

Session 4. Developing interaction.

- *Understand how a lack of theory of mind affects a child with an ASC.*
- *To know how to use comic strip conversations as an effective tool to promote social interaction.*

Session 5. Developing vocabulary and narrative skills.

- *To learn that children often behave in a certain way because it is one of their ways of communicating*
- *To understand the sensory difficulties children with an ASC can have and to learn how these can contribute to behaviour difficulties*

Hertfordshire STEPS

As part of on-going developments within Hertfordshire's Behaviour strategy, a new approach to positive behaviour management called Hertfordshire Steps' is already becoming established in many of our educational settings and services.

'Hertfordshire Steps' is a behaviour management approach adopts the following principles:

- Shared focus on inclusion of all children within their educational settings
- Shared values and beliefs across communities
- Shared communication, diversion and de-escalation
- Shared risk management
- Shared reparation, reflection and restoration

How does it work?

A team of Hertfordshire educational professionals are already skilled in the training and development of Hertfordshire Steps approaches and are able to provide training to your staff groups, professional teams others who work closely with vulnerable pupils. Hertfordshire Steps training incorporates two distinct developmental areas:

- *Level 1 'Step On'* - This provides the introduction and overview of the approach together with practical interventions that can be adopted within educational settings. All practitioners of the 'Hertfordshire Steps' approach must receive this level of training and achieve the success criteria as stipulated by course leaders.
- *Level 2 'Step Up'* - This provides more advanced practical approaches that may be required for more pupils and situations which present as more challenging and builds on successful completion of 'Step On' training.

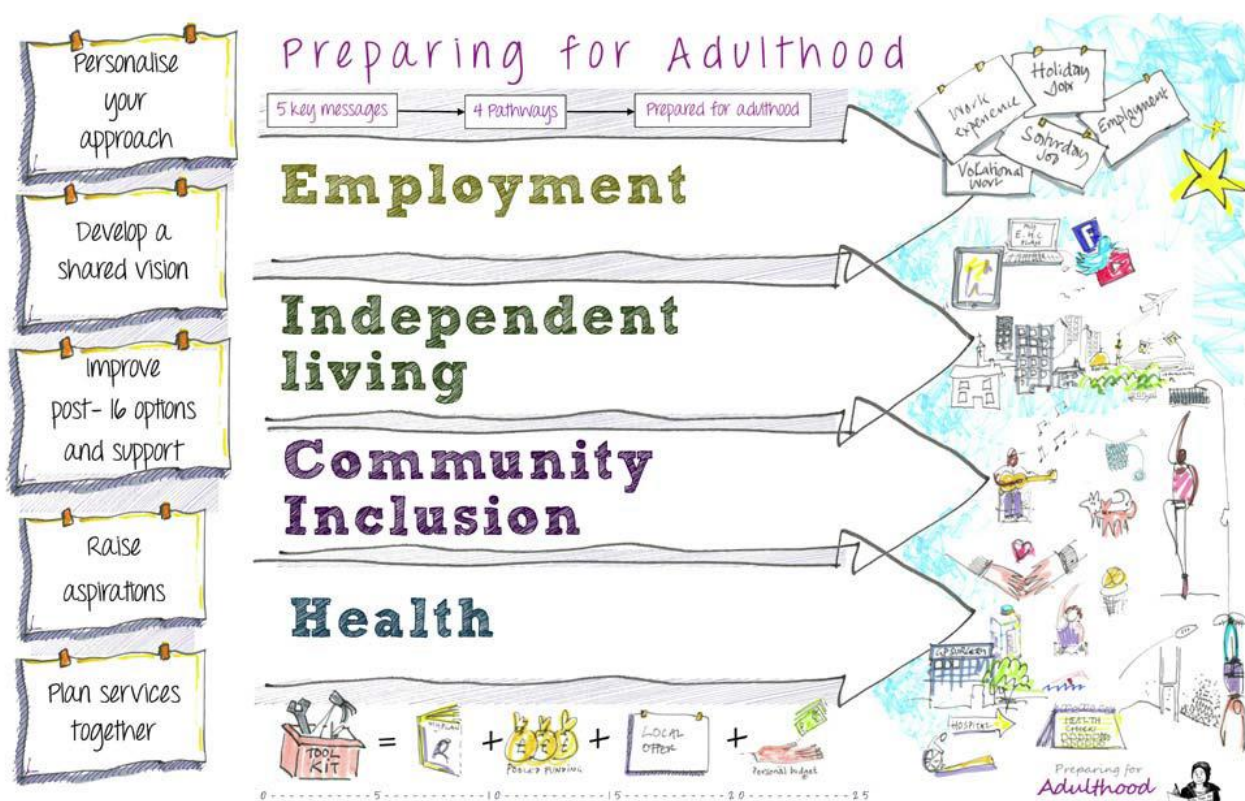
Schools in Hertfordshire have worked on collaboration with the STEPS team to train key staff as trainers. These staff then provide in-house training for staff in school through regular training sessions and updates. This ensures a commonly held ethos and delivery of positive behaviour support across Hertfordshire schools.

Hertfordshire Preparing for Adulthood Vision

The Preparing for Adulthood strategy has one purpose; to support young people with SEND to get the life they want. The aim is that each individual will be provided with the support they need to do that; support to choose, support to learn, support to thrive and support to translate their personal aspirations into positive outcomes. All agencies and providers who work with you / young people will share this common purpose and we will be accountable to young people and their families through measures which demonstrate the degree to which this objective is met.

The Preparing for Adulthood strategy will provide the framework to ensure that young people achieve the best possible learning outcomes in order to successfully progress into adult life. They will be supported to do this through high quality local provision which has been planned and developed according to young people's aspirations and needs.

Hertfordshire County Council will use the themes in the Preparing for Adulthood outcomes framework to help both shape and evaluate the impact of its local offer. These are shown below:



To deliver this vision Hertfordshire County Council will make these outcomes the shared purpose of the system and work in partnership with providers in Education,

Health and Social Care to make it a reality. To deliver against these objectives requires that all partners focus on these outcomes – and that success is measured against them.

Delivering for Young People

To deliver the strategy we will build a partnership with providers which have a shared understanding of and focus on:

- High quality study programmes which deliver effective outcomes for young people
- A broad range of pathways into employment for all young people
- A breadth of provision which meets the needs of all young people within their local community
- An offer designed against the demand from young people which is flexible and responsive to their needs

Measuring Outcomes

We will ensure that there is a clear relationship between the outcomes we have agreed with young people and the measures we use to understand whether progress is being made. We will create a framework that allows us to measure our success in delivering what matters to young people and their families, in relation to all aspects that are important for future adult lives, such as employment and independent living. This will be achieved by regular consultation with young people and their families.

HCC will use this strategy to agree the outcomes that we all want to achieve and provide clarity and support to enable all relevant parties to work together effectively to achieve them. Providers will work in collaboration with young people and their families to consider how individually agreed outcomes are best achieved. Hertfordshire County Council will consult regularly with young people and families to describe and review the Local Offer. The aim is not only to describe the provision of services in the local authority area but also the outcomes that the offer is expected to achieve.

Summary

The PfA strategy sets out for all involved a shared vision and common purpose about the outcomes to be achieved. It describes a partnership between agencies and providers to deliver outcomes for young people with services which are person centred and offer young people choice and control over their learning. It establishes a framework for the measurement of progress based on what matters to young people, clearly linked to outcomes, incorporating regular feedback from individuals and their families about what works and what needs to be improved. It is a strategy which lays the foundations of a system which is person centred, is focused on outcomes, continues to learn and improve and results in better lives for young people with SEND.



LIST OF HERTFORDSHIRE SPECIAL SCHOOLS			7
Amwell View School Station Road, Stanstead Abbots, Ware, SG12 8EH	SLD	Batchwood School Townsend Drive, St Albans, AL3 5RP	SEBD
Boxmoor House School Box Lane, Hemel Hempstead, HP3 0DF	SEBD	Brandles School Weston Way, Baldock, SG7 6EY	SEBD
Breakspeare School Gallows Hill Lane, Abbots Langley, WD5 0BU	SLD	Colnbrook School Hayling Road, Watford, WD19 7UY	LD
Falconer School Falconer Road, Bushey, WD23 3AT	SEBD	Garston Manor School Horseshoe Lane, Garston, Watford, WD25 7HR	LD
Greenside School Shephall Green, Stevenage, SG2 9XS	SLD	Hailey Hall School Hailey Lane, Hertford, SG13 7PB	SEBD
Haywood Grove School St Agnell's Lane, Hemel Hempstead, HP2 7BG	SEBD	Heathlands School Heathlands Drive, St Albans, AL3 5AY	HI
Knightsfield School Knightsfield, Welwyn Garden City, AL8 7LW	HI	Lakeside School Lemsford Lane, Welwyn Garden City, AL8 6YN	SLD
Larwood School Webb Rise, Stevenage, SG1 5QU	SEBD	Lonsdale School Webb Rise, Stevenage, SG1 5QU	PNI
Meadow Wood School Coldharbour Lane, Bushey, WD23 4NN	PNI	Middleton School Walnut Tree Walk, Ware, SG12 9PD	LD
Pinewood School Hoe Lane, Ware, SG12 9PB	LD	Southfield School Travellers Lane, Hatfield, AL10 8TJ	LD
St Luke's School Crouch Hall Lane, Redbourn, St Albans, AL3 7ET	LD	The Collett School Lockers Park Lane, Hemel Hempstead, HP1 1TQ	LD
The Valley School Valley Way, Stevenage, SG2 9AB	LD	Watling View School Watling View, St Albans, AL1 2NU	SLD
Woodfield School Malmes Croft, Leverstock Green, Hemel Hempstead, HP3 8RL	SLD	Woolgrove School Pryor Way, Letchworth Garden City, SG6 2PT	LD

Key:

Severe Learning Difficulties – SLD

Learning Difficulties – LD

Physical and Neurological Impairments - PNI

Hearing Impairment – HI

Social, Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties – SEBD

SUPPORT SERVICES AND GROUPS FOR CHILDREN WITH ASC AND THEIR FAMILIES	8
--	---

Angels Support Group

Angels is a parent led voluntary organisation and Registered Charity set up in North Hertfordshire to support parents and carers of children with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) and/or Autistic Spectrum Disorders (ASD). We formed in response to families in the community in desperate need of support for themselves and their children. All of our volunteers have children with either ADHD or an autistic spectrum disorder and are committed to providing a resource that people will find both useful and accessible, making it available to as many families as possible.

Raising a child diagnosed with ADHD and/or ASD can be very challenging to any parent or carer without the right support. Our aim is to help to empower parents and carers and encourage them to feel confident in supporting their child, both in the home environment and educationally.

The Groups are "adult only" time where we offer friendship, support, the sharing of ideas, difficulties and concerns, and we help to reduce isolation. There is plenty of opportunity to talk freely and discuss issues with other parents who completely understand the difficulties we all face. We support each other and offer a friendly meeting place to talk about all kinds of issues. We also manage to have some fun as well!!

<http://www.angelssupportgroup.org.uk>

PALMS

PALMS works across the county providing a specialist multi-disciplinary approach to children and young people aged 0-19 who have a global learning disability and/or autistic spectrum disorder and their families. PALMS clinicians comprise a 'virtual team' delivering a consistent service in a variety of community settings. PALMS aims to keep children and young people with their families within Hertfordshire, thereby improving outcomes for all family members.

The multi-disciplinary team provides individually tailored support to help manage a number of concerns experienced at home. PALMS provides intervention where necessary and intensive support to families reaching crisis with a step up and step down approach throughout their care journey. The PALMS team includes professions from: Clinical Psychology, Learning Disability Team, Media Therapy, Occupational Therapy, Positive Behaviour, Psychiatry, Speech and Language Therapy, Systematic therapy, Administration.

www.hertsschs.nhs.uk/services/children/PALMS

www.hertsschs.nhs.uk/services/challenging_behaviour

HARC

Harc is the Hertfordshire branch of the National Autistic Society (NAS). We are volunteers who provide support to individuals and their families and campaign for better local services for those living with autism in Hertfordshire. We do this because we want the potential of all people with autism to be fulfilled and recognised, and for individuals and families to receive the support and understanding they need.

Support

- *Providing workshops on various topics associated with autism*
- *Organising support group meetings with speakers of interest*
- *Running a telephone helpline answered by volunteers with personal experience of autism*
- *Establishing specialist support groups and networks not covered by other local organisations*

Inform

- *Producing quarterly newsletters and sending out regular email alerts to over 600 families and professionals*
- *Providing advice to professionals such as teachers, doctors, educational advisers and employment advisers*
- *Working with local public bodies and organisations to improve knowledge and awareness of the needs of children, young people and adults on the spectrum*

Campaign

- *campaigning for improved services on behalf of people with autism and their families in Hertfordshire*

<http://nasherts.org.uk/> or <http://www.harc-online.org.uk/>

Parent Partnership

Parent Partnership offers advice and support to parents of children with Special Educational Needs. They offer the following support:

- To help parents, schools and other professionals listen to each other, work closely together to meet the child's educational needs
- Offer local confidential helplines to discuss your child's needs
- Give impartial information and guidance on special educational needs to parents, carers and professionals.
- Try to help if there is a disagreement with the school or local authority about the way a child's needs are being met.
 - Do their best to find other relevant statutory and voluntary services if you need further support.
- Helpline: **01992 555847** (8.30am to 5pm Mon-Thurs, 8.30 to 4.30pm Fri)

parent.partnership@hertsc.gov.uk

Hertfordshire Additional Needs Database (HAND)

This is a database of children or young people (0-19) with an additional need or disability. If you choose to join you will receive a card. This can be a way of getting assistance and understanding for their child in many different situations. Some establishments will offer discounts to individuals with HAND cards. By joining you will also get a subscription to the HAND newsletter that provides lots of information on new and changing services, play schemes, holiday schemes and welfare benefits.

Any child can join that is aged 0-19 with has an additional need or disability which have a substantial impact upon their everyday life. Registration is optional. If you are interested in registering you can register on-line (see details below). If registering online isn't for you, look out for the paper membership form at GP practices, schools, health centres and clinics.

E-mail: hand@hertscc.gov.uk
Contact Number: **01992 556984**

www.hertsdirect.org/hand

National Autistic Society (NAS)

This Society aims to promote a better understanding amongst professionals and the general public of the difficulties that people with autism and their families face. It offers information, advice and support to people with autism, their families and carers.

E-mail: autismhelpline@nas.org.uk, nas@nas.org.uk
Autism Helpline: **0845 070 4004**

www.autism.org.uk

ADD-vance

ADD-Vance is a support group run by parents and carers of children with ASC and ADHD that operates in St. Albans and Herford areas. They aim to support parents/carers of children with ADHD, ASC and related conditions, as well as supporting adults and siblings. ADD-vance also work with families, teachers and other professionals to run workshops and training sessions to gain wider acceptance and understanding.

ADD-vance run a helpline to talk through issues and provide information and specialist behavioural coaching for families and individuals. They also hold monthly meetings in St Albans and Hertford. ADDvance provide a coaching service to families; refer to the website for more details.

E-Mail: herts@add-vance.org
Contact Number: **01727 833963**

www.add-vance.org

TRACKS autism

TRACKS autism is an independent local charity and early years centre, based in Stevenage, for children with autism and related conditions. We also offer respite care for children's family and carers during school holidays.

TRACKS provides a calm environment for between eight to ten children per session, currently five times a week, 48 weeks of the year. Sessions are three hours minimum and include wrap-around care for families.

These aims are achieved in close partnership with parents and families in order to meet the individual needs of the child in line with Government best practice 'Every Child Matters'. TRACKS utilises an interactive and multi-sensory approach to learning through play. Often our children with Autism and related conditions prefer to play alone and this may look as if they are deliberately ignoring others. This may in turn eventually stop other children and adults wanting to play and talk with them, which then prevents all kinds of learning, fun, and friendships. TRACKS finds creative ways to encourage our children to be interested in their environment and those around them. Lots of time is spent following the child's lead and interests, encouraging them to just enjoy being and playing with others.

<http://www.tracks-autism.org.uk>

Sibs

Sibs is the only UK charity representing the needs of siblings of disabled people. Siblings have a lifelong need for information; they often experience social and emotional isolation, and have to cope with difficult situations. They also want to have positive relationships with their disabled brothers and sisters and to be able to choose the role they play in future care. There are over half a million young siblings and 1.7 million adult siblings in the UK. We support siblings of all ages who are growing up with or who have grown up with a brother or sister with any disability, long term chronic illness, or life limiting condition.

Phone 01535 645453

<http://www.sibs.org.uk/>

Peach

Peach is an autism charity based in Ascot, Berkshire which provides information and support for parents of children with autism. One of the main services that Peach offers is a helpline for parents. Many parents find it difficult to get answers to their questions when their children have problems; they do not know where to turn. Peach provides information packs and importantly puts parents in contact with other parents who have been through the same processes and now have a positive outlook. When parents first get a diagnosis or feel their child has difficulties they often feel bereft, mourning the child they thought they had. Peach shows them that significant progress can be made, and helps them move forward.

<http://www.peach.org.uk/index.php/about-peach/#sthash.F9B89B4D.dpuf>

Woolgrove Saturday Club

It was set up for the pupils within the school and surrounding schools who are on the Autistic Spectrum and their siblings providing they are within primary school age. The club runs from 9.30 until 12.30 every other Saturday (during term time) and is run by staff specialising in Autism. We do a range of activities, including cooking, art, ICT, physical activities including football/ball games and a mini workout

Our Club offers parents/carers some much needed respite, giving them an opportunity to go shopping or even a cup of tea or coffee peacefully. We try to help those siblings come to understand and cope with their brothers or sisters Autism, and offer a listening ear for any parents/carers concerns. Sometimes another parent/carer can help to solve small problems you are having at home as they have gone through it before.

Phone 01462 622422

saturdayclub@woolgrove.herts.sch.uk

Breakaway clubs

To provide care and create an opportunity for social interaction between children and young people with special needs, through different mediums of play in a safe and fun environment. North Herts CVS Breakaway Playschemes aim to provide holiday fun for children and young people aged 5-19 with special needs in the North Herts and Stevenage area.

We provide a varied and interesting programme of activities which enable opportunities for peer interaction to help develop the social skills of the children and young people, whilst giving much needed respite for parents and carers. Our Playschemes operate at two venues in Stevenage and one in North Herts during all the school holidays. We also run a regular Saturday Playscheme based in Stevenage during term time

Phone: 01992 504013

Hertfordshire HUBs

The KIDS East and West HUBs offer information and support for parents and carers of disabled children and young people aged 0-19 in Hertfordshire. Any parent or carer of a child aged 0-19 with any impairment can access the HUBs. You don't need a referral, just call or email us. You can also drop in but please call first in case we are out! Professional enquiries also welcome.

We can offer free and impartial support via phone, email and face to face (including home visits).

<http://www.kids.org.uk/hub>