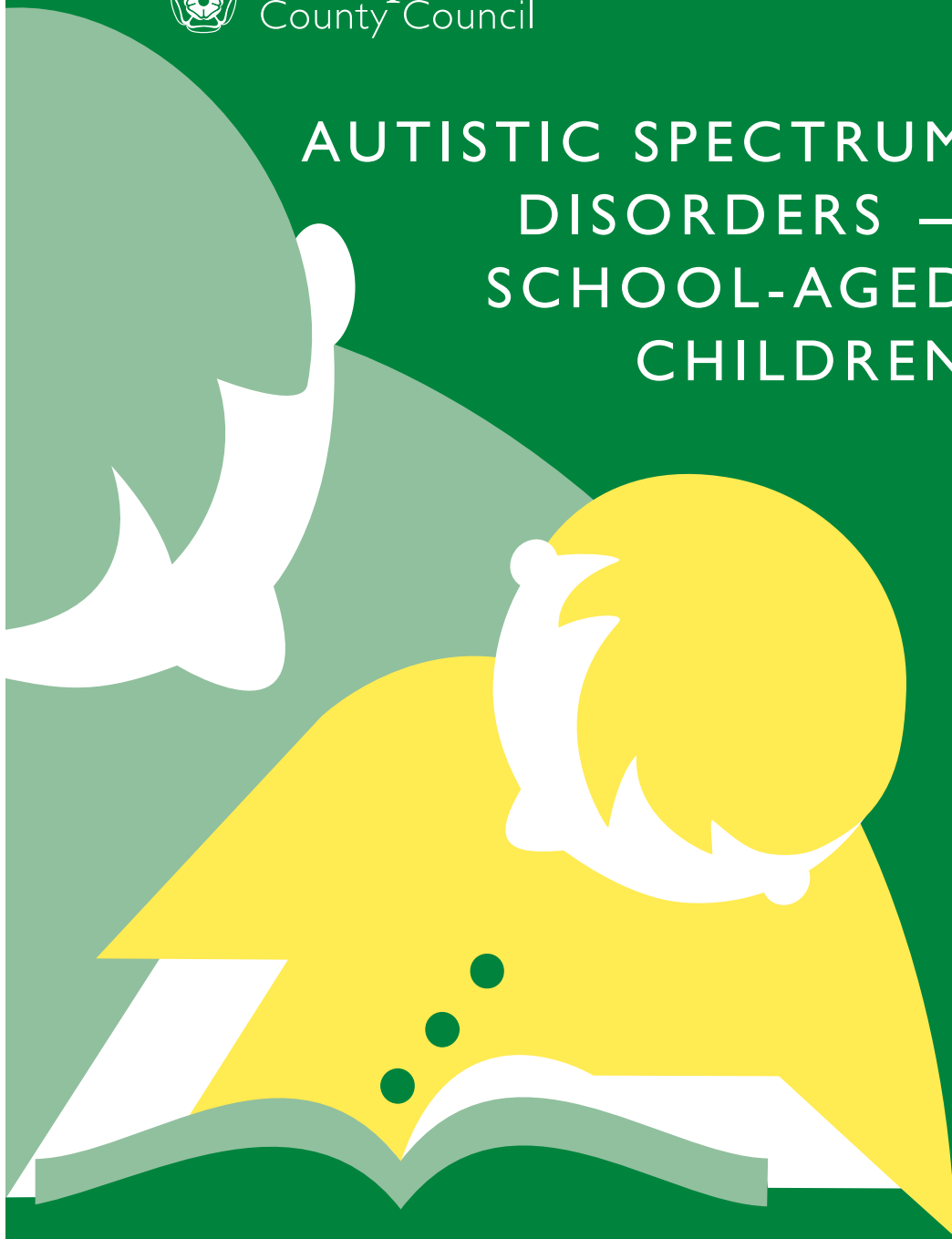




Hampshire
County Council

AUTISTIC SPECTRUM
DISORDERS —
SCHOOL-AGED
CHILDREN



Children with special educational needs

Meeting the needs of school-aged children with autistic spectrum disorders

A guide for parents and carers

Your child and autistic spectrum disorder

This leaflet is for parents/carers who may be concerned that their child has an autistic spectrum disorder (ASD). We asked some parents what they would like to know about autistic spectrum disorders. These are the questions they asked.

What is an autistic spectrum disorder?

An autistic spectrum disorder affects a child's ability to understand communication, social situations and language. The development of imagination is also affected. It is as if the children cannot make sense of what is happening around them.

For children with an autistic spectrum disorder the world is a very puzzling place and many of their activities seem to be an attempt to block out the confusion. This can be difficult to understand for all of us, especially parents/carers.

Other, more specific, terms are sometimes used when describing autistic spectrum disorders including autism, Asperger's Syndrome and pervasive developmental disorder.

Who does it affect?

An autistic spectrum disorder can be mild or it can be severe. The majority of children with autistic spectrum disorders also have learning difficulties. ASD affects about 6 in 1,000 children, significantly affecting more boys than girls.

What can be done?

The difficulties connected with autistic spectrum disorders are lifelong. However, it is clear that what parents/carers, teachers and others who work with children do at home and in school has a great impact on the child's future. Intervention in the areas of social understanding, language and communication, and managing anxiety are key. When parents/carers and professionals work closely together they produce the best results.

Where can I go for help?

The uncertainty many families feel can be very painful. It may seem as if there is a bewildering number of people who might be able to help, or nobody at all.

You might choose to talk to any of the following people who you have found helpful:

- your family doctor
- the nurse at your doctor's surgery
- school staff.

They can advise you about who else to talk to to help clarify your child's needs and what assessments are necessary. This may include talking to a speech and language therapist, a paediatrician or a clinical or educational psychologist. It is important your concerns are listened to and taken seriously.

What is an assessment?

There are different ways of assessing the needs of children with an autistic spectrum disorder including informal assessments such as how your child learns and spends his or her spare time as well as more formal assessments.

Assessments describe the development of your child over a period of time and help to clarify not only his/her needs but also the best ways of helping him or her learn. The people involved may work for health, education or voluntary bodies. The assessment is most effective when everyone works together with you as parents/carers.

Some children with impaired development in social interaction and communication are referred to the health service for diagnosis. This is usually undertaken by specialist consultants, clinical psychologists or multi-disciplinary teams.

What does Hampshire have to offer?

Over the years Hampshire County Council has developed a wide range of services aimed at enhancing the learning and development of children with autistic spectrum disorders. Many aim to build on the skills of parents/carers, increasing their confidence in meeting the needs of their child at home.

Hampshire offers:

- provision for children with autistic spectrum disorders in both mainstream and specialist settings
- extended training courses for teachers and support assistants to enable them to meet the needs of children with autistic spectrum disorders
- specialist outreach support for schools which have children with autistic spectrum disorders

- specialist educational psychologists and special needs inspectors who can provide advice to schools
- local support groups for school staff to problem solve issues about how best to meet children's needs
- some local groups for parents.

Parents often tell us that they value what Hampshire offers.

What is the future for my child?

As a parent/carer you will want to work out what are realistic expectations for your child.

It is helpful to develop a partnership with those working with your child so you can ask questions and solve problems together. Working out long and short term goals can be helpful. As your child moves through school there will be a regular cycle of planning and review; a partnership between parents, school and other professionals.

Sometimes it is the little questions that are most important – so do share them, even if there are no ready answers!

Many parents/carers want to know that they are not alone and that other people know about autistic spectrum disorders. Many find it helpful to talk to other parents/carers, so a contact number for the Hampshire Autistic Society is given on the back of this leaflet together with other useful addresses. Some professionals will be able to tell you about support groups in your area.

Contacts

For SEN publications

SEN Service
Hampshire County Council
Education Department
County Office
The Castle
Winchester SO23 8UG
Tel: 01962 846452
Website: www.hants.gov.uk/TC/inclusion/pubpc.html

For information and advice on special educational needs

Parent Partnership Service
Hampshire County Council
Education Department
County Office
The Castle
Winchester SO23 8UG
Tel: 01962 845870

Voluntary Organisations

Hampshire Autistic Society
1634 Parkway
Solent Business Park
Whiteley
Fareham PO15 7OH
Tel: 01489 880881

National Autistic Society
393 City Road
London EC1V 1NE
Tel: 020 833 2299
Website: www.nas.org.uk

OAASIS (Office for Advice, Assistance, Support and
Information on Special Needs)
Brock House
Griggs Lane
Brockenhurst SO42 7RE
Tel: 09068 633201
Website: www.OAASIS.co.uk

PACE (Parents Autism Campaign for Education)
1 Floral Place
off Northampton Grove
London N1 2FS
Tel: 020 7226 5525

This leaflet is available in large print -
please contact the SEN Service on
01962 846452

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