



Autism



WALSINGHAM
SUPPORT *Everyone is different*

It's not just support, it's happiness.

We are Walsingham Support, a charity that has been supporting people with learning disabilities, autism, brain injuries and complex needs for more than 30 years.

Whether it's a couple of hours a week or 24-hour, seven-day support, we provide bespoke solutions that enable individuals with disabilities to live fulfilling, happy lives.

At Walsingham Support, we do things differently. We really take time to get to know the people we support; to identify their needs, to learn about their abilities and aspirations, and to recognise what makes them unique.

By taking this approach, we jointly develop and deliver tailored, person-centred support to enable every individual to live life to the full.

Flexibility is key to achieving this, but while our work and the support we provide constantly evolves to meet the demands of an ever-changing social care landscape, our vision has remained the same:

We seek an equal and diverse society, in which people with disabilities are citizens in their own right who are supported to be happy and to reach their full potential.



What is autism?

Autism – also known as autism spectrum disorder (ASD) – is a spectrum condition, which means that people experience difficulties to varying degrees. Some individuals have very profound and severe problems, while others are affected to a far lesser degree.

No two people with autism are the same: each individual exhibits their own distinct characteristics, experiences very different challenges, and has unique abilities and potential.

Autism is a lifelong developmental disability that encompasses a wide range of difficulties. These can include:

- cognitive impairment
- difficulties with communication
- difficulties with social interaction
- repetitive activity
- sensitivity to sensory input
- learning difficulties
- emotional or behavioural challenges.

Asperger syndrome is a condition that falls on the autism spectrum. People with Asperger syndrome don't usually have learning disabilities and are of average or high intelligence. They often have problems with communication and processing language, but not always with speech.





Common challenges associated with autism

People with autism can struggle to interact and socialise, which can mean they prefer to be alone or behave in a way that other people perceive as being odd.

Challenges with communication are extremely common. We support individuals who simply have difficulties understanding the nuances of conversation, like sarcasm, facial expressions and tone of voice. Other people we work with don't use speech at all.

Many of the people we support have other conditions alongside autism, such as Down's syndrome, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), visual and/or hearing impairments, dyslexia and epilepsy.

This means that the support we provide for people with autism must be tailored to suit them and their specific needs. We build our support around each individual's capabilities and choices, using a **person-centred** approach.



Person-centred support

Everything we do takes a person-centred approach. This means that when we work with an individual and their family, we listen to what they want and what matters to them, ensuring they are always at the centre of conversations and decisions.

This is particularly important when supporting people with autism, because each individual's challenges are so unique. Whether they need a helping hand for an hour each week, or support 24 hours a day, we deliver bespoke solutions to help enable people with autism to live happy, fulfilled lives.

We understand that only when support is specifically tailored to an individual's needs and goals can it have maximum effect.





Our staff

It's crucial that our staff have the skills, knowledge and personality to support an individual with an acquired brain injury in the right way.

So we look for people who can be consistent in their approach, provide structure and clear instruction, and have patience. We invest in them, providing training in a range of recovery and rehabilitation models so staff understand brain injuries, their impact and appropriate support.

Our staff also undertake recognised and accredited training in supporting positive behaviour, prevention strategies and intervention techniques. This comprehensive training is 'topped up' using bespoke training that explores the very best in contemporary support methods for each person.

Our programme of continuous professional development (CPD) means that, as a team, we are always ready to meet the challenges of the evolving social care sector, whatever the individual's circumstances and needs.

Specific, autism-related training

Because autism commonly manifests in difficulties with communication – and many of the people we support are non-verbal – it's crucial that we find creative ways to talk to and support them.

So, a dedicated team of staff works with each individual, taking time to understand their challenges and to develop a support plan that best suits their methods of communication.

Our staff undertake specialist training, such as:

- Introduction to autism spectrum disorders
- Introduction to Asperger syndrome
- Sensory world of people with autism
- Challenging behaviour
- The National Autistic Society's SPELL (**Structure, Positive** approaches and expectations, **Empathy, Low** arousal, **Links**) framework
- The TEACCH (**Treatment** and **Education** of **Autistic** and related **Communication**-handicapped **Children**) approach

Our staff work to create 'low-arousal' environments that don't overstimulate people with autism, and are skilled at communicating using key words to avoid long or confusing sentences.



Sam and Tracy's story

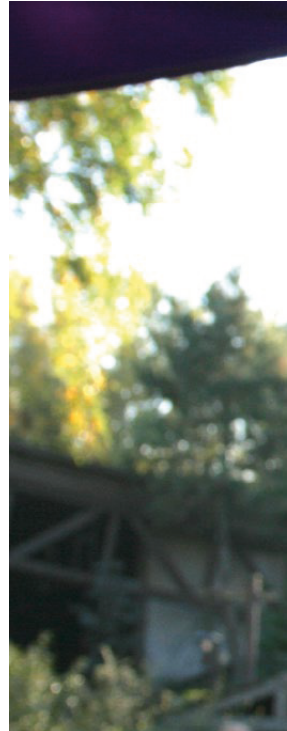
Sam is 26 and has autism. His mum, Tracy, always wanted him to be as independent as he can possibly be and to develop basic life skills that would help him to reach his potential.

But when a local care provider told Tracy it couldn't provide Sam with the help he needed, she didn't know where to turn. Unhappy with the support that was on offer elsewhere, Tracy got in touch with us.

She explained Sam's situation and how his autism affects him day to day, as well as outlining what he wants to achieve: things like being able to prepare his own food and take part in stimulating activities.

One of Sam's difficulties is with social interaction; he gets very anxious when meeting new people and refuses to interact, sometimes becoming distressed.

So, our staff took time to get to know Sam, gradually introducing themselves into his life and spending more time with him until he felt comfortable being with them.









Sam is now supported four days a week and is developing new skills, including personal care, meal preparation and computer literacy. He also participates in activities he enjoys, like swimming.

Sam used to be reliant on Tracy, but now he is doing things for himself and even took his first holiday abroad without his family! He enjoyed a trip to France where he visited Disneyland Paris, the Louvre, Eiffel Tower and his favourite place of all, Notre Dame.

“He’s a totally different person. He’s healthier because he’s physically and mentally active, his speech has improved and he’s so much happier and more fulfilled,” says Tracy.

“My son is acquiring the skills he needs to enable him to move into supported living one day. Walsingham Support have given me hope that Sam will be able to thrive in supported living, something I previously thought would never be possible.”

Why we are different

Everybody is different. We don't just acknowledge that – we celebrate it.

So we make sure we're different, too.

That means offering more than a standard, one-size-fits-all service. It means delivering a tailored support package for every single person we work with, custom made to fit them.

We look beyond a person's disability. We work with individuals, their families and carers to really understand the challenges they face, and the support that will best meet their particular needs.

Then, together we develop creative yet practical solutions that match each person's abilities and goals, giving them the tools they need to thrive and enjoy a fulfilling, happy life.

We believe that our way of thinking sets us apart from other providers in our sector – and we're proud of that!



If you would like to find out more about Walsingham Support, and how we can help people with autism and their families, please get in touch.



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