

Autism, Asperger and ADHD

Here's some very useful 'been there and done it' advice from other leaders about including Autistic children into your group.... Thanks so all the leaders that had input in this document.

Janie Cartwright

Get them to come along as we are all inclusive but get them to bring one to one support with them each week n see how it goes as to whether to continue with one to one or they may well settle in. xx

Jane Susan Roberts

Hi, just do everything as normal, but just have another adult with them to repeat instructions, also include couple sensible children to look after them and be there buddies.

Michelle Scott

Depend on individual re support don't assume they r going need it lots kids with asd don't

Samantha Gomez

I work with severely autistic children and also have a number of children in my cub pack with not so severe autism. The best way is to speak to the parents and ask them what their child requires to ensure a happy experience. Because of the wide range of severity this can vary. Many autistic children need structure and routine so they know what is going on and what is expected of them. But as I say, the parents will be able to tell you exactly what they need.

Tim Fawell

It really depends on the specifics of their Autism as all people with Autism are individuals, it is not like every autistic child is the same. Find out the specifics from the parents. As long as you are aware of the triggers then it will be fine. Have the parents give you as much information as possible.

Simply put you treat them as you would any other child ensuring that you allocate one of your ASL/YL's the role of keeping an eye on the kid and making sure they are ok with everything.

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

Ruth Tanner

We have several children on the autistic spectrum in our group from beavers to explorers.. We speak to the parents first and then they have a buddy - usually not a parent- who works with them at the cub meetings, on camp etc. We try to match the buddy up to the child. As they move up sections the buddy can move with them to provide the continuity. We also use a lot of symbols - such as the traffic light symbols etc. which all the cubs respond to and we have a couple of boxes that stay at cubs with fiddle toys in, bits of lego, stress toys, timers etc. that can be used at different times. Each child is different so we have to work with each child in a different way but the benefits are huge to the child and the family and to our scout group.

Phil Anderson

Your District Team should help you with this

Helen Swain

Get in touch with your county special needs adviser, they can give you fabulous advice

Dave Hackney

Don't forget that their parents know the best so spend time talking with them. I would ideally have someone other than the parent as a helper.

Ella Dedman

Get the children along for a visit as each child is different, we have 2 in our section, one needs more help to stay focused than the other. Get your district special needs advisor to come to a meeting so they can assess their need

Samantha Abbiss

My job role consists of working with autistic children and adults. I had an aspergers child start Beavers. I invited him to the hut one day time so that he knew what it looked like. Speak to parents and ask what their specific needs are. They may need to have a story book, with lots of pictures of what you do etc... You may need to have a visual timetable, which I am more than happy to help with. It works by taking the activity off the timeline and putting it away. If you need any resources, please feel free to ask.... X

Andy Dunn

Ask the parents to help and join in, the other children will be nosy and want to help. Taking the parents minds off their problems watching their children interact. After all we all learn at different speed and ways. Have a good time and have fun

Kelly Haycock

We have 2 currently in our pack and another one starting in the new term. Just talk to the parents, they will be able to advise on their needs and if it's anything "severe" for want of a better word, talk to district and county. Our most severely autistic child will have his own chaperone at Cub Jam next year who is specially trained, but for the meetings all he needs is his headphones if things get too loud. Patience is the best thing with them. Our youngest one has hit me several times when he doesn't get his own way so be on your guard too. Remain calm when speaking to them and things should go smoothly. :-) Obviously this is all only from our personal experience and your cubs may have different needs.

Tigz Noyce

Talk to their parents ask what support they think he will need, the child may need to know what is happening. Give it a try but make sure you review to make sure it is working.

Adele Hopkins-Ballard

As a parent with high functioning autism, and aspergers , routine is key, speaking with parents of the child to see what is the best way they communicate(verbally, visually, or kinesthetically [by

action]) and implement it into the evening, perhaps bring the parents along to the session and/ or get them to leave gradually,(be there at the start and at the end etc.)

Jenny Tarrant

Don't information overload them break it down into simple short sentence tasks. Works fine with the lad I have

Janette Mellor

Speak to parents and child. Give instructions directly to child and clearly - short / clear sentences. Have fun!

Chris Walker

We have 3-4 in each section we do the same as the rest of the sections but at a slightly slower rate it is very rewarding when they complete the task given.

Tracey Holmes

Speak to parents and child. I write down what we are doing that night and go through it with the child slowly make it fun too.

Kaye Gambles

Ask their parents to come as their carers (covered by insurance), you might end up with extra leaders through it. Be aware though that this should be a break for parents, therefore get them to do some of the normal stuff and you have a go with the autistic kids. This works two fold. Parents on site if you need them, and they might have a bit of fun!! Don't assume all autistics need support all the time, a lot of them don't. Have a go, and don't be frightened of them, the kids in the end are there for the same reason they want to have some fun...just take it slowly, but when the kids achieve something they've never done before they get a huge kick out of it and so will you. Have Fun.

Mick Lynn

You will need to get to know the child's way of life as there are many forms of Autism. You cannot exclude a child because they have Autism and you will find that if he or she becomes part of your section insurance cover is not an issue. I'm a Scout Leader myself and my grandson has Autism and given the time and effort to make a commitment you can make them feel wanted in life. Ideally if the parents supported the carer that would support you in this challenge. The web has loads of information to support you as well and you should prepare yourself for some life changes in your Leadership roll.

Judy Saunders

Agree with those who said speak to parents and depending on level of understanding the child themselves. Don't assume they will be very different, we have had some children with autism who because we have made small adjustments no one else even realises. Remember they are children first and just get to know them. As a parent of a child with aspergers it is how I got involved in scouting, the parents will want to work with you and if successful children with autism will get even more out of scouting and it teaches you loads too! Basics fit with any child - be firm and consistent

to everyone and if needed speak to other cubs to tell them why things may happen differently so they can help you and new cubs.

Linda Thomas

Message me and I with my contact details - I am a Special Educational Needs teacher and can help with integrating ASD children into scouting. I can do specific training and I am fairly local (Kent I think ?) and could support you with this.

Marie Smith

I have an autistic boy in my group who is quite intelligent so check with the parents what the individual child's needs are first. Hard to give random advice otherwise. I have asked 1 of my more mature scouts to shadow my Beaver.

P.s. Would assume that the parents wouldn't send them if they thought their child wouldn't be able to integrate.

Julie Machin

Accept it as a personal challenge. All children should be encouraged to do the best that they are able to. Autistic children are no different the results you gain will be very rewarding all round. Good luck take the challenge. (Girl Guiding Uk with 40 years service)

Marie Bradley It depends on the child's need as a scout leader with an autistic son who has gone from beaver to soon to be explorer, I could give you some advice if needed feel free to email me there is also a help sheet for autism on scoutbase as well as other conditions.

Annie Gray

Get the parents to volunteer with them, that way the parents are involved from planning the programme and can feed in what challenges it might generate, and how their child will cope, can help you put strategies in place. Every autism spectrum child will have very personal 'rules' and behaviour triggers, so getting parents involved is the best way to get them settled quickly. (I taught 4 yrs in special school.)

Jo Lawton

Autism is a huge spectrum disorder from the child who is highly verbal and intelligent needing a little support to manage social situations to the child who is completely dependent and non verbal and unable to connect with the world around them at all. You need to get to know the children you will have and find what their needs are.

Des Fraser

Depends on the level of Autism, A colony in Rugby had a young autistic lad and the parent had to stay because the lad would basically do what he wanted to do whatever everyone else was doing, the parent then became a helper for the best part of two years, hope this helps.

David Ferdinand

I have had special needs children in my group, including autistic ones, we found that after a the first few weeks of their parents being around they didn't need them and didn't notice if they weren't there. If you do have them in your group we found keeping to a routine helped them as they like to know what happens and when. Ssaying that we have just had a camp and had no problems even with the routine being very disrupted.

Julie Richards

We have children with asd in our group. As a BSL I found putting visual symbols up on the wall in the programme order a help and also a keyring with them on, all our boys miss them if they aren't put up, as ours have all moved up the sections now but I still use the visuals. Depending on the severity of asd, depends on whether we have a carer/parent coming along with them.

Jane Eacott

My 12 year old son has ASD and was very shy when he started Beavershe went to five meetings before he settled in. he was fine at cub as he knew all the children and now he's at scouts he is the same as everyone else!!

Chris Williams

My daytime job includes working with autistic children. I used to work with autistic children in my old Scout group and my youngest son is autistic as well. First of all you must find out all the information that you can about them. For example, what they like to eat. Especially true if you are planning on having a party. Perhaps they are the type who likes to have a quiet corner to go to if things become too much for them. My advice is Research, Research and Research.

However, a person great or small is still a person after all. (Doctor Seuss) Get to know your new Scouter. They might prefer to talk to another leader other than yourself. Please do not take it personally. Get their parents CRB and ask them to come along on any outings etc. Ask your district for help they should send along an extra leader or support you in another way. But if things are getting too much for you please remember to ask for help.

Alison Hayes

As a parent with a aspergers child in scouts I would say communication is very important, find out any food allergies they have so they can be catered for, I provide my own juice for club nights as my son has sweetener intolerance. Prepare the child for any change of venue, perhaps offer half a session for the 1st few times and if possible a viewing of the hall before they start. Don't put them on the spot when asking question, they need a few more seconds to process an answer, a buddy would be a good idea. But most of all enjoy their difference!! I would like to say it took me ages to get my son to scouts but he has flourished since being there. All the best.

Teresa Spiers

Kent County have always had a good support team for members with special needs. They will help you with this. Ex ADC SN [Kent Scout](#)

Fiona Barrett

Approx. a third of our Cub pack is somewhere on the ASD spectrum. As others have said, every child is individual and will respond in different ways. It will take time to learn how the child ticks, but once you do the rewards are wonderful. Work as a team, don't spring anything on the child, taking a few minutes to explain what is going to happen will save having an entirely disrupted evening. ASD children experience the world very differently and you may have to explain the same thing in many ways before they understand what you expect of them. Also, only give one instruction at a time, as Alison said, they need more time to process information. Hope all goes well.

Gill Sequoyah

My 15 year old son is autistic and has gone through all sections of scouting in beavers he stayed in the group til he was nearly 9 with a young leader as a buddy removing him From room as necessary if things got too much. He is now an explorer has very understanding leaders and has just returned from walking Hadrian's Wall with them which had lots of challenges for him and them but with good communication and patience my son has thrived by being in scouting and helped with independence as well. So I would say the key to success is communication with parents getting to know child's likes dislikes triggers routines and to try to get into their mode of thinking - above all have fun and no high expectation but don't single them out. My sons beaver group asked the other parents to come for a talk from me about how and why my son behaves as he does.

Julie Willetts Was Sankey

We have got a young boy with autism in our beaver section, for the first few weeks he had one to one with one of the assistants, and slowly we let him find his own feet. He is now liked and accepted by every one of the beavers for who he is. We have never excluded him from any activity, and have never made him seem any different from anyone else. He knows that if he feels uncomfortable that he can go to any leader and have a couple of minutes 1 to 1 before he returns to the rest of the group. Communication is the key with the parents. His mom brought in a card which explained all about his condition and we found that really useful. The communication has continued and is a big part of his success in our group.

Good luck

Samantha Eagle creator of the badge planner series