

COURSE CONTENT OVERVIEW

Autism Awareness in Education



This course will help anyone working in education to understand how to best support autistic children and young people in their setting. The course will deepen your understanding of what autism is, and what it means to be autistic. It will address some common misconceptions, and explore how autism should be viewed as a difference rather than a disorder or deficit.

You will learn that autistic people share common areas of difference, but that each autistic person will have their own individual strengths and challenges. The course explores how those areas of difference might impact a child or young person, and how individualised support should be provided, based on their actual needs and using the Graduated Approach. It goes on to offer a range of practical strategies to support autistic learners. There will be opportunities to reflect on and apply your learning throughout the modules and downloadable resources are provided.

Module 1 - Introduction to Autism

This module provides an overview of what autism is and why it is important for education professionals to understand autism. It gives a brief history of research and thought regarding autism, looks at how we should describe autism, and considers the concepts of the autism spectrum and neurodiversity.

- Functionality tour
- Foreword by Fintan J O'Regan
- What is autism?
- Why is understanding autism important?
- Inclusive practice and removing barriers
- Autism timeline
- Common misconceptions
- The autism spectrum
- Describing autism
- Medical vs Social Models
- Neurodiversity and neurodivergence

Module 2 - Areas of Difference

This module looks at common strengths that autistic people often share, and considers the key areas of difference, and how these might impact a person's experience. It also explores meltdowns, shutdowns and autistic fatigue, and looks at mental health.

- Areas of strength
- Communication and language
- Differences in social interaction
- Repetitive interests, behaviours and activities
- Monotropism
- Sensory differences
- Scenario exercises
- Meltdowns, shutdowns, and autistic fatigue
- Potentially co-occurring challenges
- Autism and mental health

Module 3 - Identifying Autism

This module gives an overview of the diagnostic process and the current diagnostic criteria. It looks at masking, autism in girls and women, and considers cultural differences that might impact diagnoses.

- Pre-diagnosis
- Diagnostic criteria
- Masking
- Autistic girls and women
- Cultural differences and diagnosis
- Pathological Demand Avoidance (PDA)
- Education, health, and care (EHC) plans

Module 4 - Supporting Autistic Learners

In this module, you will learn about good autism practice in education, creating an inclusive whole-school culture, preventing bullying, and how to apply the Graduated Approach to support autistic children and young people. It looks at taking an individualised approach, the provision framework, and how to effectively work with parents and carers.

- Good autism practice in education
- An inclusive whole-school culture
- Bullying
- Applying the Graduated Approach
- An individualised approach
- Person-centred thinking tools
- Provision framework
- Working with parents and carers

Module 5 - Practical Classroom Strategies

This module looks at practical strategies and adjustments to your practice that you can make to support autistic learners. It looks at ways to help reduce anxiety, and considers ways to support the key areas of difference, whilst acknowledging that your support will need to be personalised to meet the needs of the individual pupil.

- General strategies
- Managing uncertainty, anxiety, and overwhelm
- Recognising and expressing emotion
- Managing uncertainty
- Supporting transitions
- Calming strategies
- Supporting communication and interaction
- Supporting sensory differences
- Supporting students with PDA

Aims of the training

By the end of this course, learners will:

- Understand what autism is, and the terminology associated with it.
- Understand the need to approach autism as a difference, rather than a disorder or impairment.
- Understand how autism may be identified and diagnosed.
- Understand the areas of difference and how these may affect a child.
- Understand that every autistic individual experiences autism differently and that an individual's strengths, aspirations, and needs should drive any provision.
- Understand how to apply the Graduated Approach to support a child's learning and development.
- Understand and identify some reasonable adjustments that can be made to universal provision to support autistic learners in the classroom.