

POL37 – Adults with Autism Policy and Procedure

Serendipity Healthcare Ltd
Unit 5, Millennium Way, Dunston, Chesterfield, Derbyshire
S41 8ND



1. Purpose

1.1 To help identify adults who may have autism.

1.2 To provide individualised, safe and supportive care for people who may be living with autism.

1.3 To support Serendipity Healthcare Ltd in meeting the following Key Lines of Enquiry:

Key Question	Key Lines of Enquiry
CARING	C2: How does the service support people to express their views and be actively involved in making decisions about their care, support and treatment as far as possible?
EFFECTIVE	E2: How does the service make sure that staff have the skills, knowledge and experience to deliver effective care and support?
RESPONSIVE	R1: How do people receive personalised care that is responsive to their needs?
SAFE	S1: How do systems, processes and practices keep people safe and safeguarded from abuse?

1.4 To meet the legal requirements of the regulated activities that Serendipity Healthcare Ltd is registered to provide:

- Autism Act 2009
- The Care Act 2014
- Equality Act 2010
- The Health and Social Care Act 2008 (Regulated Activities) Regulations 2014
- Mental Capacity Act 2005
- Mental Health Act 1983

2. Scope

2.1 The following roles may be affected by this policy:

- All staff

2.2 The following Service Users may be affected by this policy:

- Residential Service Users
- Service Users receiving Nursing care
- Service Users with Learning Disabilities

2.3 The following stakeholders may be affected by this policy:

- Family
- Advocates
- Commissioners
- External health professionals

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3. Objectives

- 3.1** To provide a framework of supportive care for adults with autism that promotes control over their own lives.
- 3.2** To ensure that staff working with adults with autism have an understanding of autism, in order to provide effective support.

4. Policy

- 4.1** Staff will be alert to signs that someone may have an autistic spectrum disorder. These signs may include the following:
 - Difficulty in interpreting facial expressions or gestures
 - Difficulty forming any friendships
 - Intolerance of new stimuli (sights, sounds, smells etc.)
 - Inability to sympathise with other people
 - Difficulty in making needs known to other
 - Having an intense interest in one specialist area to the exclusion of others
 - Repeating the same phrases and behaviours
 - Over-reliance on the same routine, and not being able to tolerate changes to plans
 - Sleep problems and experiencing anxiety
- 4.2** Staff will be aware of the needs of people in their care with autism, in particular that they are more likely to have other additional mental and physical disorders and may find it more difficult to access services.
- 4.3** All staff working with adults with autism will work with other professionals, informal carers and family members as appropriate.
- 4.4** Service Users will have a full assessment of their physical, psychological and social wellbeing, as assessment information can guide the identification of autism and its management.
- 4.5** In conjunction with health care professionals, staff will review the physical and mental health wellbeing of Service Users.
- 4.6** Staff will receive basic awareness training in accordance with the requirements of the Autism Act 2009, and guidance contained in Statutory Guidance for Local Authorities and NHS organisations to support the implementation of the Adult Autism Strategy in England (Department of Health 2015).
- 4.7** The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) has produced guidelines for working with adults with autism. These guidelines are downloadable from the NICE website. All staff working with adults with autism will follow the principles outlined in the NICE guidance:
 - Be respectful when offering care and support
 - Take time to build trusting relationships
 - Work at the Service User's own pace and understanding

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4.8 Staff will be aware of guidance on particular issues related to people with autistic spectrum disorders contained in the Mental Health Act 1983: Code of Practice. It is noted that autistic spectrum conditions are included in the Act's definition of mental disorder.

5. Procedure

5.1 The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) has produced guidelines for treating and managing autism (CG142) and these guidelines will be followed by staff who may be caring for someone who may have autism:

- Where someone may be living with autism, staff must be aware of the process of referral for assessment, which would include referral to the person's GP, and for an assessment of need under the Care Act 2014
- Where someone has received a diagnosis of autism, staff must be aware of care pathways in their area for people in their care
- Offer information in a format that is easily accessible and understandable for the Service User
- Consider whether the Service User may benefit from access to a trained advocate
- Have information on self-help or support groups or one-to-one support, and provide support to Service Users where required, so that they can access this support
- Assess the physical environment where the Service User with autism is cared for in terms of personal space, decor, lighting and noise in relation to any impact on the Service User with autism and make appropriate changes where practicable
- Be alert to any issues of physical health, lack of physical activity, or changes in eating and drinking and report these to the Service User's GP if there are concerns
- Maintain awareness of difficulties regarding social interaction and offer support, where appropriate, in making or supporting friendships and relationships

5.2 Staff must undertake an assessment of physical, mental and emotional health needs and use a Care Plan format that will be reviewed on a regular basis. Adults with autism may find themselves excluded from opportunities for education, employment and training, and helping provide access to these must be part of the Care Planning process

5.3 Staff must be aware that autism may result in barriers to effective communication, verbal or non-verbal. Many people on the autism spectrum have difficulty interacting with others. They may have difficulty with initiating interactions, responding to others, or using interaction to show people things or to be sociable. This may have an impact on their lives in communal settings. Staff must consider specialist support where there are these barriers to communication.

5.4 Autistic spectrum disorders are identified as mental disorders under the definition of mental disorder described in the Mental Health Act 1983. People receiving care and treatment for a mental disorder from specialist mental health services will be subject to the Care Programme Approach (CPA). This Care Planning involves healthcare professionals, care and support staff, family and informal carers.

5.5 Autism presents potential risk to the mental and physical wellbeing of the person, including the following:

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- Vulnerability in relationships
- Conflict with others who do not understand the nature of the autism
- Poor sleep patterns
- Poor diet
- Risks to family relationships

If staff believe someone, they are working with is at risk of harm they must share that information with their line manager, in line with local safeguarding procedures. Safeguarding is everyone's business and staff and the person themselves must be involved with any concerns about welfare.

Risk management must not be seen as the elimination of risk. There are risks for everyone in all walks of life, and to try and eliminate them would result in a loss of independence and choice, so risk management must be seen in the context of positive risk-taking. Current policy thinking in relating to people with mental health problems can be found in the Department of Health's Best Practice in Managing Risk (published in 2007 and updated in 2009). The Best Practice document also describes the importance of a collaborative approach to managing risk, involving the person and the whole of the care team, so that trusting relationships are developed that aid communication.

- 5.6** Where a Service User with autism is unable to take certain decisions or choices regarding their care and support, those decisions must be taken for that Service User in accordance with the principles of the Mental Capacity Act 2005. Staff can refer to the Mental Capacity Act (MCA) 2005 Policy and Procedure at Serendipity Healthcare Ltd.

6. Definitions

6.1 Autism

- Autism is a developmental disorder associated with the following:
 - Difficulty with social communication
 - Difficulty with social interaction
 - Difficulty with social imagination
- Autism is defined as a spectrum disorder because the range of symptoms can vary from one person to another. When we use the term autistic spectrum disorders, we usually include autism, Asperger's syndrome, and atypical autism

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