

## **Empowering Individuals on the Autistic Spectrum**

### **The Autistic Spectrum** *A Better Understanding*

The Autistic Spectrum is complex and diverse. We at Lifeworks hope the following information will help you gain a more in-depth understanding of this condition and those that may co-exist with it e.g. Dyslexia, Dyspraxia, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder to name just a few.

#### **Autism – What is it?**

- A developmental disability
- It can be referred to as an Autistic Spectrum Condition (ASC). The 'spectrum' indicates the diversity of autism. Individuals will be affected at different levels and therefore experience problems to varying degrees. Some people will require considerable support throughout their lives while others live independently with minimum support.
- No two people are the same.
- The more able people on the spectrum (those with Asperger's Syndrome) are considered to have average to above average intelligence.
- There are around 700,000 people in the UK on the Autistic Spectrum. Statistics show there are more males than females diagnosed with an ASC.
- There are three main areas with which people have difficulty. Collectively these are known as the **Triad of Impairments**. The triad consists of difficulties with communication, social interaction and social imagination.
- Many people on the spectrum have a very literal understanding of language. They can experience difficulties in expressing themselves.

Due to the 'hidden' nature of the condition it is difficult to recognise someone on the spectrum. People generally show no outward sign of disability, therefore some individuals are considered more able than they are. This of course, leads to confusion and misunderstanding. However, it is important to remember that people are all different and it is vital not to focus on the negative and what people on the spectrum find it difficult to accomplish but consider what they **can** accomplish. Indeed, many individuals on the spectrum make hard working, conscientious members of the workforce. Many famous people such as entrepreneur Richard Branson and television personality Guy Martin have a diagnosis. Individuals with extreme proficiency in certain areas are referred to as 'Savants'.

What differentiates Lifeworks Staffordshire from other services? We are unique in that we look at **all** conditions that present in an individual, not just the autism. Staff and volunteers at Lifeworks have personal experience of autism and the way this affects individuals and their families. It is this aspect which makes us so passionate about the work we do. Lifeworks aims to help people to build strategies in order to navigate and improve quality of life. Individuals on the autistic spectrum need to be given the chance to reach their full potential.

**This will not be achieved without better understanding!**