

# Autism In Derbyshire

August 2018

Approximately 1.1% of the population will have autism

Estimated population of Derbyshire 791,966

## Autism is more common in men

Available evidence suggests that more men and boys have a diagnosis of autism than women and girls, with male to female ratios varying from 2:1 to 16:1

Possible reasons for this are:

- women and girls have been under-diagnosed compared to men and boys
- women and girls with 'high-functioning' autism may be better at masking their difficulties than men and boys
- women and girls may be less likely to develop autism, but are more severely impaired when they do

People from Black and Ethnic Minorities are less likely to be diagnosed and less likely to access appropriate services

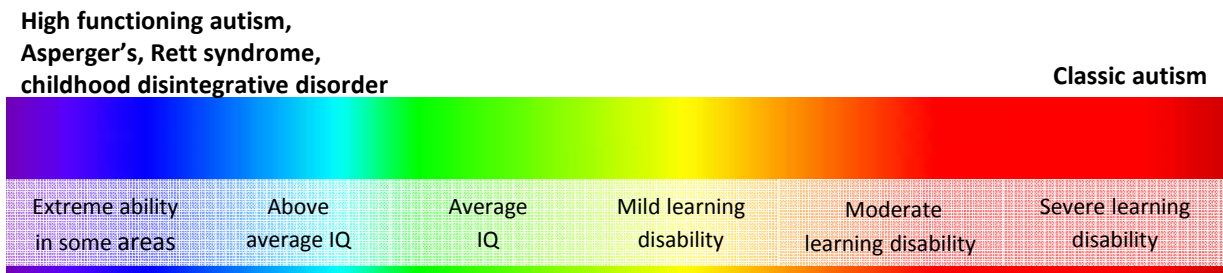


People from all racial, ethnic, religious, cultural, economic and social backgrounds can be autistic

# Autism is a spectrum condition

Autism is a spectrum condition. Whilst people with autism share certain areas of difficulty, the condition affects each individual in very different ways.

## The Autism Spectrum



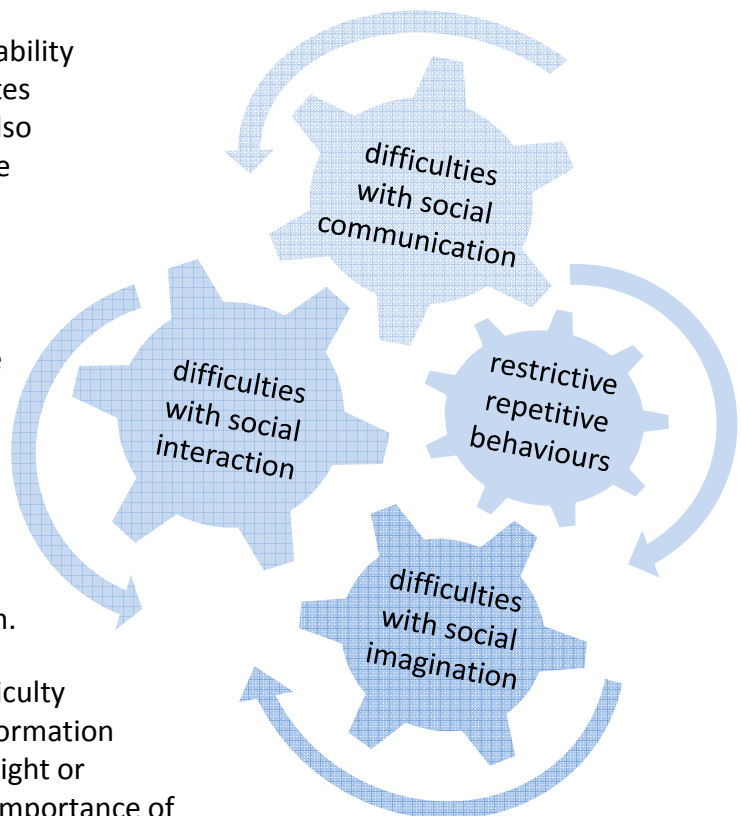
## Why is autism important?

Autism is a lifelong developmental disability that affects how a person communicates with, and relates to, other people. It also affects how they experience, and make sense of, the world around them.

People with autism all share, to a greater or lesser extent, features from three primary areas of difficulty; these are social communication, social interaction and social imagination.

It is now accepted that restrictive, repetitive behaviours are also primary feature of autism, and are present in individuals across the autism spectrum.

People with autism may also have difficulty processing and integrating sensory information such as sights, sounds, smells, tastes, light or colours and touch or movement. The importance of sensory hypersensitivities, which may manifest as over or under sensitivities, has only been recently acknowledged. Sensory hypersensitivities can have an enormous impact on the quality of life of a person with autism, who may experience apparently ordinary stimuli as confusing, unpleasant or even painful.



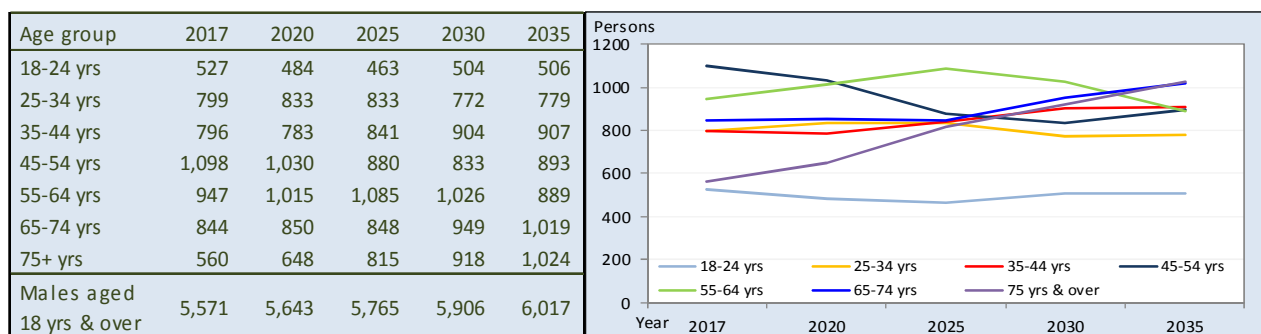
## Key Local Priorities

- Improve access to advice, information and training
- Enable people to live well
- Improve access to specialist support
- Improve access to diagnostics
- Prepare people for adulthood



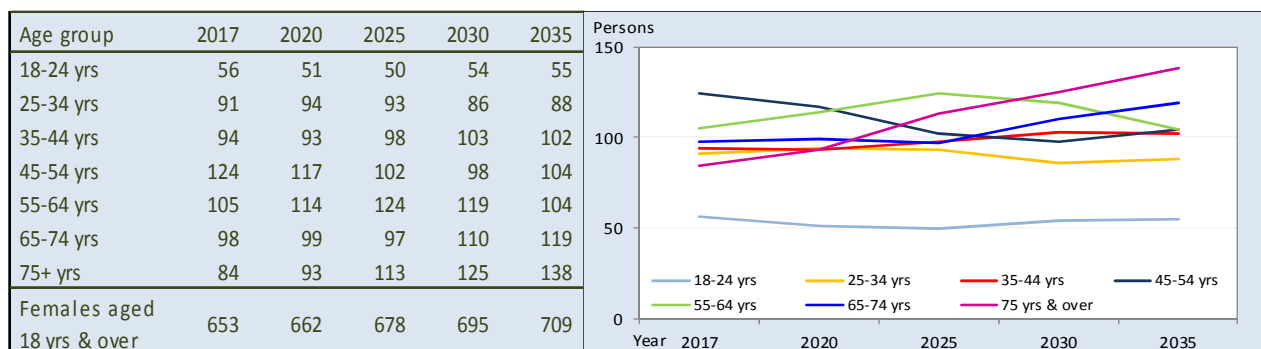
## Prevalence estimates for people with autism in Derbyshire, projected to 2035:

### Males predicted to have autistic spectrum disorders, 2017 to 2035:



SOURCE: [www.pansi.org.uk](http://www.pansi.org.uk); [www.poppi.org.uk](http://www.poppi.org.uk); accessed 25.07.17

### Females predicted to have autistic spectrum disorders, 2017 to 2035:



SOURCE: [www.pansi.org.uk](http://www.pansi.org.uk); [www.poppi.org.uk](http://www.poppi.org.uk); accessed 25.07.17

## Comorbidities and autism:

People with autism can, and do, have many of the same medical disorders and diseases that are experienced by people who do not have autism. However, credible research is revealing that many conditions are both more prevalent in people with autism than those without, and are more difficult to identify and diagnose.

Accurate prevalence rates are not yet available but the emerging evidence suggests that a wide range of conditions are present at higher rates in people with autism, including, but not limited to:

- blindness / vision defects
- hearing impairments
- sensory sensitivities
- learning disabilities
- communication disorders
- intellectual disorders
- ADD / ADHD
- constipation
- gastroesophageal reflux
- premature mortality
- anxiety
- depression
- schizophrenia
- bipolar disorder
- seizures & epilepsy
- diabetes
- thyroid disease
- obesity
- osteoporosis
- suicide
- sleep disorders
- gastrointestinal disorders
- psychiatric conditions
- Immune disorders
- metabolic disorders
- nutritional disorders
- respiratory disorders
- inflammatory conditions
- cardiovascular disease
- musculoskeletal disorders

Comorbidities may be challenging to identify and diagnose in people with autism where communication is impaired and symptoms are imprecise. Without accurate diagnosis and treatment these conditions can adversely affect the ability of people with autism to communicate. It can also impact upon their behaviour, cognitive function, quality of life and life expectancy.

The presence of comorbid conditions in people with autism can also put individuals at increased risk of secondary problems. For example, the increased prevalence of anxiety puts autistic people at greater risk of depression, self harming behaviour and ultimately suicide.

Treatment of comorbidities can lead to reductions in both symptomatology and problem behaviours, resulting in improvements in wellbeing and quality of life for the individuals concerned. Reducing the severity of symptoms and the frequency of problem behaviours will also have a positive impact on the physical and psychological burdens faced by families and carers of those with autism.

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