

# Understanding Autism Spectrum Disorder

Scouting Ireland

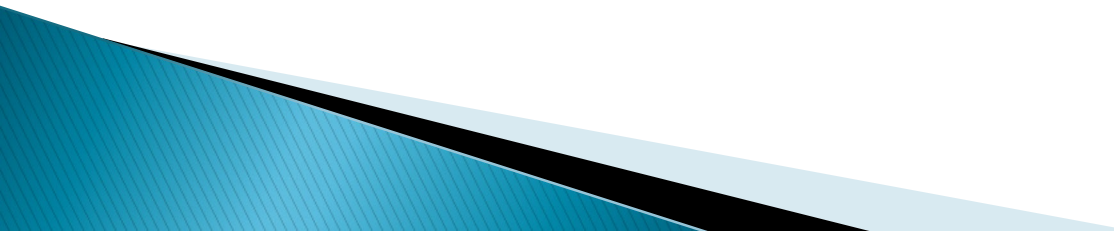
15<sup>th</sup> March 2022 / 21<sup>st</sup> March 2022

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Dr Majella McGlinchey – Psychologist

# Welcome!

- ▶ Welcome & introductions

## **Aims of the session**

- ▶ To build on the awareness of volunteers in relation to ASD
  - ▶ To provide volunteers with a basic knowledge and understanding appropriate to working with children and young people with a diagnosis of ASD
  - ▶ To enhance volunteer's ability to respond appropriately to the needs of children and young people with ASD
  - ▶ To support volunteers to ensure equality of participation and opportunity
  - ▶ To develop a basic understanding and appreciation of strategies to support children and young people with ASD
- 

Words


Unique  
Strength Share  
Listening Access  
Dislikes  
Contribute Social Role  
Capacity Preferences  
I Can Do Acceptance  
Positive Risk Taking Creative Gifts  
Vision Relationships Rights  
Likes Plan Problem Solve  
Dreams

# Group activity

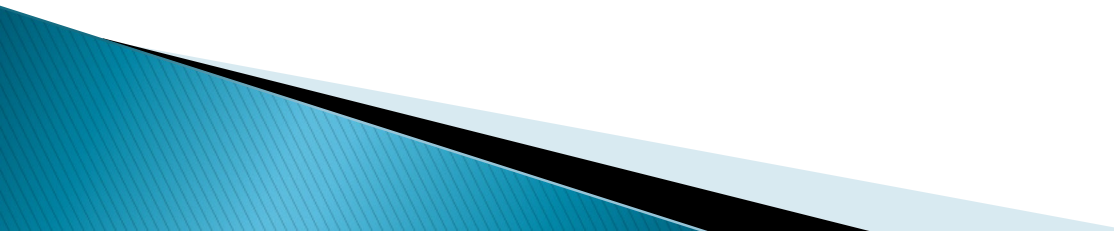
- ▶ Your understanding of ASD
- ▶ Your experience of ASD in your role as a volunteer
- ▶ Any current concerns?



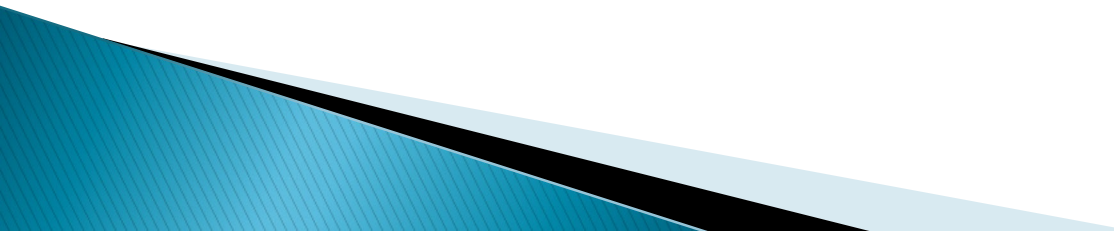
# A few facts...

- A developmental disorder
  - Lifelong
  - More common in boys than girls – but this is changing
  - Prevalence rates: 1 in 22 children have a diagnosis (2021 Prevalence of Autism in School aged Children, DHSSP)
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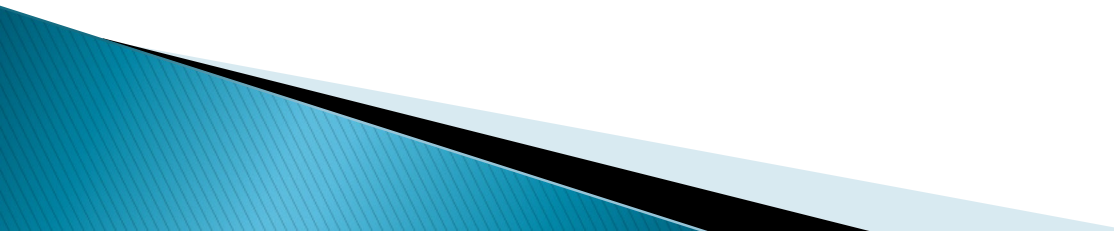
# Dyad of impairments

- ▶ Single umbrella-term
  - ▶ Show symptoms from early childhood
  - ▶ Diagnostic criteria:
    - a. Persistent deficits in social communication and social interaction across multiple contexts
    - b. Restricted, repetitive patterns of behaviour, interests, or activities
- 

# Strengths

- ▶ Specialist knowledge
  - ▶ Motivation
  - ▶ Accuracy
  - ▶ Attention to detail
  - ▶ Rule keepers
  - ▶ Seeing the world differently
  - ▶ Honesty
  - ▶ Keen to share interests with others
- 

# Challenges

- ▶ Social communication
  - ▶ Restricted, repetitive patterns of behaviour, interests or activities
  - ▶ Sensory difficulties
  - ▶ Cognitive inflexibility
  - ▶ Learning difficulties
  - ▶ Anxiety
  - ▶ Organisational Difficulties
  - ▶ Attention difficulties
  - ▶ Strong preference for routine/dislike of change
  - ▶ Difficulty with transitions
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# Useful approaches and strategies

- ▶ Preparation
- ▶ Information gathering and sharing
- ▶ Link in with family members
- ▶ Link in with school

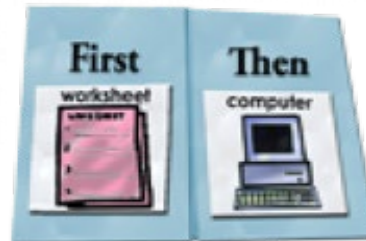


# To help understand the concept of time and what happens next

tools you can use:



1. Timer and Countdown Strip

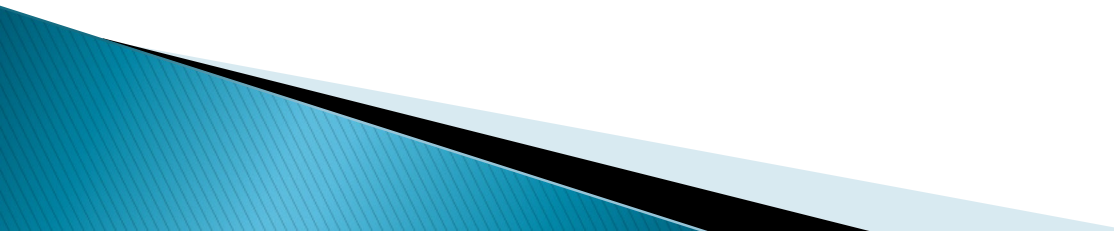


2. First / Then Card







3. Visual Schedule

# Social stories

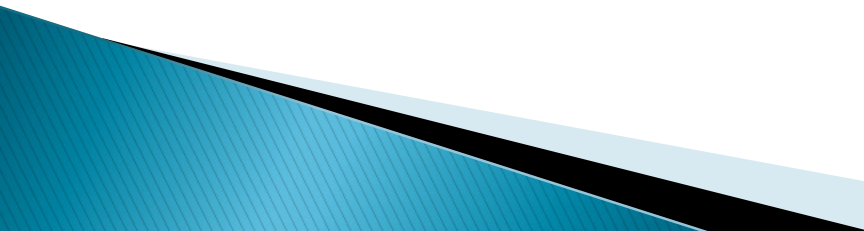
- ▶ A social learning tool
  - ▶ Safe and meaningful exchange of information
  - ▶ An accurate description of a context, skill, concept or achievement
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# Example of a social story

## Being a friend

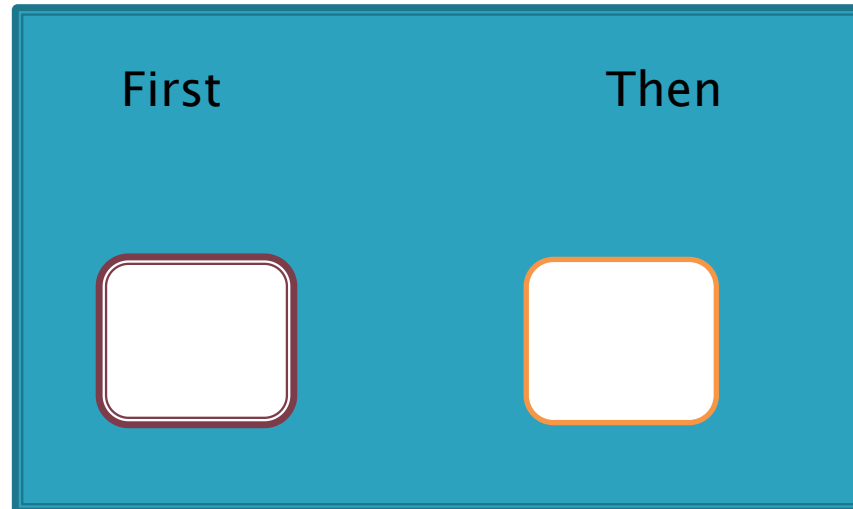
 <p>When I go outside at break time I like to play with my friends.</p> <p>1</p>	 <p>Sometimes I like to walk around the playground with my friends.</p> <p>2</p>
 <p>Me!</p> <p>I must remember to be the best friend in the world and <u>not</u> to push or hurt my friends.</p> <p>3</p>	 <p>I will try to be the best friend in the world by playing with my friend and not hurting them. This way, I will have lots of friends at school!</p> <p>4</p>

# Visual timetable

- ▶ Visual timetables help children with ASD to predict their day, to understand what happens next and what will be happening during the day/session
  - ▶ It can be helpful to use actual photographs for the visual timetable
  - ▶ The pictures can be laminated and affixed using Velcro
  - ▶ The child could have access to the visual timetable upon arrival to Scouts and throughout the session
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# First/then board

Helps the child to manage transitions and accept non-preferred activities



# Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS)



# The environment

- ▶ Consider the environment the children are coming in to and possible triggers. Children with ASD can be very sensitive to various sensory stimuli and this can trigger them. Think about
  - ▶ – noise level
  - ▶ – lighting
  - ▶ – strong smells
  - ▶ – textures
  - ▶ – unexpected noises/changes



# Group activity!

## Example A

- ▶ The area is busy with other children running around. Mike, Sean and James (all aged 8 years) are playing Crocodile Dentist together on the floor. They are taking turns and getting along well. When it is Mike's turn, the crocodile snaps, (meaning Mike is out of the game). Sean and James giggle and continue to play. Mike shouts "it's not fair", grabs the game and throws it away. He pushes James and shouts "you're always ganging up on me". You walk over to intervene, and Mike starts hitting you. What would you do?

# Group activity!

## Example B

- ▶ Sarah (aged 10 years) is at her weekly session at Scouts. She goes straight to the computer and puts on the headphones. You ask Sarah to leave the computer. She refuses and when you continue to ask her, she screams and curses at you. What would you do?

# Group activity!

## Example C

- ▶ The group of children are playing outside. One of the kids, Darren (aged 12 years), starts shouting and screaming. He runs over to the picnic table, climbs on top and refuses to get down. Two staff members try talking to him and asking him to get off the table. He refuses to get down and starts to spit at anyone standing close to him. What would you do?

# Group activity!

## Example D

- ▶ Anna is 14 years old and non-verbal. She usually loves coming to Scouts but over the past few weeks she has started having tantrums when she is here. She does not want to engage with any of the activities she used to enjoy. What would you do?

# 10 things your student with autism wishes you knew!

- ▶ I am a child.
- ▶ My senses are out of sync.
- ▶ Distinguish between won't (I choose not to) and can't (I am not able to).
- ▶ I'm a concrete thinker. I interpret language literally.
- ▶ Listen to all the ways I'm trying to communicate.
- ▶ Picture this! I'm visually oriented.
- ▶ Focus and build on what I can do rather than what I can't do.
- ▶ Help me with social interactions.
- ▶ Identify what triggers my meltdowns.
- ▶ Love me unconditionally.

*(Taken from the Book by Ellen Notbohm - "10 Things Every Child with Autism Wishes You Knew: Updated and Expanded Edition" - 1 October 2012, Future Horizons, Inc. ISBN: 9781935274650)*

# Comfort break







# Disability Awareness

# Group task!

- ▶ Brainstorm session: What does having a disability mean?

(5 minutes)





# Disability Discrimination Act 1995

Physical

## *Definition*

- ▶ The DDA defines disability as “a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on a person’s ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities”.

Mental

Substantial

Long-term  
adverse effect

# Types of disability –

- ▶ Physical
  - Blindness or a severe vision impairment.
- ▶ Learning
  - Deafness or a severe hearing impairment.
- ▶ Sensory
  - An intellectual or developmental disability.
  - A difficulty with learning, remembering or concentrating.
- ▶ Hidden
  - A difficulty with basic physical activities.
  - A psychological or emotional/behavioural condition.
- ▶ Mental health
  - A difficulty with pain, breathing, or any other chronic illness or condition.

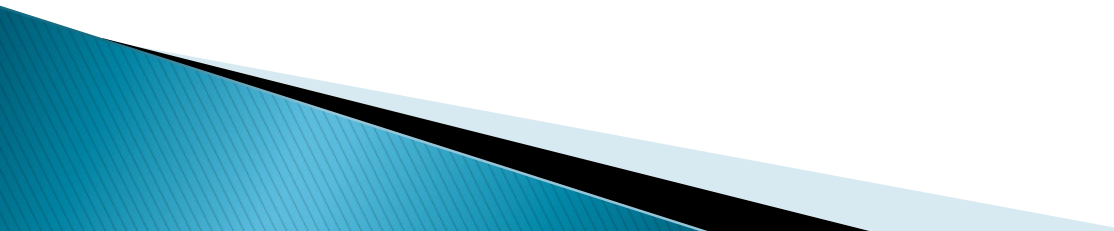
# Visible and Invisible

## *Visible disability*

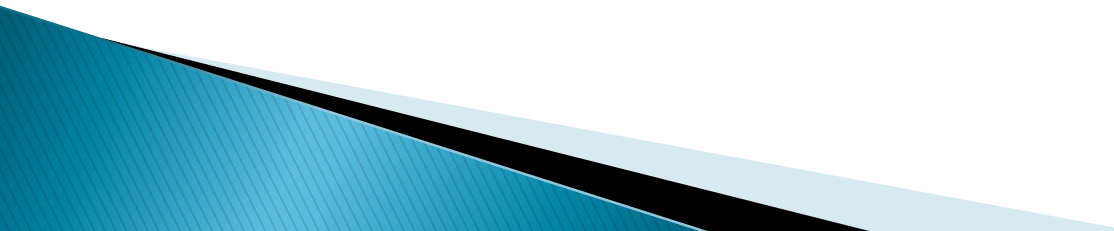
*Some disabilities you can see such as physical disabilities–  
Use of crutches, walkers or wheelchairs.*

## *Invisible disability*

*Many you can't see such as serious mental health issues, brain  
injuries, learning disability, serious physical pain.*



# Statistics

- ▶ 1 billion people (15%) of the world have a disability.
  - ▶ 1 in 5 people in Northern Ireland
  - ▶ You can develop a disability over your lifetime.
- 

# Impact of disability

- ▶ Less likely to have as many friends as their peers.
- ▶ Less likely to do age typical activities: Sports, social life, gym, outdoor activities, cinema.
- ▶ Less likely to travel independently and be a decision maker.
- ▶ Less likely to go abroad, day trips, sports events.
- ▶ Less likely to have a life partner and children.
- ▶ Less likely to go to further education or University.
- ▶ 4 times less likely to have a job (Plus– more likely to lose a job if they get one)
- ▶ More likely to live alone.
- ▶ More likely to live in poverty

# Living with a disability

"I feel left out of so many things, I feel I'm on the outside of society looking in."

"A big show is made of me and I often feel patronised."

"People sometimes shout at me instead of talking; sometimes they talk to others about me when I am there."

"People think they know better about my life than I do, even family members."

"Simple things like getting about the town can be so difficult."

"I'm an individual-we are not all the same."

"If everyone had a disability for a day, the world would change overnight."

"People talk about what I cannot do rather than what I can"

"People see my disability first and the person second, if at all"

# Attitudes to disability

“I’m scared because I don’t know what to do, so I don’t get involved.”

“I’m embarrassed to try and help in case I do the wrong thing.”

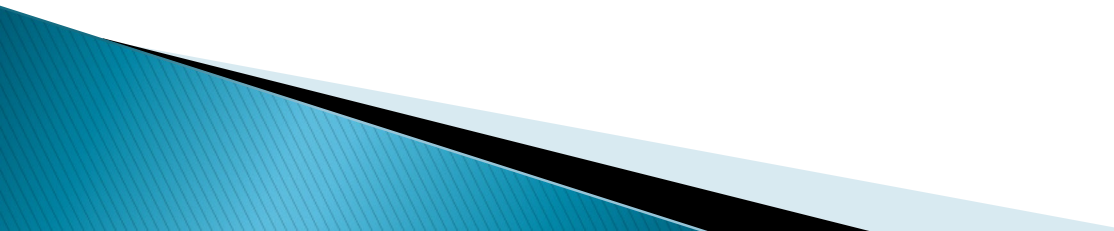
“What if I can’t understand them.”

“I’d rather someone else helped them .”

**Any of these ring true to you?**




# Group task!


- ▶ Think about your experiences to date in your role as volunteers
  - ▶ Experience of disability
  - ▶ Challenges
  - ▶ What worked well
  - ▶ What didn't work well
  - ▶ Any improvements?
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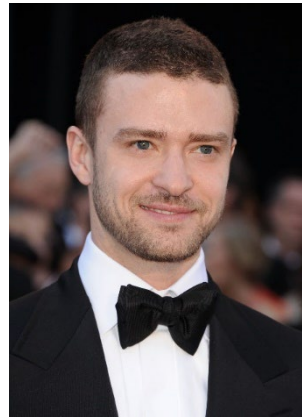
# How can you learn and change?

- ▶ Realise everyone is unique!!! Treat everyone as equal.
  - ▶ Talk to people, build relationships, ask questions, listen and be interested.
  - ▶ It ok to make a mistake! Be confident in what you do.
  - ▶ Advocate for people.
  - ▶ Respect people's right to confidentiality.
  - ▶ Ask if people would like some help, don't assume.
- 


# How can society learn and change?

- ▶ Promote rights rather than charity.
  - ▶ Support family and carers.
  - ▶ **Improve transport and access to facilities.**
  - ▶ Allow access to education, training, social and cultural events.
  - ▶ Let people with disabilities create policy to help.
  - ▶ Don't try and change the person, change society.
  - ▶ A disability does mean a person cannot do something.
- 

# Some famous faces – any others?



# Summary

- ▶ Everyone in society deserve the same opportunities to have a good life.
  - ▶ Remember, there are many types of disability, not just the ones you may see.
  - ▶ The importance of supporting the rights of people with disabilities, you can too!
  - ▶ Decide here and now to be part of the solution.
  - ▶ Treat people as you would like to be treated yourself.
  - ▶ Remember, YOU are society, you therefore have the power to change it.
  - ▶ Do it now and you will make the difference.
- 
- ▶ Thank you for listening.
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# Url for Video

- ▶ [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aJssu\\_PAw4w](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aJssu_PAw4w)
- ▶ Basingstoke & District Disability Forum

# Contact details

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