

## INTRODUCTION

The Northern Ireland Commissioner for Children and Young People (NICCY) wanted to find out what services and support are available for young people with Asperger Syndrome (AS) living in Northern Ireland.

## HOW DID WE DO THIS?

We asked the views of:

- Children and young people with AS
- Parents/carers
- Professionals in health, education and social care
- Autism NI (PAPA), Autism Initiatives and Aspergers Network.

## WHAT DID WE FIND OUT?

- There are lots more children and young people with AS now, than there were five or ten years ago. This is because professionals are now better at recognising AS. There are now just over 1000 children and young people with AS in Northern Ireland.
- Children and young people with AS have different views about telling other people that they have Asperger syndrome. Parents are also often not sure whether to tell schools or other people about their child's diagnosis.

- Children and young people with AS are very skilled in some areas and have strong interests which could be very useful in school and in later careers. These include computers, science and transport.

## Young People's Experiences of School

- Many teachers said that schools were better now than they used to be for students with AS, and some parents said the school was their main source of support.
- BUT some children and young people said they found school very hard or that they hated school. Many said that teasing or bullying in school was a problem for them.
- Children and young people had lots of ideas about how school could be made better:

***"I'd like them to put cameras up at school so that staff can see when children are being bullied"*** 12 year old

***"I would like them to listen to more than one side of a story before blaming anyone who witnessed an event"*** 14 year old

***"Staff who know exactly what they are dealing with"*** 18 year old

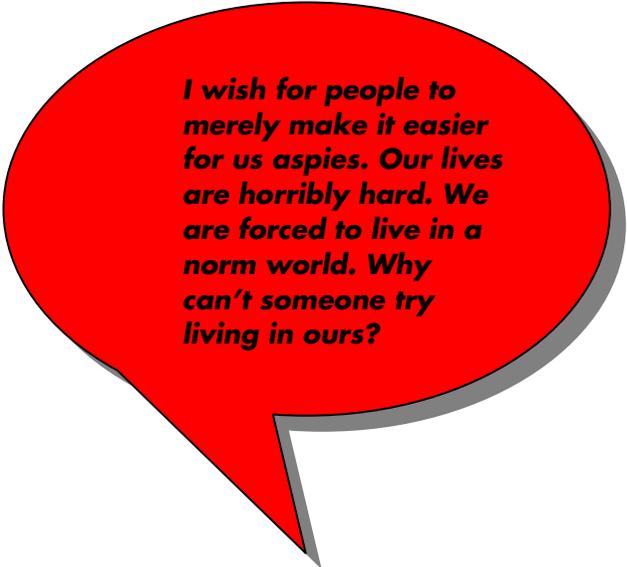
***"Teachers need to know more about what it is like to have AS. My teachers have been told about it but I still feel they have a small knowledge"*** 15 year old

***"Shorter hours, no homework, better communication skills between people like me and teachers and more help in schools"*** 18 year old

## Life After school

- When a young person with AS leaves school at 16 or 18 years, there is not enough guidance, support or provision for further education or employment.

## One 17 year old told us what life can be like for a young person with AS:



***I wish for people to merely make it easier for us aspies. Our lives are horribly hard. We are forced to live in a norm world. Why can't someone try living in ours?***

**There is absolutely nothing in Northern Ireland for aspies. The people in schools give no support and if you tell anybody you have Aspergers, they either laugh and make fun of you or try to exploit it**

## **LIFE COULD BE BETTER FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE WITH ASPERGER SYNDROME IF:**

- Staff in schools were more aware of bullying and teasing and schools dealt with the issue better.
- Professionals working with young people with AS took time to find out their skills and strengths to guide school work and future careers.
- Children and young people were given more support after school – in moving to further education or employment.
- Other people understood more about Asperger syndrome.

- Professionals, for example doctors or teachers, worked together better and took time to ask young people with AS and their families what support and services they want or need.
- More befriending schemes and activities were available for children and young people in the evenings, weekends and holidays.
- Parents, children and young people and professionals were given details of resources and books on Asperger syndrome.

## **WHO CAN I CONTACT WITH ANY QUESTIONS?**

You can get in touch with NICCY:

**By phone:** 028 9031 1616

**By e-mail:** [info@niccy.org](mailto:info@niccy.org)

**Or by our website:** [www.niccy.org](http://www.niccy.org)

### **NICCY**

Millennium House, 17-25 Great Victoria Street, Belfast BT2 7BN

**Drawing on front cover by Joshua Whitehead, a boy with Asperger syndrome. Drawing shows communication in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.**

## **“TRY LIVING IN OUR WORLD”**

### **Young People with Asperger Syndrome: A Review of Needs and Services**



