

harc is the Hertfordshire branch of the National Autistic Society (NAS). We work to provide information and support to individuals and their families living in Hertfordshire and campaign for better local services for those affected by autism.

## What is Autism and the Autism Spectrum?

Autism is a lifelong developmental disability that affects the way a person communicates and relates to people around them. Children and adults with autism have difficulties with everyday social interaction.

The autism spectrum is a term that refers to a broad definition of autism including the classical form of the disorder as well as closely related disabilities that share many of the core characteristics such as Asperger syndrome (AS) and high functioning autism (HFA).

## What causes Autism?

The exact cause or causes of autism are still not known but research shows that genetic factors are important. It is also evident from research that autism may be associated with a variety of conditions affecting brain development which occur before, during, or very soon after birth.

## Is there a cure?

There is currently no known 'cure' for autism however there are a number of therapies and interventions that can have a positive effect.

Autistic children and adults need training, education and support tailored to their needs - above all they need understanding.



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## Why do families need support?

A diagnosis of autism can lead to an initial sense of shock like bereavement and then to the need for answers to many questions. A diagnosis of autism does not come with a handbook or information about local services.

## What can harc do?

harc is a support group run by parents. It was formed in 1998 by a small group of parents concerned about the availability of support for their children. In 2007 harc joined forces with the NAS becoming the Hertfordshire branch of the national charity.

harc offers understanding and support to families, offers advice to professionals and campaigns on behalf of people with autism and their families. It works with local public bodies and organisations to improve knowledge and awareness of the needs of children, young people and adults on the spectrum. It arranges support group meetings and workshops with speakers of interest to the group and emails regular items of interest and information to members.

## How can I find out more or contact harc?

You can go to our website : [www.harc-online.org.uk](http://www.harc-online.org.uk)

You can email us: [support@harc-online.org.uk](mailto:support@harc-online.org.uk)

Or you can phone, text or leave a message on **07 836 667 394**.

If you know anyone who may need our help, please pass this leaflet onto them.

**Thank you for taking the time to read this leaflet**