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EXPERIENCE SHEET ON AUTISM

- **Autism** is a **lifelong developmental disability** associated with poor social skills. It is sometimes referred to as an “invisible disability” as there is nothing about how people with autism look that sets them apart from other people. However, people with autism may communicate, interact, behave and learn in ways that are different from most people.
- Individuals with autism have **emotions** and are able to form attachments with others although they may express them differently. Similarly, many individuals with autism are able to **communicate**. This may through the thorough use of language, use of gestures, picture exchange, sign language, spoken language, or computer technology. Individuals with autism will display a range of **sensory needs** that can affect their behaviour.
- **Autism is sometimes referred to as a “spectrum condition”**. This means that just like people without autism are different from each other, people with autism are different too. Autism can translate into a wide range of symptoms. The intensity with which it affects their ability to function also varies from mild to severe. The range of consequences is also extensive. At one end, the autism of a computer scientist may not be noticeable to others; at the other, a quarter of children with autism do not speak.

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- The UN estimates that 20 per cent of people on the autistic spectrum work. In the UK 12 per cent of high functioning individuals with autism work full time. This is a waste of potential.
- Neurodiversity in the workplace can bring benefits to employers for example individuals with autism will have diverse perspectives that can improve organisational decision making.
- Employers may need to make adjustments to their hiring practises to increase neurodiversity in their work place for example by using applied tests or adapting the way interviews are organised.
- Once in work, employers may need to make adjustments to their work place to ensure employees with autism can thrive for example to provide a quiet space for breaks.
- To find out more information about autism including information for employers please visit our website www.oursmallwonders.org

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