

Introduction

When you have a child or teenager with Asperger's Syndrome it is crucial that you build yourself a support network. That network can take the form of support groups, close relatives and organisations such as ourselves. In addition, there are some government-funded services available to you. This brochure looks at how you can access them.

What's In a Name? Autistic Spectrum Disorder v Asperger's Syndrome

You may be aware that Asperger's Syndrome is part of the Autistic Spectrum and is sometimes referred to as an Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD). Some parents have told us that they have found it easier to access resources when their child's reports and diagnosis use the term ASD rather than Asperger's Syndrome. This is something to bear in mind when applying for assistance.

Accessing Funded Support

You can access funded support either through Disability Support Services or the Mental Health Service. Many people go to Disability Support Services initially. The amount of support available through each of these services varies depending upon where you live.

In both situations your level of need will have to be assessed. In the case of Disability Support Services, this is done through a Needs Assessment Service Co-ordinator. The process is described on the next page.

Contact us at the Foundation for the details of the co-ordinators in your area. We can also supply you with details of some support service providers that may be of use to you.

Needs Assessment Service Co-ordinators (NASC)

Following a diagnosis of AS/ASD by a health professional with a written report, you can self-refer to your local NASC. You can also ask your GP or specialist to refer you.

Once you have contacted a needs assessment service, a needs assessor will meet with you and your child. Together you will discuss the sort of support that is needed. They will ask you what your child's needs are in a range of situations. This can cover recreational, social and personal development, training and education needs, and vocational and employment needs. For each area that they need assistance in, it helps to have specific examples of times they have needed support.

Based on this, the assessor will work out what support they will fund to help your child. They will also suggest local organisations that could help provide this support. Some services that families with children with AS/ASD have been allocated have been carer relief, home support, vocational support, supported living, & supported employment.

If you are unhappy with your needs assessment you can ask for a different facilitator or assessment service, or complain to the Health and Disability Commissioner.

Support Services

Once you have had an assessment, and if you qualify for funding, the following services may be made available to you.

Respite Care / Carer Relief

This is a payment made to a person or organisation to provide a break for the main carer. There can be some flexibility as to how this money is used. For example, it could be paid toward a holiday programme, after school care, a support worker to

take to leisure activities, privately employed teacher aide, holiday care etc.

Supported Living Services

The aim of this service is to ensure that people with disabilities have control over their own lives, facilitate the transition to independent living, assist the development of independent living skills and to promote maximum independence for the client.

Vocational Services

This service aims to provide support for people with disabilities into training, work experience & supported employment.

Work and Income NZ Benefits

The following are direct benefits administered by WINZ that you may qualify for. Some families have found that they have needed to be persistent when applying for these benefits.

Child Disability Allowance:

This is paid to the main caregiver of a child or young person with a serious (mental or physical) disability. It is there to help with the costs of caring for the child or young person at home.

Criteria - Under 18, lives at home and requires constant care and attention because of their disability (and will for at least 12 months).

Payment – A set amount per child who qualifies. It does *not* depend on your income or costs. It is not taxed.

Disability Allowance:

This is a reimbursement for ongoing regular costs incurred because of a disability. It may be paid to the caregivers of a child 18 years or under if they are financially dependent on you.

Criteria -Need ongoing help & medical care because of their disability (and will for at least 6 months).

Payment – There is a maximum, but payment depends on income and costs incurred. Examples of costs include visits to doctor or hospital, medicines, travel to doctor, specialist, hospital, counsellor or vocation service.

Invalid's Benefit:

Many parents worry about what work their child will do when they become an adult or if they will be able to work at all. Some people that are over 16 years and have Asperger's Syndrome qualify for the Invalid's Benefit.

Criteria - Need to be 16 years or over and unable to work 15 hours a week or more because of the disability that is expected to last at least 2 years. They must also be a NZ citizen or permanent resident.

Payment – Paid directly to individual concerned. Rate varies depending on whether they are in paid employment.

Training Incentive Allowance (TIA) - If they are on the Invalid's Benefit or Unemployment Benefit they may be eligible for TIA, which pays for training & study costs as well as travel costs to the training institution.