Autism – do you know the signs?
Older Adolescents and Adults

Social Interaction and Verbal Communication

Repeating certain words or phrases over and over again ("echolalia")
Talks excessively about topics of own interest
Takes things literally, struggles with sarcasm and metaphor
Limited use of language
Does not seek comfort when in pain or distress
Talks ‘at’ others rather than sharing a two-way conversation
Approaches others in one sided way or on own terms
Can be over-formal or over-familiar
Does not respond to greetings and farewells
Emotional responses to others are inappropriate, rude and unsympathetic
Does not offer comfort to others
Does not seek comfort when in pain or distress

Imagination, ideas and creativity

Imaginary activities not shared with others or else passively follows another’s imaginative theme or insists that others follows his/her own themes and rules.
Reduced or no imagination
Reduced creativity, limited or repetitive fantasy world or role play
Interested only in non-fiction, and not in fictional stories/films
Reduced or unusual eye contact
Unable to foresee the consequences of own actions on other people
Unable to adjust behaviour to expectations or predicted reactions of others

Gestures and non verbal communication

Lack of spontaneous gesture that expresses emotion (e.g. putting arm around someone)
Reduced or unusual eye contact
Lack of pointing to show objects and share interest
Odd or flat/monotonous tone of voice
Poorly integrated gestures, facial expression, proximity, body language or eye contact when having conversations
Lack of social smile

Narrow range of interests, routines and repetitive behaviours

Displays repetitive behaviours or rituals that negatively affect daily activities
Arranges objects in patterns or lines and dislikes these to be disturbed
Self-chosen activities are limited and unchanged
Dislike of change, which can lead to anxiety or aggression
Insists on following own agenda
Over-focused, unusual or highly specific interests and hobbies
Prefers familiar routines, likes things to be ‘just right’
Has strong adherence to rules or fairness that leads to arguments

Sensory responses

Unusual sensory responses to sound sight, touch, taste, smell, movement and/or pain