

Autism is a lifelong condition that affects how a person's brain works. It can affect how they think, feel, interact with others, and experience their environment.

Every person with autism is different, some may need more help than others. Autism can mean people have super strengths in skills such as reading, maths, art, mechanics, music or their memory.

People with Autism may:

- Find it hard to explain their feelings.
- Love one thing a lot and be fantastic at remembering facts about things that really interest them.
- Be sensitive to light, sound, smell and touch. Some people may like lots of sensory input, others may get overwhelmed.
- Want to follow similar routines.
- Talk in different ways; some may talk a lot, others may not talk as much.
- Feel worried if things change.

In Pony Club this may look like:

- A loud, busy, indoor arena may make it hard to hear and understand instructions.
- Some clothes could feel uncomfortable, for example tight trousers or wearing a shirt with a collar.
- They may get tired more easily.
- Find a change to routine difficult; for example, riding a different pony than expected.

How can we support Members?

- Be patient and don't judge.
- Ask the parent, carer or the child, (if appropriate), what works best for them and how they like to be supported.
- Use clear, direct language. People with autism may not understand jokes, metaphors or colloquialisms, for example, '*downward transition in the corner*'.
- Break tasks down into bite-size achievable tasks.
- When using non-verbal body language such as facial expressions, ensure this is reinforced with an instruction or commentary.

