

# Work Options for Autistic Job Seekers



The Autism Employment Gap,  
NAS August 2016

Registered Office: The Coach House, Ealing Green, London W5 5ER / Registered in England No. 8533231

[www.asmentoring.org.uk](http://www.asmentoring.org.uk)

# Introducing.....



- Rachel Pearson, Employment Consultant, Surrey Service Co-ordinator
- Christina Earl, Senior Operations Manager, Employment & Communities, Surrey Choices
- Justine McManus, Disability Employment Adviser for Surrey Cluster, Guildford Job Centre



# Aims of the session

- 1 hour to explore what the options are for autistic job seekers:
  - Generally
  - Specific to Surrey
- 30 mins panel session for questions, sharing case studies, signposting.

# AS Mentoring



- Support adult with ASCs to explore work goals, find and retain work – social inclusion through work.
- Set up 2013, following change in services that could be delivered by NAS
- Started with one member of staff covering London
- 2019: 27 mentors; 150+ clients – London, Surrey/Hants, Birmingham, Bristol, Dorset, remote support.
- Operate as a not for profit. Seek to find a funding stream for clients; some clients self fund.

# Some sobering statistics



- Only **16% of autistic adults are in full time work**; Unchanged in 10 years
- Another **16% in part time work** – overall employment rate of 32%
- **Three-quarters of those unemployed want to work**
- 4 in 10 autistic people working part-time feel **under-employed**
- Many autistic workers feel they are in **low-skilled work**
- Autistic graduates have the **highest unemployment rate amongst all graduates** – 22%
- **‘Hidden unemployed’** – many autistic job seekers are not claiming job seeking benefits

# Barriers to work for autistic job seekers



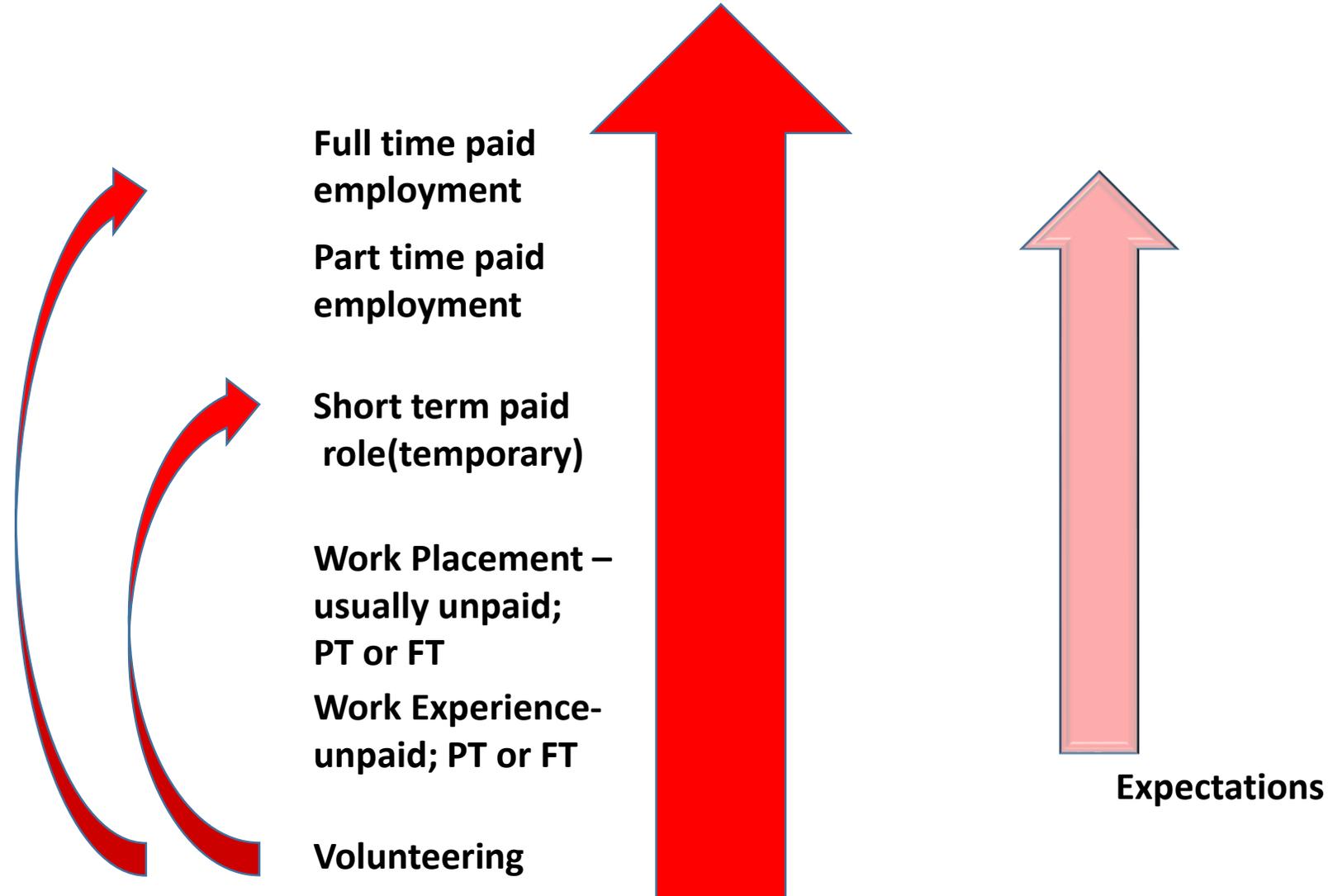
- **Confidence** - Most common reason for not being in work or looking for work is lack of confidence (23% of job survey respondents in NAS Survey, 2016)
- **Recruitment process** – geared around communication
- **Finding the right role** -“Square holes for square pegs”<sup>1</sup>
- **Lack of work experience**
- **Understanding of autism** – and understanding how it impacts in the workplace – employer and prospective employee



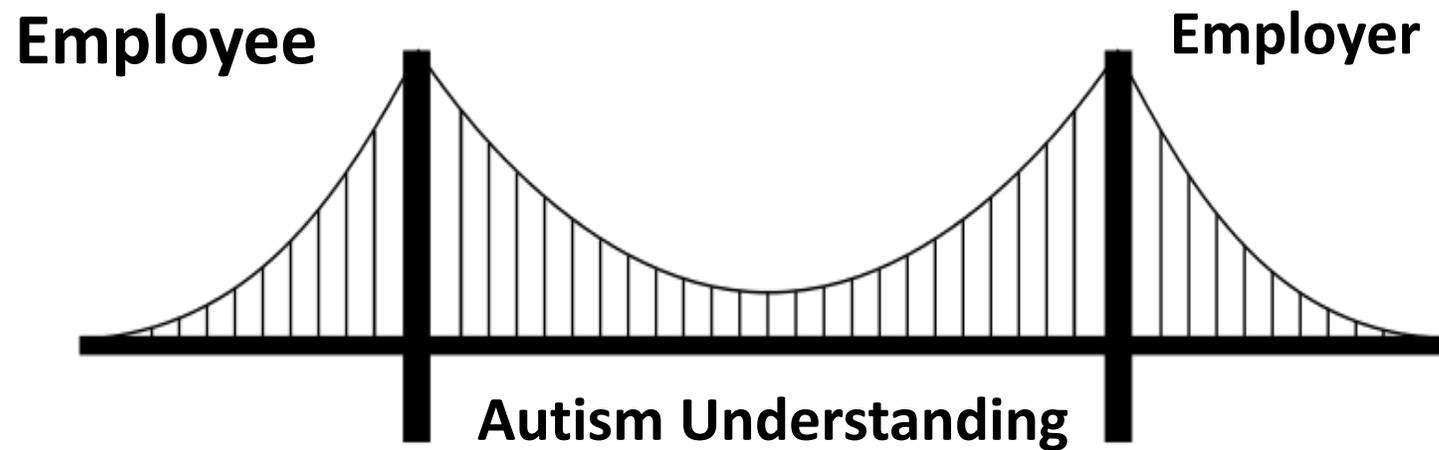
# So what are the options?

- Education: Stay in education for as long as possible??? Further Education; Higher Education
- Work
  - Work preparation: Supported internships; work experience; work placements
  - Employment: with autism 'understanding' employers, autism specific placement programmes; apprenticeships
  - Self employment (e.g. ASC graduates)

# Pathways to employment



# Autistic workers usually need a “Communication Bridge”



# What support is available

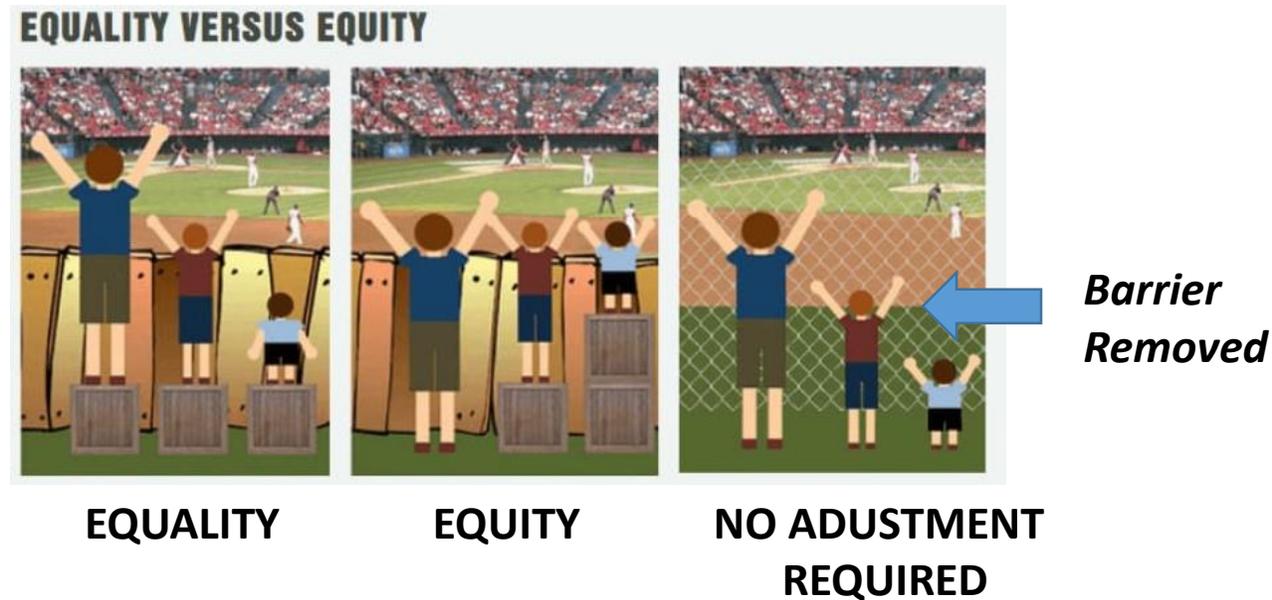


- Pre-employment support
  - explicit teaching – work prep; social skills for workplace;
  - Experience of the workplace: work shadowing; work experience; placements; internships
- Job searching/careers guidance and advice
- Navigating the recruitment process – guidance on reasonable adjustments; support at interview; disclosing a diagnosis; work trials
- In work support – reasonable adjustments at work; autism awareness training; specialist workplace support

# Reasonable Adjustments

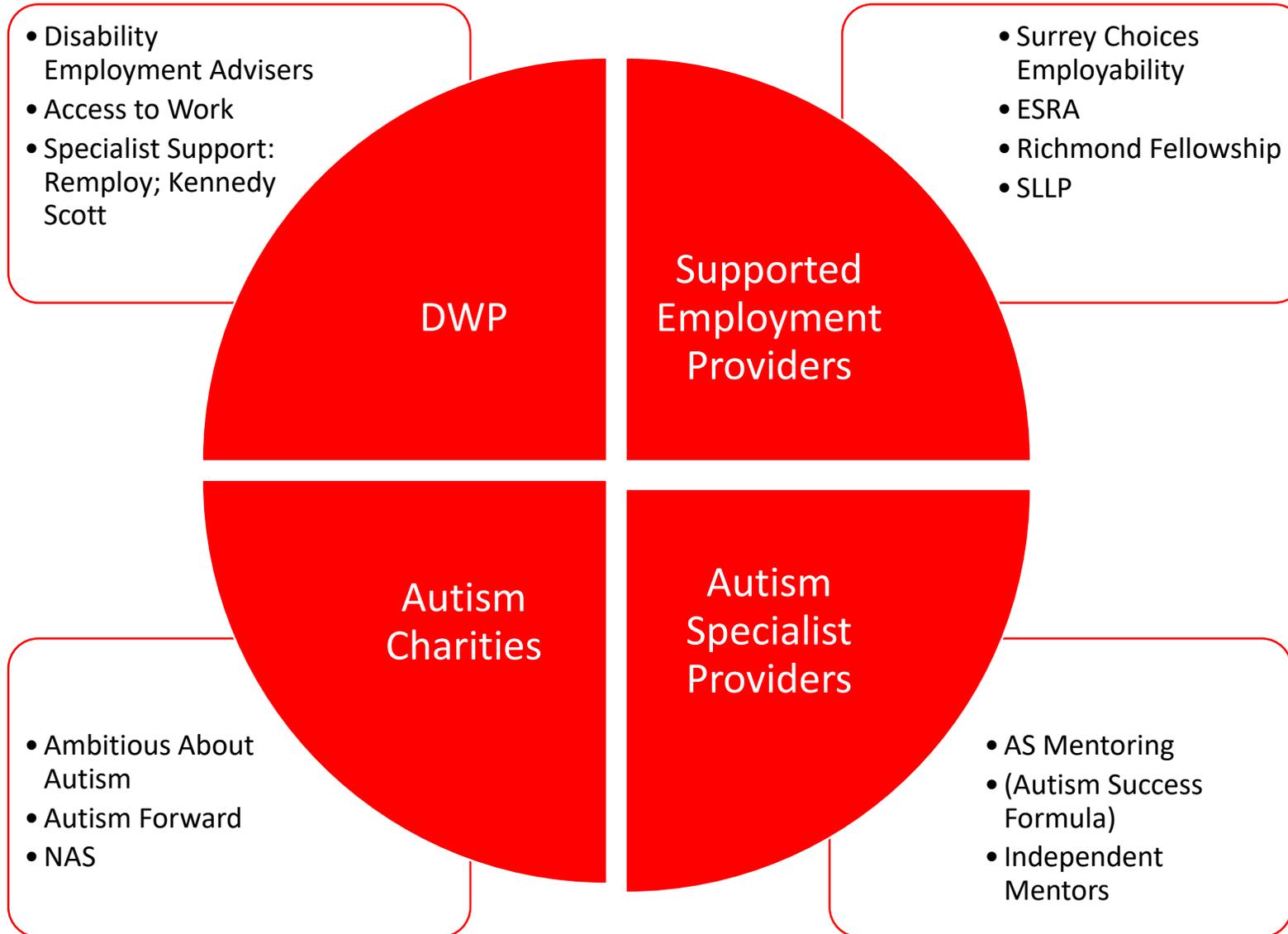
- Equality Act (2010)

*To make Reasonable Adjustments, in order to remove/ minimize the barriers/ disadvantages faced by individual disabled employees*



- For autistic people adjustments are often very minor but not always obvious either to employer or employee - e.g. change of desk position, change of working hours to avoid rush-hour travel, wearing noise-cancelling headphones at work, reserving a favourite hot lunch at the canteen(!)

# Who can support?



# Case Studies



## Georgina: Age 39

- Left Uni at 20 as too anxious to continue with IT degree.
- Spent 16 years as self-employed part-time gardener, after other casual jobs
- Started pre-employment mentoring support: worked on confidence, finding focus; exploring pathways back into IT
- Successfully applied for 24 mth IT Software Developer apprenticeship, reasonable adjustments at interview
- Specialist mentoring workplace support (outside of work) funded by Access to Work; accessing psychological therapies, funded by employer following Occupational Health assessment.

## Frank: Age 20

- Left school with 4 GCSEs (not English)
- Family friend found him warehouse work. Not suited to environment: wasn't able to focus in role; always late – facing disciplinary process
- Mentoring support to explore skills, autism impact
- Work shadow day organised to visualise the role; supported direct approach to employers
- Found paid employment as Trainee Groundsman. Workplace support funded by Access to Work.
- Now part qualified tree surgeon undertaking specialist courses with adjustments
- Working and studying independently as equipped with self advocacy skills

# Further resources



Business Disability Forum: autism and employment guide

[http://www.businessdisabilityforum.org.uk/mediamanager/public/261/Square%20Pegs\\_Final\\_GF.PDF](http://www.businessdisabilityforum.org.uk/mediamanager/public/261/Square%20Pegs_Final_GF.PDF)

Equality Act 2010

<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/15/contents>

Access to Work

<https://www.gov.uk/access-to-work>

Autism Forward Trust: charity which provides funding for employment mentors

<http://www.autismforward.org.uk/>