

Timeline



1908: Swiss psychiatrist Eugen Bleuler coins the word autistic to describe a form of schizophrenia in patients who were withdrawn and self-absorbed

1926: Child psychiatrist Dr Grunya Sukhareva publishes a paper in the Soviet Union discussing six boys she had treated in Moscow for what she called schizoid psychopathy. The descriptions echo those of Kanner and Asperger published two decades later. Her paper was translated into German in 1927. It is not clear whether Kanner and Asperger, both native German speakers, were aware of her work before their findings appeared in the 1940s, though Kanner cited her in a paper published in 1949

1962: A group of parents meet in London to form the Society for Autistic Children, which will later become the National Autistic Society

1964: American researcher Dr Bernard Rimland publishes his paper *Infantile Autism: The Syndrome and its Implications for a Neural Theory of Behaviour*, making the case for autism being linked to genetic factors, rather than parenting

1965: The Society for Autistic Children opens its first school in London.

1966: A study of children in Middlesex estimates the rate of autistic syndrome in children as 0.04%

1980: Infantile Autism is listed for the first time as a distinct condition in the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (DSM-III), issued by the American Psychiatric Association

1981: Dr Lorna Wing publishes a paper titled *Asperger's syndrome: a clinical account*

1987: A new edition of the manual (DSM-III-R) replaces the term infantile autism with the broader autistic disorder

1988: The film *Rain Man*, starring Dustin Hoffman as an autistic savant, is released, bringing awareness of autism to a mass audience around the world

1989: Professor Christopher Gillberg, of Gothenburg University in Sweden, publishes the first diagnostic criteria for Asperger syndrome

2000: The All-Party Parliamentary Group on Autism is founded by MPs and members of the House of Lords interested in autism

2003: Mark Haddon's novel *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-time* is published, telling the story of the efforts of Christopher, a 15-year-old boy with Asperger syndrome, to find out who killed his neighbour's dog, which leads to him uncovering a secret about his own family

2007: Professor Tony Attwood publishes *The Complete Guide to Asperger's Syndrome*

2008: The United Nations declares that April 2nd will be the first World Autism Awareness Day

2009: The UK Parliament passes the Autism Act, the first disability-specific law

2009: The US Center for Disease Control and Prevention estimates that 1 in 110 children have autism spectrum conditions

2015: The Berkshire Autistic Society's 25th anniversary is marked by a two-day conference in Reading with Professor Tony Attwood, the world's leading authority on Asperger syndrome. At the end of the year, the organisation is renamed Autism Berkshire, following feedback from members that the former title sounded old-fashioned. An agreement is reached with the county's two NHS Clinical Commissioning Group federations for the delivery of a range of extra support for families living with autism and those with children on the waiting list for diagnostic assessment, as part of the Berkshire CAMHS Local Transformation Plan.

2016: Autism Berkshire launches new services for families as a result of the agreement with the NHS, including advice workshops and support groups tailored for parents whose children are waiting for autism assessments, and an expanded home visit service. There are also new leisure activities, such as youth groups and relaxation classes for children and their parents and carers. The 1,000th Berkshire Autism Alert Card is issued and Autism Berkshire's Facebook page notches up its 1,000th like.



1700 & 1800s: Contemporary accounts of the behaviour of pioneering English scientist Henry Cavendish (1731-1810) suggest that today he would be diagnosed as autistic. He was intensely focused on his research, lived a life of fixed routines, dressed in the same way for decades, was painfully shy and anxious in company but if he could be drawn into conversation was a mine of detailed scientific knowledge.

1887: Dr John Langdon Down publishes his book *On Some of the Mental Affections of Childhood and Youth*, describing savant syndrome and other developmental disorders observed in patients that today would be regarded as indicative of autism

1943: Psychiatrist Dr Leo Kanner publishes his paper *Autistic Disturbances of Affective Contact*, describing traits observed in patients in the US after he moved there from Austria. He suggests autism is related to a lack of parental warmth towards very young children.

1944: Dr Hans Asperger, an Austrian psychologist, publishes a paper about autistic syndrome in boys who were highly intelligent but had obsessive interests and poor social skills. He describes it as a spectrum disorder, much closer to the modern understanding of the condition than Kanner's. This paper and his later work was not translated from German into English for many years

1977: A study of 21 pairs of twins in the UK reinforces evidence that the causes of autism are largely genetic

1979: Britons Dr Lorna Wing and Dr Judith Gould publish the Camberwell study presenting autism as a spectrum disorder, linked by a triad of impairments affecting social interaction, communication and imagination

1990: A group of parents meet in Reading to form what will become the Berkshire Autistic Society, the forerunner of Autism Berkshire

1991: Professor Uta Frith, of London University, publishes the first authoritative English translation of Dr Asperger's work

1997: The National Autistic Society launches a helpline to meet growing demand in the UK for information about autism

1998: A study published in the leading British medical journal *The Lancet* suggested that the MMR vaccine caused autism. The claim was later discredited by a series of studies published in the UK and US

2010: In line with commitments made in the Autism Act, the Government publishes a strategy on support for autistic adults in England, following the *Future in Mind Report*

2013: A new edition of the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (DSM-5) is published in the US, placing all sub-categories of autism under the umbrella heading of autism spectrum disorders, no longer classing Asperger syndrome as a separate condition.

2014: The US Center for Disease Control estimates that 1 in 68 children have autism spectrum conditions