

Inclusive Communication for autistic people

Inclusive communication is a two-way process which allows people who use services to receive information and communicate in the way that they are most comfortable. It covers all forms of communication and will be able to help you to support people when they communicate in the following ways:

- Face to Face
- Written
- Online
- Telephone

It is always good practice to ask each individual (or family member/care provider) how they would like to communicate.

Some autistic people will require a level of support with communication and others may not. Additionally, some autistic people may also have a learning disability which could affect how that individual communicates.

Autistic people may have difficulties in interacting with other people, recognising social cues such as facial expressions, and the use of literal language. They may have sensory reactions to things such as noises, lighting, colour and pattern.

This guide will help you by giving an awareness of the different ways that you can communicate and deliver services that are accessible for autistic people.

Ask how best to communicate	Autistic people may have a preferred way to communicate. Some autistic people also have a learning disability and may require additional communication support in respect of their learning disability. Some people may have another person (support staff, family member or friend) who helps them to communicate.
Consider the environment	It is preferable to find a space which is free from distractions such as noise, bright patterns and too many other people.
Allow time	It is important to allow time for communication. Autistic people may take longer to process information.
Verbal communication	Speak slowly and directly to the person you are communicating with and not to others who may be with them. Some autistic people may avoid making eye contact with the person they are communicating with. Avoid using language that is literal, humorous and figures of speech as this can cause confusion.

Communicate information in sections	To allow people time to understand what you are communicating it is a good idea to break the information in to smaller sections. You can check for understanding before moving on to the next section.
Pay attention to body language	You may see an autistic person tap, rock, hum, cover their ears. The person may be anxious or excited. It is important to recognise any signals that the person may wish to take some time away from the conversation.
Provide information in advance	It is useful for autistic people to have time to process information and having information in advance of a meeting or conversation may help them to prepare or think of questions they may wish to ask.
Communicate in a person- centred way	Each person will have their preferred way to communicate.
Provide accessible information	You can provide information in different formats. If information is printed it is helpful to use muted colours and avoid lots of different colours or patterns on the document. Avoid using words over a pattern. Information in bullet form is more accessible.
Easy read/Plain English	Easy read or plain English makes information easier to understand and uses short words and sentences along with images. Easy read information should show images aligned on the left and text aligned on the right. Use a font such as Arial which is easier to read. Font size should be a minimum of 16 and may need to be bigger depending on the individual. Use images which have meaning for the person you are communicating with. There are websites which you can pay a licence for to access images such as Boardmaker or PhotoSymbols. These websites might be useful resources: www.plainenglish.co.uk www.autism.org.uk/advice-and-guidance/topics/communication/tips
Check the person understands	As you communicate it is useful to check the person's understanding. Avoid asking long or difficult questions. Recap what information has been shared Consider giving the person the information to take away to allow them to discuss it with other people.