

Reasonable Adjustments – Autism

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Top 10  
Tips

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## Introduction

The National Autism Strategy requires organisations to make reasonable adjustments for people with Autistic Spectrum Conditions (ASC) so that they are able to access services and support. The top 10 reasonable adjustments listed below, have been put together with people with ASC to help organisations to meet the requirement.

### 1. No presumptions, everyone is different

Find out about how a person's autism affects them. A few questions about what a person prefers can stop any problems later.

Spend some time trying to get to know the person.

If you are able, speak to the person (or the person's carer if more appropriate) so that you are able to prepare for your meeting.

### 2. Ways of communication

Communicate in ways the person knows best. Verbal conversation could be best as body language may be difficult to read.

There are numerous ways in which we all communicate, be that verbal or through body language – However someone with ASC may not be able to pick up on the subtleties of body language such as a shrug of the shoulders or even a smile. It is very important to know how an individual communicates before you meet with them.

The main cause of behaviours which challenge is communication difficulty.

A good starting point is to speak to the person who knows the individual best and be guided by them.

If you are able to adapt to a person centred means of communication such as objects of reference or a particularly personal

signing vocabulary, your communication with someone with ASC is likely to be more successful, thereby reducing triggers for behaviours which may challenge and making the experience more comfortable for the individual concerned.

### 3. Routines/structures the same

Use structures rather than open ended arrangements to avoid uncertainty. If someone has some rigid routines they follow, try to work with these.

If someone has been to see you at 10am on a Tuesday for example, then try to make the next appointment at the same time, also if possible with the same person.

A consistent approach is always preferable.

### 4. Noise

Try to minimise any unnecessary noise, such as equipment which may make a noise.

People with ASC may have sensitivity to high pitched, loud or sudden noises.

Think about things such as turning off the air conditioning as the low hum could prove difficult for someone with ASC to cope with. Similarly photocopiers or the bell which rings when the front door opens and closes.

### 5. Enough time

Give time for people to process the information given to them.

Do not always expect someone with an ASC to be able to answer a request immediately.

Whilst some people will be able to process and respond to information others may take a considerable amount of time to do so.

To continue to ask a question or ask another question instead will only compound matters and could raise anxiety, leading to behaviours which you may find challenging. A double appointment time should be considered.

### 6. Ways to escape

Always ensure the person knows they can leave if they are getting stressed and where they can escape to. For example, a quieter less busy area.

Sometimes the experience of visiting somewhere like a GP surgery can make people anxious.

If someone becomes so anxious that they feel that they need to leave the environment they are in quickly, it is important that they can do so.

An area where the person can go to calm down would be beneficial – a break out room for example, or a safe and direct way to leave the building.

### 7. Sensory environment

Make sure the environment is not disruptive, avoiding sensory overload.

This is known as a low arousal environment – for example a display of several pictures on a wall may prove incredibly distracting for someone with ASC and lead to them feeling particularly uncomfortable – this in turn could lead to anxiety and a poor experience for the person.

If you are able then make your space as neutral as possible.

### 8. Clear unambiguous language used

Clear precise language used with no confusing terminology (literal meanings).

In your building, if you have access to symbol dictionaries such as board maker, Widget etc. then use these on your signs.

When communicating with an individual use clear and concise language which does not have any ambiguity of meaning.

### 9. Coping strategies

Some people may have coping strategies that they use in stressful situations – Please find out. If you're able to speak to the person or if more appropriate the person's carer prior to your meeting then you can be made aware of any coping strategies.

You may also be made aware of any triggers which cause the coping strategies and adapt appropriately.

### 10. Same people

A consistent approach is always best, seeing the same professional, going to the same place etc.

If someone has been to see you at 10am on a Tuesday for example then try to make the next appointment at the same time, also if possible with the same person.

A consistent approach is always preferable.

**NB.** The main driver behind all of the top 10 practical steps above is communication.

Awareness that an individual has an ASC prior to your first meeting and an ability to adapt your practices accordingly will help to change services so that they are easier to use

The 10 suggestions above are by no means an exhaustive list; however they do offer straight forward advice on how to make your services more accessible for people with Autistic Spectrum Conditions.