

Helpful Adjustments



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There are many reasonable adjustments that autistic find helpful to enable them to access community services, public services, education and employment.

This is a list created by the Autism by Experience CIC team to help people to think about adjustments they may be able to provide and to request.

Not every autistic person will need every adjustment.

[Autism awareness training is a key adjustment for all services and employers.](#)

Community Venues



Whilst understanding that not all venues would practically be able to offer every adjustment listed here, these are things that autistic people often find helpful:

- Visual stories on website, either using photos or video to help people prepare for a visit.
- Quieter hours (or quieter times) where lighting is dimmed, there's no background music and announcements kept to a minimum.
- A designated quiet space for people to use and be shown to if feeling overwhelmed, ideally with low arousal sensory lighting.
- A flexible re-entry policy (some people may need to leave for a short break).

- Understanding that a person may need to use sensory aids such as noise cancelling headphones and fidget toys. Perhaps even selling these items or having ear defenders to borrow.
- Awareness that an autistic person may communicate differently, for example, may avoid eye contact or may communicate in a very direct way (without intending to appear abrupt).
- Clear explanations of what an 'Autism Friendly' performance means. For example, a 'relaxed' performance tolerates people needing to make noise and move around, whereas a 'quiet' performance doesn't.
- Staff are familiar with a range of alert cards such as autism alert cards, sunflower lanyards and JAM (Just a Minute) cards. Staff understand that a person using these may be feeling overwhelmed and may need more time to process information and for verbal communication to be taken slowly and clarified where needed.
- Staff are aware that a 'meltdown' is not a behaviour aiming to achieve a goal, but an involuntary response to extreme overwhelm.
- Staff will understand the need to stay calm, de-escalate the situation and the need for the person to have time and space without demands in order to recover.

Public Services



As well as all the adjustments that community venues could helpfully offer public services like hospitals, Opticians, GP Surgeries, Police etc could also offer the following.

- Being able to book appointments online or via email.
- Appointments at quieter times of the day.
- A quieter waiting area, or a buzzer system so that people don't have a wait in a crowded waiting room.
- Longer appointments to allow for processing information and communication.
- Allowing a chosen supporter to attend the appointment with a person to act as an advocate/interpreter.

- Signpost people to Easy Read information and health passports.
<https://www.easyhealth.org.uk/>
- Understanding that unexpected touch can be alarming for many autistic people, and the importance of explaining first before touching someone.
- Offer alternatives to group work if this could be overwhelming for a person. For example, one to one therapy rather than group therapy.

Employers, schools, colleges and universities



All the adjustments mentioned in the previous sections also apply to workplaces and places of study, though people tend to spend much longer in these environments so the following may also be helpful where possible.

- Flexible working hours to avoid busy travel times and the choice to work from home if both practical and desirable.
- Extra time taken to ensure that instructions are clarified and clearly understood and put in writing if required.
- Extra time given for new tasks and for exams/tests. Also, the option to take exams in quieter rooms.
- Weekly check-ins with manager/tutor to help manage uncertainty.
- A designated workspace to ensure predictability.
- Adaptations such as desk screens to minimise background distractions, and understanding of staff as to how invasive these distractions, such as a radio playing, a noisy fridge or bright lighting can be for an autistic person.
- A desk that backs onto a wall rather than a door or corridor so that the autistic person isn't triggered by unexpected noise/movement behind them.
- A designated 'buddy' is identified for the person to contact if feeling uncertain, confused or concerned.

- Awareness that 'unstructured time' can be challenging for many autistic people. Schools and colleges can offer structured options for breaks (such as clubs, activities, or tasks).
- Reassurance that attendance at events like office parties are not compulsory.
- Using a coloured card (red one side, green the other) to keep on your desk to say that either it's okay to disturb me, or please let me concentrate.
- People are allowed to 'take a short break' when feeling overwhelmed and can do this without needing to seek permission each time (using a break card can help). Some people may need to go somewhere quiet others may need a movement break.
- A flexible recruitment process can offer a range of adjustments such as work trails instead of interviews, interview questions in advance or given in writing at the interview and more time at interview to process questions, and support to interpret questions if required.