

How to support people with autism

- Explain at every stage what you are about to do, what will happen next and why.
- Give the person enough time to understand the information you are sharing and wait a few seconds for a response if it is not given immediately.
- Questions should be clear and direct using language that is easy to understand and pictures where necessary – do not rely on the person to pick up on the meaning of your questions or body language.
- People with autism might take what you say literally so avoid words with a double meaning and humour that could be misunderstood.
- Maintain a routine – familiarity is often important to some people with autism.
- Social difficulties may include lack of eye contact and unusual body language, talking at inappropriate moments or about inappropriate topics.
- Repetitive behaviours might be a coping mechanism and therefore should be respected.
- The environment is important – some people with autism are particularly sensitive to light, movement, sounds, smell and touch. Try to keep the immediate environment as calm as possible to help alleviate any anxiety.
- Always consider the person's behaviour in terms of his or her autism, even if it becomes challenging.
- Ask the person and/or parent, carer or advocate what support they might need.