

Accessible information



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This resource looks at how you can present information to support autistic people to use your services or facilities.

Many autistic people will experience anxiety, the triggers for this will vary, but it will often impact their quality of life. Advance information can be very important for autistic visitors who may be able to cope better if they can prepare before their visit. By providing as much information as possible about your venue, you will manage expectations, reduce anxiety and help with planning. Details of a venue layout are important for people with a range of accessibility requirements but certain environmental elements can be challenging or confusing for an autistic visitor.

Even if you don't operate a venue, providing information about what people can expect when they use your facility or services (for example, on your website) can help to reduce anxiety.



Clear information

Have clear information available online and, if appropriate, in print. Try not to overload each page or section with too much information and lay it out clearly, breaking down large sections. If there is a process someone will need to go through, break it down into small chunks with a clear outline of what is expected at each stage.

Clear navigational information

You can help an autistic person navigate an environment by providing clear visual information. Navigating large spaces can be difficult, but knowing where the toilets are or how to get to an exit can help to reduce anxiety. Have clear signage in prominent locations throughout a building that indicates the direction of key places or where you are. Providing a map at the entrance or one that someone can access before a visit and take with them can help. Make sure to also include information about who to ask for help if needed.

Information in advance

Providing information in advance can be a way to reduce stress. Many autistic people find new and uncertain situations stressful and therefore the more they know about what to expect and what will be expected of them, the more likely their stress will be relieved. Having a video available showing a walk-through of your setting could help, or you could add photos of different parts of the building to your website or a leaflet that people can look at in advance.

Processing time

Sometimes autistic people feel like they're getting 'too much information' and need a few moments to filter through it all. This is called processing time. If you're talking to someone, give a minute. Ask one question as simply as you can, and just wait. If you still don't get a response, try re-phrasing it or writing it down instead. Talking a person through what is happening, using simple language rather than surprising them can also help.

Some examples of autism-friendly practices

Little Angel Theatre

A visual story is a short description of a particular situation, event or activity, which include specific information about what to expect in that situation and why. Little Angel Theatre creates visual stories for access to the theatre, but will provide bespoke stories for performances on request.

➡ www.littleangeltheatre.com

London Zoo Visual Story

London Zoo produced a visual story for a visit to the zoo. It includes a visual trail of a visit with photographs and straightforward text highlighting aspects that may be challenging or confusing for an autistic visitor.

➡ <https://admin.zsl.org/sites/default/files/ZSL%20Visual%20Story.pdf>

Visit England - Create an accessibility guide

Visit England provides advice on how to create an accessibility guide that can help you to communicate with your customers who want specific accessibility information.

➡ www.visitbritain.org/business-advice/make-your-business-accessible/create-accessibility-guide

Social Story Creator

Touch Autism provides a free tool to help you create a visual story.

➡ www.touchautism.com/app/social-stories-creator-library/

AccessAble

Provides a range of accessibility guides for public services. There are 10,000s of venues across the UK and Ireland including shops, pubs, restaurants, cinemas, theatres, railway stations, hotels and more. They have an App to enable you to use AccessAble on the go.

➡ www.accessable.co.uk

Next steps

Checklist

Download the checklist from www.autism.org.uk/autismfriendlyinformation as a starting point to the changes you can consider to make your information more welcoming to autistic people.

Would you like recognition for the changes you have made?

The National Autistic Society can provide you with recognition for the changes you have made and the positive customer experience that autistic people can expect from your business. The Autism Friendly Award will consider the experience you offer autistic people and award those businesses that meet a high standard of autism-friendly practice. The award will not only celebrate your work but also signify to autistic customers and their families that you are committed to them having the best experience whilst they visit you.

Find out more about Autism Accreditation and the Autism Friendly Award.

➡ www.autism.org.uk/accreditation



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➡ www.kusumatrust.org