

COMMUNICATING WITH PEOPLE WITH AUTISTIC SPECTRUM CONDITIONS

TOP TIPS FOR FRONTLINE STAFF

It is unlikely that you will know if someone has an Autistic Spectrum Condition, but these tips should be useful when dealing with anyone with communication problems, including those who just do not seem to 'get' what you are saying.

1. **Minimise distractions**, for example, turn off fans; radios; ask colleagues to keep their voices down; consider taking person to quieter area.
2. **Speak clearly and concisely**, with a brief pause between each point so the person has time to take in what you are saying.
3. **Give people the opportunity to tell you they have a communication problem**, for example you could say 'I don't seem to be making myself clear, what would be helpful?'
4. **Avoid metaphors and similes**, such as 'he needs to pull his socks up' or 'she'll be quick as a flash'. Such phrases can confuse someone who takes things literally.
5. **Make everything predictable** so people know what is coming next. For example 'I will ring the manager. She will come down and see you.'
6. **Be precise with your instructions**, especially if you notice that the person looks unsure. 'Please sit on the chair in the corner' might be more helpful than 'Please wait'.
7. **Present information in more than one format**, try to back up what you are saying with written information so the person can go over it in their own time.
8. **Explain feelings**, if the person is, for example, making you feel uncomfortable point this out to them. They may not be able to pick it up for themselves.

9. **Be patient with repetition**, some people can get 'locked in' to a topic and it is very difficult for them to change track. Be prepared to reassure people by repeating things several times. Try writing down your response as well. Politely, but firmly bring the matter to an end when necessary by saying, for example, 'I have explained the situation. I cannot discuss it any more, we need to change the subject.'

10. **Display a suitable 'welcome message'**, such as the notice overleaf.

HELP US TO HELP YOU

Some people need extra help to communicate.

This may be due to:

- Vision problems
- Hearing problems
- Certain physical disabilities
- Mental illness
- Learning disability
- Autism or Asperger Syndrome
- Emotional distress
- English as a second language
- And many other reasons.....



If you need extra help please let our staff know and we will do our best to assist you.