

# AUTISM



**University of  
Nottingham**  
UK | CHINA | MALAYSIA

# AUTISM



**NEURODIVERSITY**



**COMMUNICATING  
& PROCESSING**



**EVERYONE IS  
DIFFERENT**

- Neurodiversity refers to the variety of minds that is a natural part of being human. Autistic people are neurodivergent because they experience and interact with the world differently to how other people may typically do.
- Autistic people will communicate and interact with others in different ways which can affect how they are understood and how they understand others. They may also process information and react to situations in different ways.
- Every autistic person is different and will not always experience the same difficulties.

**A**ctually I'm Autistic

**U**nderstanding Each Other

**T**hinking differently

**I**nformation

**S**ensory Differences

**M**ental and Physical Impact

# **A**ctually I'm Autistic



**NON  
DISCLOSURE**



**OTHER HEALTH  
NEEDS**



**ASK  
DIRECTLY**

- Autistic people may not disclose that they are autistic during the booking-in process because they may be unsure when to disclose this information or worried about what will happen if they tell you this.
- Some autistic people may also have other physical and mental health needs i.e. ADHD, Dyslexia, Anxiety and Depression. They may also be unsure about when to disclose this information.
- You should ask every detainee directly if they have any conditions which may affect their communication and/or sensory processing i.e. autism

# Understanding Each Other



## COMMUNICATION BARRIERS

**Abc**

## CLEAR LANGUAGE



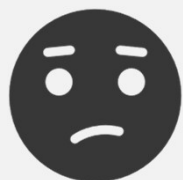
## PROCESSING

- Autistic people and custody staff may encounter barriers to communication which affect how they understand each others thoughts and feelings.
- You should make adjustments to how you communicate such as avoiding ambiguous language and asking clear and direct questions i.e. what is your full address?
- Autistic people may also need more time to process what is being said. You should give them extra time to process information.

# **T**hinking differently



## **MAKING SENSE**



## **UNFAMILIAR PLACE**



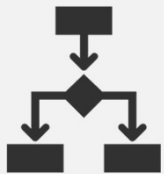
## **VISUAL AIDS**

- Autistic people have different ways of thinking and this can influence how they make sense of situations and what is happening.
- Police custody may be a new and unfamiliar place which can make it more difficult to understand what will happen and why.
- Autistic people may process information in different ways. You should ask what they prefer i.e. written, visual or verbal and consider using visual aids where possible.

# Information



**WHAT WILL  
HAPPEN**



**IN WHAT ORDER**



**HOW LONG**

- Autistic people will benefit from information about what will happen during each stage of the custody process and why it needs to be done.
- It will also help autistic people if they have an overview of the order of the custody process where this is possible so they are prepared for what might happen next.
- They may also like to know how long something might take or how long it will be until the next process i.e. it will be between 20 – 30 minutes

# Sensory Differences



## SENSITIVITY

- Autistic people may be under-sensitive to sensory demands or seek out sensory input. Others may be over-sensitive to sensory information which may cause distress or pain.



## SENSORY DEMANDS

- There are various sensory demands which can create difficulties including: light, noise, temperature, colour, space, touch, and smell.



## ADJUSTMENTS

- You should try to minimise these demands by making adjustments to the custody environment i.e. dimming the lights and using a quieter area

# Mental and Physical Impact



**ANXIETY &  
PHYSICAL DISCOMFORT**



**LOOK HAPPY  
OR CALM**



**SELF-HARM**

- Autistic people may experience anxiety and/or physical discomfort in police custody. They may be worried about lots of things and find it difficult to eat, drink, use the toilet and sleep.
- Some autistic people may look calm or happy even when they are not. They may say that they are okay when asked or be afraid to tell you they need help.
- There may be a risk that some autistic people will self-harm to help cope with the demands of being in police custody.

More information about autism and how to support autistic individuals is available from:

The University of Nottingham:

<https://www.nottingham.ac.uk/research/groups/autismandpolicing/index.aspx>

The National Police Autism Association: <http://www.npaa.org.uk/>

Autism Injustice: <https://autisminjustice.org/>

National Autistic Society: <https://www.autism.org.uk/>



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