

# ALL ABOUT ME

My Passport for Accessible & Autism-Friendly Public Services



AN ROINN DLÍ AGUS CIRT AGUS COMHIONANNAIS  
DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE AND EQUALITY



Progress has been made throughout the last twenty years in establishing legal rights and equalities for people with disabilities living in Ireland. The real impact is felt on the ground and frontlines where we all access essential public services. It is important to understand however that no single label defines any one of us, and that every person on the autism spectrum is affected by their condition in different ways to varying degrees.

This booklet will enable you to directly interact with autistic customers and service users. By asking for their feedback, you will be actively involving the best people to consult in your drive to make services more autism-friendly.

**This book is all about:**

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**SENSORY**

Coping with certain environments can be a source of serious overstimulation and anxiety for autistic people. Different settings test different individuals on the spectrum and it's important to understand the specific sensory processing challenges relevant to autism.

**I manage the environment by . . .**

**I struggle with environments such as . . .**

**I get distracted by the following odours, sounds or textures . . .**



## **COMMUNICATION**

Communication is a major obstacle for individuals right across the spectrum. Some autistic people are verbal whilst others are not. Many living with the condition find it hard to express their feelings, to initiate conversations or ask questions. Understanding and comprehending language can also be difficult. Autistic individuals are, by and large, literal thinkers and may struggle to decode sarcasm, slang or narrative instruction.

**I communicate by . . .**



**My preferred mode of communication is . . .**



**I find it difficult to understand . . .**

**It's hard for me to communicate when . . .**

**I manage instructions / directions best when they are explained by . . .**

**My preferred mode of communication is . . .**

# CONCENTRATION

Concentration or sitting still for long periods are a particular challenge for many on the spectrum. It can be especially tough for an autistic person to concentrate when they lack stimulation, are distracted by their surroundings or anxiety.

**I find it difficult to concentrate when . . .**

**I find it easier to concentrate when . . .**

**Ways to help me concentrate are . . .**

## IMAGINATION

Visual thinking comes easy to many autistic individuals, yet for those which it does not, imagining certain scenarios is tough. This makes interacting with strangers and following particular types of instructions difficult.

**I find it hard to understand / imagine . . .**

## PREDICTABILITY/ROUTINE

Predictability is crucial for autistic people to have when accessing public services. Establishing what the process entails, whether it involves using transport, visiting a hospital or interacting with State agencies, will help reduce anxiety. The unexpected will be limited and leaves less room for fretting over what-if scenarios.

**My routine is . . .**

**Predictability helps me because ..**

**Challenging things like seating plans or routes can be stressful for me. You can help reduce this anxiety for me by . . .**

## **ORGANISATION**

Self-organisation is a struggle for many autistic people. How big a difficulty it can be, and the strategies used to deal with it, varies from person to person. When interacting with public services, an autistic individual might find it hard to time manage, keep track of appointments and their personal papers. By asking them about their additional needs here, you can develop strategies to reduce anxiety and make your service more accommodating for autistic users.

**I have the following problems with organisation . . .**

**Situations that cause me to become disorganised are . . .**

**I stay organised by . . .**

## **BEHAVIOUR**

Certain situations can trigger autistic people to exhibit challenging behaviours. This is often because they are anxious about something, struggling to communicate or process their surroundings. It's crucial to understand the difference between these frustrations and how they should be addressed. .

**I may display challenging behaviour when . . .**

**I behave the following way when I am upset about something related to my condition . . .**

**If I experience a meltdown, please . . .**

## **ANXIETY**

Living with chronic worry is a major problem for many individuals on the spectrum. Anxiety can happen for a range of reasons and autistic people can vary in their ability to cope with it. Whilst experiencing spells of anxiety, their particular difficulties often become more pronounced. This impacts on how they interact with others and how they will conduct themselves personally.

**I am likely to get anxious when . . .**

**You can tell that I'm feeling anxious by . . .**

**Ways which I find useful for preventing / managing my anxiety are . . .**

**When I get anxious, approaches that have worked to calm me down are . . .**

## **INTERACTION**

Interacting with others can be a complicated process for many on the autism spectrum. Communication is one obstacle, but it is attached to a far wider series of challenges in terms of social anxiety, dealing with one person in a busy environment, and talking to complete strangers. By establishing what an autistic service user's needs are, you can make your workplace and its utilities more accessible.

**I find the following aspects of interaction difficult . . .**

**I find it easier to approach someone for help when . . .**

**Public servants could be more approachable for me if they . . .**

## **STRENGTHS / INTERESTS**

Autism's challenges are just one small part of the condition as a whole. Those on the spectrum have an entire range of practical interests and abilities which are closely linked to their diagnosis. This can be an ideal way of broaching the subject of accessibility with autistic services and what strategies can be developed for their using public services and utilities.

**My special interests are . . .**

**Ways we could link my interests to your service are . . .**

## **OTHER**

**Other useful information about me is . . .**

## **FURTHER INFORMATION FROM ASIAM.IE**

“What can I do to help?”

This is a question we get asked a lot, whether its members of the public who have learned about autism for the first time and want to make a difference or those close to a family or individual with the condition who really want to help.

Ensuring that autistic people can reach their full potential is something that needs to involve the wider community. It's not just for families affected by the condition nor for professionals in education and health. Autistic individuals need accessible support and services as well as an open and understanding mind from the society around them.

AsIAM's As You Can programme offers a range of practical advice on how to make your workplaces more autism-friendly, whether in transport, healthcare or with the emergency services.



You can view them here at <http://asiam.ie/about-autism-2/what-you-can-do>