

Supporting autistic people as lockdown eases

Why has Autism Accreditation created this booklet?

According to the mental health charity Mind:

Lockdown has been difficult for many people. But when we were in full lockdown across the UK things might have felt more certain, as the rules were more clear. Now things might start feeling less clear, and there may be new challenges

Autistic people in particular may struggle with leaving their homes and returning back to school, work and community activities in a world that can seem both familiar and changed.

The National Autistic Society has produced a **guide for teachers** on preparing for an autistic pupil's return to school as well as **top tips** for autistic people and their families. They also have advice for autistic people on going to the **supermarket**.

Dare has produced **information** for employers to help them understand some of the difficulties autistic employees may experience returning back to work.

In this booklet we offer some further ideas and resources which may be helpful for professionals and families supporting autistic people. No resource is right for autistic people and often it is the case of getting ideas but remembering the best resources are those which are adapted and personalised.

If you are an autistic person yourself these resources particularly those related to anxiety and uncertainty may be helpful but also check out the

regularly updated NAS pages on covid-19 for [advice and information](#).

Clear information

It is important to provide an autistic person with clear, consistent and accessible information about practical steps they can take to reduce the risk of infection. Be careful not to overwhelm or confuse them.

The UK government has some produced some relatively straightforward guidance on [Staying safe outside your home](#) which can be adapted into an easy read version or a social story if necessary.

For example this is an easy read guide to [washing hands](#) and you will find lots of examples of [social stories and visual guides](#) on the STARS website. If you want to make your own resources then you can get [free access](#) to Covid-19 related symbols from Widget. You may also find [videos](#) the NWTDT | Pathways Associates has produced on Covid-19 topics such as face coverings and social distancing useful.

Preparation

It is important not to bring in too many changes all at once. Stick to the routine established during lockdown and introduce new activities gradually using a visual schedule and giving lots of advance warning.

It can be helpful to visit the place ahead of the visit to take photographs to show an autistic person what has remained the same and what might look different, for

example directional arrows or screens which were not there before.

Also prepare an autistic person for how they will see other people behave. A social story is an excellent way to explain to an autistic person that not everyone will behave in the same way. Some may wear masks and some won't, some will maintain a clear social distance whilst others won't be so concerned. You should confirm with an autistic person how they should react or what they can do if they think another person is too close to them.

Anxiety and Uncertainty

This is an anxious time for all of us and you need to be sensitive to threats to the mental health and well-being of the people you support. The well-known writer and speaker on autism Peter Vermullen has produced a [video](#) and [tips](#) for autistic people for managing their anxiety during Covid-19. You may also find the following resources helpful:

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| Autistica | <i>Managing <u>mental health</u> and coping with the <u>uncertainty</u> of Covid-19</i> |
| Dare | <i>Tips for Health Anxiety and Uncertainty</i> |
| Autism East Midlands | <i>Autism Anxiety and Coronavirus</i> |
| Mind | <i>Managing feelings about lockdown easing</i> |



Young Minds

Coronavirus, autism and my mental health

Sheffield NHS

Self Care Kit COVID-19

