

# AUTISM

Created by the Nottinghamshire Autism Police Partnership at the University of Nottingham 2019.



University of  
Nottingham  
UK | CHINA | MALAYSIA

## BOOKING-IN

- Ambiguous questions can create difficulties for autistic people because it is not obvious what information is being asked for.
- Asking lots of questions might make an autistic person feel over-whelmed, especially when they are anxious. They might find it difficult to process what you are saying and might not respond straightaway.
- It may not be clear what medical conditions they need to tell you about and when they should tell you this information.
- You should ask every detainee directly if they are autistic or have any communication and/or sensory needs i.e. autism.



ASK CLEAR  
AND DIRECT  
QUESTIONS



ALLOW MORE  
TIME FOR  
PROCESSING



USE VISUAL  
AIDS AND  
PROMPTS



COMMUNICATION  
AND SENSORY  
NEEDS

## PERSONAL SEARCH

- Some autistic people may process sensory information differently which can make them under or over-sensitive to touch. Anxiety can also make it more difficult to cope with this.
- They may be anxious about what will happen during the search and may not be prepared for this.
- It may not be clear why they need to be searched, particularly if they have already been searched by police officers before coming to police custody.
- Autistic people may also be worried about handing over any personal items and what will happen to it.



EXPLAIN  
WHAT WILL  
HAPPEN



USE VISUAL  
AIDS



EXPLAIN WHY  
THEY NEED TO  
BE SEARCHED



OFFER  
REASSURANCE

## LEGAL RIGHTS

- Autistic people may not understand technical terminology and what their legal rights mean i.e. What is a solicitor?
- They may waive their legal rights because they believe they are innocent or they will be able to leave police custody quicker.
- Always call for an Appropriate Adult to be present during the custody process.
- Autistic people may prefer to be supported by an Appropriate Adult who knows them and/or understands Autism.



EXPLAIN  
TECHNICAL  
LANGUAGE



PROVIDE  
INFORMATION



CALL FOR AN  
APPROPRIATE  
ADULT



CHOOSE  
SOMEONE  
APPROPRIATE

## PROCESSING

- Autistic people may feel very anxious as they may not know what will happen or why they have to do these procedures.
- They may also be under or over sensitive to noise, light and touch. These demands can heighten their anxiety and cause distress.
- Collecting biometric data involves a lot of touching and the loud noises and bright lights created by the machines can be problematic.
- Wearing different clothing for the ID capture may make some autistic people feel uncomfortable due to the fabrics and the fact it has been worn by someone else.



EXPLAIN WHAT  
WILL HAPPEN  
AND WHY



USE VISUAL  
AIDS



ASK ABOUT  
SENSORY  
NEEDS



MAKE  
ADJUSTMENTS

## THE CELL

- Autistic people may be under or over sensitive to noise and light and may need adjustments to be made to the cell.
- They may be very anxious in the cell but may actually look calm and/or not tell you they are in distress unless you ask directly.
- They may be worried about asking for food and drink or toiletries as it may not be clear they can ask for these as well as using the toilet due to the CCTV.
- Some autistic individuals may be at risk of self-harm when these demands become too much or they are very distressed. This can be a form of distraction.



MAKE  
ADJUSTMENTS



ASK DIRECT  
QUESTIONS



EXPLAIN WHAT  
IS AVAILABLE  
AND REASSURE



OFFER  
SOMETHING TO  
DO/EXERCISE