

Helpful Tips and Things to Consider when communicating with and assisting a person who has an **AUTISM SPECTRUM CONDITION, or ASPERGER'S SYNDROME**

COMMUNICATION

- The person may need a little **extra time to process information and instructions**. Please **be patient**, and allow them time to respond.
- **Eye contact** can be extremely uncomfortable, even painful. If the person makes little or no eye contact, it does not mean they are not listening. It may be easier for them to concentrate and take in information if they do not make eye contact.
- Try to **keep instructions/directions relatively simple**, so as not to confuse them.
- Consider offering **written information instead of or as well as** verbal.
- **Avoid vague information** or **timescales** (e.g. "in due course"). **Be specific** about what the person needs to do and when, and what you will do and when.
- **Don't make promises** yourself, or on behalf of someone else, **unless** you are as sure as you can be that **they will be kept**.
- Some people on the spectrum **may lack the ability to be discerning about what they say and how**, so may come across as insensitive or rude. This is not intentional.

PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT AND SENSORY DIFFICULTIES

- **Noisy, crowded environments** can be overwhelming. Is there a **quieter area** you could take the person to?
- **Background music** can be extremely uncomfortable for some people. Can the **volume** be **lowered** or the **music turned off**?
- **Lighting** can be problematic. Is it possible to **dim the lights or turn them off** for the duration of the person's stay?
- **Movement and patterns** can be confusing and stressful, and may impact on a person's ability to concentrate.
- **Touch** can be uncomfortable or painful. Perhaps consider asking: "Do you shake hands? – it's fine if you prefer not to.", rather than assuming the person will be okay with that physical contact. Place items on a counter rather than in the person's hand.
- **Smells** can be very unpleasant, even those that most people like. Hand gels, foods, cleaning chemicals, can make some people feel unwell and nauseous.
- **Tastes** can be unpleasant and nauseating, even things most people enjoy.
- Some people may have difficulties with **coordination and balance**. Are there ways you could make it easier and safer for them to move about in the environment?

Remember: **everyone** on the spectrum **is different**, and individual **challenges and needs will vary** greatly. The person may well know and be able to say what would help them feel more comfortable; so if in doubt – **ask them and be guided by them**.