HAMPSHIRE SEND YOUTH FORUM

Autism Awareness Training Guide and Animations



Hi.

This guide has been developed by young people from Hampshire SEND Youth Forum. It is designed to help you understand autism and how to support young people with autism



WHATS IN THIS GUIDE?

Section 1 - Helping People Understand Autism

Section 2 - Supporting Young People with Autism

Section 3 - Helpful Strategies and Support Reseources



SECTION 1

Helping People Understand Autism

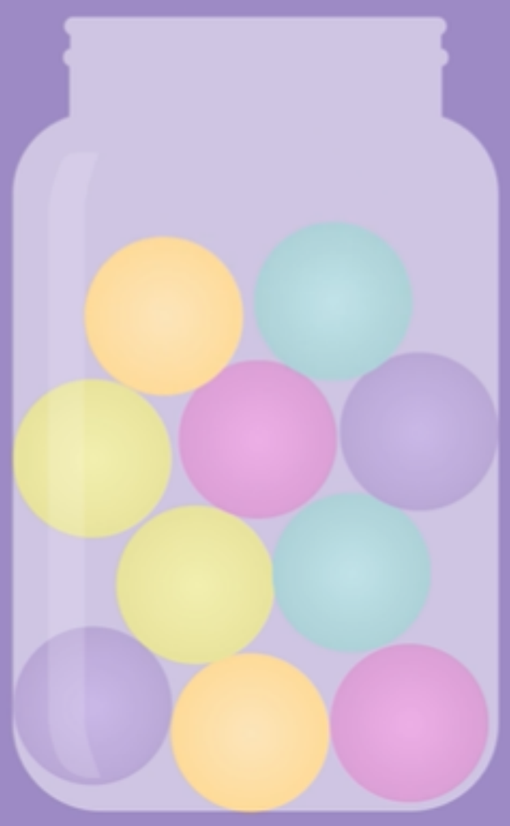
What is Autism?

Autism is a lifelong neurodevelopmental difference. It affects how people experience, understand and interact with the world around them.
Every autistic person is unique. Two autistic people may have very different strengths, interests, communication styles and support needs.

Autism looks different for everyone, everyone has their own unique experience and characteristics and each persons autism is their own.

imagine a jar filled with different coloured marbles. Each colour represents different traits, preferences, strengths and challenges.

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Some people may:

- Love social interaction or prefer spending time alone
- Be highly organised or need support with planning
- Enjoy routine or seek novelty and adventure

Every person's profile is different

Reflection Activity

Think about three people you know well.

- What are their strengths?
- What are their challenges?
- What helps them succeed?



Masking

Some autistic people may ‘mask’ their traits which can make it harder to spot.
Autism isn't someone's whole personality, its just part of a bigger picture.

Many autistic people have incredible strengths like creativity and focus.

Masking may include:

- Copying others' behaviours
- Rehearsing conversations
- Forcing eye contact
- Hiding sensory discomfort
- Suppressing stimming behaviours

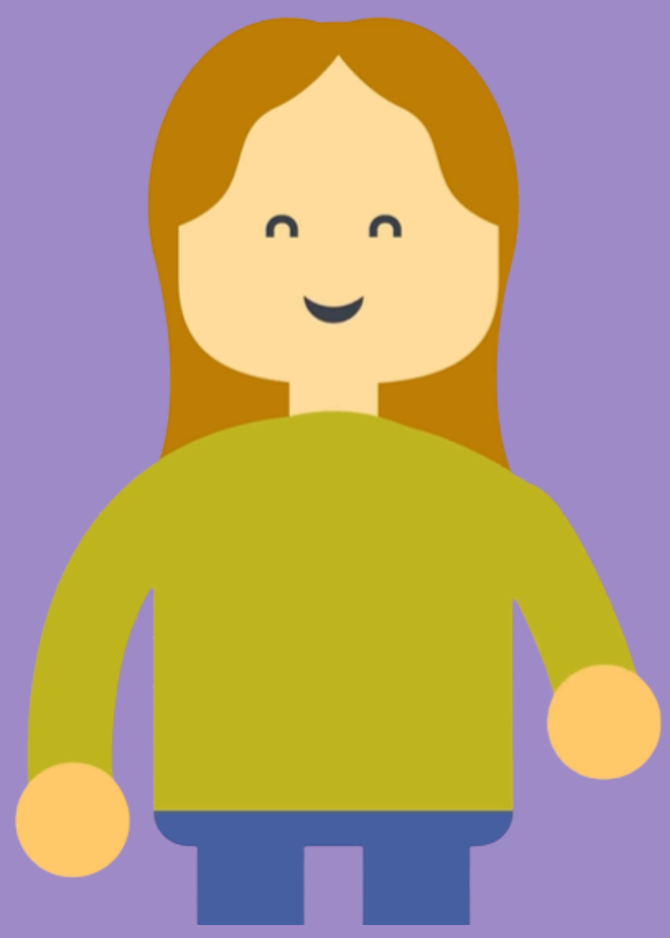
Why is this Important?

A young person who appears to be coping may actually be:

- Exhausted
- Anxious
- Overwhelmed
- At risk of burnout

You should avoid assumptions based solely on appearance or behaviour.

Good Practice



Instead of asking:
"You seem fine."
Try:
"How are you finding this environment?"
"Is there anything that would make this easier for you?"

Strengths-Based Understanding



Many autistic young people demonstrate strengths such as:

- Creativity
- Honesty
- Deep knowledge and expertise
- Attention to detail
- Strong memory
- Problem solving
- Determination
- Innovation



Sensory Processing

Many autistic people experience sensory differences.
Some may be overly sensitive to:

- Noise
- Bright lights
- Smells
- Crowds
- Clothing textures

Others may seek sensory input.



What Might This Look Like?

A child may:

- Cover their ears
- Wear headphones
- Need movement breaks
- Avoid certain environments

Helpful Tips

✓ Reduce unnecessary sensory demands
✓ Offer quiet spaces
✓ Allow sensory aids
✓ Ask what works for the individual

“UNDERSTANDING AUTISM MEANS SEEING THE PERSON FIRST WITH ALL THEIR UNIQUE TALENTS AND STRENGTHS”

This animation has been developed by the young people from the **Hampshire SEND Youth Forum**.

CLICK HERE TO WATCH ‘HELPING PEOPLE TO UNDERSTAND AUTISM’’ ANIMATION





SECTION 2



How to support autistic children and young people

Planning ahead

Supporting autistic people starts with planning ahead:

- Break information down into steps
- Give notice of any changes
- Use visual prompts
- Fidget toys and quiet spaces can support everyone



Unexpected change can increase anxiety.



Consider before an activity:

- What will happen?
- Where will it happen?
- Who will be there?
- What changes might occur?

Providing this information in advance can have a significant impact.

Visual supports can help make expectations clearer.

Examples include:

- Timetables
- Photos
- Symbols
- Checklists
- Traffic-light systems
- Social stories



Visual information remains available after verbal instructions have been forgotten.

Helpful Strategies

✓ Give advance warning
✓ Use countdowns
✓ Share changes early
✓ Explain reasons for changes
✓ Offer opportunities to ask questions



Fidget tools, movement breaks and quiet spaces can help many children regulate attention and sensory needs.

The key principle is:
Universal Approaches Benefit Everyone, many adjustments designed for autistic young people improve experiences for all learners.

> "THE MOST IMPORTANT STEP IS TO ASK WHAT WORKS BEST FOR THE YOUNG PERSON. ASK WHAT THEY NEED AND MAKE A PLAN TOGETHER."

Person-Centred Questions

- What helps when things feel difficult?
- What does a good day look like?
- What should adults know about you?
- What can we do differently?

The young person's voice should always be central.

This animation has been developed by the young people from the **Hampshire SEND Youth Forum**.

CLICK HERE TO WATCH 'HOW TO SUPPORT AUTISTIC CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE" ANIMATION



SECTION 3



Helpful strategies and resources

Everyday Support Tools

Small adjustments can make a significant difference.

Examples include:

- Ear defenders
- Noise-cancelling headphones
- Visual schedules
- Sunflower lanyards
- Communication cards
- Safe spaces
- Movement breaks



Sources of Support

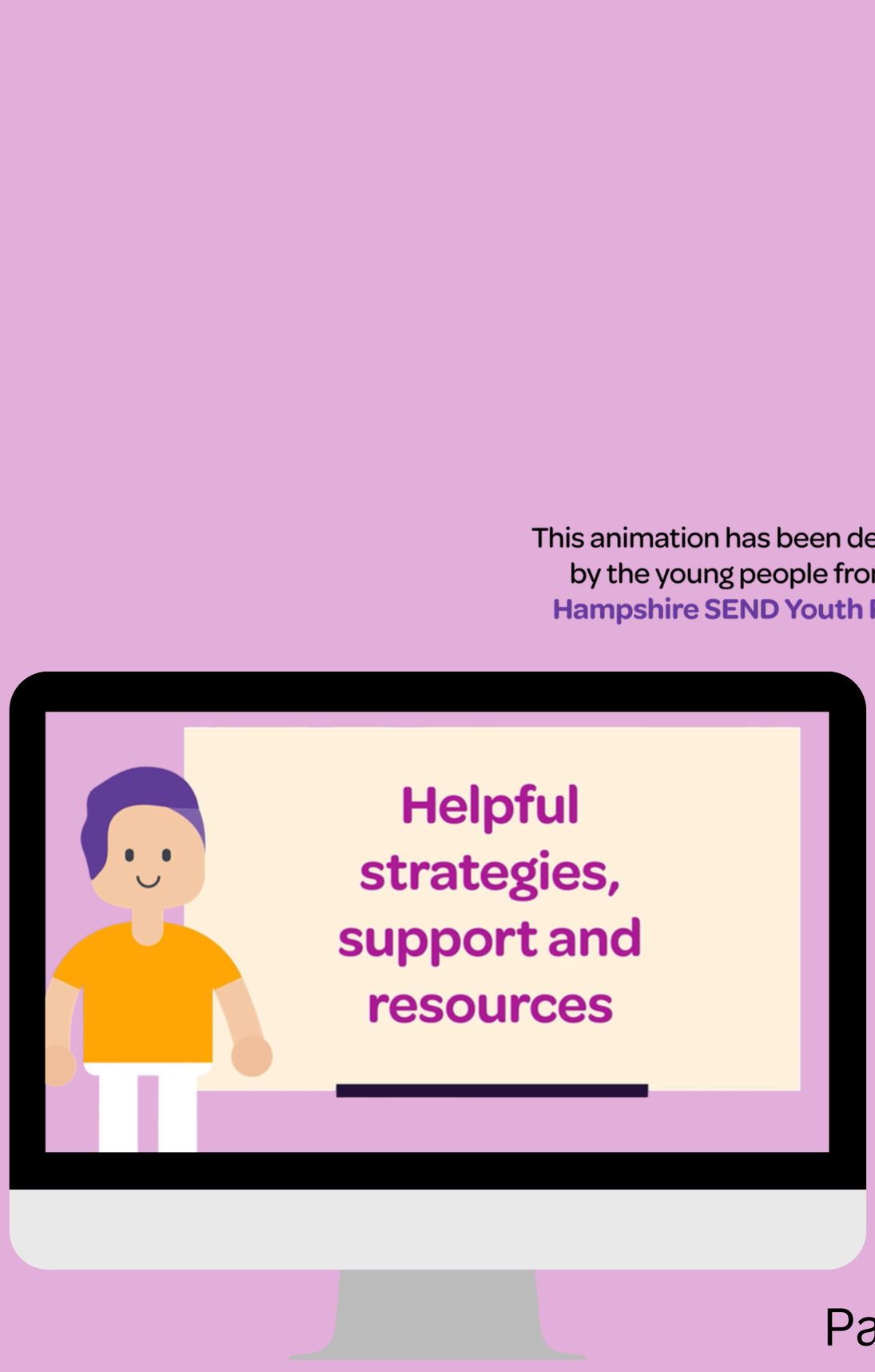
- Autistic Girls Network
- SENDIASS
- Hampshire Local Offer

These organisations can provide:

- Practical resources
- Peer support
- Advice
- Events and training
- Information about local services

This animation has been developed by the young people from the **Hampshire SEND Youth Forum**.

CLICK HERE TO WATCH 'HELPFUL STRATEGIES, SUPPORT AND RESOURCES" ANIMATION



> “TOGETHER WE CAN CREATE UNDERSTANDING AND SUPPORT FOR EVERY AUTISTIC YOUNG PERSON”

Key Messages

- Every autistic person is unique.
- Focus on strengths as well as support needs.
- Sensory differences matter.
- Predictability helps reduce anxiety.
- Small adjustments can make a big difference.
- Ask young people what works for them.
- Inclusion is everyone's responsibility.
- Understanding creates belonging

Reflection and Action Planning

After watching the animations and reading this guide reflect on:

- What new learning surprised you?
- How inclusive is your current practice?
- What barriers might autistic young people face in your setting?
- What is one change you could make immediately?

EVALUATION



So we can monitor the impact of the resources Hampshire SEND Youth create we would be really grateful if you could answer a few questions on how useful you have found the resource.

Your responses will be used by Hampshire SEND Youth Forum when developing future resources and will share feedback on the impact of the resource with the Local Area Partnership Board.

SCAN HERE TO TAKE PART IN OUR EVALUATION.

OR ALTERNASTIVY CLICK THE LINK TO TAKE PART 👉 EVALUTATION