

A guide for council and housing association landlords to supporting autistic and/or learning-disabled tenants in Greater Manchester



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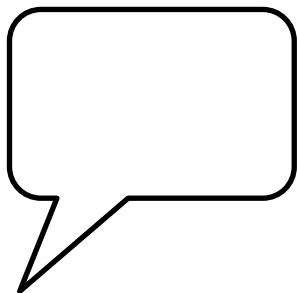
Thanks to the publishers of The Autism and Homelessness Toolkit for much of the information used in this leaflet

What is Autism?

Autism is a lifelong developmental disability which affects how people communicate and interact with the world. One in 100 people are on the autism spectrum and there are around 700,000 autistic adults and children in the UK.

Being autistic

Autism is a spectrum condition and affects people in different ways. Like all people, autistic people have their own strengths and weaknesses. Below is a list of difficulties autistic people may share, including the two key difficulties required for a diagnosis. Click on the plus sign for more information.



Social communication

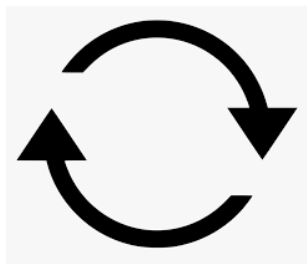
Autistic people have difficulties with interpreting both verbal and non-verbal language like gestures or tone of voice. Some autistic people are unable to speak or have limited speech while other autistic people have very good language skills but struggle to understand sarcasm or tone of voice. Other challenges include:

- taking things literally and not understanding abstract concepts
- needing extra time to process information or answer questions
- repeating what others say to them (this is called echolalia)

Social interaction

Autistic people often have difficulty 'reading' other people - recognising or understanding others' feelings and intentions - and expressing their own emotions. This can make it very hard to navigate the social world. Autistic people may:

- appear to be insensitive
- seek out time alone when overloaded by other people
- not seek comfort from other people
- appear to behave 'strangely' or in a way thought to be socially inappropriate
- find it hard to form friendships.



Repetitive and restrictive behaviour

With its unwritten rules, the world can seem a very unpredictable and confusing place to autistic people. This is why they often prefer to have routines so that they know what is going to happen. They may want to travel the same way to and from school or work, wear the same clothes or eat exactly the same food for breakfast.

Autistic people may also repeat movements such as hand flapping, rocking or the repetitive use of an object such as twirling a pen or opening and closing a door. Autistic people often engage in these behaviours to help calm themselves when they are stressed or anxious, but many autistic people do it because they find it enjoyable.

Change to routine can also be very distressing for autistic people and make them very anxious. It could be having to adjust to big events like Christmas or changing schools, facing uncertainty at work, or something simpler like a bus detour that can trigger their anxiety.

Over or under sensitivity to senses

Autistic people may experience over- or under-sensitivity to sounds, touch, tastes, smells, light, colours, temperatures or pain. For example, they may find certain background sounds like music in a restaurant, which other people ignore or block out, unbearably loud or distracting. This can cause anxiety or even physical pain. Many autistic people prefer not to hug due to discomfort, which can be misinterpreted as being cold and aloof.

Many autistic people avoid everyday situations because of their sensitivity issues. Schools, workplaces and shopping centres can be particularly overwhelming and cause sensory overload. There are many simple adjustments that can be made to make environments more autism-friendly.



Highly focused interests or hobbies

Many autistic people have intense and highly focused interests, often from a fairly young age. These can change over time or be lifelong. Autistic people can become experts in their special interests and often like to share their knowledge. A stereotypical example is trains but that is one of many. Greta Thunberg's intense interest, for example, is protecting the environment.

Like all people, autistic people gain huge amounts of pleasure from pursuing their interests and see them as fundamental to their wellbeing and happiness.

Being highly focused helps many autistic people do well academically and in the workplace but they can also become so engrossed in particular topics or activities that they neglect other aspects of their lives.

Extreme anxiety

Anxiety is a real difficulty for many autistic adults, particularly in social situations or when facing change. It can affect a person psychologically and physically and impact quality of life for autistic people and their families.

It is very important that autistic people learn to recognise their triggers and find coping mechanisms to help reduce their anxiety. However, many autistic people have difficulty recognising and regulating their emotions. Over one third of autistic people have serious mental health issues and too many autistic people are being failed by mental health services.

(The National Autistic Society 2020)

Want to know more about autism? Go to page 11 for a list of useful links.

What is a learning disability?

A learning disability is a reduced intellectual ability and difficulty with everyday activities – for example household tasks, socialising or managing money – which affects someone for their whole life.

People with a learning disability tend to take longer to learn and may need support to develop new skills, understand complicated information and interact with other people.

Different types of learning disability

There are different types of learning disability, which can be mild, moderate, severe or profound. In all cases a learning disability is lifelong.

It can be difficult to diagnose a mild learning disability as the individual will often mix well with others and will be able to cope with most everyday tasks. However, they may need support in other areas of their life such as filling out forms.

People with a severe learning disability or profound and multiple learning disability (PMLD), will need more care and support with areas such as mobility, personal care and communication. People with a moderate learning disability may also need support in these areas, but not definitely.

(MENCAP 2020)

Want to know more about learning disabilities? Go to page 11 for a list of useful links.

How can I support my tenant?

Tip:

Each person's needs are different. Ask the tenant and anyone they have supporting them what would help them maintain their tenancy.

When supporting your tenant, you may want to consider:

Premises

Understand the sensory challenges that the autistic person faces. This particularly applies to noise, smells and lighting, as these are directly relevant to maintaining a tenancy.

Consider the impact of hypersensitivity in dealing with issues such as noise nuisance.

Understand the fears that autistic adults may have in relation to processes such as annual PAT tests/ regular maintenance and try and reduce the anxiety about such events.

Be aware that autistic and learning disabled people may be at increased risk of exploitation such as Cuckooing or mate crime. If you suspect this you may need to investigate further or refer the person on for advice.

Don't make assumptions, if a person is applying to a bigger property than you may consider they need, discuss why the applicant/ tenant feels the need a second bedroom or bigger space.

Consider the use of some kind of mediation between the autistic and learning disabled people and your own organisation in the case of disputes. One of the support organisations listed below may be able to support

Consider having a consistent named contact for the autistic or learning disabled person.

Consider avoiding automated letters about issues such as rent arrears as they can often be misunderstood and cause distress.

Consider handling issues such as complaints more informally to stop them escalating.

If the person is vulnerable and/or falling out with neighbours due to misunderstandings, discuss if the tenant feels that disclosing their diagnosis, with your support, might help the situation. This needs careful handling and discussion with both the tenant and their close supporters before going ahead.

Consider allowing a longer period of transition between properties.

Communication

Check if the person has a diagnosis of autism or a learning disability. They may not think of sharing this diagnosis if they do not see the relevance

Check if the person has a communication passport, or similar. A communication passport is a good way to understand the person's communication needs and will help you to make reasonable adjustments for that person (link in section below for examples).

Talk to people that knows the individual such as family members, with permission of the autistic person, as they can often give crucial information.

Make the tenancy rules clear about noise levels and repairs and adaptations, as well as the more formal tenancy rules such as where the bins go on bin day or what to do if there are any worries or issues

related to housing (list of housing advice organisations and autism and learning disability organisations at the end of this document).

Make sure that any written communication is clear, and check the person's understanding of the content, especially for important issues.

Support the tenant to communicate via the best communication method for them. This may include email, text, phone or face to face, whichever form of communication works best. The autistic or learning disabled person or supporter, may need to explain which form of communication you prefer

Focus on building relationships with the tenants. This may take time and shorter sessions more regularly may help with this.

Ask one question at a time and allow time to process it

Be consistent. Make an arrangement and stick to it.

Ask one very clear and direct question at a time then just stop talking!

Make instructions (e.g. when a service charge must be paid) as clear and minimal as possible

Provide images to illustrate what you are telling them. Some people benefit from document in "Easy Read"

Break down information into small chunks

It may be helpful to email a record of conversations to the person, so they can process these in their own time

Make your language clear, concise and unambiguous. Avoid using idioms, irony, metaphors and words with double meanings

Planning and Preparation

Many autistic and learning disabled people become distressed and anxious when talking about issues related to housing. Consider planning for shorter or longer meetings, the need for more breaks whilst discussing things, offering to open window or have a glass of water or other measures that may reduce stress.

Prepare the tenant for changes, mandatory inspections or safety tests with as much warning as possible.

Allow a longer timeframe for tenancies to be taken up as moving is a major transition that will be particularly challenging to some autistic people.

Sometimes it might be helpful to reduce choice and minimise demands

Useful contacts and resources for you

The National Autistic Society:

www.autism.org.uk/

Mencap learning disability charity:

www.mencap.org.uk/

The Greater Manchester Autism Consortium:

www.autismgm.org.uk

Resources

Autism homelessness toolkit:

<https://homeless.org.uk/knowledge-hub/learning-disabilities-and-homelessness-toolkit/>

Example of Easy Read tenancy information:

www.halohousing.co.uk/pictorial-tenancy/

Communication Passports:

www.communicationmatters.org.uk/types-of-aac/communication-passports/

References

The National Autistic Society 2020, *What is Autism?*, viewed 30 Aug 2020, <<https://www.autism.org.uk/advice-and-guidance/what-is-autism>>

MENCAP 2020, *What is a learning disability?*, viewed 30 Aug 2020, <<https://www.mencap.org.uk/learning-disability-explained/what-learning-disability>>

Useful resources and sources of help for your tenants

National information

Charity	Website
Citizens Advice	www.citizensadvice.org.uk/
Housing LIN	www.housinglin.org.uk/
Learning Disability England	www.learningdisabilityengland.org.uk/
MENCAP Learning disability charity	www.mencap.org.uk/
The National Autistic Society	www.autism.org.uk/
Shelter	www.shelter.org.uk/

General support and advice organisations in Greater Manchester for autistic and learning-disabled people

Organisation	Contact
Advocacy together Hub- Rochdale	01706 645 830 / 07867 459 340 rochdaleadvocacy@together-uk.org www.together-uk.org/projects/advocacy-hub-rochdale/
<u>Autizma</u>	07956 002933 / 07950 940030 info@autizma.co.uk www.autizma.co.uk/
Bury People First	0161 705 4342 www.burypeoplefirst.org/
The Greater Manchester Autism Consortium	0161 998 4667 mari.saeki@nas.org.uk www.autismgm.org.uk
Manchester People First	0161 839 3700 mcrpeoplefirst@gmail.com www.manpf.org/
People First Tameside	www.peoplefirsttameside.org/
Salford Autism	07713 903224 support@salfordautism.org.uk www.salfordautism.org.uk/

Stockport Speaking Out group	0161 480 8979 info@stockportadvocacy.co.uk www.stockportadvocacy.org.uk/speaking-out-group-sog/
Trafford Advocacy Hub	0300 323 096 admin@advocacyfocus.org.uk www.advocacyfocus.org.uk
Wigan and Leigh People First	01942 728748 info@wlpf.org.uk http://wlpf.org.uk/

Housing advice services across Greater Manchester

NB Citizens Advice Service, Shelter, Tenants Union, GM Law Centre and MIND offer housing advice in all areas.

Organisation	Contact
Citizens Advice Greater Manchester	www.citizensadvicegm.org Online Chat and also available 7 nights a week from 7pm-10pm
GM Law Centre	Tel. 0161 769 2244 reception@gmlaw.org.uk
Greater Manchester MIND	www.gmmind.org.uk/about/
Shelter Greater Manchester	https://england.shelter.org.uk/get_help/local_services Tel:0161 820 7589
Tenants Union	www.tenantsunion.org.uk/ If you need help with a deposit www.billhelp.uk/manchester-rent-deposit-scheme-programmes/

Bury Council Services

Service	Contact
Bury Council	www.bury.gov.uk/index.aspx?articleid=10387 www.bury.gov.uk/index.aspx?articleid=14177
Bury housing assessment team	www.theburydirectory.co.uk/kb5/bury/directory/service.page?id=phRRKbMQKKI
Bury Council - Urgent Housing Advice	0161 253 5537 (9am-5pm Mon-Fri); 0161 253 6606 (out of hours)
Bury Council – Central Access Point (CAP)	CentralAccess@bury.gov.uk Tel. 0161 253 5940 https://www.bury.gov.uk/index.aspx?articleid=15028

Other local services

Organisation	Contact
Citizens Advice Bury & Bolton	www.cabb.org.uk/ 0300 300 9071
Bury Law Centre	St John's House, 155-163 The Rock, Bury BL9 0ND 0161 272 0666 info@burylawcentre.co.uk
Bury Red Door	Caritas Centre, St Joseph's Presbytery, Peter St (off Walmersley Road), Bury BL9 6AB 0161 272 0771 reddoor@caritassalford.org.uk https://www.caritassalford.org.uk/service-view/red-door/
The Housing Link (young people 16+)	12 Mather Street, Radcliffe M26 4TL 0161 723 2040 info@thehousinglink.org.uk

Bolton

Council services

Service	Contact
Bolton Council	www.bolton.gov.uk/housing-options-advice
Bolton Housing Advice Services	Tel. 01204 335900 E.housing.options@bolton.gov.uk

Other local services

Organisation	Contact
Bolton at Home	Tel: 01204 328 000, website: www.boltonathome.org.uk/contact-us – webchat facility available.
Citizens Advice Bury & Bolton	www.cabb.org.uk/ 0300 300 9071
Urban Outreach	info@urbanoutreach.co.uk Tel.01204 385848 https://www.urbanoutreach.co.uk/

Manchester Council services

Service	Contact
Manchester City Council	www.manchester.gov.uk/info/500341/housing_help_and_advice
Housing Solutions	Tel. 0161 234 4692 hss@manchester.gov.uk

Other local services

Organisation	Contact
Barnabus	45 Bloom Street, Manchester M1 3LY 0161 237 3223 www.barnabus-manchester.org.uk/im-homeless-and-need-help-1
Booth Centre	For people 18plus Pimblett St, Cheetham Hill, Manchester M3 1ET 0161 835 2499 www.boothcentre.org.uk/

<p>Centrepoint</p>	<p>Supports homeless 16-25 year olds. Based in city centre and Wythenshawe. 0161 228 7654 or 0808 800 0661; Webchat available. https://centrepoint.org.uk/</p>
<p>Cheetham Hill Advice Centre</p>	<p>0161 740 8999 triage@cheethamadvice.org.uk; Text 07823 495307 https://cheethamadvice.org.uk/</p>
<p>Citizens Advice Manchester</p>	<p>www.citizensadvicemanchester.org.uk/ 03444 111 222 Facebook messenger; Online Chat available. People can self- refer in and they will give you a call back www.citizensadvicemanchester.org.uk/housing-advice They also have free phones in 7 of the libraries which have now reopened (Wythenshawe, Longsight, Newton health, Gorton, Withington, Didsbury and central library.) When the libraries are open, people can go in and call Manchester CAB</p>

	for free from one of their phones.
Cornerstone Day Centre	104B Denmark Rd, Manchester M15 6JS 0161 232 8888 www.cornerstonecds.org.uk/
Lifeshare	First floor, 27 Houldsworth St, Manchester M1 1EB 0161 235 0744 www.lifeshare.org.uk/
NHS GM mental health	www.gmmh.nhs.uk/housing-advice-service/
Shelter Manchester	https://england.shelter.org.uk/get_help/local_services/manchester 0344 515 1640; Online Chat available
Reach Out to the Community (South Manchester only)	488 Wilbraham Rd, Chorlton-cum-Hardy, Manchester 0161 862 9415 www.reachouttothecommunity.co.uk/

Oldham Council services

Service	Contact
Oldham Council	www.oldham.gov.uk/info/200257/homelessness www.oldham.gov.uk/info/100007/housing/1821/housing_advice_and_support

Other local services

Organisation	Contact
Citizens Advice – Stockport, Oldham, Rochdale, Trafford (CASORT)	www.casort.org/contact 0300 330 9073; Facebook, Twitter, Online Chat
Keyring	Tel. 0161 628 4133; 24-hour helpline Tel. 0333 000 0321
Key To The Door (young people)	8 Eldon Precinct, Ashton Road, Oldham, OL8 1JP 0161 344 1121 keytothedoor@outlook.com

Rochdale

Council services

Service	Contact
Rochdale Borough Housing	0300 303 8548 housing.homelessness@rbh.org.uk www.rbh.org.uk/

Other local services

Organisation	Contact
Citizens Advice – Stockport, Oldham, Rochdale, Trafford (CASORT)	www.casort.org/contact 0300 330 9073; Facebook, Twitter, Online Chat
Gaddum	www.gaddumcentre.co.uk/getting-help-rochdale/
Key To The Door (young people)	8 Eldon Precinct, Ashton Road, Oldham, OL8 1JP 0161 344 1121 keytothedor@outlook.com

Salford

Council services

Service	Contact
Salford Housing Options Point (SHOP)	www.salford.gov.uk/housing/housing-advice-and-support/salford-housing-options-point-shop/ 7 Wesley Street, Swinton, M27 6AD 0161 793 2020; or 0161 794 8888 (out of hours).

Other local services

Organisation	Contact
Citizens Advice Salford	www.salfordcab.org.uk/ 0300 330 9074; Email form on website
Salford Loaves & Fishes	www.salfordloavesandfishes.org.uk 1 Paddington Close, Salford, M6 5PL; Tel. 0161 737 8775; E. info@salfordloavesandfishes.org.uk
Spirit of Salford	www.salford.gov.uk/spiritofsalford ; Tel. 0800 952 1000; Online enquiry form
Manchester City Mission (under Salford)	Windsor Christian Centre, Churchill Way, Salford M6 5BU 0161 736 7959 https://citymission.org.uk/
Mind in Salford	www.mindinsalford.org.uk/coronavirus-update/ 0161 710 1070

Stockport Council services

Service	Contact
Stockport Homes	www.stockporthomes.org/find-a-home/homeless-advice/ Cornerstone, 2 Edward Street, Stockport SK1 3NQ. Online advice or fill in enquiry form on website. 0161 474 3780 or 0161 217 6016

Other local services

Organisation	Contact
Citizens Advice – Stockport, Oldham, Rochdale, Trafford (CASORT)	www.casort.org/contact 0300 330 9073; Facebook, Twitter, Online Chat
The Prevention Alliance	www.stockporttpa.co.uk/ 0161 474 1042 info@stockporttpa.co.uk
The Wellspring	Harvey Street, Stockport, PO BOX 456, SK1 1YD 0161 477 6344 https://thewellspring.co.uk/

Tameside Council services

Service	Contact
Tameside Council Housing Advice	https://www.tameside.gov.uk/Housing/Housing-and-Homelessness

Other local services

Organisation	Contact
Citizens Advice Tameside	www.tamesidecab.org.uk/ 0300 330 9076; Textphone: 03444 111 445 Online Chat available
Key To The Door (young people)	8 Eldon Precinct, Ashton Road, Oldham, OL8 1JP 0161 344 1121 keytothedoor@outlook.com

Trafford

Council services

Service	Contact
Housing Options Service Trafford (HOST), Trafford Council	<p>Waterside House, Sale Waterside, Sale, M33 7ZF; Tel. 0161 912 5513; E. host@trafford.gov.uk</p> <p>outside of office hours you become homeless, contact the Emergency Duty Team by telephoning 0161 912 2230.</p> <p>https://www.traffordhomechoice.co.uk/choice/</p> <p>https://www.trafford.gov.uk/contact-us/housing-options-service-trafford.aspx</p>

Other local services

Organisation	Contact
Citizens Advice – Stockport, Oldham, Rochdale, Trafford (CASORT)	<p>www.casort.org/contact 0300 330 9073; Facebook, Twitter, Online Chat</p>

Wigan

Council services

Service	Contact
Housing Options Team, Wigan Council	<p>www.wigan.gov.uk/Resident/Housing/index.aspx</p> <p>www.wigan.gov.uk/Resident/Housing/Council-homes/Find-a-home/What-are-my-housing-options/index.aspx</p> <p>www.wigan.gov.uk/Council/Contact-us/Life-Centres/index.aspx</p> <p>01942 489005</p>

Other local services

Organisation	Contact
Citizens Advice Wigan	<p>www.cawb.org.uk/ 0300 3309 077; advice@cawb.org.uk</p>
The Brick	<p>10 Arcade Street, Wigan, WN1 1LU</p> <p>01942 236953 www.thebrick.org.uk/ enquiries@thebrick.org.uk</p>