

# The challenges autistic people face when using public transport.

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# So why am I here?



- To quickly explain what autism is.
- To talk about the challenges autistic people face when navigating public transport.
- To show you a pair of videos highlighting the **challenges** that we face.
- To show you the **consequences** of those challenges.
- To tell you about what you can do to help including applying for our Autism Friendly Award and answer any questions you may have.

# What is autism?



- Autism is a developmental disability which affects the way a person understands the world around them. Autism is...
  - lifelong
  - a spectrum condition
  - different for everyone.
- Autistic people are individuals with their own likes and dislikes, talents and challenges, dreams and ambitions.

# What's a spectrum condition?

- Some autistic people need lots of support as they have complex needs. Others need very little support and might live independently.
- All autistic people share certain difficulties in areas such as social communication, imagination and interaction.



# So what challenges do autistic people face?

- Access to Information (how do we get around).
- Sensory (loud noises + proximity).
- Anxiety (shock of the new or the unexpected).
- Risk of Meltdown or Shutdown from overload.
- Risk of misunderstanding with passengers or staff.

# Anxiety from unexpected changes or events



You may have heard that autistic people tend to like routines. This is true for some – organising your day and knowing what's planned can be very calming.

Sometimes plans go wrong or changes need to be made at late notice. Trains get delayed, buses get cancelled, meetings get moved and friends cancel plans.

These unexpected changes can cause an autistic person to feel anxious.



Make it stop



# Sensory sensitivities



- Some autistic people might be over or under sensitive in their senses. Some people might fluctuate between being over or under sensitive depending on their level of anxiety.
- Over sensitive – might not like bright lights or loud sounds, might not like being touched, might not like strong flavours or smells.
- Under sensitive – might like bright lights and loud music, might like to sleep with a weighted blanket, might love strong flavours or smells.



# Meltdown or Shutdown



- When it all becomes too much and an autistic person is unable to cope any more, they might have a meltdown.
- Just as all autistic people are different, meltdowns can be very different too. Some people might be very quiet, others may cry or seem upset.
- It's important to recognise that autistic meltdowns are not a form of misbehaviour, they are the response to a challenging environment or circumstance.

# Diverted



# So what does all of this add up to?



Our recent survey showed us that:

- 53% of autistic people and 36% of parents said they avoided travelling by bus specifically.
- 45% of autistic people and 36% of adults said they avoided travelling by underground/metro specifically.
- 40% of autistic people and 30% of parents of autistic children said they avoided travelling by train specifically.
- 52% of autistic people and 32% of parents of autistic children said they avoided going places because travel would be too difficult for them.
- 79% of autistic people feel socially isolated, mostly because of judgmental attitudes from the general public.

# What can you do?

You can train your staff in:

- Knowing when to help and what to ignore.
- Ask “can I help” and then if necessary “how can I help”?
- Try not to judge the person or the behaviour.
- Think about your own environment and the changes in that environment.

# You may also want to apply for our Autism Friendly Award



Our Autism Friendly Award is a standard designed to support and build lasting improvement across the five areas that autistic people value most when visiting a venue:

- Provision of customer information
- Staff awareness
- Reasonable adjustments to physical spaces
- Processes for consultation and feedback
- Promoting wider public awareness

For information on costs and how we can support you, please contact:

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