



Group Guidelines to help people feel comfortable, safe and able to communicate.

The following guidelines have been prepared to ensure that Autism Bucks continues to provide a safe and secure environment for its social and activity groups, and we thank our attendees for abiding by them, enabling us to continue to offer a quality service.

Autism Bucks

1. Autism Bucks is not a professional body, but a registered charity operated by a group of unpaid volunteers.
2. Members of Autism Bucks may be adults with autism, family members, carers, volunteers or professional partners.
3. The volunteers organise group social and activity sessions for the members and other adults with autism, to help attendees understand the condition of autism, meet others with autism and develop friendships with others.

Autism Bucks social and activity group sessions

What Autism Bucks will do

1. The social and activity group sessions are organised by Autism Bucks volunteers, who are only able to act as facilitators.
2. Autism Bucks aim is to provide a safe and supportive environment for the attendees so that they can feel secure and comfortable.
3. The Autism Bucks volunteers attending the sessions are acting as facilitators only. They are NOT there to provide counselling or professional mental health services. NOR are they there to provide any 1 to 1 support.
4. Autism Bucks will keep attendees contact details confidential and will not discuss personal information with other attendees or members.
5. Autism Bucks will not pass on information without permission. They will not respond to requests for other member's personal details i.e. phone numbers.
6. Autism Bucks are not responsible for
 - a. Any relationships or friendships members might have with one another outside the group. We cannot become involved in any personal disputes.
 - b. Any behaviour of members outside the group is not Autism Bucks responsibility and we cannot become involved in any problems people have with member's behaviour outside the group.
 - c. Use of the Autism Bucks email service as a support line; it is for information only.

What we ask of those who want to attend a session

1. Attendance is currently open to members and non-members alike subject
2. Whilst Autism Bucks aims to deliver the sessions at a minimum charge of £2 to all, it may be necessary from, time to time to make a charge to cover the cost of the session, for example to fund guest speakers. Naturally donations are always welcome.
3. Attendees are required to sign-in on a register. This information is treated as confidential and is subject to the Autism Bucks Data Protection Policy.
4. Attendees are responsible for their own transport to and from the groups.
5. Attendees are responsible for their own care, or should bring a carer with them who will take responsibility for them.
6. There may be times when we recommend that an individual does not attend our sessions, because it may not be the best action for the individual or because their attendance may cause other attendees to become upset, anxious or even frightened.
 - a. If you are upset we recommend that you call CALM 0800 58 58 58 lines open 5pm – midnight or Samaritans 116123.
 - b. If you are in crisis or need support, we ask that you do not attend a session, but rather we recommend that you contact your support person. If you do not have a support person contact your GP.
7. Autism Bucks tries to meet everyone's sensory needs, however this is very difficult to achieve.
8. If an attendee is uncomfortable with the environment and needs to have anything adjusted we ask that they raise this with a volunteer. As an example, we often have the lights dimmed and expect others to respect this.

Behaviour guidelines

1. Information shared by attendees might be something they wish to be kept confidential and should not be discussed with other people outside the group. However, Autism Bucks is not responsible for individuals and therefore we can't guarantee confidentiality. You need to be aware of what personal information you share, and be aware how others might react to that information. Remember you are not responsible for other people's reactions.
2. Attendees are responsible for their own wellbeing, and are also responsible for recognising when they are too anxious or upset to attend.
3. People with autism can be more sensitive to the environment and to the behaviour of others and in respect of this we ask attendees to
 - a. Be mindful and respect personal space- allow 1 arm length where possible.
 - b. Avoid towering over another person or talking "in someone's face"
 - c. Ask permission before hugging/touching.
 - d. Keep your voice volume down.
 - e. Respect each other's feelings & opinions.
4. Should an individual feel uncomfortable it is OK to politely tell someone how you feel so they can adjust their behaviour. For example, it is acceptable to say "Please move back" "I need more space" "No, I don't want a hug".
5. Be mindful of private conversations. If you are having a private conversation, find a suitable place to talk.
6. It is each member's responsibility to say or not do something if they feel uncomfortable – you could move away or talk to a volunteer.
7. You are welcome to walk around or leave the room at any time.
 - a. In High Wycombe there is a quiet room or outside. In Aylesbury you can go outside.

Group Discussions and Decisions

1. Decisions must be discussed and agreed by all or the majority of the group.
2. The group cannot serve the wishes of only one or a few members and decisions will usually be finalised by a majority vote.
3. Confidentiality: what is said in the group decisions should not be shared with anyone (including family) outside of the group.
4. It is each member's responsibility to say or not do something if they feel uncomfortable – you could move away or talk to a volunteer.
5. One person to talk at a time.
6. Do not interrupt someone talking, wait your turn. Put your hand up so the volunteer knows you want to say something.
7. If someone comments on your behaviour or language – you should listen politely, change, do not be offended. If you feel the comment unfair, you may wish to ask a volunteer to help you understand or talk to the other person.

Traffic Lights System

To support anyone who may become overwhelmed during the group session we have a traffic light system. However, we do stress that if you are over anxious or angry before the group that you do not attend that day.

1. The traffic light cards are in bags by the door or on the centre table of the venue we are using.
2. There is a red, yellow and green card.
3. We suggest that you take a bag containing the cards at the start of the meeting.
4. If during the meeting you start to feel you need support, then hold a yellow card close to you and one of the volunteers, will support you to move to another space.
5. The red card should be used if you need urgent help.
6. If the situation changes and need reduces that you can cope, hold the green card to show that things are now OK

Unacceptable behaviour

The following applies to all attendees and volunteers

1. Any significant breach of the rules by an individual, as judged by the Volunteer facilitators, may result in the individual being asked to leave the premises, and even being given a ban on attending future sessions for a suitable period to be determined by the facilitators.
2. Anyone under the influence of illegal substances or alcohol will not be permitted to attend the groups.
3. Any rude or aggressive behaviour will not be tolerated
4. Any discrimination of Race, Religion, Gender, Sexual Orientation or Disability will not be tolerated.
5. Violent or abusive behaviour will not be tolerated and any individual demonstrating or threatening such behaviour will be asked to leave
6. Any attendee that causes damage to the property, such as the premises being used will be held responsible for paying for that damage.
7. In the extreme event of an attendee engaging in unlawful disruptive behaviour, or refusing to abide by these rules and guidelines, for example refusing to leave when asked; the Autism Bucks volunteers may call on the emergency services for professional support.