

Autism Bucks

Community Guidelines

Version	Date	Author	Comment
v1.0	10 Jan 2025	N Cary	Rewrite of original meeting guidelines
v1.1	13 Jan 2025	N Cary	Updated with trustee revisions to v1.0
v2.0	14 Jan 2025	N Cary	Document agreed at Trustee Meeting on 13 Jan 2025
v2.1	23 Jun 2025	N Cary	Additional items (bullet points) added to Section 6 "Group Discussions"
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1. Welcome

Autism Bucks is a community for autistic adults and the people who are important in their lives.

Our aim is to create a welcoming, inclusive space where people can connect, share experiences, learn from one another, and build meaningful relationships. We recognise that everyone brings their own experiences, perspectives, communication styles, and ways of engaging with the world.

These guidelines are intended to help us create an environment where everyone feels respected, valued, and able to participate in a way that works for them.

2. What You Can Expect from Us

Welcoming and Inclusive

We welcome people from all backgrounds and recognise that there is no single way to experience autism. Every person's journey, identity, and perspective is valid.

We recognise that attending a new group can feel daunting.

Contrary to common stereotypes, many autistic people enjoy social connection and meaningful relationships when they are in environments where they feel comfortable, understood, and respected.

One of the strengths of Autism Bucks is the warm welcome that new members often receive. We encourage members to help create an environment where everyone feels included and able to connect in ways that work for them.

Respectful

We aim to create an environment where people are treated with dignity, kindness, and understanding.

We encourage people to contribute openly, knowing they will be met with respect.

Differences of opinion are welcome, and we encourage conversations to take place with curiosity and mutual respect.

Respecting Different Experiences

We recognise that people understand and experience autism in different ways.

We value different ways of thinking, communicating, socialising, and experiencing the world.

Accessible

We will do our best to make our meetings and activities as accessible as reasonably possible. We understand that people may have different sensory, communication, mobility, and participation needs.

We welcome feedback about adjustments that may help you feel more comfortable participating.

While we will always try to be accommodating, it may not be possible to meet every individual's needs in every situation. Some needs may be difficult to accommodate due to venue limitations, practical constraints, or because the needs of different attendees may sometimes conflict.

We appreciate your understanding and will always aim to find the most inclusive and reasonable approach available to us.

Volunteer-Led

Autism Bucks is run by volunteers. While we work hard to provide a supportive community, we are not a counselling, advocacy, crisis, or care service.

Volunteers facilitate our groups and activities but do not provide counselling, therapy, advocacy, or one-to-one support.

3. What We Ask Of Each Other

Creating a positive community is a shared responsibility.

Treat Others with Respect

Please treat others with the same respect, patience, and consideration that you would like to receive yourself.

Differences of opinion are welcome. Personal attacks, hostility, or deliberately hurtful comments are not.

Respect Different Communication Styles

People communicate in different ways.

Some people prefer to think things through before responding, while others may respond more immediately. Some communicate verbally, while others may prefer written communication or different ways of expressing themselves.

There is no expectation that everyone communicates in the same manner.

Members are encouraged to share their own experiences and perspectives while recognising that others may have different needs and preferences.

We encourage everyone to help create space for different voices and perspectives to be heard.

Respect Personal Boundaries

Everyone has different comfort levels regarding personal space, conversation topics, and physical contact.

Please seek consent before initiating physical contact and respect the boundaries of others without question or pressure.

Examples of physical contact might include a hug, a reassuring hand on someone's shoulder, touching someone's back when moving past them, or any other form of physical contact that may not be welcome.

If someone says no, asks for space, or indicates that they are uncomfortable, please respect their wishes.

Respect Privacy

Many people choose to share personal stories, thoughts, and experiences within our groups. We ask that members treat these conversations with care and discretion.

Information, experiences, and discussions shared within the group should generally remain within the group unless the person involved has given permission for them to be shared, or there is a safeguarding concern that requires action.

Please ask permission before taking photographs, recording, or sharing information about others on social media.

Approach Differences with Curiosity

Misunderstandings can happen, particularly when people have different communication styles, experiences, or perspectives.

We welcome the sharing of experiences and ideas. What works for one person may not work for another, and different perspectives can exist side by side.

Where possible, we encourage members to approach differences with curiosity, kindness, and a willingness to seek clarification before making assumptions about another person's intentions.

Making Decisions Together

Where group decisions need to be made, we will aim to do so fairly and transparently, ensuring different views can be heard.

4. Participating in Ways That Work for You

Everyone experiences social situations differently, and we encourage members to participate in ways that work for them.

4.1. At In-Person Meetings

You are welcome to:

- Take breaks when needed.
- Step outside or move to a quieter space.

- Move around during meetings.
- Use sensory aids, fidget items, or comfort items.
- Participate as much or as little as feels comfortable.
- Attend with an adult supporter if this helps you participate.

4.2. At Online Meetings

You are welcome to:

- Keep your camera on or off.
- Use the chat function rather than speaking.
- Take breaks or leave temporarily if needed.
- Participate as much or as little as feels comfortable.
- Use whichever communication methods work best for you where possible.

We encourage everyone to recognise and respect their own needs, energy levels, and boundaries.

While our groups can offer understanding, connection, and peer support, Autism Bucks is not a crisis support, counselling, or mental health service. If you need urgent emotional, mental health, or medical support, we encourage you to contact the appropriate professional services.

5. If Something Goes Wrong

We understand that concerns, misunderstandings, and disagreements can occasionally arise.

If something happens that makes you feel uncomfortable, unsafe, or unwelcome, please speak to a volunteer or contact Autism Bucks by email.

We will listen respectfully, take concerns seriously, and seek to respond fairly, proportionately, and with an open mind.

Where appropriate, we will aim to resolve issues through discussion, understanding, and constructive dialogue.

If your concern relates to safeguarding, or the conduct of volunteers, trustees, or the organisation, you can also refer to our Safeguarding Policy.

We are committed to creating a community where concerns can be raised without fear of judgement or negative consequences.

6. Protecting Our Community

In rare situations, we may need to take additional action to protect the safety, wellbeing, or inclusion of those attending our groups.

This may include asking someone to leave a meeting, restricting attendance, or, in exceptional circumstances, ending their involvement with Autism Bucks.

Examples might include:

- Aggressive, threatening, or intimidating actions.
- Harassment, bullying, or deliberate discrimination.
- Repeated disregard for the boundaries of others.
- Deliberate damage to property.
- Actions that create a significant risk to the safety or wellbeing of others.
- Attending whilst under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs.
- Unlawful activity.

Any action taken will be considered carefully, fairly, and proportionately.

7. A Shared Community

Autism Bucks belongs to all of us.

By treating one another with respect, understanding, and kindness, we can create a community where people feel valued, included, and welcome