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"
v3.0	10 Jun 2026	N Cary / D Hyams	Document name change from "Member Meeting Guidelines" to "Community Guidelines". Complete document rewrite with professional input.
v3.1	21 Aug 2026	N Cary	Information added on Bullying & Harassment. New section on Behaviour Outside Autism Bucks Activities.
v3.2	31 Oct 2026	N Cary	Section 3 updated to include subsection on Commercial Activities

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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

2.1. 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.

2.2. 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.

2.3. 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.

2.4. 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.

2.5. 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.

3.1. 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.

3.2. 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.

3.3. 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.

3.4. 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.

3.5. Commercial Activities

Autism Bucks membership is intended for personal participation and support, not for promoting commercial products or services.

Members must not use Autism Bucks meetings, activities or information obtained through the Charity to solicit business from other members without prior agreement from the Trustees.

3.6. 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.

3.7. Bullying and Harassment

Bullying, harassment, intimidation or deliberately targeting another person is not acceptable within Autism Bucks.

Such behaviour may include repeated or serious actions or communications that humiliate, intimidate, threaten, deliberately exclude or target another person. Harassment may also include unwanted behaviour relating to a person's identity or personal characteristics.

Autism Bucks recognises that differences in communication style, misunderstandings and disagreements can occur, particularly within a diverse autistic community. A difference of opinion, an isolated misunderstanding or the fact that someone has been upset or offended does not, by itself, mean that bullying or harassment has taken place.

Where concerns are raised, Autism Bucks will consider the behaviour and its impact in context, rather than making assumptions about either person's intentions.

3.8. 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.

5.1. Raising Concerns About Bullying or Harassment

Concerns about bullying or harassment may be raised with any Autism Bucks Trustee or volunteer, either in person or by contacting Autism Bucks by email. A person may raise a concern about behaviour directed towards themselves or behaviour they have witnessed involving somebody else.

Autism Bucks will consider the information available, listen to those involved where appropriate, and seek to establish what has happened before deciding whether any action is required. No assumption will be made that an allegation is either true or unfounded simply because it has been made.

Anyone raising a concern in good faith will be treated respectfully and must not be subjected to retaliation or disadvantage for having raised it. Equally, a person whose behaviour has been questioned will be treated fairly and given an appropriate opportunity to respond.

5.2. Resolving Concerns

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

If a concern relates to safeguarding, our Safeguarding Policy and Procedures will apply. Other complaints about Autism Bucks, its Trustees or volunteers may be raised in accordance with our Complaints Policy and Procedures.

5.3. Raising Concerns Safely

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. Behaviour Outside Autism Bucks Activities

Autism Bucks does not generally become involved in disagreements, relationships or communications between members that take place outside activities or communication channels organised or managed by the Charity.

However, Autism Bucks may consider behaviour outside its own activities where there are reasonable grounds to believe that it has a direct and significant impact on the safety, wellbeing or ability of another person to participate in Autism Bucks, or where it presents a significant safeguarding, safety or reputational concern for the Charity.

Where Autism Bucks considers such behaviour, any action taken will relate to the individual's participation in Autism Bucks and will be considered fairly and proportionately. Autism Bucks will not attempt to regulate or adjudicate members' private relationships or independent groups.

8. 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