

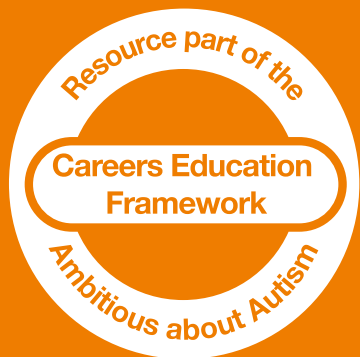


**Ambitious
about Autism**

Self-advocacy in the workplace and in the community

for pupils in Key Stage 5

Lesson plan designed for use when teaching autistic young
people accessing personalised provision



Self-advocacy in the workplace and in the community

for pupils in Key Stage 5

Lesson plan designed for use when teaching autistic young people accessing personalised provision, e.g. special schools or a specialist college

Length of lesson: 35–45 minutes

Resources

- Interactive whiteboard
- Self-advocacy cards (strips of card/paper prepared)
- Resources booklet (in PDF form) comprising seven tools: Visual vocabulary sheet, Picture prompts, Key definitions, Self-advocacy in the workplace story, Self-advocacy one-page profile, Self-advocacy prompts, Self-advocacy one-page profile example.

Lesson outcomes

By the end of this lesson, you will:

- have explored the meaning of self-advocacy
- have identified how you can self-advocate in the workplace
- know some reasonable adjustments you can request in the workplace.

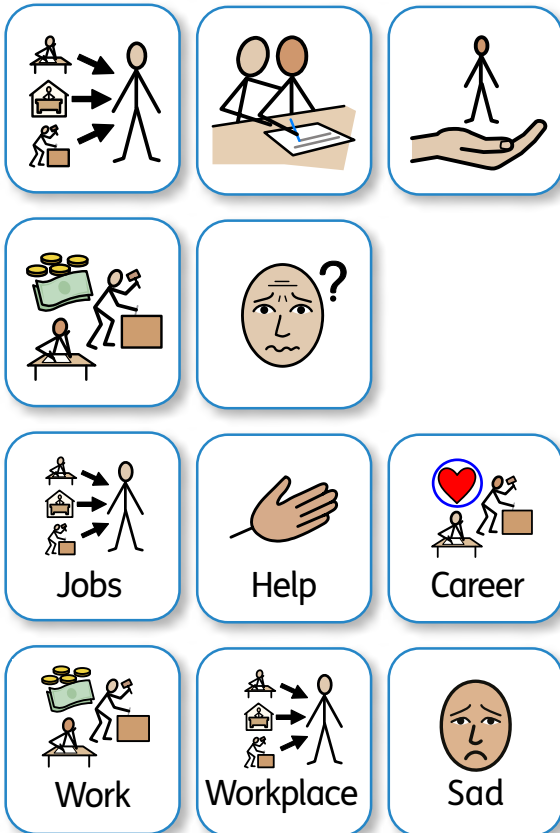


Lesson plan – personalised provision

Structure

Starter (5–10 minutes)

Lesson plan



- Look at the PPicture prompts (tool 2) and ask learners what they think they will be learning about. Learners to use Visual vocabulary sheet (tool 1) to support matching, if more appropriate.
- Explain that, today, we will be looking at how your manager can help you when you are at the workplace or when you have a job. Making changes to things you find hard is called 'reasonable adjustments'.
- Explain that the learners will need to tell their managers what they find hard so they can give them help. This is called 'making a disclosure' and 'self-advocating'. Read the Self-advocacy in the workplace story (tool 4).

Resources

Resources booklet:

- Visual vocabulary sheet (tool 1)
- Picture prompts (tool 2)
- Key definitions (tool 3)
- Self-advocacy in the workplace story (tool 4)
- Self-advocacy one-page profile (tool 5)
- Self-advocacy prompts (tool 6)
- Self-advocacy one-page profile example (tool 7)

Extension

Ask pupils to depict what they think they will be learning about according to the picture:



Structure

Main (20–25 minutes)

Lesson plan

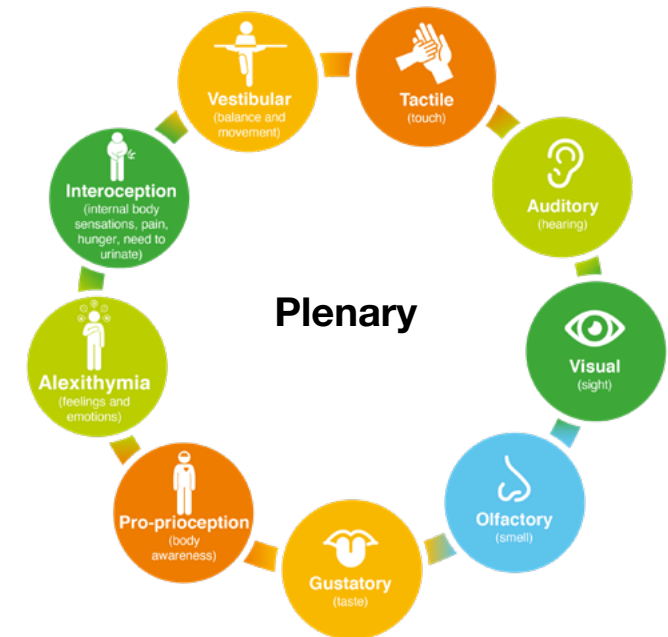
- Today, we are going to think about the things that help you in school or college that might also help you in the workplace.
- Using your Self-advocacy one-page profile (tool 5), go through each section and write down: your preferred communication style, your strengths, your fears and worries, and what people can do to help you (prompt learners to think about sensory integration). To differentiate, you can provide additional visual choices for each section.
- Now, at the bottom of the Self-advocacy one-page profile, write down the reasonable adjustments you can ask your manager or colleagues to make. Use the Self-advocacy prompts (tool 6) for support. For example,

I like communicating with pictures

– ask your manager to send you a visual schedule of your work schedule.

I need to move around often

– tell you manager that you will need regular movement/ stimming breaks.

**Extension**

Ask the pupil to reflect on why they think this would be helpful? Can you write/ draw/share how you think this would help you in the future?



Structure

Main (20–25 minutes)

Lesson plan

- Be aware: Sensory preferences and thresholds vary on a number of factors.

Teacher notes

Sensory preferences:



Tactile/touch hypersensitivity – Some autistic people prefer softer fabrics and looser fitting clothes. Some may also have a heightened ‘startle’ reflex to just being touched lightly on the shoulder, or accidentally brushed against in the workplace. Having extra personal space and being able to push your chair back away from the table so there is more space can be helpful, particularly in crowded meeting rooms. Individuals who are undersensitive will seek out tactile input. They may lean on objects or people around them.



Sound/hearing hypersensitivity – Some autistic people may be sensitive to unexpected sounds, high tones, alarms and human noise, such as general background chit-chat. They may wear noise-cancelling headphones. As these don’t cancel noise completely, hypersensitive individuals may still benefit from a quieter environment. Individuals who are undersensitive to sound, or certain sounds, may seek out particular sounds to help them feel comfortable, focused and relaxed.



Visual/sight hypersensitivity – Some autistic people may find harsh, bright and artificial lighting difficult, particularly white LED lamps, which contain blue light in the spectrum and can cause all people with photosensitivity to struggle. Daylight is often a preference for those with sight or visual-input sensitivity, but they may need to still be shielded from harsh sunlight, glints and glares. Individuals who are undersensitive to sight will seek out visual stimuli, e.g. they hold bright lights like a torch close to eyes.



Smell hypersensitivity – This may cause physical symptoms, such as nausea and migraine, in some autistic people. Autistic people are often oversensitive and really struggle, not with natural smells that may be unpleasant, but with artificial odours that others find pleasant, such as air fresheners, deodorant, makeup and even hair products. They may benefit from having additional personal space and a well-ventilated environment. Individuals who are undersensitive to smell may seek out stimuli and might stand closer to objects or people that smell nice.



Structure

Main (20–25 minutes)

(continued)

Lesson plan

Teacher notes (continued)**Sensory preferences:**

Taste hypersensitivity – Some autistic people avoid strongly flavoured and spicy foods, preferring bland foods. Lots of autistic people also have sensitivities and prefer different textures of food, e.g. crunchy versus soft and may need something quite different during their break times and lunch times. It's not unusual for autistic people with sensitivities, in terms of taste and texture, to prefer to have their food not touching on their plates, so that the textures and flavours don't get mixed up. Joint meals or canteen environments might be stressful and may be avoided. Individuals who are undersensitive to taste might seek out strongly flavoured food.



Proprioception or body awareness – This is the ability to tell accurately where your body is in relation to your surroundings, e.g. how far your foot is from the floor. Autistic people with this difference will often find walking on floors with high-contrasting patterns and lines very difficult. Solid blocks of colour on floors and walls can be helpful.



Alexithymia – This is a difficulty or a difference in or expressing feelings and emotions, either in yourself or in others. Some autistic people find it difficult to answer open questions, such as: 'How are you?' Individuals will likely need specific questions when others are checking in on their well-being. These individuals are likely to answer an open question about how they are feeling with unusual responses, such as: 'I don't know.' Individuals will benefit from more specific questions, such as: 'Are you feeling your usual self today?' or 'Are your energy levels where they need to be for this next activity or meeting?' You can have alexithymia without being autistic. However, lots of autistic people do have alexithymia.



Structure

Main (20–25 minutes)

(continued)

Lesson plan

Teacher notes (continued)**Sensory preferences:**

Interoception – This is difficulty or a difference in accurately feeling body sensations, such as pain, hunger, thirst or the need to go to the toilet. It is thought that this difficulty is quite common among autistic children but can also be common in adults. Individuals may learn by experience to put balances and checks in place. These individuals may benefit from regular prompts, such as: ‘Have you eaten?’, ‘Have you had a drink today?’ or ‘Have you been to the toilet?’



Vestibular – This is a difficulty or a difference with balance and movement that can often affect autistic people. Decluttering walkways and providing extra physical space to move around in and work in, as well as taking any obstacles out of the way, can be helpful for someone with vestibular differences.



Structure

Main (20–25 minutes)

(continued)

Lesson plan

Teacher notes

Autistic strengths and talents examples:

**Mental abilities**

- attention to detail
- concentration
- memory and recall
- pattern recognition
- methodical
- creative
- innovative.

**Productivity**

- efficient problem-solving
- increased productivity
- highly organised
- independent task completion.

**Personal ethics**

- a drive to ensure fairness for all
- honesty and integrity
- committed and loyal
- less vulnerable to social pressure to conform
- inclusive of others' difference.

**Unique perspective**

- efficient problem-solving
- increased productivity
- highly organised
- independent task completion.



Mental abilities – We've always known that autistic people can have an exceptional attention to detail, ability to concentrate, a very good memory and ability to recall information, particularly written information or visual information. Autistic people may also have enhanced abilities in terms of pattern recognition. They are often methodical, logical, creative and innovative, due to differences in their brains.



Productivity – Autistic people can be efficient problem-solvers and highly productive. Autistic people may also be highly organised when they have the right amount of detail, information and context to be able to do this well. Autistic people are much less likely to need support once they've started a task and are very independent in terms of completing tasks.

Many of these talents and skill sets we've known about for a long time. Here, we can see a summary¹ of research carried out by Cope & Remington in 2022. Their studies summarised self-reported strengths and abilities from autistic professionals. Many of these strengths and talents are also backed up with empirical evidence.

¹ 'The Strengths and Abilities of Autistic People in the Workplace', Rosie Cope and Anna Remington, *Autism in Adulthood* 2022;4(1):22–31.



Structure

Main (20–25 minutes)

(continued)

Lesson plan

Teacher notes



Personal ethics – Autistic people often have a real drive to ensure fairness for everybody. They have high levels of honesty and integrity and are committed and loyal. Autistic people feel less pressure to conform, which means they'll often challenge others' ideas and plans, regardless of the social situation, pressure or hierarchy. All organisations need people who will challenge in this way. This is how we get new thinking and new ideas into what we do. Compared to non-autistic people, autistic people have also been shown to be more inclusive of other people's differences, regardless of who those people are and exhibit much less bias towards people based on how those people look or sound.



Unique perspective – Autistic people often develop a very high level of expertise related to an area of work that they are intensely interested in. Autistic people may also enjoy activities and tasks that others might find very difficult or even impossible to do. Lots of autistic people are comfortable feeding back about their experiences to their employers to improve equity, diversity and inclusion initiatives, policies and processes. Autistic people also show very high levels of resilience. This is because the world isn't often designed for them and what they must cope with on a day-to-day basis.



Structure**Plenary (10 minutes)****Lesson plan**

- In small groups, learners to role play self-advocating by pretending someone is their manager and they are the employee. Support learners to plan and facilitate this by drawing freeze frames on a mini white board. Use the prompt cards that were written with the reasonable adjustments for the role play (tool 6).
- All pupils should be given a turn to be the employee and to be the manager. You can record this on an iPad or other tablet and refer to in order to learning.

Resources

- iPad
- mini whiteboard
- whiteboard pen.

Extension

Learner can write a script based on what they would request when self-advocating.



We are Ambitious about Autism

Ambitious about Autism is the national charity standing with autistic children and young people.

We believe every autistic child and young person has the right to be themselves and realise their ambitions.

We started as one school and have become a movement for change. We champion rights, campaign for change and create opportunities.



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