

Guidance for professionals when seeing clients with an Autistic Spectrum Disorder

- Ask the individual or parent/carer beforehand if there are any special needs to consider or reasonable adjustments which can be made to help make it a positive experience.
- Provide as much information beforehand about what the appointment will entail and the location it will be held at.
- Where possible allocate the first or last appointment of the day so that delays are kept to a minimum.
- Provide a quiet room to wait in until they need to see the professional or allow them to wait in their car.
- If timings of appointments are running late then phone the parents/carer and let them know the new estimated time of the appointment.
- Allocate a longer appointment than usual.
- Flickering or buzzing fluorescent lights may cause discomfort. Check these regularly.
- Try and keep noise to a minimum and warn beforehand of noisy equipment which may be present.
- Cold instruments and uniform accessories like masks may be frightening. Where possible, show the individual first and allow them to inspect before wearing.
- Carpeted areas provide less noise of clicking heels and scraping chairs which are also noises that can distress.

- A step by step approach where the child is praised for just entering the building, then the corridor, then the appointment room, then sitting in the chair or lying on the examination bed may prove helpful.
- Be aware of the communication method of the individual. This may include symbols, photos, writing things down, sequences or signing for example.
- There will always be some children for whom none of these will work and visits to professionals may be too much. In these cases home visits should be available to enable the child/young person to access their right to professional medical care and treatment.
- An action plan of steps agreed to take between professional and carer/child with agreed timings for appointments and timings to review would be most helpful.
- Social stories, visual cues and pictures of both location and staff can be useful ways to reduce anxiety and help an individual with Autism access new services.

These ideas are not exhaustive and checking with the individual and/or their parent/carer is usually the most helpful way to better understand how to support them to access the service.