

Transition and Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) in the context of COVID-19



This is a very uncertain time; lacking in clarity and predictability its effects may be felt more intensely for those with ASD.



Common differences seen in the ASD population can mean individuals:

- Find it challenging to tolerate uncertainty (when will everyone go back to school? when will COVID-19 end?)
- Experience distress at changes in routine (how will school look now?)
- Develop a focus that becomes overwhelming (I must know everything about COVID-19 to keep safe)
- Are unable to meet their sensory needs using their familiar and preferred methods (I cannot move how and where I need to)
- Become emotionally overwhelmed due to changing environmental demands and a possible absence of these during lockdown (I am safe and relaxed at home)

- Preparation and prewarning are key- provide the pupil with photos and a virtual tour before they attend the setting. Focus on what is the same (a reminder) and what is different e.g. floor markings, fewer pupils- things will look and feel very different.
- Social Stories which provide extra explanation about the context (who, what, where, when, how and why).
- Provide a consistent and predictable routine- a 'new normal for now' and make this visual.
- Clear structure for lessons and days presented visually and given to children and parents before pupils return.
- Structure breaktimes and lunch times to support pupils with the new social expectations.
- Minimise transitions and warn of necessary transitions-between/during lessons and throughout the day.
- Ask children/parents about the pupils' lockdown experience, communication is key.
- Be mindful that some pupils have been exposed to reduced sensory, social and communicative demands.
- Attending a setting after reduced demands may result in an increase in pupils feeling overwhelmed.
- Be mindful that pupils may be feeling more anxious generally and will need increased opportunities to regulate. Provide emotional check-ins using visual methods.
- Continue to monitor behaviours and use the autism lens to consider what the pupil could be communicating.
- Safe space for when a pupil is in 'fight or flight' mode- ensure they know where it is and how to access it.

Useful Links:

- [COVID-19 specific resources including Social Stories \(STARS\)](#)
- [60 minute course featuring tips and resources to help adults support those with ASD with transition in the current context \(Schudio\)](#)
- [Support for talking about bereavement with those with ASD \(Child Bereavement UK\)](#)
- [Getting ready for secondary school questionnaire \(AET\)](#)
- [Autism and transitions \(AET\)](#)
- [Transition tips for pupils with SEND \(Young Minds\)](#)