

National  
Autistic  
Society

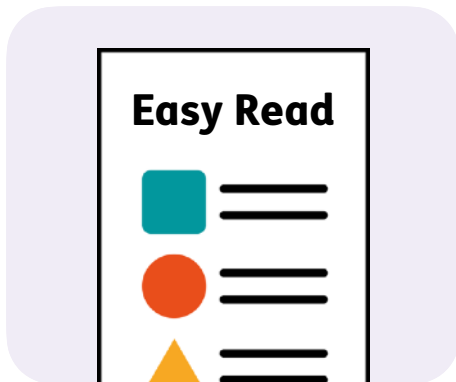


Easy  
Read

# Autistic travel



# Easy Read

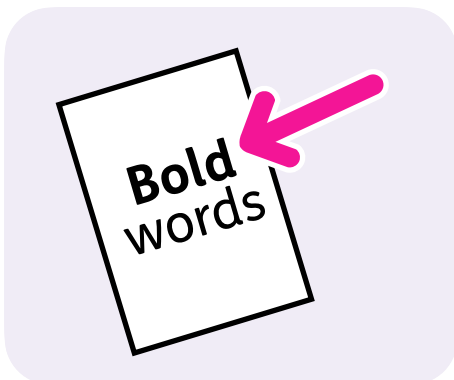


This is an Easy Read version of a research report.

It uses easier words and pictures.



Some people may still want help to read it.



Some words are **bold** to show they are important.



We explain bold words if they are hard to understand.

# What is in this booklet

|                                       |    |
|---------------------------------------|----|
| About this booklet .....              | 4  |
| What we wanted to find out about..... | 5  |
| Using public transport .....          | 6  |
| What makes travel hard .....          | 7  |
| What makes travel easier .....        | 11 |
| How we got the information .....      | 21 |
| Autism friendly award.....            | 22 |
| Find out more .....                   | 24 |

# About this booklet



We are the National Autistic Society.



We speak up for autistic people in the UK.



We have been learning about how autistic people travel.



This booklet explains what we found out.

# What we wanted to find out about

We wanted to find out:



- What makes it hard for people to get around.



- How journeys can be better.



We mostly looked at travel on buses, trains and taxis.

In this booklet, we call this **public transport**.

# Using public transport



Most autistic people use trains, buses and taxis.



But many autistic people find public transport hard to use.



It can cause people a lot of problems if there are difficulties when they travel.



For example, they might find it hard to get to places like work, hospital appointments, or to see friends.

# What makes travel hard



The biggest problems that people told us about were:

- Feeling worried.



- Needing a lot of time to feel good again after a journey.



- Having **meltdowns**.

**Meltdowns** are when you feel so stressed that you cannot control how you behave.



- **Sensory overload**.

**Sensory overload** is when you see, hear or feel too many things at once and it is difficult to cope.

People also told us that public transport could cause these problems:



- Being in crowds, and strangers being too close.



- Buses and trains that are late or do not come at all.



- Not enough places to sit down.



- Difficulties with planning journeys.

People also told us that public transport could cause these problems:



- Feeling in a rush.



- Feeling like people expect them to behave in certain ways.



- Not enough information.



- Not feeling in control.

People also told us that public transport could cause these problems:



- Feeling trapped.



- Having to sit still for a long time.



- Other people not understanding them, or treating them badly.



- Not being able to travel on their own.

# What makes travel easier



Lots of autistic people told us what would make travel easier for them.



We also talked to transport companies about what they can do to support autistic people better.



On the next pages there are some ideas for autistic people and those who support them.

# Support for autistic people



It can be hard to ask for help. Staff do not always understand what you need.



We told public transport staff how to get better at supporting you.



If you need support, you could try:

- Phoning or texting someone who can support you if your travel plans change.

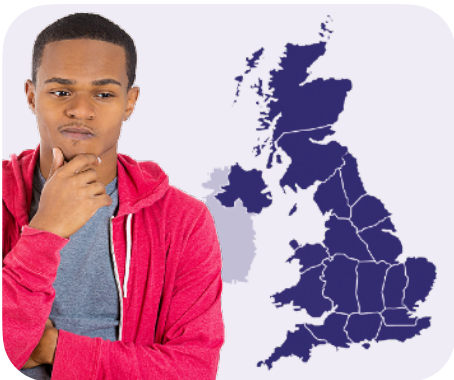


- Bringing someone with you on practice journeys.

This can help you to get used to travelling.



You could find out about how your local public transport companies can support you.



Different transport companies or places might give different support.

# Information you can understand



It can be hard to understand what to do when you are travelling.



There should be helpful information for planning and taking your journey.



The information should be clear, and in different ways, like Easy Read.



We told public transport staff about this.

# Dealing with sensory overload



If you are worried about sensory overload, you can try different ways to make places feel less stressful, like:



- Using headphones to block out noise.



- Bringing things with you that help you stay calm, like puzzles and safe foods.



- Doing something relaxing, like listening to music or reading.



If you can, you could try to travel when it is less busy.



Sometimes, transport services ask for people's ideas to make travelling better.



When this happens, you could tell them how they could make transport better for autistic people.



This could include ways to make spaces feel less stressful.

# Understanding autism



We know that other people sometimes treat autistic people badly.



The public needs to understand more about autism, and what travel is like for you.



We told public transport companies that they could have adverts to tell the public about autism.



This could help other people to be kind and helpful.

# Feeling in control



One of the hardest things about travel is that you feel out of control.



Your bus or train might be late, or you might have to change your travel plans.

You could try:



- Looking at the company's website to find out live information about your train or bus.



- Relaxing before you take a journey.

You could also try:



- Making time to feel good again after the journey.



- Practising the journey, so you know what to expect.



- Choosing the type of public transport that makes you feel most in control.

For example, bus, train or taxi.



- Practising calming yourself down when you do not feel in control.

You could also try:



- Planning each part of your journey, and how you will get from one part to the next one.



- Having a plan for if your journey goes wrong, or if you feel too stressed to travel.



- Using the same routines where you can, like using the same seat if it is free.

# How we got the information



Thousands of autistic people told us what they think in surveys and interviews.



We also talked to people who work in public transport.



We worked closely with a group of 8 autistic people.



This group helped us to make sure that our work was all about the things that matter most to autistic people.

# Autism friendly award



We have given some transport services an award called the Autism Friendly Award.

It looks like this.

This award is for services that:



- Have had training from us about including autistic people.



- Are working hard to support autistic people well.



Some of the transport companies that have the Autism Friendly Award are:

- East Midlands Railway, from Nottingham to Skegness.
- Great Western Railway.
- Lancashire Community Rail.
- Lothian Buses.
- Nexus North East.
- Red Funnel Ferries.
- Waterloo Station.
- Waverley Hoppa Service.

# Find out more



You can find out more about this work on our website here:

[www.autism.org.uk/empowering-autistic-travel](http://www.autism.org.uk/empowering-autistic-travel)



If you have any questions, you can email us: [research@nas.org.uk](mailto:research@nas.org.uk)



What do you think about this Easy Read booklet?

Please fill in this survey to tell us what you think:

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