



“ The environment around us can have a big impact on people who are on the autism spectrum, making it difficult for them to access help and support. I am pleased that this checklist gives us the tools to make our spaces better, and that after being endorsed nationally our learning is being shared and adopted across the country ”

Stephen Simpson, lead autism practitioner, understands how difficult experiencing every day environments, situations and buildings can be for people on the autism spectrum. To help with this, he created a checklist for everyone to use which raises awareness of how we can make small changes to make our environments friendlier for people with the condition.

Many people with autism can experience severe difficulties with 'unfriendly' environments. This can mean that a person may have problems with sensory input from the world around them.

This may affect them in a variety of different ways, from being distracted, unable to concentrate and having mild discomfort, to symptoms of acute 'pain' and deterioration in functioning. If the environment is distressing for the person this may stop them from using it, meaning that social, health and leisure activities are limited.

Checking out what can change

In response to this, we developed a 'Checklist for autism-friendly environments'. We know that some of our environments aren't good for people with autism, so the checklist was created to help raise awareness of the difficulties that people with autism may face when visiting our buildings.

At Manygates Clinic in Wakefield, the ADHD/autism team created a plan to find out whether clinic environments within the building were autism friendly for the staff and service users who attend there. Staff used the checklist for Autism-friendly environments in four locations - clinic room 1, clinic room 2, meeting room and waiting area.

In a nutshell

To make our environments as friendly and accessible as possible for people on the autism spectrum, we have created a checklist to raise awareness and ensure our places are friendlier for people with the condition. The checklist has been endorsed nationally and shows how making little changes can have a big impact on people with autism.





Making moves at Manygates

These checklists were reviewed to identify common themes and any changes that would need to be made. These would need to be both cost effective and practical. They would also need to take into account things such as clashes with other people who also use the environment, for example, patients within the ADHD pathway.

Staff at the clinic managed to make simple but very effective changes, such as buying dimmer lamps which could be used during appointments for people who experience light sensitivity. Another change that was easily made was moving furniture to the side of the room or out of the way completely if it wasn't needed, as some people with Autism can find too much furniture overstimulating.

Sharing our success

The checklist has been endorsed by the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE), which provides national guidance and advice to improve health and social care, and the National Autistic Society - a British charity for people with autistic spectrum disorders.

I've also presented the checklist at the National Autistic Society conference which gave it excellent exposure to other professionals working in the field. I'm very passionate about helping people with autism so it's great that we have this checklist to show to services and say 'this is what you can do'.

Thanks to the checklist, people are now acknowledging that people with autism may struggle in environments that seem perfectly fine to many people. I've had calls from around the country with positive feedback, questions and queries about the checklist so it's great to see that it's getting out there and creating a culture change which can really help people on the autism spectrum.



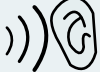
Some questions from the checklist...



Have you considered if the environment has fluorescent or harsh lighting?



Have you considered the smells of cleaning materials used?



Have you considered noise levels at different times of the day?



Does the environment have clear signs to indicate the use of each room?

You can access the autism checklist [here](#).

With **all of us** in mind.