



AUTSCAPE

2011 "Owning Autism"

22 – 25 August 2011 Ackworth School, Pontefract, Yorkshire, UK

Part 1: The Autscape Experience

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1. Introduction

We hope you are looking forward to coming to Autscape. We understand how important it is, especially for autistic people, to know what to expect. In these documents, we will give you as much information as we can. The website will contain updates as they become available, and some will be given out at orientation.

This is for your information. You may print it, transfer it to a phone or laptop, or just read it. We suggest you print the relevant sections from part 3 and carry them with you.

The information pack consists of these files:

1. Experience: what to expect at Autscape and how to deal with challenges
2. Programme: presentations and presenters' information and schedule
3. Printing: lists, maps and forms you may want to print for future reference

If you have any questions, feel free to contact us, preferably by e-mail: info@autscape.org. If you can't e-mail, phone: **+44 (0)775 400 5873**.

Registration

Registration is 2:30-5.00pm, Monday 22nd August. **Please do not come early.** If you cannot make registration before 5:00pm, please contact the registrar at: registrar@autscape.org in to arrange for your arrival. If you are delayed on the day, contact one of the people listed in part 3 of this information pack.

Registration procedure

1. Follow the signs for Autscape registration. This will be in the foyer of the Fothergill Theatre, and will serve as the main information area throughout Autscape.
2. Name badges will be laid out on a table alphabetically. Please take yours.
3. Say your name or show your name badge to the person at the desk.
4. You will be given your room number and boarding house and given the number you need for your house's entry keypad.
5. Follow the signs to your house or wait for a volunteer to escort you. You will find your conference folder in your bedroom. Take some time to locate your nearest bathroom and nearest fire escapes. (If you are not staying on site you will be given a conference folder when you register.)
6. When you feel ready, return to the information area where you registered.

Options

Also in the information area you will be able to:

- Sign up for a venue tour
- Ask questions of Autscape volunteers
- Choose an alternative way to attach your badge

It is okay to go to your room or look around the venue and the grounds before returning to the information area.

NB: Day participants are welcome to stay for the evening meal and to join in the evening activities.

Getting involved: Annual General Meeting (AGM)

Autscape's AGM will be on the final day of Autscape. If you want to have a say in how Autscape is organised, make sure to join in the AGM at 9:30am on Thursday 25 August 2011 in the Music Centre at Ackworth School. If you have missed the chance to become a director this year, you can still join a sub-committee (check on the website or ask an organiser on duty if you are unsure of how to do this).

At Autscape we need a number of volunteers to help with collecting questions at presentations, setting up rooms and various other tasks. If you would like to volunteer, please let us know before or during Autscape.

2. Venue

Autscape will take place in Ackworth School, Pontefract, West Yorkshire. See part 3 of this pack for the exact address and information on how to find the venue.

This is Autscape's first time at Ackworth, a boarding school which was established in 1779. It is mainly one large complex building. We will do our best to signpost the venue to help you find your way around, but if you find somewhere is not adequately signposted please alert an organiser or use the 'action needed box' in the information area to let us know. Remember the building is also new to the organisers who also may not be able to instantly answer your questions.

We have explained our communication badge system to the venue staff, so they will expect some people who prefer not to speak and instead use gestures such as pointing to indicate their needs, for example, their lunch choice. It is important to remember that the badge system is new to them; they may make mistakes. Please be patient.

Accommodation

The boarding 'houses' are located in the main school building. All doors to the boarding houses are secured by key pad locks. Please do not share your house's code with anyone who is not staying in your house. While bedroom doors do not lock, there is a locker under the bed which you can use by bringing a padlock. To avoid unwelcome intrusions, bedrooms will not be cleaned during Autscape.

Each house has its own communal bathrooms. **You must bring your own towels.**

There are common rooms, most of which have televisions, and kitchens you can prepare light snacks in. One of these has lockers you can use to store food in, again you need to bring your own padlock. If you are leaving any food in the fridge remember to clearly mark it. Please also remember to tidy up after yourself, wash any dishes you used and take your unused food out of the lockers and fridge before you leave Autscape.

Buildings and grounds

The presentations will take place in the music centre which is about five minutes walk from the dining room. Classrooms and common rooms in the main building will be used for discussions and other activities requiring smaller rooms.

Ackworth School has a 25m indoor heated swimming pool. We will have access to this between 2pm and 5pm on the Tuesday and Wednesday afternoon. There will be two lifeguards on duty while the pool is open. There are also table tennis facilities.

The grounds include courtyards, lawns, gardens, picnic tables and playing fields.

Escapes

- Quiet room: There will be a designated quiet room near the main presentation room where you can go to relax and 'chill out' if things are getting too much. No interaction or unnecessary noise is permitted in the quiet room and there will be some quiet sensory equipment in this room to help you relax.
- Sensory room: There will be a room which contains some sensory equipment Autscape has purchased and some equipment that is on loan to us. Please treat the equipment with respect. We do not expect the sensory room to always be a quiet escape, but it is likely to have designated times for silence and noisy activity.

Local area

There is a Co-operative supermarket about half a mile from the venue and a petrol station with a shop, a fish and chip shop and a pharmacy slightly closer. The pavements to the shops are narrow in places. There is a bus stop across the road from the school.

3. Services

Food service

Autscape registration includes three meals per day for those staying on site and two meals (lunch and supper) for those staying elsewhere.

Meals are served cafeteria style, with a queue and servers, in a communal dining hall. That part is not very autism friendly, but once you have your meal you may take it to a quieter secondary dining room down the hall or to your room. If you prefer, you can use the no interaction table in the quiet dining room. No food or drink other than water may be taken into the meeting rooms. Please return any dishes you remove from the main dining room.

Mealtimes

Breakfast	8:00
Lunch	12:30
Supper	18:00

Food will be served for the first half hour only, so please arrive punctually. Each meal is followed by a half hour break to accommodate slow eaters and those who need a longer rest.

There are half hour tea/coffee breaks at 11:00 and 16:30.

No interaction table

A 'no interaction' table will be available in the quiet dining room. This table will be marked by a red sign.

Phone and Internet access

Part of the building has a Wifi (Internet) signal. Because the building is made of stone, coverage will be patchy, so you may need to walk around to find a good signal. Bedrooms are unlikely to have a signal. Please consider helping us out by recording the best places for a Wifi signal in the information area.

Mobile coverage indoors is poor; mobile phones are best used outside. Pay phones are also available.

Merchandise

Autescape will have some merchandise for sale. We hope to have the following:

- Stuffed animals with the Autescape logo.
- Selection of stimmy toys.

We can take UK cheques or cash.

Autescape items can also be bought online at <http://www.zazzle.co.uk/autescape>

Proceeds from sale go towards keeping the costs of Autescape as low as possible.

4. Getting Along

Autistic needs and behaviour

We take autistic needs into consideration throughout the planning and running of Autescape. Of course, there is no way we could anticipate, let alone accommodate, every need of every autistic person. We are doing our best within the constraints of our knowledge, energy and resources. It is important to remember that nearly everyone at Autescape, including organisers, is also autistic. They may be struggling to cope just as much as you.

Autistic behaviour is totally normal and expected at Autescape. Stimming (repetitive movements), echolalia, distractibility, atypical body language, and perseveration (obsessiveness), to name but a few possibilities, are expected and accepted. Appearing, or indeed being, completely NT (neurologically typical, or 'normal') is also perfectly acceptable. Most importantly, **you can be yourself** here!

Expectations

By coming to Autescape, we expect that you can manage certain things, or will bring someone to help you.

- Respect others' space and property
- Follow 'house rules' about things like smoking and drinking
- Make your own choices

- Share a room (if applicable)
- Organise your time
- Take care of your health and hygiene
- Ask for help

House rules

Please help us by following these house rules and the guidelines that follow.

- **Smoking:** There is absolutely no smoking permitted on the grounds, indoors or out. Please be aware of smoke smells on hands, hair and clothing, which may be distressing to other participants.
- **Noise:** Some Autscape participants are very sensitive to noise. Please be considerate of others when engaging in noisy activities such as talking, playing instruments, closing doors or showering. Try to limit or avoid these activities in places and times where they may be a nuisance to others. Please refrain from talking in the corridors outside bedrooms *at all times* and keep voices low outdoors after 10pm.
- **Alcohol:** The venue does not have a bar. You may bring your own alcohol if you like, however you may not sell or purchase alcohol on the premises. We will clearly mark the areas where you are permitted to drink alcohol.
- **Consideration:** **Please respect interaction badges**, noise level signs, and sensory sensitivities of other participants, as described in the next section.

Noise levels

There will be a system to indicate the allowed noise level in different areas.

Type	Colour	Description
Silent	Red	No interaction or unnecessary noise in this area
Moderate	Yellow	Talking allowed, but please refrain from shouting. No sound amplifiers, musical instruments or stereos.
Noisy	Green	Music, films or other loud activity taking place

Some areas will always be a particular colour, while others will vary according to the activity and time.

Help

Care needs

Autscape does not provide any formal or professional individual help. It may sometimes be possible to arrange with another participant to help in small ways; for example, your roommate may be willing to wake you in the morning. However, this help must be voluntary and must not be an unfair burden on others. Due to their own limitations, others may not be available or completely reliable, even if they wish to help. If you require extensive or essential assistance, please bring a carer who can provide that for you.

Organisers on duty

Nevertheless, we recognise that things go wrong for all of us from time to time. If you have queries or problems or need help understanding something, two organisers will

be on duty at all times. A duty rota will be displayed in the information area and the people on duty will wear blue hats or sashes so that you can identify them. They will also be displaying a blue card in their initiation badge.

Between midnight and 8am the two people on duty will be asleep, so please only contact them at these times if it is **very important**. Whenever possible, please allow organisers who are not on duty to have a rest; come to one of the organisers on duty with your concerns.

Action needed box

If you are not comfortable approaching an organiser for help, you may leave a note in the ‘action needed’ box which will be in the information area. This box will be checked on a regular basis and the concerns acted on. If you need a personal reply, please be sure to identify yourself. Write as neatly as possible. If we can’t read it, we can’t help you.

First Aid

The venue provides trained first aiders on site during the day. In the evenings and overnight we can reach a first aider by phone. Ask an organiser on duty if you need first aid so we can contact one for you.

Social interaction

There is no requirement to socialise at all, and there will be no disapproval of those who choose not to interact with others.

Initiation badges

Everyone will be provided with coloured badges they can use to indicate who may initiate social interaction with them. You are not required to use the badges, but you must respect those of others.

Type	Colour	Description
No initiation	Red	Please do not initiate any interaction with me.
Prior permission	Yellow	Please do not initiate unless I have already given you permission to approach me on a yellow badge.
Please initiate	Green	I would like to socialise, but I have difficulty initiating. Please initiate with me.
Neutral	White (or no badge)	I am able to regulate my own interaction.

Filming and photography

Black circle: People who do not wish to be photographed or filmed will be wearing a black circle. Permission must be sought from every individual in a photograph before any publication.

Please respect all these badges for the safety and comfort of all participants.

Sensory issues

Sensory issues, and mechanisms to reduce them, will be common and totally acceptable. No one will think it odd or cause you any difficulty for wearing sunglasses, earplugs, headphones or whatever you may require. Unfortunately, some of the rooms do have fluorescent lighting, but we will keep its use to a minimum.

While you are welcome to have 'stim toys', such as something to fiddle with or lights to look at, please be aware that some people find these very distracting. It will be less disruptive to others if you could try to sit near the back or sides of the room when using these in presentations.

Sensory considerations for other participants

Because many autistic people have particular sensory sensitivities, we have a few special rules to avoid inadvertently causing distress.

- **Touch:** Some autistics are very sensitive to touch. **Please do not touch anyone** without first asking their permission – including children.
- **Noise:** Please be aware of people trying to rest, and keep noise to a minimum near bedrooms and the quiet room, both indoors and outside the windows. Please respect noise level signs posted on doors. If you have noisy stims or tics, try to contain them during presentations. If this is likely to be a problem for you, please discuss it with us. Please keep noise levels to a minimum after dark as it could prevent other participants from sleeping.
- **Lights:** Before using a camera flash, you must gain the permission of everyone in the room. Under most circumstances, flashing light 'stim toys' are not a problem. However, they may be disturbing to some people, so please be respectful of that. Presenters may ask for flashing lights not to be used during their presentations.
- **Smells:** Please do not wear scented products at Autescape. If you smoke or drink alcohol, be aware that others may find this aversive. We recommend you wash your hands immediately after smoking and try not to get too close to others until the smell has dissipated.

5. Challenges

Choices

There are many choices to be made before and throughout the conference, ranging from what you'd like to eat, to which discussions you'd like to participate in.

What we will do:

We will try to make it easier on you by giving as much information as possible in advance so you can consider your options.

What you can do:

- Consider your options well ahead of time. If you decide what you would like to go to and what interests you, this can limit the stress of having many choices to make when you have a lot of other things to cope with.

- Study the menus in advance; a copy will be available in the information area. You can make your food choices, or at least have something in mind, before entering the serving queue.
- Be prepared to communicate your meal choices by word or gesture by the time you get to the front of the queue.

Sharing a room

Some participants will be sharing a room with someone they don't know. We understand that this can be very difficult. Where interaction and noise level choices are not the same, the more restrictive level must be followed.

What we will do:

We will try to match you up with the most compatible roommate we can find.

What you can do:

- If noises disturb you, earplugs may help you sleep more comfortably.
- If you are up a lot in the night, please be quiet and respectful of your sleeping roommate.
- You can choose to have a 'no interaction' room, and please respect it if your roommate would prefer not to interact in the room.

Busy days

For many participants, the amount of activity at Autescape will be far more than they're used to. This can be exhausting.

What we will do:

We have scheduled breaks between activities, and the evenings are more relaxed, with social and entertainment activities.

What you can do:

- Remember to take time out to relax in whatever way works best for you.
- It is more difficult to cope with being busy if you're tired, so adequate rest and sleep will help you cope with as much activity as you would like.
- You always have the choice not to do a particular activity, or to leave early if you're feeling stressed. Only you can decide what you would like to do with your time at Autescape.

Unstructured time

Some autistic people don't know what to do if there is a large amount of unstructured time, especially in an unfamiliar place. Knowing what to expect and what to do all the time can help some people cope better.

What we will do:

We have tried to keep a balance between structured and unstructured time. We have avoided large blocks of totally unstructured time during the day. When there is unstructured time, there are many options for activities you could do alone or with others to fill it. Some of the options won't be determined until the event, but there will

be opportunities to suggest or sign up for structured or semi-structured activities for most of the time.

What you can do:

- If unstructured time is a problem for you, try to think ahead about how you would like to occupy yourself in the evenings.
- Bring your own entertainment, such as books, music, electronic devices, games to share, musical instruments or other interests and hobbies.
- Consider running a structured discussion one evening, and think of some topics you would like to discuss with others.

Self-care

Many autistic people have trouble taking care of themselves in various ways, such as nutrition, health and hygiene. You will have to be able to get yourself up, washed and dressed without intervention from others. You will be better able to cope with the demands of being at Autscope if you eat and sleep as regularly as possible.

What we will do:

The structure of the days will help many people with routines of rising and going to bed and taking breaks. Meals are cooked for you and served at specific times, so your nutrition should be adequately catered for as long as you partake.

What you can do:

- If you take any medication, you can get a multi-compartment box which you can fill ahead of time.
- Come to meals in good time and ready to eat. You may take as long as you like to eat your meal. Take your meal away somewhere quieter if you find it hard to eat with distractions.
- Bring an alarm clock if you have difficulty getting up in the morning. If you have a portable alarm or a mobile phone, you can set it to go off at bedtime or other important times of day.
- When planning how much time you will need in the morning, leave extra for dealing with an unfamiliar environment and having to share bathroom facilities.

Orientation

Knowing where to be and when to be there can be difficult for autistic people, who often aren't able to just 'follow the crowd'. Remembering where things are or what time things are happening can be difficult.

What we will do:

We will provide you with a schedule, including where each event will take place. The name of the room, its function, and a schedule of its use will be posted on the door of each room. The first session of each day will be a plenary lecture, so everyone who wishes to attend will be going to the same place at the same time.

What you can do:

- Wander around the facilities as much as you need to in order to find each place you will need.

- Head to activities with plenty of time for getting lost and found again.
- Locate essential facilities such as toilets, fire escapes, and the dining hall before you need them.
- Keep your schedule with you.
- Prepare scripts to ask for help or directions, with gestures if necessary (for example, you could point to the name of the activity you're trying to find).

Overload

The sensory and social input of a conference can be hard to manage.

What we will do:

We will minimise the use of fluorescent lighting, although it can't be avoided altogether. We have chosen a venue with many quiet areas to retreat to. The social interaction badge system exists so you can participate fully in the conference even when you don't feel up to socialising.

What you can do:

- Try taking a break from the stimulation for a while.
- Bring whatever you find helpful in reducing sensory overload, such as sunglasses, earplugs or headphones.
- Use the initiation badge you are provided with to indicate if you are not up to socialising.