



AUTSCAPE

2012 “Similarities and Differences”

23 – 26 July 2012 Belsey Bridge Conference Centre, Ditchingham, East Anglia, UK

Part 1: The Autscape Experience

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1. Introduction

We hope you are looking forward to coming to Autscope. 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 three separate files:

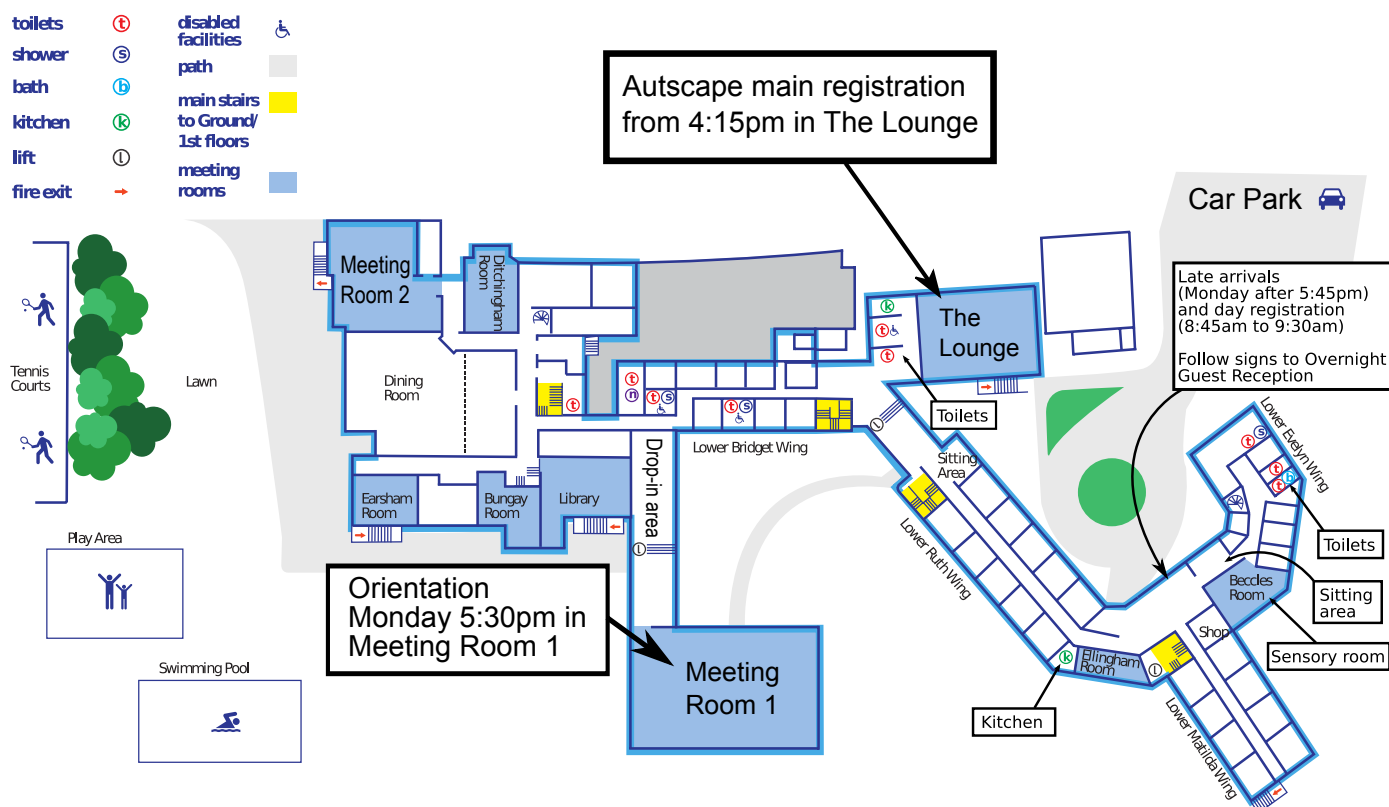
1. Experience: what to expect at Autscope and how to deal with challenges
2. Programme: presentations and presenters' information and schedule
3. Printing: lists, maps and forms you may want to print for future reference

If you have any questions, feel free to contact us, preferably by e-mail:

info@autscope.org. If you can't e-mail, you can phone or text: **+44 (0)775 400 5873** (Trish) or **+44 (0)7770 696066** (Elaine).

Map of the venue

The map below shows where the important areas are and where registration will take place. Be sure to follow the steps on the following page for registration.



Registration

Residential (overnight) participants

Residential registration runs **from 4:15pm to 5:15pm on Monday 23rd July** in The Lounge. The map to the right shows how to get there from the car park. Debbie, the registrar, will be at the registration desk.

Please follow the steps below in order. You can sit down and relax at any stage on one of the seats around the hall. Toilets are behind The Lounge.



1. At the first table you receive your room number and key, name badge and name stickers. Please either say your name or show us something on which we can read your name. (If you can't speak and have nothing with your name on it, there will be pens and paper ready at table 4.)
2. The second table has the items you need for the conference. Take one of each.
3. The third table has other conference items you may need.
4. The fourth table has miscellaneous things, including pens and paper.
5. Follow the signs to your room. If you need assistance, wait for one of the organisers to come and help you get to your bedroom.
6. When you arrive at your bedroom, please stick one of your name stickers to your folder. Also locate your nearest fire exit(s). Leave your luggage in your bedroom.

Now, you can participate in any of the drop-in activities (described in the programme in your folder). Here you will also find organisers who can answer your questions.

If you are running late, please see the list below. If you will be arriving after 6:30pm, please phone or text Debbie at 07595 33 90 83. It is preferable to phone after 5:30pm.

- **5:15–5:45pm:** Debbie will be in Meeting Room 2 until 5:45pm.
- **5:45–6:00pm:** Wait in the 'overnight guest reception' area to register at 6:00pm. Debbie will be moving the registration materials there between 5:45pm and 6:00pm.
- **6:00–6:30pm:** Please register in the 'overnight guest reception' area.
- **6:30–7:30pm:** If Debbie is not in the 'overnight guest reception' area, find her in the dining hall. Ask someone to help you locate her. You may wish to eat your meal first.
- **7:30–10:00pm:** When you arrive in the car park it would be helpful if you phoned or texted again to announce your arrival. Go to the 'overnight guest reception' area.
- **10:00pm onwards:** either ask a friend to take your key and conference materials and meet you on arrival, or take a break and arrive for Tuesday morning instead.

Daytime participants

Daytime registration is between 8:45am and 9:30am. Come to the 'overnight guest reception' area (see the next page). If you cannot arrive between these two times, please contact Debbie to arrange a time of arrival on 07595 33 90 83 or email registrar@autscape.org preferably before the start of Autscape.

Overnight guest reception

See the map on page 2. There will only be one table in this registration area. Here you give your name (or write it) and receive your bedroom key and your conference materials. All bedrooms are signposted from this area.

There is a map below showing the facilities near this area. It is okay to put your luggage down neatly and relax before registering or finding your bedroom.

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 11:30am on Thursday 26 July 2012 in Meeting Room 1. If you have missed the chance to join the board this year, you can still join a subcommittee (check on the website or ask an organiser on duty if you are unsure of how to do this).

Note that you need to be a member of Autscape in order to vote at the AGM. Most of you will have signed up for membership during registration. If you have questions about membership, please email Yo at secretary@autscape.org or talk to her during the conference.

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 at Belsey Bridge Conference Centre, situated in Ditchingham on the Norfolk/Suffolk border. See Part 3 of the information part for the exact address and information on how to find the venue.

The venue has over 20 acres of grounds, and there are several walks nearby. It is situated within the Broads National Park, which is Britain's largest protected wetland and third largest inland waterway.

Facilities***Pool***

There is an unheated outdoor pool on site. A minimum of two people must be swimming pool area at any one time and children must be supervised by an adult. There is no lifeguard and swimming is at your own risk. The pool is behind a locked gate, the key for which will be available from Autscape's on-site team of organisers, who will be identifiable via various blue items.

If you are intending on going swimming, you will need to bring a towel for this purpose. There is a small outdoor line you can dry your swimming gear on.

Other leisure facilities

The venue also contains a table tennis table, a tennis court and a children's play area for under 10s. Tennis rackets can be borrowed from the venue for a £5.00 returnable deposit.

Accommodation

The accommodation is in the main building. Some of the rooms are shared, and all doors have locks. All rooms have their washbasins, and just over half have a toilet and shower facilities. Each group of standard rooms has shared bathroom facilities. Towels are provided by the venue, and refreshment points are located close to the bedrooms for attendees to make drinks at any time. Cleaners will not enter bedrooms during the conference.

Exterior doors are locked at night, and the reception door is locked at all times. You can get through the reception door via a blue fob on your key.

Remember the organisers will also need time to settle in and may not be able to instantly answer your questions. The venue staff may also take some time to get used to our ways. Please be patient.

We have explained our social initiation badge system to the venue staff, so the staff 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.

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	8:30
Lunch	13:00
Supper	18:30

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 16:00.

No interaction table

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

Bar

Autescape will run a bar in The Lounge in the evenings between 9 and 11pm. We will be selling cans of beer, larger and cider, bottles of alcopops, wine by the glass, and soft drinks and bar snacks. Please do not take drinks out of The Lounge.

Phone and Internet access

Most of the venue has free wireless internet. In the TV room (Ellingham), there is one computer with internet access available for participants to use.

Please do not sit browsing the internet where there is a formal presentation/discussion happening.

Mobile coverage at the venue is poor, but a pay phone is located in the overnight guest reception near the shop.

Merchandise

Autescape will have some merchandise for sale, including stimmy toys and games covering a range of senses, and Autescape branded items. We can take UK cheques or cash. Proceeds from sale go towards keeping the costs of Autescape as low as possible.

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

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 the house rules about things like smoking and drinking (see page 7)
- 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 no smoking permitted indoors. Outside, smoking is permitted in the designated smoking area only. Please be aware of smoke smells on hands, hair and clothing, which may be distressing to other participants.
- **Noise:** Some Autescape 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 between 10pm and 8:30am.
- **Alcohol:** You can buy alcohol at the bar between 9pm and 11pm. You may bring your own alcohol if you like, but you may not sell alcohol on the premises. Please drink alcohol in the Lounge only.
- **Consideration:** **Please respect initiation badges**, noise level signs, and sensory sensitivities of other participants, as described in the next section.
- Questions and complaints should go to Autescape organisers, not venue staff.

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

Autescape 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 (in the

Drop-in 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 (in the Drop-in 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.

Hugging

Orange star: People who like being hugged can get an orange star to add to their badge. This is *not* a blanket permission to hug; this star indicates that the wearer may be *approached* and *asked* for a hug.

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. This goes for computer screens as well. Please try to sit near the back or sides of the room when using any light-emitting device in presentations, so that others can choose to avoid them by sitting near the front.

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, 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 (for example, perfumes or scented deodorants) 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 (in the Drop-in 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 Autscope 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 Autscope.

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 initiation 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.