

Here are some important things to consider before you deliver peer to peer autism awareness sessions:

- ✓ Some autistic young people may not know about their diagnosis. Attending an assembly or taking part in a lesson could raise their feelings of difference. Ensure that you have checked in advance with their families about the way they want this to be approached.
- ✓ Alongside peer awareness, there may be a need for supporting young autistic people to understand, accept and celebrate their own diagnosis.
- ✓ Be aware that running autism understanding lessons or assemblies may raise questions for some young people about themselves or people they know. After leading the lesson or assembly, provide a box for anonymous questions. This allows young people to ask questions without the pressure of being identified.
- ✓ Even if your young people are aware of their diagnosis, let them know that you'll be discussing autism with their peers in lessons and/or assemblies and ask if they would like to contribute in some way.
- ✓ Inform their families so that they can provide extra support in case the young person becomes anxious about this topic being discussed.
- ✓ If the young person doesn't feel comfortable taking part in the lesson or assembly, ensure they have a choice in attending, and plan an alternative option.
- ✓ Do not single out young people within your setting by providing examples which reflect their behaviour, unless this has been previously agreed.



- ✓ Do not call on autistic students to provide support or give their personal experiences if they have not explicitly given permission.
- ✓ If a young person does want to be involved in the assembly or lesson, allow them to set the boundaries of what they share and how they do so.
- ✓ Check the terminology you are using. Some children and young people see autism as their identity and would like you to use 'autistic person' (this is the preference of our Autistic Young Expert's Panel). Others may prefer to use 'has autism' or 'is on the autism spectrum' to describe their condition. Always ask the young person what their preference is.
- ✓ Do not solely focus on exceptional autistic people such as celebrities or inventors when you are trying to explain autism. This adds to stereotypes about autism and is not always helpful.
- ✓ Encourage everyone to speak positively about autism. Make sure that you are using positive language and are focusing on differences and not deficits.
- ✓ After leading the lesson or assembly, signpost the young people to the list of trusted resources, so they can learn more on their own if they wish.
- ✓ Educational professionals should always be honest about their level of knowledge and experience – young people are not expecting you to be an expert on autism. Admit when you are unsure about something, and commit to find out more information from a trusted source.

More practical guidance can be found in the Additional Examples and Resources documents that accompany the Schools Standards and Competencies:

[Link](#) [View our Schools Standards Framework here](#)



[Link](#) [View our Schools Competency Framework here](#)

