

Peer Support Group Frequently Asked Questions

The Dundee Connections team have compiled the following information to help individuals know what to expect from our Peer Support Network.

If you require further information, support, guidance or signposting, please get in touch with Scottish Autism's Connections team using the below details:

Phone: 03030 034 020

Email: dundeeconnections@scottishautism.org

What is the Peer Support group?

A small group, who meet fortnightly to mutually support one another and share lived experience, related to being autistic.

Attendance varies; it's rarely the same group twice, and you may need to attend a few times to get a feel for the peer support experience.

The maximum number of attendees is 8.

Peer support is an autistic-only space. The group is usually facilitated by a member of the Dundee Connections team who is also autistic. On occasion the group may be facilitated by someone from the wider Scottish Autism Communities team (e.g. Advice Line or Fife One Stop Shop) that is also autistic. In this instance we would do our best to notify those booked to attend of any changes.

This is a mutually supportive space — the facilitator is a peer, here to guide the conversation rather than lead it. The facilitator may share resources and follow up on questions raised during discussions. Everyone is welcome to contribute.

Our Peer Support Network is a structured support group with a focus on the autistic experience; focusing on emotional, informational and practical support. Although there may be elements of being social in this space, it is not usually a social group based on casual conversation.

Who is the Peer Support group for?

Our peer support groups are for all autistic adults aged 18+, who would like to meet other autistic individuals to gain or share knowledge, emotional support, and practical help strategies.

The peer facilitator is there to support the group, rather than for their own support.

Do I need a medical diagnosis of autism?

No, you do not need a “formal” or medical diagnosis – all autistic individuals are welcome, regardless of whether you are at the early stages of exploring your autistic self or you have chosen not to pursue a formal diagnosis at all.

Do I need to have contact with the service before attending?

Yes, we ask that prior to attending the Peer Network or any group spaces for the first time that you discuss your plans of attendance with the staff at Dundee Connections, this provides an opportunity for us to share a little about what to expect within the group(s) and also for you to ask us any questions or advise of any additional support if required.

We also wish to highlight that sometimes there might be support/assistance dog(s) present within these spaces. Meeting with us before visiting these spaces allows us to explore what support (if any) you may require as an individual to access these spaces when a support/assistance dog is present.

Booking

Do I have to book?

Yes. Bookings help ensure groups are small enough to feel safe and accessible (maximum of 8 participants). We operate a waiting list if more than 8 people want to attend.

Do I need to cancel if I have booked a place?

Yes. If you let us know you can't attend, we can offer your place to someone on the waiting list.

How do I book?

Bookings are made via private Eventbrite links for:

- Monday Evenings
- Wednesday Mornings

If you have any problem booking on Eventbrite, you can email Dundee Connections on dundeeconnections@scottishautism.org

Ways to support yourself to attend the group

Can I meet with the person facilitating the group before I attend?

Yes, we recommend this. There are lots of ways to connect with the Community Advisor who will be facilitating each specific group.

You can call, email, or attend a weekly drop-in to meet the facilitator(s) face-to-face. You can also arrange to meet in the half hour before the group starts. The Community Advisor is usually around 30 minutes before the group starts to help you settle in and answer any questions you have.

You can find out a little about the advisors within the Dundee Connections Team on our webpage under the [“Our Team”](#) tab.

What other support can I access to help me attend the group?

There are various ways we can accommodate support needs for attending Peer Support. Some examples are included below however we are open to discuss other supportive strategies that you may find helpful:

- Using pen and paper to communicate with the facilitator or sitting near them.
- Taking notes if you struggle to remember what you wanted to ask or share.
- Letting the facilitator know your communication preferences, e.g. not being called on to speak or using a signal to indicate you'd like to talk.
- Bringing tools to stim with (e.g. knitting projects).
- Visiting the space or viewing photos beforehand.
- No pressure to speak or take part in traditional icebreakers.
- Celebrating diverse approaches to participation — listening is powerful.

Can I bring a support worker or supportive person to Peer Support?

It's not possible to accommodate extra people who are there solely to provide individual support for a few reasons, including:

- **Protection of autistic-only spaces:** Peer Support is solely for autistic individuals. If you feel you need the support of an individual known to you to attend any groups, we recommend discussing your support needs with our advisors who will be able to recommend alternative groups.
 - **Group size:** We keep the groups small (maximum of 8 participants)
 - **Confidentiality:** Many individuals choose not to publicly disclose that they are autistic and feel safer knowing that everyone in the room is autistic. It helps to know that there's a mutual understanding when attending. Please note that while every effort will be made to respect a request for confidentiality, if there are safeguarding concerns, it will be necessary for advisors to share this information with others as detailed within Scottish Autism's Adult Safeguarding Policy.
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Can I bring my assistance dog to Peer Support?

Yes. A few individuals attending Dundee Connections are accompanied by an assistance dog.

We do ask that you let us know when booking if you will be bringing an assistance dog with you. This allows us to explore with you what we can do to support you and your dog within our group spaces as well as supporting others that may experience distress or discomfort around dogs.

Attending the group

When can I arrive to settle into the space?

You can arrive up to a maximum of 30 minutes before the group starts to settle in and have refreshments.

If I am late, can I still attend?

Yes. The group understands that sometimes you may arrive late due to circumstances outside your control. We ask that you settle in quietly without disrupting the discussion.

If you arrive late on a Monday evening, there may be no staff on reception to let you in, so you might need to wait a few minutes. The facilitator will leave the group to respond to the buzzer — you may need to press it more than once.

Where is the group held?

Location: 45, North Lindsay Street, Dundee, DD1 1PW

Monday evening space:



Wednesday morning space:



What should I expect the format of the session to look like?

- We do our best to start on time, after allowing a few minutes for to settle in.
- The facilitator introduces themselves and welcomes newcomers. You can share as much or as little as you want — there's no pressure to speak and we don't do icebreakers.
- The group then decides what aspect of peer support to focus on e.g. relationships, autistic masking, or barriers to employment. This may be decided in advance and planned for future dates – this will be communicated by the facilitator as needed.
- We usually have a comfort break within the first hour. This is a good opportunity to use the toilet facilities without interrupting the group.

Areas of focus chosen by group include:

Masking · Age of diagnosis & late identifying as autistic · Trust · Ableism · Sensory experiences and Stimming · Burnout · Work adjustments · Sleep · Friendships and relationships · Hyperfocus & special interests · Money & benefits · Travel and holidays · Double Empathy Bind · Self medicating · Bullying · Rage/anger · Confidence · Meltdown & shutdowns · ADHD · PDA · Transitions · Executive function · Loneliness & isolation · Childbirth & pregnancy · PMDD & Menopause · Aging · Eating Disorders/Differences · Situational Mutism · Study & School · Being perceived

What if I feel overwhelmed and need time out?

If you need to step away, you are welcome to move to a quieter area of the room; the facilitator will check in with you and find an appropriate space where you can decompress or chat with them.

Toilet Facilities at North Lindsay Street

We usually have a comfort break within the first hour. This is a good opportunity to use the toilet facilities without interrupting the group.

During the day, the group facilitator will pause the group to accompany you or request alternative staff support to accompany you and check that there is no one in the toilets before granting access; they will then wait for you in the corridor area to escort you back to the group. This is to comply with safeguarding protocols in place to ensure the safety and dignity of visitors and supported individuals within our building.

There are accessible toilet facilities available within the building; please make the advisor aware if you would prefer to use this.

During the evening, there may be a cleaner present in the building.

Creating safer spaces

Are group discussions confidential?

Yes. Confidentiality is maintained within the group. If you share your experience of the group with someone outside the group, please avoid identifying details of others. Focus on your own feelings and actions — always consider whose story it is before sharing.

Please note our Advisors are legally obligated to report any safeguarding concerns and that while every effort will be made to respect a request for confidentiality, if there are safeguarding concerns, it will be necessary for advisors to share this information with others as detailed within Scottish Autism's Adult Safeguarding Policy.

How I can I give feedback?

You are encouraged to share what makes you feel safe.

You can share any reflections with the group if it feels safe for you to do so, or you can contact the facilitator individually. You can provide feedback via email, phone, in person or online.

You can remain anonymous when providing feedback by posting it into the Feedback & Suggestions box the facilitator brings along to the group or by [following this link](#).

So far, participants have said:

- “It helps when the group starts on time — it reduces small talk pressure.”
- “It helps if there is something to focus on, like a topic or question.”
- “When a new person joins, it’s helpful to do basic introductions, including pronouns.”
- “I appreciate it every time someone shares their pronouns — it normalises this outside the LGBTQIA spaces.”
- “I prefer when people just listen without fixing or challenging my experiences.”
- “Small groups please — more than 8 feels too many.”
- “A test of when I feel safe is when I can unmask — this group is the first place I’ve been able to do that.”