



## Autism and Coronavirus Restrictions

### Background

For autistic people changes in routine can be distressing and cause increases in their anxiety levels. Many autistic people have specific routines, activities and locations that are particularly beneficial in managing these responses. As a result, Welsh Government have acknowledged that reasonable adjustments need to be made to the Health Protection (Coronavirus Restrictions) (Wales) Regulations 2020 to reflect this need. The revised 'Leaving home for exercise: guidance' on Regulation 8 of the Coronavirus Restrictions Wales Regs clearly states in Section 12 that:

The Regulation also acknowledges, however, that staying indoors for extended periods of time without relief may exacerbate certain mental or physical conditions. Examples of specific health conditions or disabilities include learning disabilities, autism, dementia, or other mental health conditions which can be alleviated by an established routine, or by exercise outdoors. Where people with particular conditions would (accompanied as necessary by their carers) benefit from outdoor exercise more frequently than once a day, this would be a reasonable excuse to leave home.

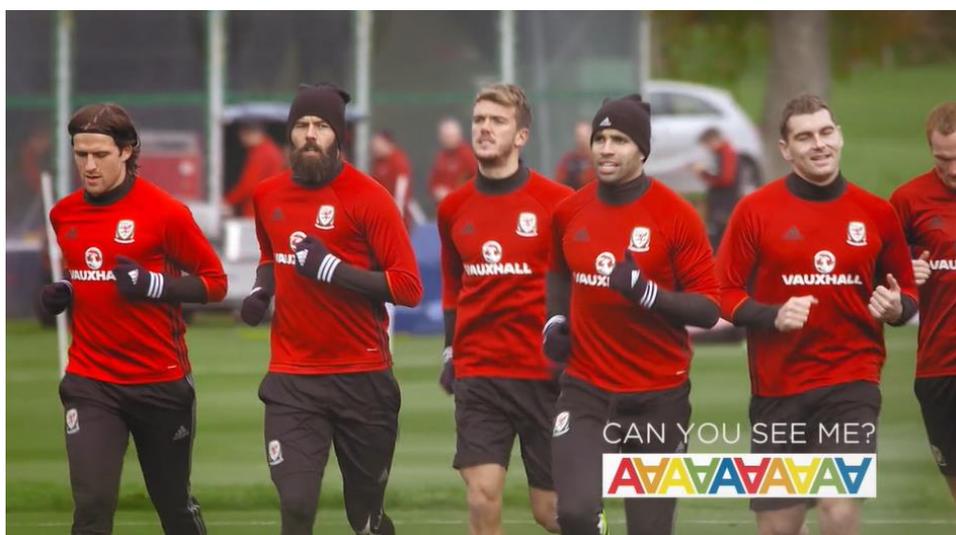
<https://gov.wales/leaving-home-exercise-guidance>

### Concerns and solutions

Whilst these changes have been welcomed many autistic people and their families have expressed concerns regarding 'proving' they are autistic, should they be stopped by the police, or if out exercising and there are several carers supporting a person as per their care plan. The National Autism Team has also been approached by some Police Officers who required guidance re the issue. Some Local Authorities in Wales have adopted a 'card' scheme; however, this is not universal. Therefore, to assist the police in this, we have consulted the autistic community and would like to highlight the following:

1. There are 'I am autistic' cards and letters that some Local Authorities and services have produced and supplied to clients. If a letter is on headed paper and from a recognised body e.g. a Local Authority, Health Board, National Autistic Society or a recognised team e.g. an [Integrated Autism Service](#), the National Autism Team, a Children's Disability Service – then it is felt that this should be sufficient proof.
2. The National Autism Team 'Can You See Me' scheme has widely recognised branding and many autistic people wear bands, have wallet cards, car stickers etc. This is the link which we would recommend be publicised. This is

complemented by the 'Emergency Services and Autism' training and resources (<https://www.asdinfo.wales.co.uk/can-you-see-me>).



3. Many autistic people are in receipt of PIP, hold Blue Badges, have GP letters etc. which can also be used to confirm that they are autistic.
4. There is an Orange Wallet scheme in Wales – these are used to assist disabled people with their transport communication needs. This will also clearly demonstrate the autistic person's needs (<https://www.asdinfo.wales.co.uk/orange-wallet>).

## Way forward

It is recommended that:

1. Information to be circulated to the Police Liaison Unit and then shared to the relevant authorities/ forces;
2. Information to be circulated to autism networks (Local Authority, Health etc.,) by the National Autism Team;
3. Information to be published and highlighted on [ASDinfoWales](https://www.asdinfo.wales.co.uk) website and social media by the National Autism Team;
4. Liaison with any emergency services that are seeking further information or training;
5. Liaison with autistic people and their families to monitor the implementation of the revised Guidance.

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