

# Supporting your wellbeing at University

During the pandemic and beyond

Resources for students with ASD



Welcome to Staffordshire University

We hope you enjoy your time with us  
as part of the Staffordshire University community

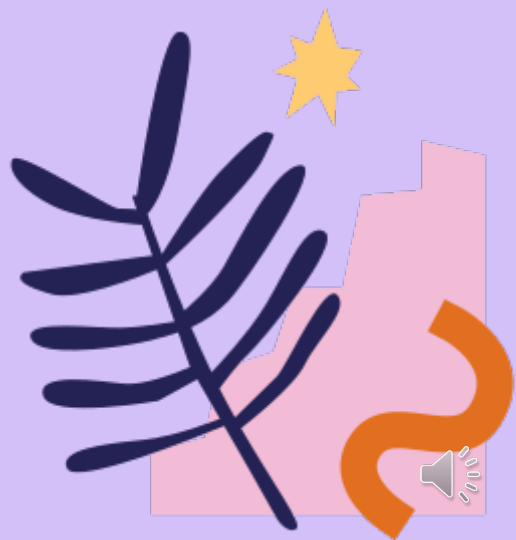


Everyone will experience different reactions to the Covid -19 pandemic, and you are not alone in this situation.

Some people may feel more anxious because of the change in routine, and find that managing unpredictable changes is a challenge, while for others social distancing measures may reduce the anxiety which comes from social interactions

The University acknowledges the range of issues their students are experiencing at this time and we want to confirm our commitment to supporting you

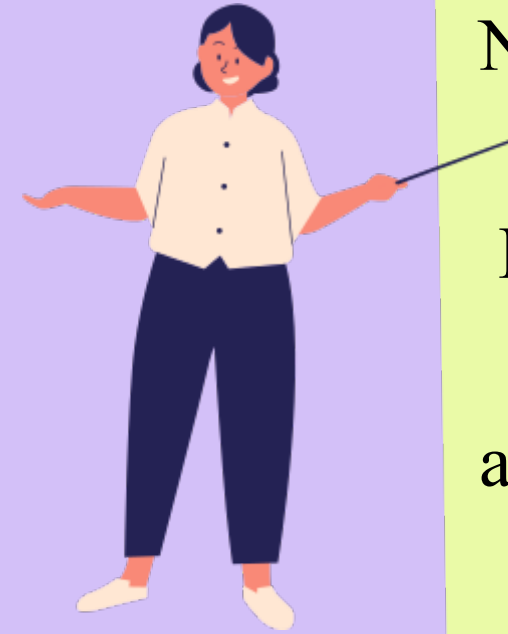
This guide contains tips from other students, links to other sources of information and resources, and information on how we can support you



# A blended approach to learning

Here at Staffordshire University, we're doing everything we can to support our students through the the Covid-19 pandemic, both now and in the future

This means there will be a blend of online teaching and on-campus teaching, this will be specific to the course you have chosen



No one expected to be working in a different way due to a pandemic  
Many people are having to change the way they do things,  
and it's OK to ask if you don't know

At first, I wasn't keen on the move to online working at all,  
but I have begun to enjoy it. Honestly, I prefer in-class college learning  
but this is working and I feel as if I am still learning and working towards  
progressing my future  
George, University student

This will be carried out in line with official guidance from the Government and other authorities - more detailed information on arrangements can be found on the [University's Coronavirus update pages](#) - please check back regularly for updates



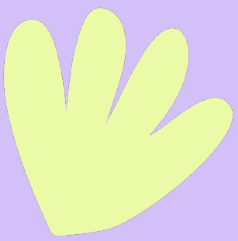
# Staying safe on campus

- Staffordshire University has put in a range of measures to ensure a Covid-19 safe learning environment
- Social distancing measures will be in place on all our campuses
- We have ensured our University accommodation is COVID -secure in a supportive community (and are working with private landlords to achieve the same aim)
- We'll be working with the Student's Union to deliver COVID -19-secure social events during the 2020/21 academic year



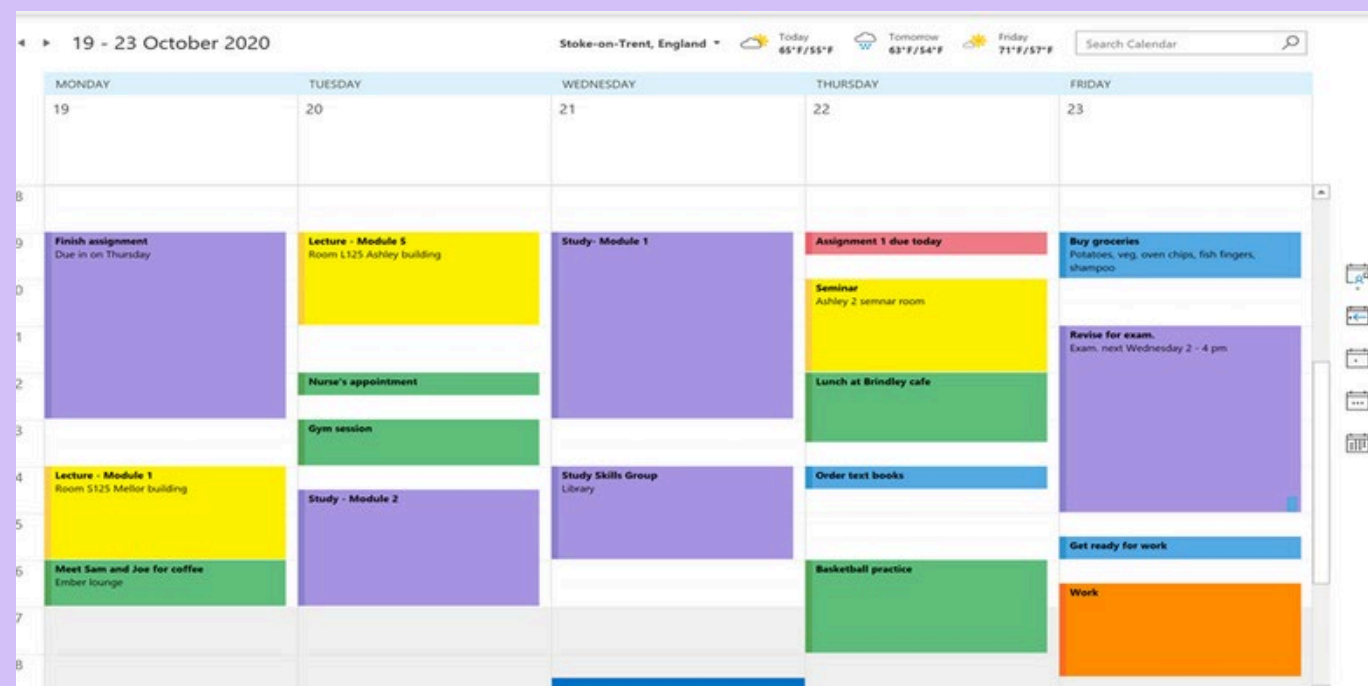
# Staying safe on campus 2

- Keep your distance (at least 1 metre apart, and 2 metres apart if possible)
- Wash your hands regularly
- Currently, students, staff and visitors will be required to wear face coverings in certain specified areas. For the latest updates please visit the [face coverings information page](#)
- Do not leave home if you, or anyone in your household has symptoms - a high temperature, a new, continuous cough or a loss or change to your sense of smell or taste - follow [NHS self-isolation guidance](#)
- If you have been advised by a health professional to self-isolate, please let us know by completing the [Covid-19 Self Isolation Declaration form](#), and call the Staffordshire University helpline on 01782 298500 . Our team will be on hand to provide the support and guidance you need



# Creating a new routine

- Concentrate on what you can control, rather than what you can't
- Create some structure and set yourself a routine
- Include your academic timetable and study sessions, and include time for eating, exercise and things you enjoy. Using colour coding can be helpful
- This makes it easy to see what time you have left for other activities



I have my own weekly visual timetable so I can see everything I have planned for the week. I'm also a personal diary which I check daily

Victoria, University student,  
Manchester

# Making the most of your studies

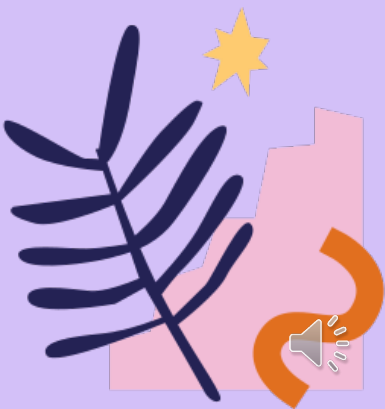
- Plan your own timetable for work, with time for reading, note-taking and planning, and add submission dates for examinations and assignments
- Try and focus on one piece of work at a time, and if you have a lot of work to tackle, breaking it down into smaller chunks can make things seem more achievable
- Remember, you are gaining new skills, knowledge and experiences throughout your time at University and in the pandemic which will build your resilience and be useful to you in the future





# Making the most of your studies 2

- Do you have learning materials which are accessible to you and take account of your particular needs ?
- Some options might include having access to a printer, being able to record online lectures, or having captions or subtitles
- Please talk to your Course Leader or Disability Advisor on 01782 294977 or email: [disability@staffs.ac.uk](mailto:disability@staffs.ac.uk) if your learning materials are not accessible to you, and make sure you have a DSA Assessment as this allowance can provide funding for adaptations



# Making the most of your studies 3

The Thompson Library, based in the Cadman Building on College Road, offers a range of support for our students, including [Academic Study Skills Support](#), [Library Subject Support](#) and [Researcher Support](#)

On the website you will also find [Study Smarter with Technology resources](#) and [Assistive Technology](#) for downloading [An accessible guide to the Library](#) for anyone who may feel anxious about coming to the Library, and highlights aspects of the buildings which may be challenging for students on the autistic spectrum

Please note that all visits to the library and appointments with staff will currently need to be booked

[Library and Learning Services homepage](#), with a Welcome Guide for 2020 students, and information on how to book a visit

Library opening hours are currently Mon - Fri 10 am - 4 pm



For more ideas and information on creating a routine and making the most of your studies, please look out for our 'Supporting your Learning' presentation which will be delivered on campus w/c 24<sup>th</sup> Aug and 28<sup>th</sup> Sept



# Do things you enjoy

- It's really important to spend time doing things you enjoy!
- Some people find that writing a journal can help them to record their feelings and reflect
- Reading new books or re-reading old stories you know can be comforting
- Outdoor exercise and spending time in nature is very beneficial for our wellbeing
- Limit the number of times you check the news channel or update Twitter/Facebook - the amount of information can be overwhelming
- When you do check the news, stick to reliable sources
- Doing things you enjoy can take your mind off the news

Here are some suggestions in the [50 things to do while social distancing](#) guide from Staffordshire University

[Top tips for adults during the pandemic](#) from the National Autistic Society



# Stay in touch

- If you're away from home, talk to your family and friends as much as you feel comfortable with, to let them know how you are feeling and check how they are
- Let your family and friends know how you prefer to be contacted, whether it's by 'phone, text or video
- If you're at home with people you don't usually spend much time with, let them know that you need time and space to yourself



## Stay in touch 2

The National Autistic Society have an [online community](#) where you can share tips and ideas with other people

[The Aspie World](#) has a Facebook page, for support/understanding/solidarity with other people on the spectrum

Other links

[Grace Liu's blog](#) about social distancing and staying sane (National Autistic Society)

[Experiences of people with autism on coping with the pandemic](#) (National Autistic Society)

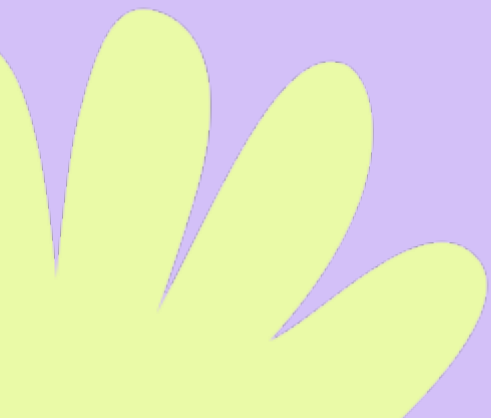


# Stay in touch 3

## Local organisations

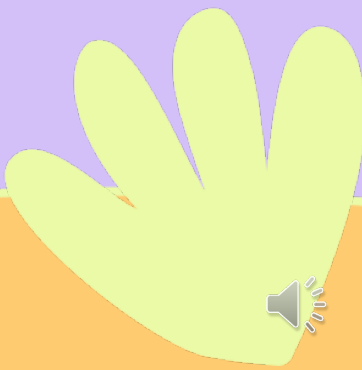
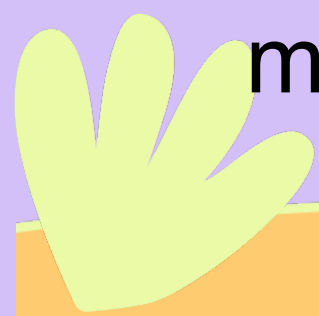
[Staffordshire Adults Autistic Society](#) is a local service which holds a range of events including a weekly natter in a spectrum-friendly environment (Thursdays 4-7 pm) and an 'Enlightening Evening' every other Monday evening, covering a different topic each time (these are currently being run online)

[Lifeworks Staffordshire](#) is a local charity to support and empower people with high functioning autism age 14 and over. You do not need a formal diagnosis to get support. They run a variety of activities and events but these are currently cancelled due to the coronavirus. Please ring or email for updates



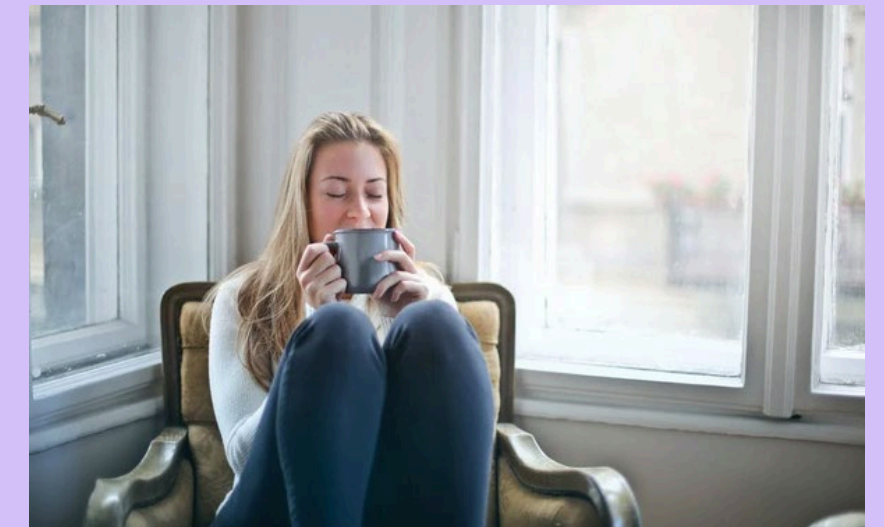
# Your environment

- Create a comfortable work area with minimal distractions, where you can keep your laptop, books and stationery
- Having a plant on your desk can be relaxing
- Is there an area in your home where you can relax and refresh, with minimal sensory distractions?
- Soft colours such as pale pinks, blues and greens, or darker shades such as brown and black can help you relax
- Soft carpets or wooden floors (you can place a soft rug over linoleum) can make your environment feel more comfortable



# Your environment 2

- Avoid bright or fluorescent lights, use adjustable dimmer switches so you can control the level of lighting
- Blackout curtains to block out streetlamps or car headlights can be helpful
- Keeping your space tidy and clearing clutter away can promote a sense of calm and order
- Display your favourite ornaments or photographs
- Limiting colours and patterns will help reduce sensory distraction



[Ideas for creating a calm space from the National Autistic Society](#)

[Tips for creating a friendly environment from Living Autism](#)



# Your environment 3

It is well known that autistic people have sensory issues. We can find the world too bright, too loud and scratchy. But we can also really enjoy calming sensory experiences. Creating a quiet and comfortable corner at home, with low light, a beautiful blanket, a deliciously scented candle or a spritz of your favourite perfume on a scarf can be instantly calming

Laura James, autistic journalist and ambassador for the National Autistic Society



# Your wellbeing

Self-care is important to make sure you maintain your wellbeing at University

It means thinking about what you are eating and planning healthy meals, exercising, being active, spending time outdoors and sleeping well, taking time for yourself and doing things you enjoy

Find out more by watching our webinar on self-care and wellbeing:

[Are you OK webinar on self-care and wellbeing](#)

[Five ways to wellbeing](#) from Mind, the national charity



# Healthy Eating

Eating a balanced diet and making healthy food choices is important and supports our wellbeing.



[Cook & Eat](#) have links to a range of resources on healthy eating including food choices, vegetarian foods, dietary restrictions, information on fats, salt and sugar in your diet, food safety, food labels, using equipment safely and kitchen hygiene

On the webpage you will also find a link to a wide selection of recipes which are healthy, economical, quick and easy to make - including breakfast, lunch, main courses, vegetarian, world foods, beat the takeaway, outdoor cooking, special occasions and desserts

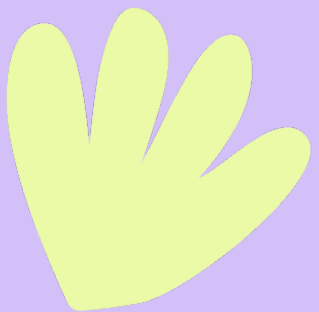
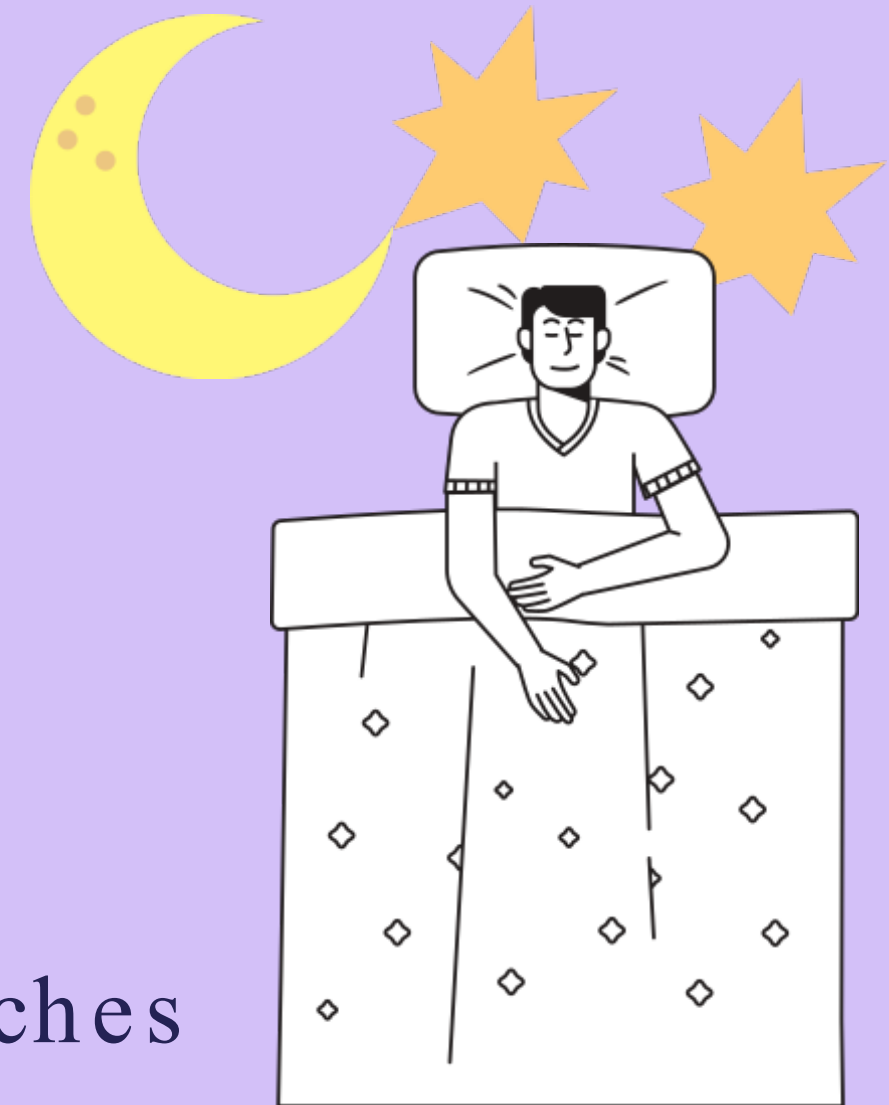
[The NHS Eat Well webpage](#) has lots of information on food, diet and recipe tips

[The 5 a day webpage](#) from the NHS tells you which fruit and vegetables count towards your 5 a day

# Sleep

Keeping to regular times for going to bed and getting up can help to set a routine and improve your sleep

- Try and wind down before bedtime
- Don't drink tea, coffee or other sources of caffeine for at least four hours before bed
- Do some light relaxation exercise before bed, eg. yoga stretches
- Reading a book, listening to the radio or to music can help you relax



# Sleep 2

Avoid laptops, smartphones and tablets for at least an hour before bedtime, as the light of the screen can have a negative effect on sleep

Follow the tips in the section on Your environment to make your sleeping area comfortable and relaxing



Here are some further resources:

Doing yoga before bed helps me sleep. It calms me down after a long day and allows me to focus on something other than my intrusive thoughts. Victoria, Manchester

[Are you OK webinar on how to improve the quality of your sleep](#)

[A guide from the NHS on how to improve the quality of your sleep](#)

# Exercise

- Building some exercise into your routine can support and maintain your wellbeing
- The Stanley Matthews Sports centre is located on the Leek Road campus, and will be offering a programme of activities for the new Semester. It is designed for people of all fitness levels and includes a great range of facilities. Of course, activities will be subject to guidelines to ensure the safety of all users
- Keep up to date with what's happening at Sports@Staffs by following this [twitter feed](#)
- Walking is a great exercise too, just getting outside each day and enjoying nature can really enhance our feelings of wellbeing

## Other links

[Online exercise videos](#) from the NHS in aerobics, strength and resistance, yoga and pilates



# Mental Health

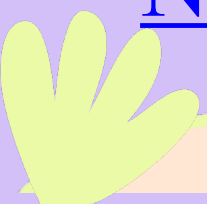
Many people will be feeling anxious about the Covid -19 situation - you are not alone, and there are lots of resources to help you. Here are a few which may be useful:

[National Autistic Society Hub Information Hub](#)

[Health, mental health and wellbeing webpage of the National Autistic Society](#)

Here is a link to a great resource on anxiety, what to do if you are feeling anxious about the Covid-19 situation, and coping strategies:

[NHS Every Mind Matters page on anxiety](#)



# Mental Health 2

Support from the University

Our team of advisors are here to support you. If you are feeling overwhelmed, problems are piling up or you have a personal difficulty that you are struggling to cope with, or any other issue, the advisors are here to help you.

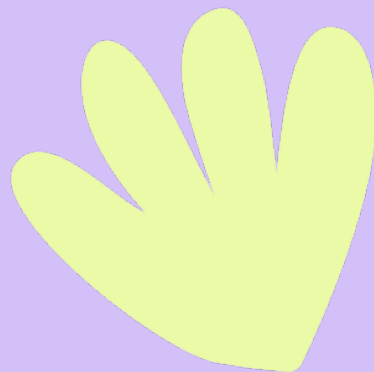
Contact [Student Wellbeing](#) if you would like to talk to someone. Online appointments are available

tel 01782 294976

Email: [studentwellbeing@staffs.ac.uk](mailto:studentwellbeing@staffs.ac.uk)

The webpage also offers self-help information and links to emergency 24 hour support  
Please also see our page on [Mental Wellbeing](#) \*

\* coming soon - new Sharepoint resource on Mental Wellbeing





# Mental Health - External support

Staffordshire Mental Health Helpline

Call on: 0808 800 2234 (Free) Text: 07860 022821 (FREE)

Email: [Staffordshire.helpline@brighter-futures.org.uk](mailto:Staffordshire.helpline@brighter-futures.org.uk)

Instant Messaging service (online chat) can be found here, you just need to click on the Instant Messaging Service button

Open 7 am - 2 pm weekdays, 2 pm - 2 am weekends, every day of the year

Togetherall

[Togetherall](#) is an anonymous, safe community to support your mental health, with clinical expertise, peer support and trained practitioners available for extra support when needed. Self-assessments and resources, and opportunities for self-expression through creative tools

Join in 3 simple steps - Register, Activate, Participate

Available 24 hours a day, every day



# Mental Health - External support 2

[Student Space](#) is a free collaborative mental health programme developed by Student Minds, to complement the support provided by Universities

Students at Staffordshire University can access the website for free where they can gain access to [Phone](#) and [Text](#) support as well as resources on a number of topics ranging from [Adapting to change caused by Coronavirus](#), [Relationships & Social Life](#) and [Bereavement & Loss](#)

The programme will run for 6 months from July - Dec 2020

In an emergency, or you or someone else are in a life-threatening situation, call 999 or go to your nearest A & E department

# Have you registered with a GP on campus?

Stoke:

[Harley Street Medical centre](#)

The surgery will be located available at the Trent Building on the Leek Road campus, but appointments are also available at the Hanley venue

Please register online, or ring 01782 212066

Stafford:

[Beaconside Health centre](#), Weston Road, Stafford

ST18 0BF

Tel 01785 214424

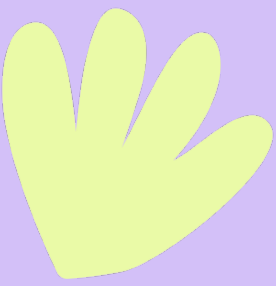
Shrewsbury:

Tel 01785 220004 (Primary Care Trust) or go to the [NHS website](#)



# Coping with changes

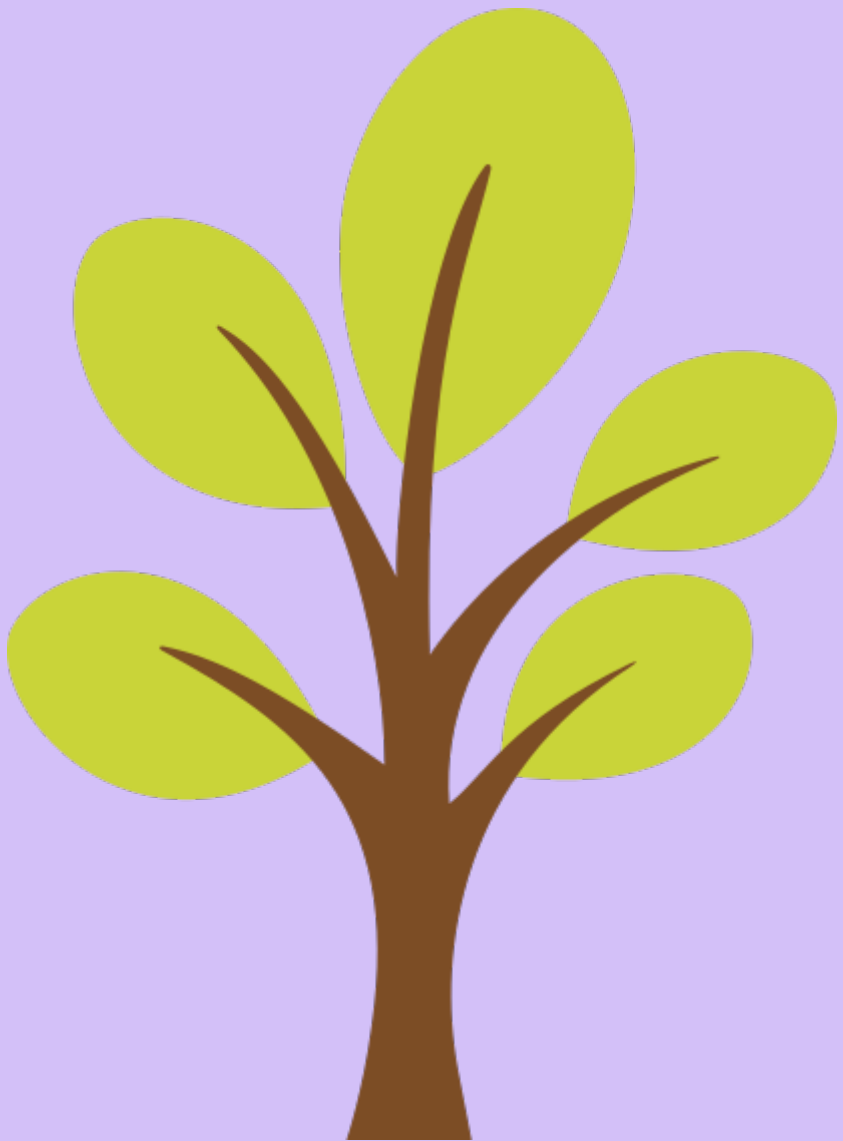
- As we know, the situation with Covid -19 may change, which means we might need to modify the measures we have put in place during the coming weeks and months
- It's a good idea to think about changes so you will be prepared, but please be aware that here at Staffordshire University we have planned for every situation so there is no need to be concerned
- If things do change and you need to alter your routine, take your time. It's important to continue looking after yourself and practising self-care
- Follow advice from the [University Coronavirus webpage](#) - and check back regularly for updates



# Coping with changes 2

The information hub at the National Autistic Society will help you keep up to date with any changes nationally:

Congratulate yourself for what you have achieved so far, so you have done so well adapting to all the changes which have happened over the last few months



# Support from the Careers Team

The Careers Team can support you throughout your time at University and afterwards  
Staffordshire graduates

Our team of friendly Career Coaches are available Mon - Fri, 10 am - 6 pm in  
the Digital Careers Studio to help with looking for part-time work, securing a placement year,  
interview tips and securing a graduate role when you are preparing to complete your degree

One to one appointments are available on Microsoft Teams

[Staffordshire University Careers and Personal Development Team](#)

Email: [careers@staffs.ac.uk](mailto:careers@staffs.ac.uk)

Tel 01782 294992



Mentoring: In the coming months we will be launching our Mentoring programme which will help to support students as they navigate work experience, design their future and prepare to enter the graduate marketplace. Further information will be available soon

# Support from the Careers Team 2

## External resources

[Access to Work](#) is a Government scheme which provides advice and support to people with a disability, mental health or physical condition to start or stay in work.

[The National Autistic Society](#) offers resources including a 'Finding a Job' handbook, 'Finding employment' module, autism friendly employers and advice on disclosing your condition and your legal rights at work

[Employ-ability](#) is a non-profit organisation dedicated to assisting graduates with all disabilities into employment, including internships and graduate recruitment

Although everyone with autism is different and an individual, some people can have positive qualities which are useful for different types of careers, such as an excellent memory, an ability to live in the moment and a passion for a particular interest

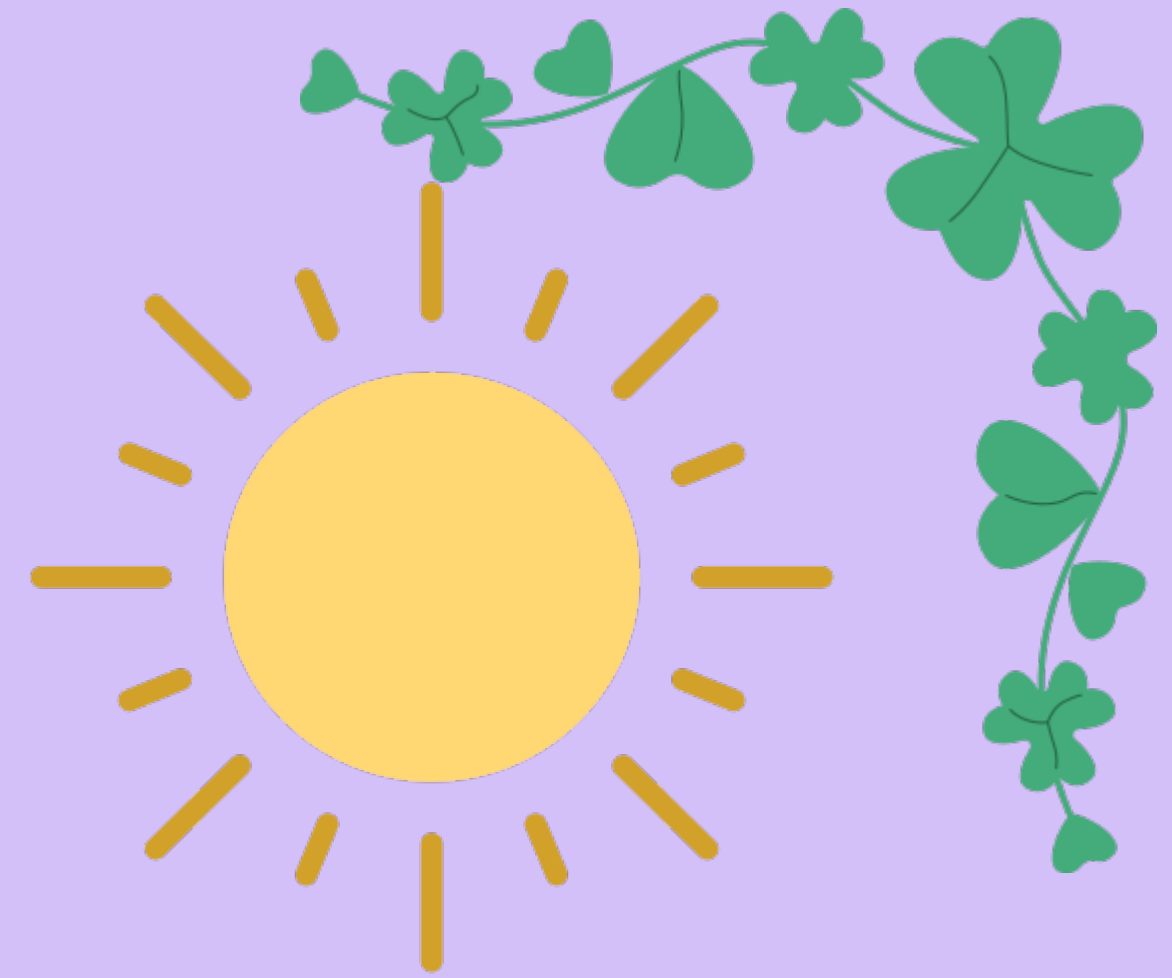
<https://www.verywellhealth.com/top-terrific-traits-of-autistic-people-260321>

Remember... this situation is only temporary



One important thing I have to remind myself through of all this, is that it will not last forever. It is just temporary. I look forward to the future and things slowly returning to normal again

Jake, University student





# Need further help?

Student Wellbeing team

(tel) 01782 294976

Email: [studentwellbeing@staffs.ac.uk](mailto:studentwellbeing@staffs.ac.uk)

Disability Services

(tel) 01782 294977

Email: [disability@staffs.ac.uk](mailto:disability@staffs.ac.uk)

[Student Hub Team](#) – home to a wide range of student support facilities

[Up to date information on coronavirus from Staffordshire University](#)

[Up to date information from the Student's Union](#)

[Students' Union Advice centre](#)

[ResLife Facebook page](#)

[National Autistic Society](#)

# Best wishes for your time at University

One thing I think is important for neurodivergent students of all ages is to just remember in times like this, if you feel really isolated, there's a lot of people out there who recognise the challenges that you're facing and how valid that is

Madeline St. Amour

[www.insidehighered.com](http://www.insidehighered.com)

