



**SPEAKERS**  
for schools

# Guide for speaking to SEN/ASN students

Speaker Guide for Talks

If you have any questions or queries please email us at  
[inspiration@speakersforschools.org](mailto:inspiration@speakersforschools.org), and we'll be happy to help.

August 2022

This guide aims to raise awareness around inclusivity in the workplace for people with disabilities as well as inspiring more young disabled people to consider their career ambitions, aim high and experience the world of work.

With your support, we also hope to reach out to Special Educational Needs (SEN) schools/ ASN (Additional Support Needs) schools in our network and offer students more opportunities to hear from speakers in our network. In feedback we have gathered from our network of SEN/ASN schools, they are looking for speakers to share with students an overview of their role or industry as well as the key skills needed for the world of work.

Below is a guide on how to plan your talk at a SEN/ ASN school and some signposts to some useful resources.

**When you start to plan your talk at a SEN / ASN school it is important that you arrange a planning phone call with the school contact.**

**The school contact will be able to let you know the preferred format for the talk and suggest the abilities and preferences of the audience. For instance, they might suggest a shorter talk of a 10–15-minute presentation and then a 10-minute Q&A.**

### Points to consider

Audiences in a SEN/ ASN school may be smaller than a mainstream school. You may have an audience of less than 30 students. The talk may need to be much shorter (less than an hour) depending on the school's preferences.

### Tips on planning your talk at a SEN/ ASN school

In your planning phone call, ask the school contact what type of topics the students would be interested in, and their preferred format. Our speaker guides on themes and formats are [here](#).

Or you could use a more specific topic area, here are a few potential topics below:

- Key skills for employment- what are the skills you use?
- Outline of your job and your industry/sector
- What is a job interview? Offer some key tips
- Is your company Disability Confident? You can talk more about the scheme

### In your talk:

- Keep it simple
- Use visual aids to show what you are talking about
- Show a clear structure e.g. I will tell you about my role; some examples of the work I have done and then tips about how to get into this career
- Allow 6 seconds for processing time after you say a question. Keep the questions simple
- Ask the students what careers they are interested in
- Ask the students what their hobbies are
- Use icebreakers at the start, such as true or false questions or simple interactive quiz
- Offer to record the talk and ask if they want it transcribed

## Things to avoid

- Avoid using complicated language
- Do not talk too fast
- Do not ask a quick succession of questions, ask one and give students lots of time to think and then respond
- Avoid ambiguous language such as analogies

## Planning a talk for autistic young people

In your planning phone call with your school contact, ask what delivery style and topics would work the best. Our speaker guides on themes and formats are [here](#).

**Ambitious about Autism** have created a useful guide on how employers can support autistic young people into their first experiences of employment or training, you can see more on their [site](#).

## What is autism?

Autism is a spectrum condition, and it affects the way a person communicates and how they experience the world around them.

Autistic people find social interactions difficult and can find it challenging to understand other people's intentions and express their own feelings.

## In your talk

- When giving your talk make sure that your structure is very clear, 'I am speaking to you today about my role, the skills I use and advice on how you can enter this industry'.
- Give lots of time for the students to respond. For example, allow 6 seconds for processing time after you say a question. Keep the questions simple
- Use visual aids
- Ask the students what careers they are interested in and what hobbies they enjoy
- Use icebreakers at the start, such as true or false questions or simple interactive quiz

## Things to avoid

- Avoid using complicated language
- Do not talk too fast
- Do not ask a quick succession of questions, ask one and give students lots of time to think and then respond
- Avoid ambiguous language such as analogies

## Planning a talk for deaf students

It is important to speak to the school contact and ask them what their preferred method is for the talk. Our speaker guides on themes and formats are [here](#).

For more information on how to engage with deaf young people, please visit the **National Deaf Children's Society's** website, [here](#).

## Planning an in-person talk

- They might ask that you find an interpreter- this would cost money
- They might provide an interpreter for you
- They might ask you to send resources in advance- and the students will lip-read

## Planning a virtual talk

- Ensure that the captions are on for your talk
- Speak slowly and clearly
- Spotlight yourself to ensure that the students can see you when you are speaking
- Use visual aids
- Offer to record the talk and then send it back to the school
- Use the chat function so that students can type in their questions
- Keep the timings short
- Use interactive activities such as polls or quizzes
- Use breakout rooms for students to discuss together in groups
- Send resources in advance

## Planning a talk for students with learning disabilities

It is important to speak to the school contact and ask them what their preferred method is for the talk. Our speaker guides on themes and formats are here.

## What is a learning disability?

A learning disability is a significant lifelong condition that affects the way a person learns new things throughout their lifetime. Having a learning disability means a person may have difficulty with everyday activities – for example household tasks, socialising or managing money.

## In your talk: Top 10 tips for communication

1. Make sure you have their attention- give time to settle
2. Don't rush, speak clearly
3. Stress key words
4. Repeat if necessary
5. Give time for the student to digest
6. Give one piece of info at a time
7. Use easy read which is a simple sentence, and the picture also explains it
8. Be clear and explain what you mean
9. Check understanding by asking students to repeat it in their own words
10. Avoid jargon

## Useful terms

**Area of Need** - The four categories used to describe a pupil's special educational needs and disability: communication and interaction; cognition and learning; social emotional and mental health; sensory and physical.

**Area of Need** - Additional Support Needs. Term mainly used in Scotland.

**ASN School** - Schools in Scotland for young people with additional support needs. Additional Support Needs can be due to disability or health, learning environment, family circumstances and social and emotional factors.

**Education Health and Care Plan (EHC Plan)** - This plan is a legal document written by the local authority which describes the special educational needs a child or young person has and the help they will be given to meet them. It also includes the health and care provision needed.

**Individual Education Plan (IEP)** - A non-statutory document that schools use to outline and monitor the support they provide to a child or young person.

**Learning Difficulty** - A type of SEN which affects areas of learning, such as reading, writing, spelling, mathematics. Examples include: dyslexia, attention deficit-hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), dyspraxia and dyscalculia. A learning difficulty does not affect general intellect.

**Learning Disability** - A learning disability affects the way a person learns new things throughout their lifetime. This means they can have difficulty: understanding new or complex information, learning new skills and coping independently. It can affect how a person understands information and how they communicate.

**Looked After Children (LAC)** - Children under the age of 18 who have been provided with care and accommodation from child services.

**Performance Levels/Scales (P Levels/Scales)** - The levels used to assess the progress of a student aged 5-14 years old whose abilities do not yet reach Key Stage Level 1 of the National Curriculum.

**PRU** - A pupil referral unit or alternative provision school which provides education for pupils who would otherwise not receive suitable education because of illness, exclusion, or any other reason.

**SEND** - Special Educational Needs and Disability.

**SEN School** - Schools in England, Wales and Northern Ireland for young people with special educational needs. Special educational needs include: behavioural, emotional and social difficulties, speech, language and communication, hearing impairment, visual impairment, multi-sensory impairment, physical disability and autism.

**Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Coordinator (SENco/SENDco)** - A qualified teacher who has responsibility for coordinating SEND provision

