AUTISTIC DISCOVERY JOURNEY 8 WEEK GROUP

ADJ is a partnership between Barnet Education and Learning Service & Aucademy

An online group for 6 to 10 people who identify as autistic (Diagnosed or self identified)

For more info on Aucademy visit https://aucademy.co.uk/

WHEN?

Wednesdays at 16:30 - 17:30,
30th Sept - 2nd Dec 2026.
No sessions 28th Oct or 18th Nov

If you are interested in joining this group please email:
Autism.Team@Barnet.gov.uk
With the subject title:
"Aucademy/BELS Autistic Discovery Journey"

REQUIREMENTS:

- **Aged 13-18**
- **Living in Barnet**
- **Access to Zoom on a laptop or PC (phone/tablet may be manageable) and a quiet space**
- **Parental/carer consent is required for young people under the age of 18 and for an adult to be at home during the session.**
- **No expectation to use your camera or microphone if you do not want to. Chat box participation is embraced, especially if using mouth words is not your preferred method of communicating**

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WHAT?

The purposes of the Autistic Discovery Journey programme include:

- Working out what being neurodivergent means to you right now including strengths and challenges
- Building understadning of your Autistic profile - what makes you YOU
- Learning ways to communicate your needs, preferences and boundaries
- Learning strategies to support confidence, well-being and self-esteem
- Meeting other young people with shared experiences and feeling part of a community

Is it for me?

Being neurodivergent as a teenager can feel complicated. You might not want labels, attention, or other people deciding who you are. You may also have ideas about autism that don't fully fit your experience.

This group gives you space to explore what being autistic means for you, rather than having it defined by someone else. You do not need to "act autistic". It does not matter how much you do or don't know about neurodivergence to join either.

Some of the things we might talk about include:

- "Why do some situations feel overwhelming?"
- "Why do I feel different in some spaces, but completely fine in others?"

You'll also meet other teenagers figuring out similar things in their own way.

The Autistic Discovery Journey Programme is split into 8 sessions covering these topics. The topics will vary based on what the group want:

* What is Autistic experience + neurodiversity
* Autistic sensory experiences
* Masking, Burnout, Meltdowns/Shutdowns, Depression
* Stimming & Autistic theories
* A variety of common Autistic experiences
* Boundary setting, Accessibility and your rights
* Autistic profile building

Session structure

Introduction to facilitators and session

What have you done in the last week?

Information on topic

Questions and activities related to topic

What are you looking forward to?

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The Facilitators



Ben Usher-Barrass (he/him) Situationally non-speaking Autistic, ADHD,

Creator of Autisticality and Administrator at Aucademy CIC. Ben is a content creator, advocate and author.



Sarah Meharg (she / her) Neurodivergent

Occupational Therapist at Moodlifter. Director at neuroflect.



Jessica Chudasama-Alloway (they/them) Autistic

Director at Aucademy CIC and OMMT tier 2 certified trainer specialising in autistic consultation, training and education.

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Information for parent/ carers

This group is a co-production between BELS and Aucademy.
Each session is facilitated by: two neurodivergent adult facilitators from Aucademy + one staff member from BELS

The group aims to create a supportive space where young people can explore identity, communication, wellbeing, and community alongside others with shared experiences.

A parent or responsible adult must remain present in the home whilst the session is taking place online.

The group may be particularly helpful for young people who:

- are questioning or exploring what autism means for them
- feel different from peers, even if this is not always visible to others
- can communicate freely in some situations but find communication much harder in others
- may appear confident externally whilst still experiencing overwhelm, shutdown, anxiety, or exhaustion internally
- We recognise that communication and presentation can change depending on environment, stress, sensory demands, and energy levels. Young people do not need to fit a stereotype of autism to take part. We do not view neurodivergence as a deficit, and aim to recognise both strengths and support needs.

"ADJ was genuinely life changing for my child and our whole family. Having previously refused to engage with their diagnosis, this course enabled them to positively embrace their autistic identity for the first time. It has been the springboard for so many important conversations."