



U21
UNIVERSITÄT

Introduction to our First Issue!

Welcome to our first research insights newsletter!

This newsletter aims to bridge the gap between research and our everyday practice, making research accessible and actionable for all staff.

In this first issue, we focus on the importance of using neuro-affirming language in our schools.

However, we recognise that finding out a person's individual preferences is always the best way to communicate effectively and sensitively.

Research Summary - Keating et al (2023)

A team at the University of Birmingham, in partnership with the U21 Autism Research Network, surveyed over 650 English-speaking autistic adults worldwide to understand their preferences. This was one of the first studies to investigate language preferences outside of the UK or Australia.

While there is no universally accepted terminology, many autistic individuals in the UK prefer identity-first language (e.g., "autistic person") over person-first language (e.g., "person with autism"), as it acknowledges autism as a core aspect of their identity (Kenny et al, 2016).

This represents a shift from traditional medical language (focusing on deficits & disorders), to neuro-affirming language (emphasising differences & strengths).



Connor Keating

The Reality



Inclusive, identity-first language:

Autistic person/is autistic/neurotypical



Seek individual preferences:

Where possible, ask individuals how they prefer to be referred to.



Educate & raise awareness:

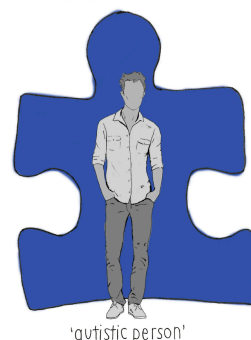
Promote neuro-affirming language among staff to foster an inclusive environment.



Pathologising language:

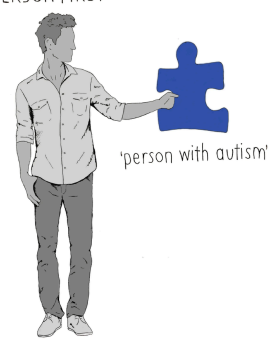
**Person who has autism/ASD/ASC
Person with autism/deficit/normal people**

IDENTITY-FIRST



'autistic person'

PERSON-FIRST



'person with autism'

Further Reading & Links

[National Autistic Society \(Kenny et al, 2016\)](#)

[Article - Keating et al, 2023\)](#)

<https://www.u21autismresearchnetwork.co.uk/about>