

NATIONAL AUTISTIC SOCIETY

ARTICLES OF ASSOCIATION: AN EXPLANATORY NOTE

The Articles of Association set out the purpose of the charity and the detailed rules for its administration and governance. As the charity evolves, so the Articles need to be periodically reviewed and updated. The proposed changes that members are now being asked to confirm are as follows:

1. Terminology.

Some of the terms used in the Articles date from when the charity was first established and are no longer current. For example, we now prefer to refer to autistic people, rather than 'people with autism' and the revised Articles reflect this change.

2. National Forum

The National Forum was an elected body of some 42 members (some 'regional' and some 'national') who met once or twice a year to discuss topical issues. The idea was that they could provide direct feedback to the charity's chair and trustees, representing the voice of the charity's members. However, the Forum became increasingly difficult to justify because:

- Elections to the Forum were very poorly supported with only a tiny fraction of the membership bothering to vote.
- Forum meetings were held face to face, often in London over a weekend which meant that many members required an overnight stay. Perhaps as a consequence attendance was often patchy.
- The development of social media and the ability to sound out many more members directly on specific topics via things like online surveys meant that the Forum was becoming increasingly irrelevant. Further face to face meetings became impossible during the Covid restrictions.

Consequently, the National Forum has been replaced as a means of obtaining feedback from members by on line techniques and the updated Articles reflect this fact.

3. Trustees' Terms of Office

Currently trustees are able to serve two terms of 4 years with the possibility of a third term if they chair a committee or the board itself, making a total of 12 years. This is out of line with the Charity Governance Code which recommends a maximum of 9 years in order to ensure there is a turnover of trustees, bringing in new ideas and approaches. Accordingly, the revised Articles reduce a trustee's term of office from 4 years to 3 years. This rule will apply to trustees appointed after these revised Articles have been adopted.