

# **Autism Accreditation Inclusion Award**

## **Community programmes**

**Name of programme**

**Reference number**

**Lead contact**



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# What is autism?



Autism is a lifelong developmental disability that affects how people communicate and interact with others, although it is important to recognise that there are differing opinions on this and not all autistic people see themselves as disabled. With an estimated 700,000 autistic adults and children in the UK - approximately 1% of the population - most people probably know someone who is autistic. In addition, there are an estimated 3 million family members and carers of autistic people in the UK.

Autistic people see, hear and feel the world differently to other people. Autism varies widely and is often referred to as a spectrum condition, because of the range of ways it can impact on people and the different level of support they may need across their lives. While autism is not a learning disability, around four in ten autistic people have a learning disability (Autistica). Some autistic people will need very little or no support in their everyday lives while others may need high levels of care.

## Terminology used in the framework

The terms used in this framework are consistent with the guidelines provided by the National Autistic Society on how to talk and write about autism. This guidance is based on research on the preferences of autistic people, their families and professionals, as well as the feedback and insight the National Autistic Society gets from our supporters and wider work.

[How to talk and write about autism](#)



# Autistic people and access to the community



Many autistic people experience sensory sensitivities which can make a visit to a public space such as a railway station, a café or a leisure centre an overwhelming and unsettling experience. Because autism is an invisible difficulty, the challenges they may experience in interacting and communicating with others may be misinterpreted as them just being rude, uncommunicative or even aggressive. Even if people become aware that a person is autistic they may not have the knowledge or understanding to know how best to help even if small changes can make a huge difference.

The National Autistic Society found that just 16% autistic people and their families feel the public understand what it means to be autistic. Around a half said that they sometimes do not go out, and 28% said that they have been asked to leave a public space because of their autism. 79% of autistic people and 70% of families felt socially isolated because of this lack of public understanding of autism.

The National Autistic Society's Too Much Information campaign highlighted the five things autistic people have told the public they would like them to know about what it is like to be autistic;

- needing extra time to process information
- experiencing anxiety in social situations
- experiencing anxiety with unexpected changes
- finding noise, smells and bright lights painful and distressing
- becoming overwhelmed and experiencing a 'meltdown' or 'shutdown'.

A report from the All Party Parliamentary Group on Autism on understanding, services and support for autistic people and their families in England stated that autistic people constantly have to adapt to the world around them instead of the world adapting to them:

"With more understanding, members of the public would know better what they can do. This could be knowing not to ask lots of questions at once, to remove things that cause sensory overload, or what to do if an autistic person is experiencing a meltdown. Understanding helps counter misconceptions and myths about autism, which sadly are still common".

## About the Community Programmes Inclusion Award

The National Autistic Society offers an award for specialist services for autistic people within the care, education and health sector.

The National Autistic Society's Inclusion Award is intended for community-based programmes that are not specialist services for autistic people but enable autistic people to take part in meaningful and enjoyable social activities, for example; related to leisure, recreational or sports interests. As such these programmes play a very important role in boosting social inclusion.

We recognise that those who deliver these programmes are required to directly support autistic people in one to one situations or as part of a small group, sometimes over an extended period of time.

The inclusion award standards support such community programmes in addressing the specific barriers that autistic people often experience in accessing information and services. The standards take in to account current research into good autism practice, as well the experiences and insights of autistic individuals.

- **identify what they are already doing well and where more work may be needed**
- **create an action plan to ensure staff are receiving adequate training and reasonable adjustments are in place for autistic people**
- **improve outcomes for autistic people**
- **support provisions in meeting their Equality Act duties**
- **provide evidence of good autism practice in order to achieve the National Autistic Society Inclusion Award.**

## Completing the self-audit



After registering with the programme, the next stage is for your team to complete the self-audit, which is based on our standards of good practice.

The standards are divided into four topics:

- Understanding autism
- Making our service accessible for autistic people
- Providing personalised support
- Working in partnership in the best interests of autistic people.

Each of these standards are broken down further into indicators. These are pointers to help services identify what they can do to meet the standards.

Your team can score how well they are doing in meeting each indicator using the following RAG (Red; Amber; Green) rating:

<b>Not applicable</b>	This aspect of practice is not relevant or practical for the provision to address. It would be expected that only a few indicators (if any) are rated as not appropriate, and a rationale can be given for why.
<b>Not developed</b>	Work has yet to be started in this area.
<b>Developing</b>	Work has started in this area but maybe only recently or with some inconsistency.
<b>Developed</b>	Work is taking place in this area.

Once the self-audit has been completed, an action plan can be created to address those standards where more development work is required. You can use the template in this document or your own version.

# The assessment process



## Before your assessment

You should contact your adviser to book a date for your assessment. Please give six months' notice to ensure a booking as your adviser may not be able to accommodate an earlier date.

A few weeks before the assessment date, you will be sent a link to a confidential survey which you can share with the autistic people you support.

Two weeks before the assessment date you will need to submit a portfolio of evidence. This will consist of:

- the completed audit and action plan
- individual case studies (maximum of three)
- working documents to support case studies.

## The assessment day

On the day of the assessment, the assessor will interview the key person in your provision responsible for developing inclusive systems and processes in supporting autistic people. You can nominate up to three other staff members to be interviewed.

Where appropriate, interviews should also be conducted with autistic individuals themselves. Interviews will be conducted through a confidential video link.

Consideration will also be given to the outcome of the surveys and documentary evidence provided.

## After your assessment

Within a month of your assessment, you will receive a letter confirming if you have achieved the award and identifying what you are doing well and where further developments could be made.

The letter will be followed up by a certificate and access to the Inclusion Award Quality Mark. We recommend that you request a reassessment every three years to ensure that a good standard is maintained, and your award will be recognised as reflecting current practice.

## Topic one : Understanding autism

- **Our team understand the key challenges that autistic people may experience in accessing our programmes.**
- **Our team are aware of what actions they can take in their roles to make it easier for autistic people to access our programmes.**
- **Our team receive ongoing professional development to develop their knowledge and confidence in working with autistic people, including gaining insight from experts with lived experience.**

Indicator	Not applicable	Not developed	Developing	Developed
Our team know that autistic people are autistic all their lives and that autism is caused by differences in processing within people's brains.				
Our team know characteristics that might indicate that a person is autistic but also that these characteristics can present in many ways or not at all and that each person is affected by autism differently.				
Our team know about the challenges that autistic people might face in visiting public spaces (especially for the first time) and know that individuals may become anxious, confused, find it difficult to communicate or be overwhelmed by too much noise and activity.				
Our team understand their role and responsibility to make reasonable adjustments for autistic people according to the <i>Equality Act</i> and the <i>Autism Act</i> .				
We have provided our team with guidelines on what terms they should use when talking about a person's autism, so they show respect and avoid causing offence.				
We have provided our team with guidelines on what reasonable adjustments they should consider (relevant to their role and responsibility).				
We have identified one or more team members as autism or neurodiversity champions. They could be people with knowledge, interest or personal experience of autism who are willing to support other team in identifying and embedding good practice in working with autistic people. (This could be within our team or across a group of provisions). All our team know who the autism champions are and what their role is.				
Members of our team who work directly with autistic individuals over an extended period of time receive additional training in providing person-centred support.				
We have created an autism group for our team to share ideas about how best we can work with autistic people.				

## Topic one : Understanding autism

Indicator	Not applicable	Not developed	Developing	Developed
Our team know who they can ask for additional help and advice in working with autistic people if they feel they need it.				
Our team are encouraged to access additional resources to find out more about autism as and when it would be timely for them to do so.				
Team members who are autistic or have a close relative who is autistic are encouraged to share their expertise through experience in whatever way they feel comfortable, while taking care to recognise that each person's experience of autism is unique and may not apply to others.				
We include opportunities for our team to hear or read accounts from autistic people about the challenges they face within the community; for example inviting an autistic person to speak at a team meeting or showing everyone a video interview.				
We have identified autistic people, who we have worked with, that are willing to be autism representa-tives and help us to develop our understanding of how best to support autistic people within the Com-munity.				
We gather feedback from autistic people and/or their families who we have supported and use this feedback to improve our team's understanding of autistic people's experiences of using our programme.				

What key evidence shows how we meet these standards?


## Topic one: Assessment

**Our team understand the key challenges that autistic people may experience in accessing our programmes.**

Summary of how we address this standard (Max 400 words)

Assessor comment (Max 400 words)

Assessor grade

**Our team are aware of what actions they can take in their roles to make it easier for autistic people to access our programmes.**

Summary of how we address this standard (Max 400 words)

Assessor comment (Max 400 words)

Assessor grade

## Topic one: Assessment

**Our team receive ongoing professional development to develop their knowledge and confidence in working with autistic people, including gaining insight from experts with lived experience.**

Summary of how we address this standard (Max 400 words)
Assessor comment (Max 400 words)
Assessor grade

## Topic two: Making our services accessible for autistic people

- We have taken reasonable steps to make the physical environment in which our programmes takes place more accessible.
- We provide accessible information for autistic people which helps prepare them for what is going to happen and what they can expect from us.
- We adapt the ways we normally do things to make it easier for autistic people to access our programmes.
- We gather and make use of feedback from autistic people to identify whether further adaptations could make our programmes more accessible.

Indicator	Not applicable	Not developed	Developing	Developed
We always consider requests for reasonable adjustments and are willing to do things in a different way or to provide additional support when it is practical to do so.				
We provide autistic people with accessible information about what they can expect from our programme.				
When visiting our programmes, an autistic person is able to follow directional signage to work out where they need to go which is highly visual and consistent throughout eg arrows, footprint stickers, colour-coded trails etc.				
On arriving at our programme, there are visual cues to help autistic people know who they can go to for help.				
We offer visitors ways to immediately alert staff that they may need extra help, for example, by displaying and making available 'I am autistic' cards.				
We know that autistic people may find it difficult to cope in areas which they find busy, noisy, cluttered or where there is a lot of activity. We take steps to try to reduce sensory overload.				
We offer a quiet place for autistic people to wait or talk to us or a screened-off space where there are less distractions.				
Consideration has been given to seating arrangements to avoid autistic people having to sit in close proximity to others; for example, when waiting for an appointment.				
We offer autistic people an opportunity to attend when the programme is less busy.				
All our staff recognise that autistic people are likely to be feeling very anxious in visiting the programme although they may mask their anxiety, or it may present as unwillingness to cooperate or rudeness.				

## Topic two: Making our services accessible for autistic people

Indicator	Not applicable	Not developed	Developing	Developed
<p>All our staff have been trained in approaches to help calm an anxious person down, for example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• listen to them carefully and calmly</li> <li>• focusing on what the person wants them to do</li> <li>• giving processing time</li> <li>• not telling the person to calm down</li> <li>• not giving false reassurances which later turn out not to be true</li> </ul>				
<p>All our staff are trained in knowing how to adapt their communication if they know a person is autistic includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• slowing down and avoiding talking too much</li> <li>• using clear language</li> <li>• sticking to the point</li> <li>• writing down key points and sharing them with the autistic person.</li> </ul>				
<p>We actively seek and use feedback from autistic people on what we can do to ensure our service is accessible to them.</p>				

What key evidence shows how we meet these standards?

## Topic two: Assessment

**We have taken reasonable steps to make the physical environment in which our programmes take place more accessible.**

Summary of how we address this standard (Max 400 words)

Assessor comment (Max 400 words)

Assessor grade

**We provide accessible information for autistic people which helps prepare them for what is going to happen and what they can expect from us.**

Summary of how we address this standard (Max 400 words)

Assessor comment (Max 400 words)

Assessor grade

### **We adapt the ways we normally do things to make it easier for autistic people to access our programmes.**

Summary of how we address this standard (Max 400 words)

Assessor comment (Max 400 words)

Assessor grade

### **We gather and make use of feedback from autistic people to identify whether further adaptations could make our programmes more accessible.**

Summary of how we address this standard (Max 400 words)

Assessor comment (Max 400 words)

Assessor grade

## Topic three: Providing personalised support

- **Members of our team providing direct support find out the best way of working with individuals and make reasonable adjustments according to what is best for the individual.**
- **Members of our team providing direct support structure the support we offer and try to ensure consistency, preparing the autistic individual for any changes.**
- **Members of our team providing direct support help autistic individuals to access extra support if they want and need it.**

Indicator	Not applicable	Not developed	Developing	Developed
Where possible we allocate individuals to members of our team who we know have particular skills experience or interest in working with autistic people.				
Members of our team providing direct support are aware of the reasonable adjustments they can make for autistic people and inform them about what they can offer, rather than assume that the autistic person knows what to ask for.				
Members of our staff providing direct support find out from the autistic individual (or those who represent them) how best they can work with them. In particular, they will ask them the best way of; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• communicating with them (eg would you like me to write notes down as I explain things and then give you a copy?)</li> <li>• what they can do to help them in self-organisation</li> <li>• how they can support them in their sensory needs (eg would you prefer we had our meetings in a quieter space?)</li> </ul>				
We keep an open mind about what an autistic person can or cannot do and avoid relying on stereotypes and myths; eg autistic people don't feel emotion, have a savant skill, cannot form meaningful social relationships etc.				
We do our best to avoid changes; eg last minute cancellations, change in seeing a familiar team member. Where changes cannot be avoided, we give the autistic person as much advanced warning as we can rather than just telling them at the last minute. We also reassure them about what will stay the same despite the change.				
We try to start and finish sessions on time and appreciate the stress we might cause if we don't. When a change of time can't be avoided, we give as much advanced warning and try to be as specific as possible (avoiding figures of speech such as 'in a moment').				

## Topic three: Providing personalised support

Indicator	Not applicable	Not developed	Developing	Developed
We structure sessions and try to keep the format the same, so they become very predictable. We explain what is going to happen at the start of the meeting (eg First I will ask... then...) and if it helps present this as a written schedule.				
When giving information, we check for understanding rather than assuming we have been under-stood.				
When asking questions, we make them clear and specific. We allow thinking time and consider writing the questions down for the autistic person to read before they answer. If the autistic person's answer suggests confusion, then we repeat the question or break it down into more closed questions.				
We encourage and support the autistic person to write an about me passport or similar document that explains what reasonable adjustments they might need.				
We have processes in place to avoid the autistic person having to tell members of the team information they have already told one of our colleagues.				
In offering extra support and reasonable adjustments, we recognise the importance of the autistic person (or where appropriate, those that represent them) being able to express their views, and be involved in decision making, with their informed consent and understanding.				

What key evidence shows how we meet these standards?

## Topic Three: Assessment

**Members of our team providing direct one to one support find out the best way of working with individuals and make reasonable adjustments according to what is best for the individual.**

Summary of how we address this standard (Max 400 words)

Assessor comment (Max 400 words)

Assessor grade

**Members of our team providing direct one to one support structure the support we offer and try to ensure consistency, preparing the autistic individual for any changes.**

Summary of how we address this standard (Max 400 words)

Assessor comment (Max 400 words)

Assessor grade

## Topic Three: Assessment

**Members of our team, providing direct one to one support, help autistic individuals to access extra support if they want and need it.**

Summary of how we address this standard (Max 400 words)

Assessor comment (Max 400 words)

Assessor grade

## Topic four: Working in partnership in the best interests of autistic people

- We work in partnership with other services to ensure the needs of autistic people accessing our programme are addressed.
- We work in partnership with other organisations to share good practice and resources in supporting autistic people.
- We work in partnership with providers and other services to improve our work with autistic people.

Indicator	Not applicable	Not developed	Developing	Developed
We work in collaboration with other services to share resources and examples of good practice in working with autistic people.				
We work in collaboration with organisations that represent or are run by autistic people so we can share with them what we do and how we work with autistic people, and they can share their expertise and knowledge.				
We share information about an individual's autism and reasonable adjustments that they might need with the consent of the individual and where it would be appropriate to do so.				
We find out about and tell autistic individuals about services, charities and user-led organisations that can help them in the local area and how they can access them, making direct referrals when it would be appropriate to do so.				

What key evidence shows how we meet these standards?

## Topic Four: Assessment

**We work in partnership with other services to ensure the needs of autistic people accessing our programmes are addressed.**

Summary of how we address this standard (Max 400 words)

Assessor comment (Max 400 words)

Assessor grade

**We work in partnership with other organisations to share good practice and resources in supporting autistic people.**

Summary of how we address this standard (Max 400 words)

Assessor comment (Max 400 words)

Assessor grade

### **We work in partnership with providers and other services to improve our work with autistic people.**

Summary of how we address this standard (Max 400 words)

Assessor comment (Max 400 words)

Assessor grade



# Action plan

## Topic one : Understanding autism

- Our team understand the key challenges that autistic people may experience in accessing our programmes.
- Our team are aware of what actions they can take in their j roles to make it easier for autistic people to access our programmes.
- Our team receive ongoing professional development to develop their knowledge and confidence in working with autistic people, including gaining insight from experts with lived experience.

Action	Completed



# Action plan

## Topic two: Making our services accessible for autistic people

- We have taken reasonable steps to make the physical environment in which our programmes takes place more accessible.
- We provide accessible information for autistic people which helps prepare them for what is going to happen and what they can expect from us.
- We adapt the ways we normally do things to make it easier for autistic people to access our programmes.
- We gather and make use of feedback from autistic people to identify whether further adaptations could make our programmes more accessible.

Action	Completed



# Action plan

## Topic three: Providing personalised support

- Members of our team providing direct support find out the best way of working with individuals and make reasonable adjustments according to what is best for the individual.
- Members of our team providing direct support structure the support we offer and try to ensure consistency, preparing the autistic individual for any changes.
- Members of our team providing direct support help autistic individuals to access extra support if they want and need it.

Action	Completed



# Action plan

## Topic four: Working in partnership in the best interests of autistic people

- We work in partnership with other services to ensure the needs of autistic people accessing our programme are addressed.
- We work in partnership with other organisations to share good practice and resources in supporting autistic people.
- We work in partnership with providers and other services to improve our work with autistic people.

Action	Completed

# Case study one



Brief description of the skills and challenges experienced by the autistic individual.  
(Do not use real name or any specific information that could personally identify them.)

What reasonable adjustments have been made by the programme?

What additional support has been provided to them in helping them access the programme?

What outcomes have been achieved?

Any other relevant information

# Case study two



Brief description of the skills and challenges experienced by the autistic individual.  
(Do not use real name or any specific information that could personally identify them.)

What reasonable adjustments have been made by the programme?

What additional support has been provided to them in helping them access the programme?

What outcomes have been achieved?

Any other relevant information

# Case study three



Brief description of the skills and challenges experienced by the autistic individual.  
(Do not use real name or any specific information that could personally identify them.)

What reasonable adjustments have been made by the programme?

What additional support has been provided to them in helping them access the programme?

What outcomes have been achieved?

Any other relevant information

## Summary of the assessment

Date of assessment:	
Assessor:	
Outcome:	

What the service does well:

Next steps:



# About the National Autistic Society

**The National Autistic Society is here to transform lives, change attitudes and create a society that works for autistic people.**

**We transform lives by providing support, guidance and practical advice for the 700,000 autistic adults and children in the UK, as well as their three million family members and carers. Since 1962, autistic people have turned to us at key moments or challenging times in their lives, be it getting a diagnosis, going to school or finding work.**

**We change attitudes by improving public understanding of autism and the difficulties many autistic people face. We also work closely with businesses, local authorities and government to help them provide more autism-friendly spaces, deliver better services and improve laws.**

**We have come a long way but it is not good enough. There is still so much to do to increase opportunities, reduce social isolation and build a brighter future for people on the spectrum. With your help, we can make it happen.**



The National Autistic Society is a charity registered in England and Wales (269425) and in Scotland (SC039427) and a company limited by guarantee registered in England (No.1205298), registered office 393 City Road, London EC1V 1NG.