

Making society work for autistic people





Our impact

in 2023-24



The National Autistic Society exists to create a society that works for autistic people and their families. Our bold Moonshot Vision, created with and by autistic people, sets out what that society will look like. In April 2023, we launched our Vision to Reality strategy, saying what our next steps will be to create that society.

At the end of the first year, we want to tell you what our impact so far has been.



A message from our Chief Executive



This has been a defining year for the National Autistic Society as we strive towards our vision to create a society that works for autistic people and their families. In our Vision to Reality strategy published last year, we outlined our core beliefs and ambitions: supporting all autistic people; influencing and collaborating to improve support; and transforming society.

These are huge ambitions and will take many years to achieve fully. Our strategy set out the first steps we needed to take and this year has been pivotal in achieving those. We'll keep building on them until we reach our goal to create a society that works for autistic people.

It hasn't been an easy year. Economic and political insecurity, council funding cuts and the cost of living have hit our charity just as they have hit everyone's lives. We had to make tough decisions to close some services where, after trying everything we could, we just couldn't afford to keep running them. And it means that we haven't been able to make all the progress we wanted to in our first year of the new strategy.

But Vision to Reality is still exactly what we are working for. We will continue to provide adult services to meet the needs of people who face the most complex challenges while pioneering a new universal information and advice service. We will train staff across the country and pilot new forms of support in education. We will keep fighting for autistic people's rights in every nation of the UK and collaborate with autistic people and other organisations in our powerful movement for change.

Whatever we haven't achieved in our first year remains on our to-do list for the second. We end the year with stronger foundations for making these changes happen, and I look forward to standing side-by-side with you all to create a society that truly works for autistic people.

Caroline Stevens,
Chief Executive

We support

all autistic individuals and their families to live a fulfilled life on their terms.



Over a **million** people visited our website for vital advice or guidance. All together, they looked at our advice pages over four million times.

Over **5,000** people called or emailed our charity for support.



We supported **670** autistic adults in our adult services across the UK, providing expert support in people's homes and communities so they can thrive.



In our national Diagnostic and Assessment Service, we dealt with over **4,000** enquiries and provided expert clinical consultations and enhanced diagnostic assessments for 264 people.

All across the UK

In **Scotland**, our comprehensive range of support programmes have supported almost **170** young people, autistic adults after diagnosis and families.



In **Wales**, **250** people have taken part in our new Peer Support Project which gives people opportunities in a safe environment where you can be yourself and meet others with similar interests and life experiences.

In **Northern Ireland**, we supported **663** people from our innovative Belfast Centre with a mix of daytime activities, family support and a lending library.

In **England**, our Autism Inpatient Mental Health Casework Service helped **147** autistic individuals and their families understand their rights and entitlements to prevent or challenge detention in mental health hospitals.



Meet Rebekah

"I love sunbathing in my garden, cooking and baking."

Rebekah lives in one of our residential services. She loves music, dancing and meeting up with her friends. Rebekah has one-to-one support throughout the day to help her live as independently as she can. You can watch her film at www.autism.org.uk/meet-rebekah



Meet Jack

“My school is a place where I can be myself.”

Jack attends our Sybil Elgar School in West London. Founded in 1965, it was the world's first autism-specific school and paved the way for education for autistic children. Jack and his schoolmates recently completed an art project for the school, and you can watch the film at www.autism.org.uk/meet-jack

We influence

and collaborate with others to improve standards and adjustments.



Almost **450**

children were taught in our autism-specific specialist schools and our custom-built innovative Cullum Centres in mainstream schools.

Over

100,000

professionals across education, health and social care improved their knowledge and practice by getting training from our expert Autism Know How team and our partners, the Autism Education Trust. Almost 1,000 people joined our annual conference to develop their insight.



We worked with over

600

organisations and businesses to embed good autism practice through our Accreditation and Inclusion Awards.



We transform

society by building understanding, acceptance and respect for all autistic people.

Almost
25,000

campaigners took action with us to say it's

#TimeToAct,

calling out delays to crucial reforms to the *Mental Health Act* in England and Wales, and to ask their MP to find out more about our

#LetEveryAutisticChildLearn

campaign to fix the education system for autistic children.

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In Scotland, following our campaigning, the public consultation on the *Learning Disabilities, Autism and Neurodivergence Bill* included key proposals for mandatory training, legally binding strategies and a Commissioner.

In April 2023, we worked with local campaigners and successfully reversed the restricted criteria to get an autism diagnosis in Bristol.



2024 saw the launch of our General Election campaign

#ChangeTheConversation,

which saw more than

800

autistic people let us know about their experiences of campaigning.



Meet **ZeZe**

“The Government must act to stop the scandalous treatment of autistic people in mental health institutions.”

ZeZe is one of our Young Ambassadors. In October 2023, she handed in our #TimeToAct petition to Downing Street with members of our Campaigns team. You can watch her film at www.autism.org.uk/meet-zeze





There is much more to do to create a society that works for autistic people

In December 2023, **172,022** people in England were waiting for an autism diagnosis assessment. Of these,

147,042

(85.5%) had been waiting over three months.

In March 2024,

2,045

autistic people or people with a learning disability were in mental health hospitals.

The most recent Government data shows the **employment rate for autistic people is only**

29%

You supported our fight for a society that works for autistic people

Our generous, passionate and ambitious donors, members and fundraisers make all this work possible. The majority of the impact we have celebrated in this report simply would not have been possible without you. So, thank you! Now we celebrate you; these numbers are just a snapshot of the amazing contributions you, our supporters, have made.



Last year, you:

- ran over 9,000 miles in marathons and half marathons across the world
- walked and ran nearly 65,000 miles in our 100 miles in October challenge
- climbed nearly 470,000 feet in treks up the Yorkshire Three Peaks, Snowdon and the Jurassic Coast
- descended over 400,000 feet by skydiving or abseiling.

You also fundraised your way, with 379 people taking on inspirational and creative challenges, including:

- live streaming for 24 hours playing Hogwarts Legacy
- motorcycling 4,000 miles across Sweden and Finland
- bouncing for 27 hours on a trampoline to become Guinness World Record Breakers
- cycling 100 miles dressed as a burger.



And you didn't stop there!

- Over 16,000 of you supported our mission as members of the National Autistic Society.
- Nearly 8,000 of you helped us through regular donations to our work.
- Over 500 of you remembered a loved one by generously supporting our work.
- 4,500 of you took part in our flagship campaign, World Autism Acceptance Week, as well as 28 of our corporate partners.
- The support of private donors and corporate partners enabled us to deliver many life-changing projects, that simply would not have happened without their generosity.

Together, you helped us raise over £7.5 million to fund our vital work to make society work better for all autistic people and their families. Thank you!

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

Find out more at www.autism.org.uk



**National
Autistic
Society**