



HM Government

Autism strategy implementation plan: 2021 to 2022 (Annex A)

21 July 2021



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Contents

- Monitoring the implementation of ‘the national strategy for autistic children, young people and adults: 2021 to 2026’** 2
- Improving understanding and acceptance of autism within society** 3
- Improving autistic people’s access to education, and supporting transitions into adulthood** 6
- Supporting more autistic people into employment** 9
- Tackling health and care inequalities for autistic people** 11
- Building the Right Support in the community and supporting people in inpatient care** 16
- Improving support within the criminal and youth justice systems** 21
- Enablers** 25

Monitoring the implementation of ‘the national strategy for autistic children, young people and adults: 2021 to 2026’

About the implementation plan

This document is the government’s implementation plan for year 1 (2021 to 2022) of the new autism strategy ‘the national strategy for autistic children, young people and adults: 2021 to 2026’. It is published alongside this new strategy, which is issued pursuant to the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care’s powers under section 1 of the Autism Act 2009.

The implementation plan sets out the actions we will take across government, the NHS, local government and the voluntary sector to implement our vision of a society that truly understands and includes autistic people in all aspects of life by 2026. We will publish implementation plans for the subsequent years of the strategy, in line with future Spending Review rounds.

Monitoring progress in 2021 to 2026

To ensure the actions set out in this and subsequent implementation plans are delivered on time and make a real difference to autistic people and their families’ lives, we will monitor progress against the measures of success set out below through a refreshed governance structure.

The Department of Health and Social Care and the Department for Education will establish a refreshed national Executive Group to monitor the timely delivery of actions. This group will hold action owners to account, and we will set up underpinning Task and Finish groups to oversee delivery of specific strands of work.

The new Executive Group will report directly into the Minister for Children and Families and the Minister of State for Care at a biannual accountability meeting. There will be bi-annual accountability meetings, chaired by both Ministers to review progress on actions set out in this and subsequent implementation plans.

Improving understanding and acceptance of autism within society

1. We will improve public understanding of autism and inclusion across the public sector by:

Commitment	Action owner	Applies to children and young people (CYP), adults or both	Measure of success	Date of completion
Developing and testing an autism public understanding and acceptance initiative, working with autistic people and their families and the voluntary sector	DHSC	Both	Initiative is developed and tested with thousands of people	July 2022
Encouraging the establishment of a Neurodiversity priority for Disability and Inclusion Champions within government Departments	Civil Service HR	Adults	Increase in the number of Departments establishing this priority	May 2022
Reviewing cross-Civil Service learning to ensure neurodiversity is an integral part of courses for managers	Civil Service HR	Adults	Review is completed	May 2022
Continuing to work towards the National Autistic Society's Autism Friendly Awards at the MoJ	MoJ	Adults	Progress made against key areas of the award criteria	TBC when the Award resumes

Commitment	Action owner	Applies to children and young people (CYP), adults or both	Measure of success	Date of completion
Headquarters and sharing learning with other government departments				

2. We will make transport and communities more autism-inclusive by:

Commitment	Action owner	Applies to children and young people (CYP), adults or both	Measure of success	Date of completion
Resuming the ‘it’s everyone’s Journey’ campaign to create a more inclusive and supporting public transport environment for disabled people	DfT	Both	Reported action as a result of the campaign	From September 2021
Continuing to promote our disability equality training package to transport staff	DfT	Both	Reported impact via monitoring and evaluation activity	December 2021
Continuing to deliver the Inclusive Transport Leaders Scheme to recognise actions being taken to improve disabled passengers’ experiences	DfT	Both	Increase in the number of transport operators accredited under the scheme	Ongoing
Supporting disabled people, including autistic people, to return to transport as lockdown restrictions ease by	DfT	Both	Campaign awareness and positive engagement	From May 2022

Commitment	Action owner	Applies to children and young people (CYP), adults or both	Measure of success	Date of completion
raising awareness of people's needs and improving signposting support services and safety measures				
Encouraging more autism-friendly programmes in the cultural and heritage sectors	DCMS	Both	Increase in the number of organisations demonstrating efforts to become autism-inclusive	May 2022
Engaging more autistic people in sport and physical activity	Sport England	Both	Increase in the number of autism friendly programmes	May 2022

Improving autistic people's access to education, and supporting transitions into adulthood

3. We will improve educational professionals' understanding of autism by:

Commitment	Action owner	Applies to children and young people (CYP), adults or both	Measure of success	Date of completion
Providing funding (£600,000) for autism training and professional development in schools and colleges	DfE	CYP	Successful delivery of contract against target of training 15,000 staff	March 2022
Carrying out a new anti-bullying programme in schools, to improve the wellbeing of children and young people in schools, including those who are autistic	DfE	CYP	New anti-bullying programme is launched	September 2021
Engaging with potential providers of training as part of our commitment to recruit and train Designated Mental Health leads in schools	DfE/DHSC	CYP	Training providers appointed and programme roll out started	End of academic year 2022

4. We will improve how the SEND system supports autistic children and young people by:

Commitment	Action owner	Applies to children and young people (CYP), adults or both	Measure of success	Date of completion
Publishing and consulting on the SEND review	DfE	CYP	Review published for consultation	As soon as possible
Moving forward with plans to open 37 new special schools, including 24 with specific provision for autistic children and young people	DfE	CYP	Schools opened as per delivery plan	Ongoing programme
Continuing to recognise the needs of autistic children and young people as part of actions we take to support children with SEND, as we move out of Covid-19 restrictions	DfE	CYP	SEND needs reflected in recovery work	March 2022

5. We will improve positive transitions into adulthood by:

Commitment	Action owner	Applies to children and young people (CYP), adults or both	Measure of success	Date of completion
Providing £8.6 million of additional funding to strengthen the participation of parents and young people in the design of SEND policies and services	DfE	CYP	Plans and approaches developed that will be transferable to the wider Jobcentre network	March 2022

Commitment	Action owner	Applies to children and young people (CYP), adults or both	Measure of success	Date of completion
Taking action to strengthen and promote pathways to employment, such as Supported Internships, Traineeships and apprenticeships, and working to support all local areas to develop Supported Employment Forums	DfE/DWP	CYP	Increased sign up and employer take-up of resources on autism	March 2022
Ensuring considerations around autism and transitions into adulthood are included in our programme of school and college workforce training	DfE	Both	Increased take up by autistic people	March 2022

Supporting more autistic people into employment

6. We will improve employment support and the welfare system by:

Commitment	Action owner	Applies to children and young people (CYP), adults or both	Measure of success	Date of completion
Continue our work to ensure our Jobcentre network is welcoming and supportive to autistic customers, developing and testing new approaches through our Health Model Offices	DWP	Adults	Plans and approaches taken forward in Health Model Offices	March 2022
Ensuring that through the Disability Confident Scheme, we promote the skills and abilities of autistic people, and signpost employers to resources on supporting autistic people	DWP	Adults	Increased sign up and employer take-up of resources on autism	Ongoing
Continuing to promote existing programmes, including the Access to Work scheme, and IPES for autistic people who are at least a year away from work	DWP	Adults	Increased take up by autistic people	Ongoing

Commitment	Action owner	Applies to children and young people (CYP), adults or both	Measure of success	Date of completion
Publishing and consulting on the Health and Disability Support Green Paper	DWP	Adults	Green paper is published	Spring 2021
Expanding the government's Autism Exchange Internship Programme outside of London and the South East	Civil Service HR	Adults	Increased take up of the scheme	Summer 2021
Collecting data on the number of autistic staff members working across the Civil Service, to gain a better understanding of the employment rate and actions we may need to take to recruit more autistic people	Civil Service HR	Adults	Data collection begins	From March 2022

Tackling health and care inequalities for autistic people

7. We will improve early identification and reduce autism diagnosis waiting times by:

Commitment	Action owner	Applies to children and young people (CYP), adults or both	Measure of success	Date of completion
Investing £7 million to test and implement the most effective ways to reduce diagnosis waiting times for children and young people, and address the impact of the Covid-19	NHSE/I and DHSC	CYP	Systems in regions will pilot new diagnostic approaches and report findings on quality and effectiveness of pathways to NHSE/I and the Autism Strategy Executive Group. Evidence from the pilots will be used to determine what realistic waiting times reductions should be in years 2 and beyond of the strategy.	March 2022
Continuing an NHSE/I-funded evaluation on the identification of best practice diagnostic pathways for children	NHSE/I and DHSC	CYP	Share update on developing research and findings	March 2022

Commitment	Action owner	Applies to children and young people (CYP), adults or both	Measure of success	Date of completion
Providing £3.5 million of funding to speed up identification for autistic children and young people who are waiting for their autism diagnosis assessments and are at risk of crisis or being admitted to inpatient mental health settings	NHSE/I and DHSC	CYP	Report on the impact of identifying CYP on waiting lists will be provided to the Autism Strategy Executive Group	March 2022
Significantly expanding an early identification programme developed in Bradford	DfE and DHSC	CYP	Pilot rolled out in 100 schools over the next three years.	March 2022
Investing £2.5 million of funding to improve the quality of adult diagnostic and post-diagnostic pathways, and help to address the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on waiting lists	NHSE/I and DHSC	Adults	Systems in regions will pilot new diagnostic approaches and report findings on quality and effectiveness of pathways to NHSE/I and the Autism Strategy Executive Group	May 2022
Improving the quality of data on autism waiting times data, and setting out a plan to specifically improve the collection of data on children and young people	DHSC, NHSD and NHSE/I	Both	Action plan developed for improving data collection	June 2021

8. We will improve health and care professionals' understanding of autism by:

Commitment	Action owner	Applies to children and young people (CYP), adults or both	Measure of success	Date of completion
Continuing to trial and develop the Oliver McGowan Mandatory training on learning disability and autism for all health and adult social care staff	DHSC	Both	Trials and evaluation complete	March 2022
Commissioning a Capability Statement for social workers working with autistic children and families	DfE/DHSC	Both	Statement has been commissioned	May 2022
Publishing guidance and a population calculator developed by Skills for Care and NDTi for health, care and education commissioners, to support the development of diagnostic (as well as other) services	Skills for Care/NDTi	Both	Guidance published	June 2021
Introducing new National Assessment and Accreditation System simulated practice and knowledge assessment materials for social workers working with children	DfE	CYP	A further 17 LAs onboarded to the programme	March 2022
Rolling out the learning disability and autism commissioner qualification to a	LGA/Skills for Care/ADASS	Both	120 commissioners undertaken the qualification	May 2022

Commitment	Action owner	Applies to children and young people (CYP), adults or both	Measure of success	Date of completion
further 120 NHS and Local Authority commissioners				
In addition to the Long Term Plan requirement for every ICS to have a named lead, providing £1.25 million in 2021 to 2022 of funding to recruit Champions in autism and learning disability in every Integrated Care System	NHSE/I	Both	Every ICS is able to identify who their executive lead and their champion is	May 2022

9. We will reduce the health inequalities autistic people face by:

Commitment	Action owner	Applies to children and young people (CYP), adults or both	Measure of success	Date of completion
Carrying out the LeDeR programme for autistic people without a learning disability for the first time	NHSE/I and DHSC	Both	Report on progress with LeDeR application to autistic people	March 2022
Progressing the NHS Long Term Plan's commitments, which include: Trialling the autism health check, developed by	NHSE/I	Adults	The trial is complete	March 2022

Commitment	Action owner	Applies to children and young people (CYP), adults or both	Measure of success	Date of completion
Newcastle University in the North East.				
Piloting hearing, sight and dental checks for children in special residential schools	NHSE/I	CYP	Progress reported via the NHSEI CYP Steering Group	March 2022
Introducing Continuing the expansion of the STOMP-STAMP programmes to stop the over-medication of autistic people	NHSE/I	Both	Report on progress at Transformation Board	March 2022
Working with 12 Early Adopter Sites to trial improved recording of reasonable adjustments (RA) and a 'digital flag' in patient records	NHSE/I	Both	RA flag software flag interface is developed, and tested from June 2021 for wider use in late 2021	March 2022

Building the Right Support in the community and supporting people in inpatient care

10. We will improve crisis prevention and avoidable admissions into inpatient mental health settings by:

Commitment	Action owner	Applies to children and young people (CYP), adults or both	Measure of success	Date of completion
Investing £25 million into building the capacity and capability of seven-day specialist multidisciplinary and crisis services supporting autistic people and people with a learning disability	NHSE/I	CYP	Year on year inpatient reductions in line with the Long Term Plan commitment for 2023/2024	2022 – ongoing work towards targets
Investing £15 million in keyworker pilots and early adopter sites to support children with the most complex needs in inpatient mental health settings, as well as those at risk of being admitted to these settings	NHSE/I	CYP	27 systems will have either a keyworker pilots or early adopter site in place by March 2022	March 2022
Providing £21 million funding to Local Authorities as part of the £62 million Community	DHSC	Both	Increased discharges. Up to 700 each year to be supported for a	Summer 2022

Commitment	Action owner	Applies to children and young people (CYP), adults or both	Measure of success	Date of completion
Discharge Grant for the second year, to accelerate discharges			faster discharge due to CDG funding	
Reviewing the results of our consultation on the Mental Health Act White Paper's proposals to improve the treatment of autistic people	DHSC	Both	Response published	Summer 2021
Investing £3 million in respite and short breaks after COVID-19 with the aim of reducing admissions of autistic children and young people with and without a learning disability to tier 4 mental health settings	NHSE/I	CYP	An expected 15% reduction in admissions to tier 4 settings of autistic children and young people without a learning disability	May 2022
Investing £4 million in 2021 to 2022 to roll out the Transforming Care for Children and Young People accelerator programme with the aim of reducing exclusions and preventing avoidable admissions into inpatient care	NHSE/I	CYP	Provide report on the impact of this accelerator programme across the 14 sites involved to the Autism Strategy Executive Group	May 2022
Working towards the new Affordable Homes Programme's target of 10% of homes being	MHCLG	Adults	Review progress against 10% target	Spring 2022

Commitment	Action owner	Applies to children and young people (CYP), adults or both	Measure of success	Date of completion
supported housing by 2026				
Raising awareness of the DFG for autistic people, including through exploring key issues and how best to overcome barriers with Foundations (the National Body for Home Improvement Agencies) and key charitable organisations for autistic people	MHCLG	Both	Review awareness through engagement with representative bodies	End of 2021
Considering autistic people's needs as part of the review of the Building Regulations, undertaking research on inclusive design	MHCLG	Both	Progress in the research, final reports returned	Mid 2022
Bringing forward plans to reform the adult social care system	DHSC	Adults	Plans published	End of 2021
Rolling out the Small Supports programme across England, and in an additional 8 Transforming Care Partnerships	LGA/NDTi	Both	Programme expanded to 8 TCPs	March 2022

11. We will improve the quality of inpatient mental health care for autistic people and facilitate timely discharge from inpatient care by:

Commitment	Action owner	Applies to children and young people (CYP), adults or both	Measure of success	Date of completion
Investing £1.5 million of funding into the development and trialling of autism training for staff working in adult inpatient mental health settings	NHSE/I	Adults	Progress on the development and trialling of this training will be reported to the Autism Strategy Executive Group	May 2022
Investing £4 million to enable providers of inpatient care for autistic children and young people as well as adults to make adaptations to their physical environments	NHSE/I	Both	Plans agreed with providers, with anticipated timescales. Progress reported to the Autism Strategy Executive Group	May 2022
Undertake a funded £4.5 million joint DHSC/NHSE/I review of advocacy provision for autistic people and people with a learning disability in inpatient care	DHSC and NHSE/I	Both	Review completed with recommendations for next steps to be reported to Building the Right Support Delivery Board	Summer 2022

12. We will address the use of restrictive practices by:

Commitment	Action owner	Applies to children and young people (CYP), adults or both	Measure of success	Date of completion
Investing £1.35 million into life planning, including piloting Senior Intervenor roles to support autistic people and people with a learning disability (or both) with discharge planning	DHSC and NHSE/I	Both	3 Senior Intervenor roles established, supporting 15 people in long-term segregation towards discharge	March 2022
Publishing draft statutory guidance for Mental Health Units (Use of Force) Act for full consultation	DHSC	Both	Draft guidance is published for consultation	Spring 2021
Responding to the CQC's Out of Sight report as soon as possible, taking forward actions in 2021 to 2022	DHSC and NHSE/I	Both	Response published, and progress on actions	July 2021
Responding to Baroness Hollins' and the Oversight Panel's recommendations, taking forward actions in 2021 to 2022	DHSC and NHSE/I	Both	Response published, and progress on actions	July 2021
Commissioning guidance on the use of injunctions for families of people in inpatient care	DHSC	Both	Guidance is commissioned	May 2022

Improving support within the criminal and youth justice systems

13. We will improve understanding of autism across the criminal and youth justice systems by:

Commitment	Action owner	Applies to children and young people (CYP), adults or both	Measure of success	Date of completion
Reviewing the call for evidence on neurodiversity, and developing a toolkit to educate frontline staff about neurodiversity, and the additional support they might need	MoJ	Adults	Call for evidence provides understanding of existing provision for neurodivergent people	Summer 2021, call for evidence published
Introducing and testing a new Neurodiversity Support Manager role within education in up to five prisons	MoJ	Both	Up to five manager roles created	Spring 2022
Having all new prison officers and youth custodial specialists undertake the new Custody and Detention apprenticeship, which includes a dedicated autism session	MoJ	Both	Improved staff understanding and recognition of autism	Starting July 2021
Encouraging more prisons and	MoJ	Both	More prisons and probation	Ongoing

Commitment	Action owner	Applies to children and young people (CYP), adults or both	Measure of success	Date of completion
probation areas to undertake the National Autistic Society's Autism Accreditation scheme			areas register interest with the programme	
Considering the needs of autistic prisoners in the development of improved safety training for prison staff	MoJ	Both	Safety training considers the needs of autistic prisoners	May 2022
Developing a revised policy framework and accompanying guidance on 'Advancing Diversity and Inclusion for offenders and children in custody'	HMPPS	Both	Policy framework launched	End of 2021
Improving staff awareness of dealing with court and tribunal users with hidden disabilities, including autistic people through the 'Hidden Disabilities Scheme'	HMCTS	Both	Scheme launch	December 2021
Ensuring that the experience of court and tribunal users in its buildings is autism-friendly, and that staff are making adjustments to environments	HMCTS	Both	Reasonable adjustments are provided	Ongoing
Introducing mandatory learning as part of the	HMCTS	Both	Launch of Human Voice of Justice	March 2022

Commitment	Action owner	Applies to children and young people (CYP), adults or both	Measure of success	Date of completion
'Human Voice of Justice', which is training focused on communicating with court and tribunal users				

14. We will improve access to services for autistic people in touch with the criminal justice and young justice systems by:

Commitment	Action owner	Applies to children and young people (CYP), adults or both	Measure of success	Date of completion
Conducting research into how police use Out of Court Disposals (OOCs) to support adults with vulnerabilities, including autistic adults	MoJ	Adults	Initial research stages complete	Spring 2022
Publishing guidance for adult prison healthcare services on meeting the needs of autistic people accessing healthcare	NHSE/I	Adults	Guidance published	June 2021
Employing a national neurodiversity advisory for the Community Sentence Treatment (CSTR) programme	NHSE/I and MoJ	Adults	National advisory role recruited	Summer 2021
Ensuring all NHSE/I-commissioned	NHSE/I	Both	Programmes delivered	May 2022

Commitment	Action owner	Applies to children and young people (CYP), adults or both	Measure of success	Date of completion
services are able to continue to identify, assess and meet the needs of autistic people using these services				

Enablers

15. In the first year, we will:

Commitment	Action owner	Applies to children and young people (CYP), adults or both	Measure of success	Date of completion
Develop a cross-government action plan to improve data collection and reporting, involving people with lived experience, delivery partners and charities	DHSC	Both	Data action plan is published	July 2022
Develop a research action plan, setting out actions we will take to improve autism research and embed a culture of autism research by 2026	DHSC	Both	Research action plan is published	July 2022
Refresh our governance structure for delivering on the autism strategy	DHSC and DfE	Both	New governance structure has been implemented	September 2021



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