

Think Autism strategy governance refresh

DH ID box
Title: Think Autism strategy governance refresh
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Document Purpose: Policy
Publication date: March 2018
Target audience:
Stakeholders and partners; the wider general public.
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1. Think Autism strategy governance refresh

The Autism Act (2009) places a duty on the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care to publish a strategy for meeting the needs of autistic adults in England, and to review it from time to time. England's first Adult Autism Strategy, Fulfilling and Rewarding Lives, was published in 2010, with commitment from Ministers across government to transform the support for and experience of autistic people. In April 2014, the Strategy was updated with the publication of Think Autism, supported by revised Statutory Guidance in March 2015.

In 2017, it was agreed that the arrangements for overseeing implementation of the Strategy should be refreshed. In some areas, it was agreed with stakeholders that progress was not as quick as envisaged, and that there was scope to streamline the set of actions and commitments and to re-confirm ownership of specific actions to focus on those that would best realise the objectives of the Strategy.

The Strategy itself has not changed, but the implementation activities required to deliver its intended outcomes, and who will do what, have been clarified. This has returned the focus to delivering what is required by the Autism Act and Statutory Guidance, in a realistic and measurable way.

A revised governance model

A revised governance model to oversee implementation of the Strategy has been established, which centres on 19 overarching strategic objectives. These were identified from the existing Strategy, and have a direct read across to the core aims of the Autism Act and the associated Statutory Guidance. The 19 strategic objectives have been grouped into five domains: Measuring, Understanding and Reporting the needs of people with autism; Workforce Development; Health, Care and Wellbeing; Specific Support; and Participation in the Local Community. There will be five Task and Finish Groups (TFG), one for each domain, which will be responsible for coordinating the delivery of the relevant objectives, and tracking progress of the associated actions. A diagram of the model can be found in Annex A.

Each TFG will be composed of members representing organisations which have the levers, authority and ability to take action to realise the objectives in each specific area. The Chair of each TFG represents the organisation best placed to facilitate overall progress in that domain, and they will be able to influence progress against their objectives. Additionally, at least two members of each group will be self-advocates to ensure that the voice of people affected ultimately by the work of the TFGs is represented. The terms of reference for each group clearly sets out each member's role and responsibilities to drive forward progress in their area.

A new Executive Group will oversee the progress of the TFGs, coordinate actions across the Strategy as a whole and monitor and report on the overall progress against the strategic objectives. Progress, risks and issues from the TFGs will be reported into the executive group. This will help to ensure that activities across the groups are joined up. Every year, the executive group will present the progress in implementing the Strategy to an annual accountability meeting, chaired by a Department of Health and Social Care Minister.

The aims and the objectives of the Think Autism Strategy stand but the revised governance model is expected to help drive progress this year before a formal review of the Strategy in 2019.

2. Annex A: The domain model

The Autism Strategy

Overarching Objective 1: Reducing the gap in life expectancy for autistic people Overarching Objective 2: Autistic people are able to play a full role in society

Domain 1: TFG Lead: DH Measuring, Understanding & Reporting needs of autistic people

- GPs aware of patient's condition (establishment of Autism Register)
- Awareness of diagnosis waiting times and post diagnostic outcomes (indicators in MHSDS), focus to include older people, under diagnosis of women & children)
- Widespread interpretation of social care return data to support autism strategy
- Research
 conducted into
 causes of life
 expectancy gap,
 and best
 interventions to
 address these,
 benchmarking
 what are
 effective mental
 health
 interventions for
 autistic people.

Levers:

- Mental Health Services Data set
- Autism Act/Statutory Guidance
- NHS and Social Care outcomes frameworks

Domain 2: TFG Lead: DH/HEE Workforce Development

- Health and care staff, and staff in organisations with public facing responsibilities, who provide general support to autistic adults have appropriate knowledge of the condition
- Health and care staff, and staff in organisations with public facing responsibilities, who have a direct impact on, and make decisions about, the lives of autistic adults have appropriate specialist knowledge of the condition

Levers:

- 2014 Care Act
- Autism
 Act/Statutory
 Guidance
- DH workforce policy enacted through the 2012 Health and Social Care act
- NHS MandateEqualities Act

Domain 3: TFG Lead: NHSE Health, Care and Wellbeing

- Timely access to adult autism diagnosis
- Timely and appropriate mental health support
- Widespread use of tailored communication methods and recognition of sensory, communication and environmental needs
- Preventative support in line with Care Act 2014

Levers:

- 2014 Care Act
- Autism
 Act/Statutory
 Guidance
- 2014 Child and Families Act
- 2012 Health and Social Care Act (NHSE's oversight of commissioning
- NHS Mandate
 Fauglitian Ast
- Equalities Act

Domain 4: TFG Lead: DWP Specific Support

- Specific support available to people within criminal justice system
- Appropriate
 support to
 identify and
 follow aspirations
 when
 transitioning from
 education
- Easy access to, and positive experience of, employment and benefits pathways
- Support is provided to autistic people to help them retain employment, and support them in their work setting
- Easy access to public transport

Levers:

- 2014 Care Act
- Autism
 Act/Statutory
 Guidance
- 2014 Child and Families Act
- MoJ/HO statutory powers over CPS, Youth Justice Board, NOMS, NPCC
- DWP Autism
 Strategy Action
 Plan
- Equalities Act

Domain 5 TFG Lead: ADASS Participation in Local Community

- Reasonable adjustments enable people to access public services
- Participation in local planning and H&WB strategy implementation
- Access to an appropriate range of accommodation options
- Successful transition of people preparing for adulthood across education. health, employment and social care spheres (participation in employment considered in needs assessments and care and planning process takes account of work opportunities)

Levers:

- 2014 Care Act
- Autism Act/Statutory Guidance
- 2014 Child and Families Act
- HWBs and JSNA
- Equalities Act