

# The Autism Strategy (2013–2020) and Action Plan (2013–2016)



Northern Ireland  
Executive

[www.northernireland.gov.uk](http://www.northernireland.gov.uk)

# Key



**'A' STANDS FOR  
AUTISM**



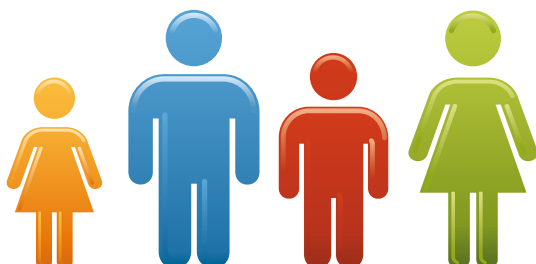
**'C' STANDS FOR  
CARER**



**'NICS' STANDS FOR  
NORTHERN IRELAND  
CIVIL SERVICE**



**'NIE' STANDS FOR  
NORTHERN IRELAND  
EXECUTIVE**



**FAMILY**

## Who we are

The Northern Ireland Executive (the government) wrote this booklet.



It is our job to create new laws and make sure they work.

## About this booklet

In 2011 we introduced a new law about autism.

Because of this law the Department of Health Social Services and Public Safety made a strategy and action plan for improving the services and support for people with autism and their families.



**AUTISM LAW**



# Autism Strategy (2013–2020)

Here is our strategy to make services better and improve the support for people with autism, their families and carers.

It covers 11 key areas throughout life.

## 1 Awareness

We want everyone to understand the day-to-day challenges people with autism face and we want everyone to have a positive attitude about autism.

- Staff who work in public services should get training to understand how to make their services easier for people with autism to access.
- The government should create new information so the public can understand autism more.



## 2 Accessibility

We want to make everyday life easier for people with autism.

- We will try to make it easier for people with autism to use the environment, transport, shops and services.
- There should be more information, signs, communications and people to speak up for the needs of people with autism.



## 3 Children, young people and family

We want to help children and young people with autism and their families cope with everyday family life challenges.

- The right services and support should be available to children and young people with autism and their families when they need it throughout their life.



## 4 Health and well-being

We want the health and well-being needs of people living with autism and their families and carers to be met.

- There should be more promotion of the mind, body, emotional and social health of people living with autism and their families and carers throughout their life.



## 5 Education

We want all children and young people with autism to receive a high-quality education.

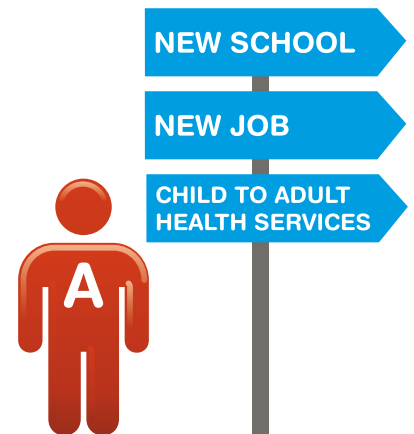
- Children and young people with autism should get a high-quality education that prepares them for life and work and lets them fulfil their potential.



## 6 Moving on

We want better planning for people with autism when changes happen like starting a new school, new job, or moving from child to adult health services.

- When people with autism are moving on to something new everyone should work together to make sure they have the right support.



## 7 Getting a job

We want people with autism to get skills and jobs.

- More people with autism should be able get jobs and their rights should be looked after if they are already working.
- There should be more training and courses for people with autism to get skills and qualifications.



## 8 Choice, control and freedom

We want people with autism to have as much independence, choice and control over their life as possible.

- People with autism should have more choice, control and freedom in their daily lives.



## 9 Justice

We want people with autism to have the same justice as everyone else.

- The law should cater for everyone. People with autism should have access to justice and live safely in their own community.



## 10 Being part of the community

We want people with autism to have a good quality of life as part of the community.

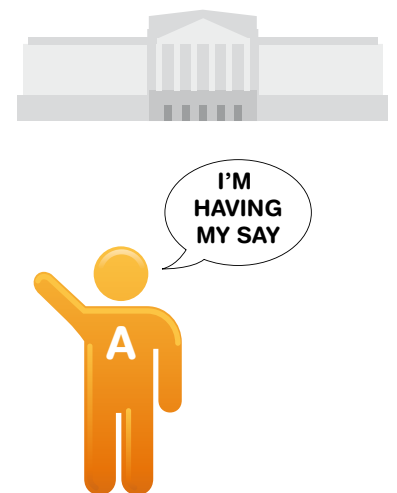
- There should be better access to sport, arts, leisure and other community activities for people with autism.



## 11 Being an active citizen

We want people with autism to feel involved in the decisions the government makes, especially decisions that affect them.

- People with autism should be able to have a say in government policy.
- The government and organisations should do more to help people with autism take part in decisions.



# Action Plan (2013 – 2016)

Here is our action plan to make services better and improve the support for people with autism, their families and carers.

## 1 Awareness

### What we will do

- We will provide training on autism to staff who work in public services.
- We will raise awareness about autism and provide the public with information on it.



### Who will make sure this happens?

- All government departments
- Community and voluntary organisations



### When will we do this work?

- By March 2014 we will make sure staff who work in public services get an autism fact sheet.
- By March 2015 we will make sure organisations that work with the government get an autism fact sheet.
- By March 2015 front-line public services staff will get autism awareness training.
- By March 2014 we will have the plans and funding to create a public autism awareness campaign.

GOVERNMENT



## Action Plan (2013 – 2016)

- In 2014 and 2015 we will promote awareness about autism.
- By September 2014 we will update information about autism on NI Direct.
- In 2014 and 2015 we will take part in World Autism Awareness Day.



**2014 & 2015**

**AUTISM**

## 2 Accessibility

### What we will do

- We will improve travel and public transport information to make it easier for people with autism to get around.
- We will create more travel training to make it easier for people with autism to get around and use public transport.
- We will make sure there is better communication and information about support services available to people with autism.
- We will make sure local autism groups complete a list of local autism services.
- We will provide advocates (someone who speaks for you) for people with autism and their families and carers.



### Who will make sure this happens?

- Translink
- Department of Regional Development
- All other government departments
- Health and Social Care Board
- Local autism groups

# Action Plan (2013 – 2016)



## When will we do this work?

- By March 2015 we will produce easy-to-understand travel leaflets.
- By March 2015 we will take away obstacles that stop people with autism getting around or using public transport, shops and services.
- By March 2014 we will improve the way we direct people with autism to support services.
- By March 2015 we will make it easier for people with autism to access the information and advice they need throughout their life.
- By September 2014 we will make sure more information about autism services is on the NI Direct website.
- By March 2015 we will provide different types of advocates to speak for and support people with autism, their families and carers.



### 3 Children, young people and family

#### What we will do

- We will work with other people to provide support services to meet the needs of children and young people with autism.
- We will promote the different support services available at local community level on the Family Support NI website.
- We will make sure carers of people with autism are aware of their rights and have the right guidance and support.
- We will provide awareness courses and short break support to families and carers of people with autism who need it.



#### Who will make sure this happens?

- Health and Social Care Board
- Health and Social Care Trust Autism Teams in partnership with Education and Library Boards
- Health and Social Care Trust Autism Teams in partnership with the Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership, local councils, Education and Library Boards and the Education and Skills Authority
- Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety with the Health and Social Care Board



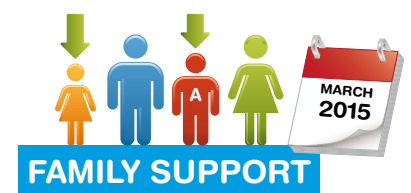
# Action Plan (2013 – 2016)

- Health and Social Care Board and the Public Health Agency in partnership with Health and Social Care Trust Autism Teams
- Health and Social Care Trusts



## When will we do this work?

- By March 2015 we will find out how much support is available for families and for the brothers and sisters of children with autism.
- We will continue to increase the number of carers who know about their right to a carer's assessment.
- By March 2015 we will make sure families and carers of people with autism who are in need of short breaks and family support services get them.
- By March 2015 we will make sure childcare providers get disability awareness training and autism awareness courses.



## 4 Health and well-being

### What we will do

- We will promote the needs of people with autism in all health and well-being programmes.
- We will make sure health services and supports can identify autism and help with it as early as possible.
- We will make sure health and well-being services are improved through everyone working together and the sharing of information and best practice.
- We will check how well the autism care pathways for children and adults are working.



### Who will make sure this happens?

- Health and Social Care Board
- The Public Health Agency
- Health and Social Care Trusts
- Department of Education
- Education and Library Boards
- Education Skills Authority

HEALTH AND  
WELLBEING



AUTISM

# Action Plan (2013 – 2016)



## When will we do this work?

- By March 2015 more people with autism will find it easier to access health and well-being programmes.
- By March 2015 we will improve the way we refer, diagnose and help people with autism.
- By March 2014 we will make sure the adult autism services are working well.
- By March 2015 we will make sure there is progress on the way we apply National Institute for Healthcare Excellence clinical guidelines.
- By March 2014 we will check how well the autism services for children and adults are working and improve them if necessary.



**NICE** National Institute for Health and Care Excellence



## 5 Education

### What we will do

- We will continue to build upon schools' and youth service's ability to meet the needs of children and young people with autism.
- We will make sure schools and other education bodies inform, involve and support the parents and carers of children and young people with autism.
- We will make sure professional support for all children and young people with autism is the same.
- We will make new arrangements for the way the education service works with health autism services.
- We will give support to more children and young people with autism with more complex needs.



### Who will make sure this happens?

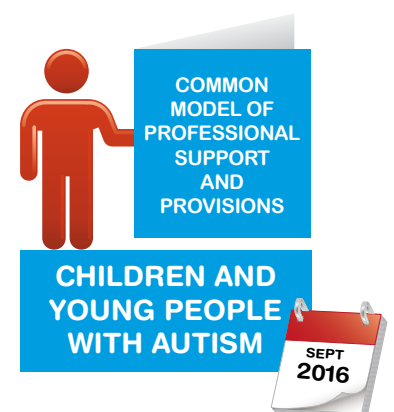
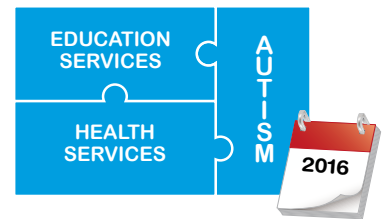
- Department of Education
- Education and Library Boards
- Education and Skills Authority
- Education and Library Boards youth services
- Middletown Centre for Autism
- Health and Social Care Board
- Health and Social Care Trusts

# Action Plan (2013 – 2016)



## When will we do this work?

- By 2016 we will provide effective autism support, training programmes, research and information to schools, parents and carers.
- By 2016 we will explore the potential for youth workers to provide some of the autism support services that schools have.
- By 2016 we will work out and put in place any changes needed in parent and carer training at Middletown Centre for Autism.
- By September 2014 we will make sure there is a plan for giving the same professional support to all children and young people with autism.
- By September 2015 we will make sure the plan for giving the same professional support to all children and young people with autism is ready to put in place.
- By September 2016 we will make sure the plan for a common model of professional support for all children and young people with autism is in place.



## 5 Education (continued)



### When will we do this work? (continued)

- By September 2014 we will have made new arrangements for the way the education service works with health autism services.
- By 2015 more children and young people with autism presenting with complex needs will get support.



## 6 Moving on

### What we will do

- We will make sure that all transition plans (plans to help when moving on to a different stage of life like a new school or job) suit the needs of people with autism.
- We will provide strong support so people with autism can move smoothly from early years to childhood, from childhood to teenager and from teenager to adult.



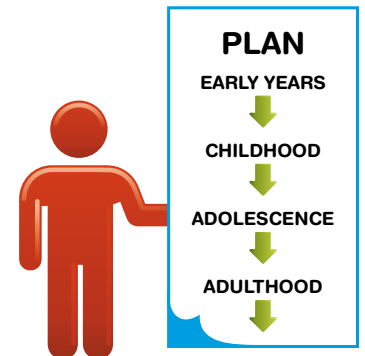
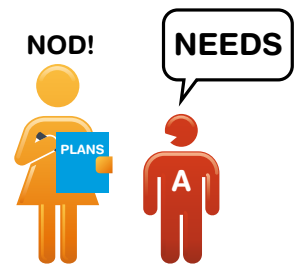
### Who will make sure this happens?

- The Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership Regional Transitions subgroup
- Health and Social Care Trusts
- Education and Library Boards
- Northern Ireland Housing Executive
- Department for Employment and Learning's Careers Service



### When will we do this work?

- By September 2015 we will develop integrated transition plans for children with autism.
- By September 2015 we will improve all stages of transition.



# Action Plan (2013 – 2016)

## 7 Getting a job

### What we will do

- We will support people with autism in getting into or staying in further and higher education, employment and training.



### Who will make sure this happens?

- Department for Employment and Learning
- Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership  
Regional Autism Coordinator
- Health and Social Care Trusts
- Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment



### When will we do this work?

- From 2014 we will make people with autism, and their parents and carers, aware of the support available for getting into and staying in further and higher education, employment and training.
- From 2014–2020 the Department for Employment and Learning will work closely with higher education providers to offer support to people with autism in line with the Access to Success Strategy.
- From 2014 we will make sure the chances of people with autism getting a job are improved through the Economic Inactivity Strategy.
- From 2014 the Pathways to Success Strategy will offer people with autism more chances to get jobs, education and training.

### EMPLOYMENT



### JOB INTERVIEW



## Action Plan (2013 – 2016)

- From 2014 we will make sure further education gives individual support for students with autism.
- From 2014 we will work with organisations to raise awareness with employers on the benefits of employing people with autism.
- From 2014 we will provide programmes to give individual personal support to people with autism who are in education and training or who are working or trying to get a job.



# Action Plan (2013 – 2016)

## 8 Choice, control and freedom

### What we will do

- We will provide support for independent living choices for people with autism.
- We will provide life skills training for young people with autism at post-primary school to help them prepare for adulthood.
- We will provide advice and support on changes to benefits to people with disabilities including those with autism, their families and carers.
- We will increase the personal support for adults with autism.
- We will create a multiagency service for people with autism and their families and carers. It will provide information and access to government services such as health and social care, housing, education, employment and benefits.



### Who will make sure this happens?

- Supporting People Commissioning Body
- Department of Education
- Education and Library Boards
- Education and Skills Authority
- Middletown Centre for Autism
- Social Security Agency



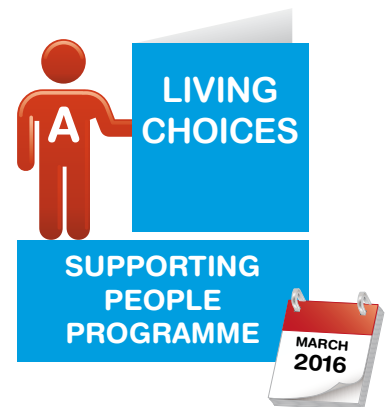
# Action Plan (2013 – 2016)

- Department for Social Development
- HSCB, Health and Social Care Trusts
- Northern Health and Social Care Trust



## When will we do this work?

- By March 2016 supported living choices will be available for people with autism through the Supporting People Programme.
- From 2013–2016 we will provide life skills training for young people to help support independent living choices.
- From 2013–2016 we will provide and oversee advice and support on benefits to people with disabilities including those with autism, their families and carers.
- By March 2016 there will be more self-directed support, direct payments and personal budgets for people and families living with autism.
- By June 2014 we will set up a multiagency autism service in the Northern Health and Social Care Trust and see how it works.



# Action Plan (2013 – 2016)

## 9 Justice

### What we will do

- We will provide extra support for people with autism in the justice system.



### Who will make sure this happens?

- Department of Justice
- Criminal justice agencies



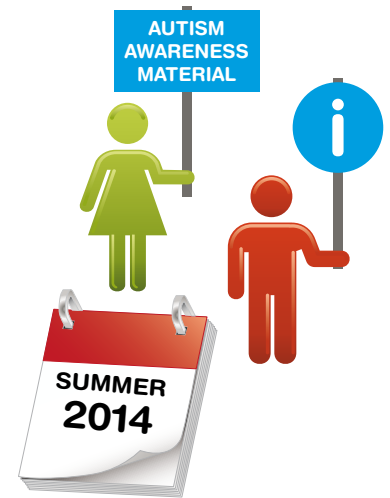
### When will we do this work?

- By March 2014 we will produce a guide to help criminal justice professionals who may meet someone with autism. The guide was produced and launched by the Justice Minister on the 5 February 2014.
- By March 2014 we will develop a training model on autism for those working in criminal justice.
- By March 2018 we will deliver a five-year strategy to improve services for victims and witnesses of crime that takes in the needs of people with autism.
- By March 2016 we will write a new section on interviewing witnesses with autism in the A Guide to Achieving Best Evidence document.
- By March 2015 we will put in place needs assessment and screening tools to help people with autism who come to the attention of the criminal justice system.



## Action Plan (2013 – 2016)

- By March 2015 we will provide information for young people with autism and their families about the criminal justice process.
- We will promote autism awareness in criminal justice organisations through articles and leaflets.
- By summer 2014 we will produce autism awareness cards for people working in criminal justice so they can identify behaviour associated with autism early and look after their needs.



## 10 Being part of the community

### What we will do

- We will set up community social programmes for people with autism and their families.



### Who will make sure this happens?

- Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure
- Culture, arts and leisure providers



### When will we do this work?

- By December 2015 we will have raised awareness about the needs of people with autism and their families and carers in museums, libraries, arts and sports facilities.
- By December 2015 we will encourage and promote opportunities for more people with autism to take part in culture, arts and leisure.



## 11 Being an active citizen

### What we will do

- We will involve people with autism in the design, development and review of government policy.



### Who will make sure this happens?

- Department of Health Social Services and Public Safety, Health and Social Care Boards, in partnership with the Public Health Agency and Health and Social Care Trusts
- Department of Justice
- Department for Employment and Learning



### When will we do this work?

- From September 2013 – March 2016 we will make sure to involve people with autism, parents and carers in carrying out the Autism Strategy (2013 – 2020) and Action Plan (2013 – 2016).
- From April 2014 we will involve people with autism, parents and carers in creating a Victims and Witnesses Strategy.
- By March 2014 we will involve organisations that represent people with autism in the development of the Disability Employment Strategy.



**AUTISM STRATEGY  
AND  
ACTION PLAN**



**VICTIMS AND  
WITNESSES  
STRATEGY**

## Carrying out the strategy

### What we will do

- We will work in partnership with all government departments, agencies, people with autism, their families and carers and community and voluntary sector to carry out the Autism Strategy (2013 – 2020) and Action Plan (2013 – 2016).
- We will give regular progress reports on the strategy and plan to the group that monitors it.
- We will give progress reports on the strategy and plan to the Northern Ireland Assembly every three years.
- We will make sure we get more information on people with autism to help with future plans and services.
- We will keep a check on autism policy to see how well it is working.

### Who will make sure this happens?



- All government departments
- Health and Social Care Board
- Health and Social Care Trusts



# Action Plan (2013 – 2016)



## When will we do this work?

- By 2014 we will successfully launch the Autism Strategy (2013 – 2020) and Action Plan (2013 – 2016).
- By February 2014 government measures to check progress will be in place.
- We will give an annual report to the group that monitors the strategy and plan.
- By January 2017 we will give a report to the Northern Ireland Assembly.
- We will check the ways Health and Social Care Trusts collect, keep and report autism information.
- By September 2014 we will set up ways to share autism information across government departments.
- By March 2015 we will have better ways to collect and share information on the numbers of people with autism involved in the criminal justice process.
- We will regularly check and watch how well the Autism Strategy (2013 – 2020) and Action Plan (2013 – 2016) is working.

