

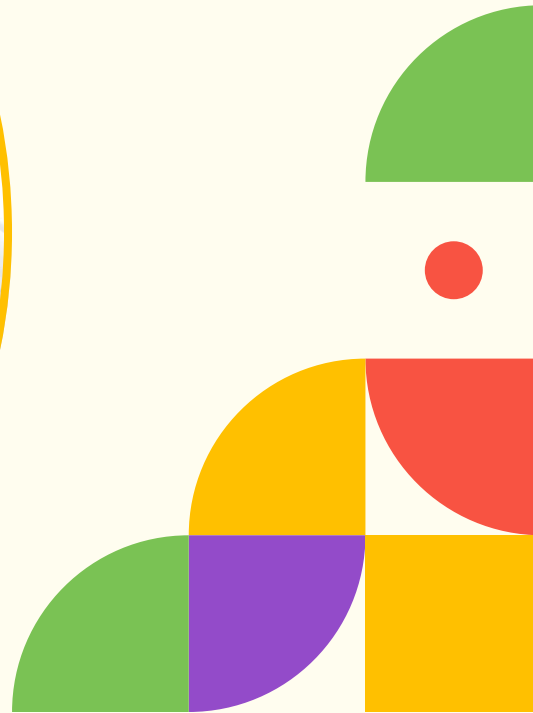


NORFOLK
AUTISM
PARTNERSHIP

NORFOLK'S ALL AGE AUTISM STRATEGY

JUNE 2024 TO 2029

SUMMARY





NORFOLK AUTISM PARTNERSHIP



A partnership of autistic people, parents, carers, and voluntary and statutory organisations working together to achieve an autism-friendly Norfolk.

Foreword

This is a summary of the refreshed strategy.

It builds on and replaces the Norfolk All Age Autism Strategy for 2019 to 2024, 'My Autism, Our Lives, Our Norfolk'.

This strategy is for autistic people of all ages, their parents, carers and families, those supporting them and anyone who has an interest in autism in Norfolk.

This refreshed strategy builds on 'My Autism, Our Lives, Our Norfolk' which was a five-year strategy from 2019 to 2024.

This strategy reflects the improvements that have happened since 2019, and the changes that autistic people in Norfolk have told us they want to see over the next five years, from 2024 to 2029.

The refreshed strategy also reflects changes in national guidance and policies, so that our local priorities and actions can be as effective as possible. It takes account of other local strategies that may be relevant for autistic people.

**700,000 autistic adults and children in the UK
1 in 100 people are autistic**



Introduction and vision

'My Autism, Our Lives, Our Norfolk' and this refreshed strategy set out a vision for the future.

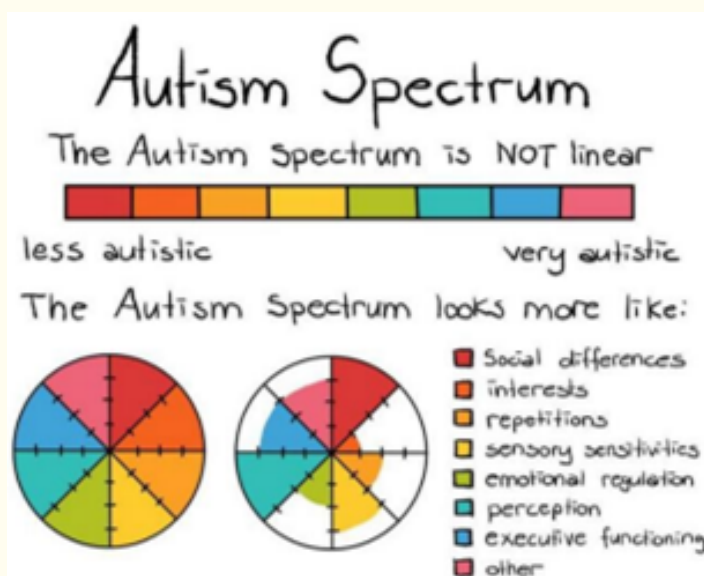


Our Vision

All autistic people, their parents/carers are accepted, understood and treated as equal members of the community.

That there is a greater awareness and understanding of autism by people that live and work in Norfolk.

That this understanding will enable autistic people to have the same opportunities as everyone else to live a fulfilling and rewarding life and achieve their life's ambitions.



This strategy uses the term 'autistic people'. Autistic members of the NAPB said that they prefer 'identity first' language ('autistic people' rather than 'people with autism'). Identity first language reflects the view of many autistic people that their autism is part of who they are, not something separate.

Autism is a lifelong developmental difference that affects how people communicate and how they experience the world around them

The priorities

These are the areas the Norfolk Autism Partnership will work on to achieve the vision.

This summary includes the key themes that people said are important to them, for each of these priorities.

1 Improve understanding and inclusion of autism

2 Improve access to education and support transitions into adulthood

3 Support adults into employment

4 Tackle health inequalities for autistic people

5 Build the right support in the community

6 Improve support within the criminal and youth justice system

To find out more information you can read the full version of the strategy.

This says more about what is happening nationally and locally, and what people said is important.



1

Improve understanding and inclusion of autism

21% of Norfolk autistic people felt more included in their communities compared to 2019

24% of autistic adults in the UK think public understanding has improved

By 2029, we want Norfolk to be a much more autism-inclusive county, where Norfolk's autistic population are included in society, feel safe and welcome.

We want to improve understanding of autism within the general public, and among those providing support and services to autistic people.

Awareness seems to have increased, but I don't feel like it has translated to real inclusion.

Norfolk Resident

I note there is in general, a shift (for the better) in people's awareness and understanding of the needs of autistic people and there are more considerations in services (i.e. supermarkets, cinemas, etc) of how to adjust to meet the needs of autistic people.

Norfolk Resident

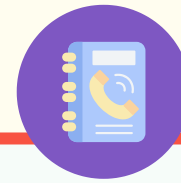
People said these themes are important to them:



Better understanding of autism within society



Better understanding of autism within public services



A Norfolk autism directory of support



Autistic people fully involved in planning, delivery and monitoring of the strategy



Independent advocacy available



A quiet space available within communities and hospitals



2

**Improve access to education
and support transitions into
adulthood**

**2 new autism schools and
13 autism specialist
resource bases**

**More specialist resource
base provision needs to
be developed**

By 2029, we want autistic children and young people to get the right support so that they can flourish in education.

We want transitions into adulthood to improve so that young people can live well in their communities, find work or continue in education.

“
My son has no idea how to move forward after college and is very stressed about what the future may bring.
”

Norfolk Resident

“
Better planning for this transition period, thinking about aspirations, developing independence skills and access to mental health support/ support with creating and maintaining healthy relationships.
”

Norfolk Resident

People said these themes are important to them:



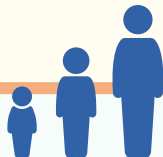
Support in schools, colleges and other education settings



Listening to parents, children and young people



Support for home educating families and young people who are not in school



More support for transition to adulthood

A woman wearing a blue hard hat and a high-visibility yellow jacket is focused on operating a yellow surveying instrument mounted on a tripod. The background is a blurred outdoor construction site.

3

**Support adults into
employment**

**3 in 10
autistic people of working
age are employed
nationally**

**10,000
autistic people of working
age living in Norfolk are
estimated to not be in
employment**

By 2029, we want more autistic adults to be in employment.

We want autistic people's experience of being in work to have improved, and for employers to be more confident about hiring and supporting autistic workers.

“
Many autistic people find themselves stuck in volunteering or unhealthy work environments. I think a priority needs to be to support us to find paid, sustainable employment...
”

Norfolk Resident

“
... support for adults when they are already in employment...
”

Norfolk Resident

People said these themes are important to them:



Support to get a job



Support to keep a job



Support for employers



Routes into employment and education for adults



4

Tackle health inequalities for autistic people

9290

children and young people are waiting for a neurodevelopmental assessment in Norfolk and Waveney

954

adults are waiting for an autism assessment in Norfolk

By 2029, we want autistic people to be able to access the health support they need to live healthier lives.

We want to see improved health outcomes and a reduction in the gap in life expectancy that currently exists for autistic people.

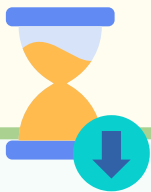
“
ASD affects the whole experience of healthcare, and the long wait times and difficulty getting diagnosed is a significant barrier to accessing the correct healthcare and resources.

Norfolk Resident
”

“
People are waiting too long for a diagnosis that can put people off a diagnosis when it is needed.

Norfolk Resident
”

People said these themes are important to them:



Reduce the waiting time for a diagnosis, and provide more information and support



Better access to health services, through annual health checks, health passports and specialist services



Better access to mental health services and support to prevent people going into crisis

5

Build the right support in the community



By 2029, we want autistic people to be able to live well in their communities.

We want improvements in support to mean that fewer autistic people reach crisis point.

When autistic people spend time in hospital, we want them to be able to return home or move to suitable accommodation with the right support as soon as they are ready.

“
Life at home, relationships - support for neurodiverse spectrum couples and help to have a healthy relationship and family life.

Norfolk Resident
”

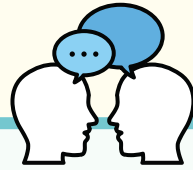
“
More support directed towards autistic adults. Not everyone will seek out the support.

Norfolk Resident
”

People said these themes are important to them:



Early intervention such as more autism social groups, support to understand yourself and peer support



Support for autistic people such as a drop-in service and autism friendly guidance and advice



Improve social care support for autistic people



Support to develop independent living skills and information about housing options



6

**Improve support within the
criminal and youth justice
system**

By 2029, we want autistic people who come into contact with the criminal and youth justice system to get the support that they need.

Through early intervention, we want fewer autistic people to become victims of crime or to be convicted of a crime.

We want those who have been convicted of a crime to get the support they need to fully engage with their sentence and rehabilitation.

“
More awareness and support for reoffending programmes tailored for autistic people. Ensuring probation staff are trained to stop recall being the first option when someone with autism is struggling and can instead support them better.
”

Norfolk Resident

“
Some autistic people are coerced into criminal activity due to a variety of factors that is not a deliberate intention or awareness of hurting others, with lack of autism awareness from professionals.
”

Norfolk Resident

People said these themes are important to them:



**Early intervention
and support to
prevent situations
from getting worse**



**Support in police
stations and courts**



**Support while in
prison**



**Support on release
from prison**

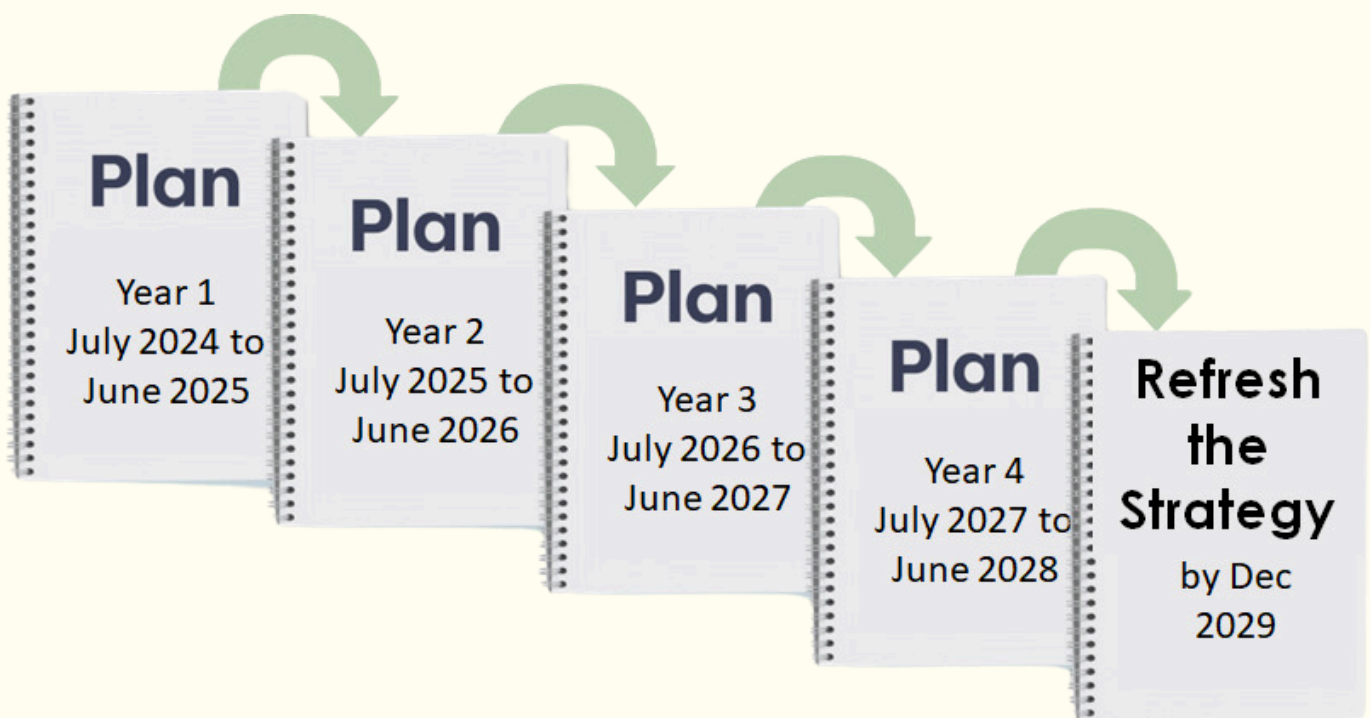


Putting the strategy into action

The plan sets out the key actions that we will take towards achieving the priorities of the strategy.

A new plan will be agreed each year.

The NAPB will monitor the plan and whether partner organisations are doing what they have said they will do.



To find out how this strategy will be put into practice, you can read the plan.

“
Will there be visibility on how funding is spent?

Norfolk Resident
”

“
Who will monitor how and when the strategy is implemented?

Norfolk Resident
”

How we refreshed the strategy

This strategy is co-produced by the Norfolk Autism Partnership Board (NAPB), which includes people with lived experience of autism of all ages, including parents/carers.

July to Dec 2023

Set up an Autism Strategy Group made up of autistic people to oversee the refresh of the strategy

Oct to Nov 2023

Documents, questionnaire and workbook available through the Norfolk Autism Partnership website

July to Sept 2023

Autism Strategy Group designed and tested

- a document, animation and easy reads to share what the strategy achieved over the last 5 years and what partners plan to do over the next 5 years
- an online questionnaire and workbook, to find out what is important to people
- a webpage to share the communications
- a plan of how to encourage people to take part

“
Being part of the Autism Strategy Reference Group enabled me to feel part of a caring community dedicated to making positive change for autistic people in Norfolk.

Autism Strategy Group Member
”

Mar to Apr 2024

Autism Strategy Group analysed the feedback to agree the Norfolk All Age Autism Strategy's key priorities and wrote the strategy and plan

Jan to Feb 2024

Autism Strategy Group arranged activities to share and understand better what people said is important and check if anything is missing

May to June 2024
Shared the strategy with Board members and partners

Who was involved?

574 individual comments were recorded and analysed from those people who completed the questionnaire in October 2024, and those who took part in online and face to face sessions held in January and February 2024.

The questionnaire was completed by 137 people:

- 76 autistic adults (blue)
- 2 autistic young people - aged under 18 (yellow)
- 35 parents/carers or family members (green)
- 24 professionals/other respondents (orange)

69 people took part in individual and group sessions:

- 43 people through an online session (gold)
- 20 people through a library session (grey)
- 6 people in a workshop for autistic prisoners at Norwich Prison (purple)

Acknowledgements

Acknowledgement and special thanks to the following:

- **The Autism Strategy Reference Group members for their hard work to develop this strategy and their creativity and innovative thinking.**
- **All members of the NAPB, past and present, who give their time, skills and experience. Their valuable contribution to improving services and support for autistic people of all ages is acknowledged.**
- **Those who completed the autism strategy questionnaire or attended a group or forum to refresh the strategy. All those who took part have had a major impact on this strategy by sharing their experiences and ideas.**





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