

The national strategy for autistic children, young people and adults: 2021 to 2026

On the 22nd July 2021, the government launched its national strategy for improving the lives of autistic people and their families and carers in England and published their implementation plan for 2021 to 2022.

The Vision

“By 2026, we want to demonstrate that we have significantly improved public understanding and acceptance of autism, and that autistic people feel more included in their communities and less lonely and/or isolated. We want the public to have a better understanding of autism and to have changed their behaviour towards autistic people and their families.”¹

The NNPCF welcomes this strategy which sets out the changes the government want to make across 6 areas:

1. improving understanding and acceptance of autism within society
2. improving autistic children and young people’s access to education, and supporting positive transitions into adulthood
3. supporting more autistic people into employment
4. tackling health and care inequalities for autistic people
5. building the right support in the community and supporting people in inpatient care
6. improving support within the criminal and youth justice systems

We know that by listening to our members this has been very challenging for many families. The strategy acknowledges the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on autistic children and young people and their families’ lives,

The focus of our work will remain Covid 19 for the foreseeable future as services are far from back to where they were before the pandemic and the long-term impact on our children has not yet been understood or felt.

We will continue to ensure that the parental voice is heard and work with the government and NHSE to ensure that all children with SEND (including children and young people with autism) are not further disadvantaged through the recovery.

However, we also need to focus on improving the underlying system that was struggling even before the pandemic hit and this strategy gives us the opportunity to tackle many of the issues that you have told us are important to you.

SEND Review

Improving how the SEND system supports autistic children and young people. We will continue to engage in work of the SEND Review to support the DfE to achieve the far-reaching changes we think are necessary including supporting positive transitions into adulthood.

¹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-strategy-for-autistic-children-young-people-and-adults-2021-to-2026/the-national-strategy-for-autistic-children-young-people-and-adults-2021-to-2026>

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NHS Long Term Plan

Through our joint role with Contact to be the strategic partners for NHS England's Children and Young People's Learning Disability and Autism Team, the NNPCF will be involved in key elements of the development, implementation, and review of the NHS Long Term Plan in relation to children and young people with a learning disability or autism (LDA).

The contract will enable the NNPCF to sharing information with parent carer forums about the long-term plan and provide feedback to the NHS LDA team on the lived experience of families.

Autism Schools Project

NHSE has developed a national project for each region to work on promoting better understanding & support with regards to autism in schools.

The rollout of the national programme was undertaken towards the end of the summer term 2021. Successful expression of Interests has secured funding to rollout the pilot across regionally.

Engagement with the DWP

The NNPCF have been invited engage with the DWP to inform the Health and Disability Green Paper.

Find out more about what the strategy says:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-strategy-for-autistic-children-young-people-and-adults-2021-to-2026>