

Autism Accreditation

Specialist Award Manual

2023-2026

Specialist Educational, Social Care and Health Provisions

Name of service:

To be completed by your consultant:

Reference no:

Date of Assessment:

Lead assessor:

External moderator:

Outcome of previous assessment:

To be completed by the Quality Manager:

Committee decision:

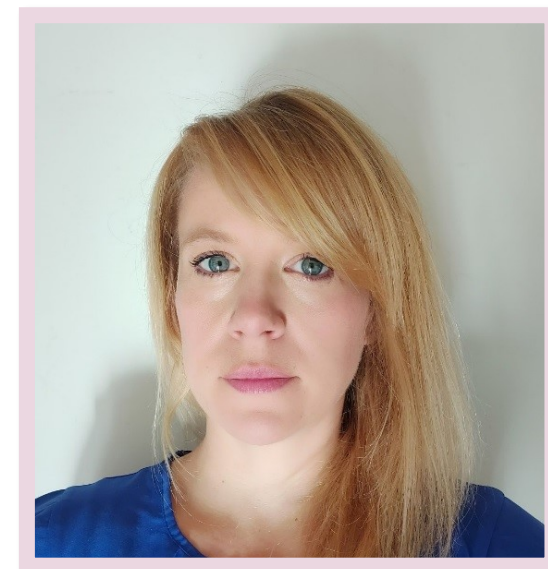
Date of committee decision:

Foreword

Autism Accreditation commenced in 1992 with the overall aim to improve autism practice across both social care, health and education. Since that time, we have worked with over 1000 different service providers and at present our work is impacting on over 35,000 autistic people's lives.

Whether you are new to accreditation or working toward re-accreditation this manual will guide you through your accreditation journey. Once you have filled in the self-audit, action plan and case-studies you can submit this document to your consultant who will complete the assessment and hand the report on to the accreditation awards committee. The committee decision will be included in the report and the now fully completed manual will be returned to you. Throughout the **manual** you will find advice and information to help you on your way.

The Accreditation team welcome the opportunity to continue working with you to achieve the highest standards of good practice in supporting autistic people.



Christine Flintoft-Smith

Christine Flintoft-Smith
Head of Autism Accreditation



Autism Accreditation Mission

We work to ensure that society works for autistic people.

We set the standard for best autism practice and provide frameworks across all sectors to develop supportive environments and cultures that produce positive quality of life outcomes for autistic people.

We are seen as the experts of autism practice and our kite mark acts to reassure autistic people and families of the standard of support they should expect to receive from providers.

Our aims

Set the standard for best autism practice:

Working with autistic people, families and professionals and we use the latest research to inform the standards set.

Sustainable:

We provide a programme of development and resources that can be maintained and built upon year after year.

International kite mark:

Our kite mark is recognised as a sign of best autism practice by autistic people, families and professionals. Offering assurance that the services provided by the organisation are of the highest quality.

Reach:

To ensure that all sectors are targeted to provide best practice across the board our awards and frameworks are tailored to organisation types.



Contents

SECTION One

Your Autism Accreditation journey: An overview [6](#)

- Our framework of best practice [9](#)
- Awards Criteria [10](#)

SECTION Two

Your self-audit [12](#)

- Completing your self-audit and action plan [14](#)
- Self-Audit- **to be completed by the provision** [20](#)

SECTION Three

Submitting your case studies [38](#)

- Case studies templates - **to be completed by the provision** [40](#)

SECTION Four

The Autism Accreditation assessment [46](#)

- Preparing for your assessment [47](#)
- Your assessment [51](#)
- Assessment report (**completed by the consultant**) [54](#)

SECTION Five

Committee decision and next steps [69](#)

- Committee decisions – **to be completed by the Quality Manager** [71](#)
- Next steps [72](#)



Click this symbol on any page to take you to
return back to this page



SECTION One

Your Autism Accreditation journey: An overview

- [Our framework of best practice](#)
- [Awards Criteria](#)





Your Autism Accreditation journey

Pre- assessment

Carry out a comprehensive and detailed review of current practice using our self-audit tool.

Implement an accreditation action plan based on the self-assessment.

Optional sessions can be booked with your consultant to help you complete the self-audit and action plan, review documentation or observe and reflect on practice.

Assessment

Assessment days include observation of practice, oversight of key person-centred documentation, and discussions with key people within the provision (including where possible autistic people.)

Observations may also be undertaken by an independent moderator.

Online accreditation survey is sent to autistic people and/or families/advocates.

A report summary of assessment findings, areas of strength and development is produced by the consultant and sent to the Committee awarding body.

Committee decision

The Accreditation Awarding Committee consider assessment report and decide if an Award can be given and at what level: Aspiring: Accredited or Advanced.

Once a provision has achieved an Advanced Award it has the option of applying for Beacon Status in recognition of the work they do in sharing their expertise and knowledge of good practice in supporting autistic people.

You can read the full criteria [here](#).

Maintaining and progression

Provisions are offered a new assessment plan if they wish to stay in the programme.

They can continue to access consultant support and work on areas of development identified from their assessment. They also have the opportunity to request a further assessment to show they are maintaining the standards or have progressed to the next level.

We recommend this occurs within three years to ensure that our Award can be considered a meaningful reflection of current practice

SECTION one

Your Autism Accreditation journey



How long does each step take?

This depends on:

- How well good autism practice is already in place and consistent across the provision at the point of registration.
- How much time and resources can be committed to carrying out the self-audit, implementing the action plan and preparing for the assessment.
- However, we do recommend that right from the start you set your own dates as targets to work towards. This will help maintain a focus and direction. You can always review these dates if the progress you make is greater or less than you expected. For example:

Jan 2024	Register with the Programme
By July 2024	Complete self-audit
July 2024- Jan 2025	Implement action plan
Jan 2025	Book assessment *
Jan- June 2025	Work on completing action plan and preparing for assessment

*Remember assessments should be booked at least 6 months in advance.

Your assessment plan

On registering with Accreditation, you should receive a copy of your finalised assessment plan. The assessment plan outlines the work that Accreditation considers necessary to assess a provision together with associated costs. You can find out more by reading our [terms and conditions](#).

The assessment plan will tell you how many consultant visits are included in the plan. If you are not intending for your whole service to be assessed, your plan should list what will be included. For example there may be specific care homes that you want to be included in the assessment or maybe in a school a specific department or classes. This should be listed accurately in the plan.

During the pre-assessment phase you may wish to add to expand or reduce your registration. You will need to seek the agreement of the Head of Accreditation to do so, by completing an amendment proposal form. This can be requested from your consultant or from March 1st 2023 it can be downloaded from the Accreditation members section of the National Autistic Society website.

SECTION One

Our framework of best practice



Support should be:	What does this mean
Person-centred	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Each autistic person receives support that is uniquely tailored to them as an individual.• Autistic people and where appropriate their family/advocates are actively involved in shaping the support they receive in ways which are meaningful to them.
Evidence-informed	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Approaches employed to support autistic people are informed by credible research that shows positive outcomes for autistic people, together with practitioner expertise and the lived experience of autistic people.• Approaches should be regularly evaluated to show they are achieving intended outcomes and changes made if they are not.• Whilst approaches can be those which are widely established within the field of autism, they should be adapted according to what will work best for the individual.• Where approaches may be less well-established, they are delivered by, or supported by, appropriately qualified and experienced professionals, are based on a good understanding of autism and closely monitored to ensure that they are not ineffective or harmful.
Strengths-based	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• A strengths-based approach begins with a holistic assessment not just of an individual's needs and challenges, but their skills, interests, preferences and strengths.• Support first and foremost seeks to celebrate and build upon these assets.
Directly promotes wellbeing	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Support is based around activities which each autistic person finds enjoyable, relaxing or engaging, and provides them with a sense of achievement and purpose.• Approaches are identified which help maintain the wellbeing of each autistic person, including where appropriate proactive and preventative strategies to avoid anxiety or distress and to help them understand and regulate emotions and sensory reactions.• Consideration is given to what changes need to be made to the environment or the way staff engage with the autistic person to support their wellbeing and engagement.
Active	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Autistic people are supported to actively take part in purposeful and meaningful activity that impacts on their quality of life.• Autistic people are taught relevant skills in communication, independent living, problem solving and decision making to empower them to have greater control, autonomy and purpose in their lives.• Autistic people are actively involved in and contribute to their community.

SECTION One

Awards criteria



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Aspiring	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The service meets some of the criteria to be Accredited but there are one or more gaps or inconsistencies related to fundamental principles of good practice in supporting autistic people. These areas of improvement directly impact on outcomes for some of the autistic people supported by the service and require a significant amount of work to address.
Accredited	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Staff have a working knowledge of evidence-informed approaches associated with good autism practice. They can adapt these specialist approaches so that support is person-centred and tailored to individual qualities, abilities, interests, preferences and challenges. Adaptions are made to the environment to support individual wellbeing and self-reliance. Each autistic person develops skills and confidence in communicating with others and engaging in a range of rewarding social activities. Each autistic person develops skills and confidence in carrying out tasks independently and in being empowered to make their own decisions, leading to them having greater control and autonomy in their lives. Each autistic person enjoys an increasing range of sensory experiences whilst developing regulation strategies to help them avoid sensory overload. Support enables autistic people to take part in activities which are purposeful and engaging and which promotes their emotional wellbeing and social inclusion. Proactive and preventative strategies are employed to help each autistic person avoid anxiety or distress and to help them understand and regulate their emotions. Feedback from autistic people and/or, where appropriate, those that represent their interests is overall good, confirming that the majority are happy with the support given and how they are involved and consulted. Whilst there may be some gaps or inconsistencies related to fundamental principles of good practice in supporting autistic people these can be addressed quickly and in a relatively short period of time, within the provision's existing resources and capabilities.
Advanced	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The service meets all the criteria to be Accredited at a high level of quality and consistency. Feedback from autistic people and/or, where appropriate, those that represent their interests is excellent, confirming that an overwhelming majority are happy with the support given and how they are involved and consulted. There are no or very limited gaps or inconsistencies related to fundamental principles of good practice in supporting autistic people.
Beacon Status	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The provision has received an Advanced Award within the last 18 months. The provision can demonstrate exceptional work done to impact on knowledge and understanding of autism amongst families, external professionals and the local community. A provision will only be considered for a Beacon Award on submission of an application form to our independent panel of professionals with considerable expertise in the field of autism.



Surveys of autistic people and/or families

Autism Accreditation values feedback from autistic people and where appropriate those representing their best interests. Provisions, especially those hoping to achieve Advanced status, are expected to take reasonable effort to support as many autistic people as possible to participate in our confidential survey, taking steps to make it more accessible where necessary.

- For an Accredited Award, we would normally expect to receive at least 10 % returns from surveys with over 50 % of these returns rating support as always or mostly good.
- For an Advanced Award, we would normally expect to receive at least 33 % return from surveys with over 75 % of these returns rating support as always or mostly good, with more in the always good category. The rest should be in the ok category with maybe the exception of one or two responses in the poor category.

These guidelines will be applied with discretion according to context.

Statutory inspections

Award decisions will be primarily based on observations, interviews and scrutiny of support plans, alongside feedback from autistic people and their families. However, Committee decisions will consider evidence from statutory bodies that a provision does not fully meet regulatory standards

- Accredited award will be withheld if the provision fails to meet statutory requirements related to wellbeing of autistic people,
- Advanced award/Beacon Status will be withheld if the provision enquires improvement or does not meet statutory requirements related to wellbeing of autistic people

Some discretion can be given in applying these rules dependent on when any statutory report was completed and specific content. They also do not apply for services not subject to statutory inspection.

Autism Accreditation reserve the right to declare an award as void if evidence is provided by a regulatory body or other accountable and reputable sources of failings within the service related to wellbeing and safeguarding within 18 months of receiving the award.



SECTION Two

Your self-audit

- [Completing your self-audit and action plan](#)
- [Self-Audit- **to be completed by the provision**](#)



SECTION Two

Completing your self-audit and action plan



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The self-audit tool can be found in this manual. It is based on our [framework of best practice](#) and is divided into five topics.

**Commitment and
Consultation**

**Social Communication,
interactions and relationships**

**Functional skills and self-
Reliance**

Sensory experiences

Emotional wellbeing

Our standards were created using an evidence-informed approach. This can be defined as the blending together of research evidence alongside practitioner expertise and the lived experience of autistic people. To achieve this, we considered current research into the field of autism, with particular bias toward research that employed participatory methods. We consulted with professionals registered with the accreditation programme to gain their insight. We made a specific point of ensuring that the professionals we consulted with included autistic people.

Commitment and Consultation

To complete this first topic, you will need to think about:

- *What are the main specialist approaches used to support autistic people?*
- *What training/ongoing professional development do staff receive in these approaches?*
- *How are autistic people (and where appropriate families, carers or advocates) consulted about the support received?*

Quartet of difference

Our next four standards are based on what we refer to as the **quartet of difference**. These relate to the core areas or domains where autistic people most frequently experience differences when compared to the majority of people.

These differences can present as a combination of skills and strengths as well as challenges, particularly where such differences are not accommodated.

Each of these standards are broken down into a series of indicators. For each of these indicators you are required to say what you do to address it and to give a rating score.

SECTION Two

Completing your self-audit and action plan



Rating Criteria

Fully met	The service/school can provide clear evidence that this question is fully addressed consistently and to a high standard. There is no identified scope for improvement
Partially Met	The service/school can provide clear evidence that this question is addressed for each autistic person but there are clearly identified areas for improvement.
Not Met	The service/school cannot provide sufficient evidence to demonstrate that this question is addressed for each autistic person and there is considerable scope for improvement.
N/A	The service/school do not feel that this question is of relevance to them. NB: you will need to be able to explain why this is the case.

Key points

- The self-audit is based on the same framework that we employ to assess provisions. It is therefore a good indicator of what areas will be considered when you are assessed.
- Feedback tells us that provisions find the self-audit provides an effective framework for development and the process of completing it encourages reflection and discussion.
- We believe that the self-audit process will only be useful to you if you complete it with honesty and self-reflection. Getting accredited will not depend on how well you complete the self-audit and there is no pass mark you need to achieve or any 'correct' responses.
- Some questions may be very challenging. This is intentional as we want the self-audit to be aspirational and thought provoking even for very good provisions.

SECTION Two

Completing your self-audit and action plan



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Setting up a Quality Action group

We recommend that you ask other staff members to join a Quality Action Group (QAG) to meet regularly in order to work on the self-audit and action plan.

The QAG should ideally include representation from different departments and level of management and maybe autistic people or other stakeholders.

You may have a core of regular members as well as those you ask to join you to discuss specific topics or issues. In some provisions it may not be possible to set up a QAG and you may find yourself doing most of the work alone.

However it is important that you find ways of consulting with and including others so the self-audit is truly representative of your provision and not just one person's perspective.

Involving others

Try to think of ways in which you can engage the whole staff in the process. For example, you may run a staff workshop where people are put in small groups to address specific areas using an appreciative feedback approach. This will provide insight into whether there is a shared understanding and where they may be gaps and inconsistencies.

Staff may also come up with examples of things that are happening in the provision that you may have overlooked or be unaware of.

When engaging autistic people and where appropriate their families it may be best to think of key questions that relate to the self-audit and how you think these could be presented in a clear and accessible way eg

What activities do you like doing at the day centre? Are there other activities you would like us to offer? (For some autistic people this could be asked using augmentative or alternative communication).

Do you think staff do enough to support your child's emotional wellbeing? Are there other things you would like them to do?



SECTION Two

Completing your self-audit and action plan



Appreciative Enquiry approach

We recommend that you use an Appreciative Enquiry Approach to complete the self-audit. This is a strengths-based approach that focusses on what is already working and building upon this rather than identifying problems and trying to fix them. As such it has been found to be a more positive, constructive and empowering way of achieving change.

Discovery stage: The best of what is.	<i>Your QAG can take one of the indicators such as 'Each autistic person is supported to participate in rewarding social interactions (both spontaneous and structured) with staff, with each other and with members of their local community'. The QAG can then share all the good work you already do in supporting autistic people to take part in social activities, identifying what activities or events have worked really well and sharing success stories.</i>
Dream stage: What might be.	<i>QAG members can then imagine what it would be like if the positive features that were identified in the discovery stage were embedded as everyday practice, for example if social events that worked really well could occur more often or involve more people.</i>
Design stage: How can it be.	<i>The participants work together and try to identify steps that can make the dream stage a reality.</i>
Delivery stage: What will be.	<i>The participants create and implement an action plan.</i>

If you want to find out more there are a number of online resources. For example you can view the [Appreciative Inquiry Resource pack](#) from the Scottish Social Services Council and NHS Education for Scotland.

SECTION Two

Completing your self-audit and action plan



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Creating and action plan

As you work your way through the self-audit you are likely to identify lots of action points. We suggest you group these as:

- Priorities- what must be done before the assessment.
- Back burner- Not essential but would be good if actioned.
- Quick wins- tasks that are relatively easy to carry out and can give a sense of progress.

In the self-audit tool, we include a simple pro-forma for an action plan but you may wish to create your own or incorporate it into an existing development plan.

Once your action plan is set up you should be able to predict how much time you will need to address all priority areas. You can go back to the original timescale you set yourself and decide if it needs to be revised.

It is unlikely that you reach a point where you have completed all identified actions. However when you feel reasonably confident that you can meet the criteria you can think about booking an assessment. Remember you need to give us at least 6 months notice so do allow for this in your plans.

You can continue to work on your action plan up to three weeks before your assessment at which point you are required to send a final version of the self-audit and the action plan to your consultant.

SECTION Two

Completing your self-audit and action plan



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Getting support

Our members only section:

From March 1st 2023 you will be able to access an Accreditation members only section of the National Autistic Society website. These pages will provide you with resources that may help you in completing the self-audit and action plan.

General consultant support:

This is support that you can access at any point in the process without additional costs. You can access this support by emailing your consultant with a question. Maybe you don't know what to write for a particular indicator. Or maybe you are looking for some ideas around how you could address an issue highlighted in your self-audit.

Your consultant can advise you on the accreditation process and provide general advice about good autism practice. However they are not able to give you specific advice on how best to support an autistic individual.

It is important that you take the initiative if you need such help. Your consultant knows you are busy and won't keep contacting you without a reason. If the consultant doesn't hear from you they will assume you are making steady progress in working towards booking an assessment and that you don't need their help.

Your consultant may reply in an email or suggest a short phone or video call.

There is no additional cost for accessing general consultant support providing the demands you are placing on the consultant in terms of time or resources does not become excessive. If the consultant believes this is the case, they will advise that you book in a consultant session.



SECTION Two

Completing your self-audit and action plan



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Getting support

Consultation session (on site):

You have the option of asking the consultant to carry out a consultant visit. To get the most out of the visit you are strongly advised to plan what will happen on the day to get the most out of the visit. The visit could involve one or more of the following activities:

- Meeting to provide bespoke advice, review and feedback on the self-audit and action plan.
- Review and feedback on personal support plan documentation and assessment tools.
- Environmental audit or learning walk of your provision.
- Focused observations of current practice.

Please be aware of our safeguarding guidance which apply to any Autism Accreditation visit which can be found [here](#).

Consultation session (virtual)

If you are just wanting bespoke advice and guidance on the self-audit then you might prefer to ask your consultant to provide support via a virtual meeting. A benefit of this is that your consultant should be able to arrange this at an earlier date than a site visit.

Your consultant will be able to advise you on whether the virtual session will be covered by your assessment plan or whether you will be charged an additional cost. This will depend on the length of the session. As a rough guide two virtual sessions both lasting more than two hours would be charged at an equivalent cost to an onsite consultation visit.



SECTION Two

Your self-audit - completed by the provision



National
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The self-audit tool can be found in this manual. It is based on our [framework of best practice](#) and is divided into five topics.

**Commitment and
Consultation**

**Social communication,
interactions and relationships**

**Functional skills and
self-reliance**

**Sensory
experiences**

**Emotional
wellbeing**



Type of provision eg special day school; residential care home etc.

How many people are supported by the provision?

How many of this number are autistic?

What is the range of autistic people supported by the provision (eg age; learning disability; verbal or non-verbal etc)?

Outcome of last statutory inspection if applicable. (eg body, date, outcome).



What are the main specialist approaches used by staff to support autistic people?

This should include reference to social communication, sensory regulation, promotion of independence, and wellbeing.

What training/ongoing professional development is provided for staff in delivering autism-related approaches or methods?

What processes are in place to ensure that each autistic person has a regularly reviewed personal support plan that identifies strategies and sets targets in relation to social communication, sensory regulation, promotion of independence, and wellbeing?



How are autistic people consulted in the support they receive? *This should include reference to any adaptation to enable them to express their opinion.*

How are families, carers and/or advocates of who represent the best interests of each autistic individual consulted about the support being provided where appropriate to do so?



Rating Not Applicable = 0 Not Met = 1 Partially Met = 2 Fully Met = 3			
	Indicator	How we do this	Rating
C1	Staff are confident in using a range of communication approaches and systems relevant to the people they support.		
C2	Each autistic person's preferences, skills and strengths in understanding and responding to others are recorded.		
C3	Each autistic person's challenges in understanding and responding to others are recorded.		
C4	The environment is organised to encourage autistic people to socially engage with increasing self-reliance.		
C5	All staff consistently use the best way of communicating with each autistic person within different contexts, including when out in the community.		



Rating Not Applicable = 0 Not Met = 1 Partially Met = 2 Fully Met = 3			
	Indicator	How we do this	Rating
C6	Each autistic person has access to tools, training and programmes which help them communicate and express themselves within different contexts, including when out in the community.		
C7	Each autistic person is supported to participate in rewarding social interactions (both spontaneous and structured) with staff, with each other and with members of their local community.		
C8	Each autistic person is supported to develop skills in forming healthy relationships including friendships and intimate and sexual relationships.		
C9	Each autistic person is supported to deal with challenging or unwanted social interactions including abusive or unhealthy relationships.		
C10	The strategies and approaches used to support each autistic person in their communication and social interaction are regularly reviewed to ensure that they remain effective and achieve optimum impact.		
C11	Positive outcomes that each autistic person makes in their communication, social interaction and relationships are identified, recorded, and celebrated with autistic people and their circle of support.		



Action plan - completed by the provision

Things we do well and need to carry on doing: (word limit 325)

Things we could do better or consider introducing (highlight when complete): (word limit 325)



Functional skills and self-reliance (1)

Rating Not Applicable = 0 Not Met = 1 Partially Met = 2 Fully Met = 3			
	Indicator	How we do this	Rating
F1	Staff are confident in using a range of approaches and tools to encourage independence and reduce reliance on direct support, including supporting autistic people to make decisions and express opinion.		
F2	Each autistic person's strengths and challenges in functional life skills are recorded.		
F3	Staff organise the environment to support and encourage autistic people to function with increasing autonomy.		
F4	Staff understand and consistently follow the best way of breaking down, structuring and presenting tasks so that each autistic person is able to complete them with increasing confidence and self-reliance.		
F5	Staff understand and consistently follow the best way of supporting each autistic person to understand and cope with transitions and changes in routine in different contexts and settings.		



Functional skills and self-reliance (2)

Rating Not Applicable = 0 Not Met = 1 Partially Met = 2 Fully Met = 3			
	Indicator	How we do this	Rating
F6	Each autistic person is supported in developing skills in making choices and taking decisions.		
F7	Each autistic person is supported in developing daily functional life skills,		
F8	Each autistic person is supported to develop skills in staying safe and healthy in a range of contexts.		
F9	The strategies and approaches used to support each autistic person in becoming more independent (including making choices and expressing opinion) are regularly reviewed to ensure that they remain relevant and achieve optimum impact.		
F10	Positive outcomes that each autistic person makes in their self-reliance and functional life skills are identified, recorded and celebrated with autistic people and their circle of support.		



Action plan - completed by the provision

Things we do well and need to carry on doing: (word limit 325)

Things we could do better or consider introducing (highlight when complete): (word limit 325)

Sensory experiences (1)



Rating

Not Applicable = 0

Not Met = 1

Partially Met = 2

Fully Met = 3

	Indicator	How we do this	Rating
S1	The provision ensures that staff are confident in using a range of approaches and tools to support autistic people in their regulation of sensory input.		
S2	Sensory experiences and activities which have a positive impact on each autistic person are identified and recorded, for example, those which help an individual feel calm and focussed, or provide enjoyment and pleasure.		
S3	The challenges each autistic person may experience in regulating sensory experiences are identified and recorded.		
S4	Staff organise the environment to support and encourage autistic people to self-regulate sensory input and avoid sensory overload.		
S5	Staff use proactive and preventative strategies (as best for the individual) to avoid sensory overload and discomfort which impacts on individual wellbeing.		



Rating Not Applicable = 0 Not Met = 1 Partially Met = 2 Fully Met = 3			
	Indicator	How we do this	Rating
S6	Each autistic person is supported in using sensory self-regulation strategies and tools with increasing autonomy.		
S7	Each autistic person is supported to tolerate an increasing range of sensory experiences including when out in the community.		
S8	Each autistic person is enabled to regularly access sensory input which they find rewarding, for example, which helps them relax or which they find enjoyable.		
S9	The strategies and approaches used to support each autistic person to regulate sensory input and avoid sensory overload are regularly reviewed to ensure that they remain effective and achieve optimum impact.		
S10	Positive outcomes that each autistic person makes in their sensory self-regulation are identified, recorded and celebrated with autistic people and their circle of support.		



Action plan - completed by the provision

Things we do well and need to carry on doing: (word limit 325)

Things we could do better or consider introducing (highlight when complete): (word limit 325)



Emotional wellbeing (1)

Rating

Not Applicable = 0

Not Met = 1

Partially Met = 2

Fully Met = 3

	Indicators	How we do this	Rating
E1	The provision ensures that staff are confident in using a range of approaches and tools to support autistic people in maintaining emotional wellbeing.		
E2	Activities which each autistic person personally finds enjoyable, relaxing or which provides them with a sense of achievement and purpose are identified and recorded.		
E3	Factors which may impact on each autistic person's emotional wellbeing (for example, which may cause them anxiety, stress or trauma) are identified and recorded.		
E4	The provision ensures that staff are knowledgeable and look out for mental health problems (especially those that are a particular risk for autistic people) as well as commonly co-occurring conditions. Staff are also aware of autism masking (especially but not exclusively in women and girls) and the impact this may have on emotional well-being.		

Emotional wellbeing (2)



Rating

Not Applicable = 0

Not Met = 1

Partially Met = 2

Fully Met = 3

	Indicators	How we do this	Rating
E5	Staff organise the environment to support autistic people in their emotional wellbeing, to avoid anxiety and stress and to maximise participation and engagement.		
E6	Each autistic person is supported to understand and regulate their own emotions and recognise how they are expressed by others.		
E7	All staff understand and consistently follow proactive and preventative strategies to help each person to stay calm and in control, and to avoid stress, anxiety and upset. When necessary, they are confident in employing bespoke non-restrictive de-escalation techniques.		

Emotional wellbeing (3)



Rating Not Applicable = 0 Not Met = 1 Partially Met = 2 Fully Met = 3			
	Indicator	How we do this	Rating
E8	Policy and practice is informed by an understanding that autistic people are at high risk of developing long term psychological harm from being exposed to restrictive practices. The provision is committed to ensuring that restrictive practices are not regularly or routinely employed and that they are only ever used in an emergency as a means to avert immediate harm. Their use is followed by a robust investigation to identify lessons learnt.		
E9	Each autistic person is enabled to access a range of activities which they personally find enjoyable and rewarding, including recreational and leisure activities.		
E10	Each autistic person is supported to learn new skills, try out new experiences and challenge themselves.		
E11	Each autistic person is supported to be socially included within (and contribute to) their community and to make meaningful connections.		

Emotional wellbeing (4)



Rating

Not Applicable = 0

Not Met = 1

Partially Met = 2

Fully Met = 3

	Indicator	How we do this	Rating
E12	The provision offers an inclusive environment in which each autistic person is empowered to recognise their autism as an integral part of who they are but also to explore and express diverse identities around gender, sexuality, race, religion and other aspects of their personality.		
E13	Support plans focus on the wellbeing and quality of life of each autistic person and actively reflect the likes and dislikes of autistic people and what matters to them.		
E14	The strategies and approaches used to support each autistic person in their emotional wellbeing are regularly reviewed to ensure that they remain relevant and achieve optimum impact.		
E15	Positive outcomes that each autistic person achieves in improving and maintaining their emotional wellbeing are identified, recorded and celebrated with autistic people and their circle of support.		



Action Plan - completed by the provision

Things we do well and need to carry on doing: (word limit 325)

Things we could do better or consider introducing (highlight when complete): (word limit 325)



SECTION Three

- [Submitting case studies](#)
- [Case studies templates](#) - **to be completed by the provision**



SECTION Three

Submitting case studies



Submitting case studies

Your assessment is an opportunity for you to demonstrate how well your school or service supports autistic people.

Case studies are increasingly recognised as a tool that can help achieve this and can be an excellent way to showcase what you have helped autistic people achieve.

You can complete up to three case studies showing the impact of an initiative or specific programme for autistic individuals.

You can complete up to three more case studies about an autistic individual that shows what difference the support they have received has made in the quality of their lives.

Try to really focus on identifying what positive outcomes have been achieved.

Ensure that actual names and identifying personal details of people you support are not included to preserve anonymity.

You do have the option of not filling in the case studies but this will mean that you will only be considered for an accredited or aspiring award as case studies are required evidence for the Advanced Award.

SECTION Three

Case study to show impact of an initiative (1)



Date initiative started:	
Description (What was the initiative?)	
Context (What was reason for developing initiative?)	
Purpose of initiative (What were the aims and objectives of the initiative?)	
Method (What did you do, and how were you going to measure, observe and record outcomes?)	
What happened? (Describe how the initiative developed)	
What were the actual outcomes of the initiative? (What progress was made by individuals for example in communication and social skills; in self-reliance and independence; sensory processing; emotional regulation and wellbeing)	
Next steps and lessons learnt	

SECTION Three

Case study to show impact of an initiative (2)



Date initiative started:	
Description (What was the initiative?)	
Context (What was reason for developing initiative?)	
Purpose of initiative (What were the aims and objectives of the initiative?)	
Method (What did you do, and how were you going to measure, observe and record outcomes?)	
What happened? (Describe how the initiative developed)	
What were the actual outcomes of the initiative? (What progress was made by individuals for example in communication and social skills; in self-reliance and independence; sensory processing; emotional regulation and wellbeing)	
Next steps and lessons learnt	

SECTION Three

Case study to show impact of an initiative (3)



Date initiative started:	
Description (What was the initiative?)	
Context (What was reason for developing initiative?)	
Purpose of initiative (What were the aims and objectives of the initiative?)	
Method (What did you do, and how were you going to measure, observe and record outcomes?)	
What happened? (Describe how the initiative developed)	
What were the actual outcomes of the initiative? (What progress was made by individuals for example in communication and social skills; in self-reliance and independence; sensory processing; emotional regulation and wellbeing)	
Next steps and lessons learnt	

SECTION Three

Case Study about an Autistic Individual (1)



Name of individual	Use Initials or number (no names)
Period of time covered	
What support was introduced? What approaches, strategies, methods were used?	
Pen picture of individual before support was introduced including challenges, difficulties etc.	
OUTCOMES	
Communication skills; social skills; relationships, Confidence; self-reliance; independent problem-solving; Ability to cope with sensory input; Emotional self-regulation and wellbeing	
Achievements, successes and quality of life outcomes	
Next Steps; transition	

SECTION Three

Case Study about an Autistic Individual (2)



Name of individual	Use Initials or number (no names)
Period of time covered	
What support was introduced? What approaches, strategies, methods were used?	
Pen picture of individual before support was introduced including challenges, difficulties etc.	
OUTCOMES	
Communication skills; social skills; relationships, Confidence; self-reliance; independent problem-solving; Ability to cope with sensory input; Emotional self-regulation and wellbeing	
Achievements, successes and quality of life outcomes	
Next Steps; transition	

SECTION Three

Case Study about an Autistic Individual (3)



Name of individual	Use Initials or number (no names)
Period of time covered	
What support was introduced? What approaches, strategies, methods were used?	
Pen picture of individual before support was introduced including challenges, difficulties etc.	
OUTCOMES	
Communication skills; social skills; relationships, Confidence; self-reliance; independent problem-solving; Ability to cope with sensory input; Emotional self-regulation and wellbeing	
Achievements, successes and quality of life outcomes	
Next Steps; transition	



SECTION Four

The Autism Accreditation assessment

- [Preparing for your assessment](#)
- [Your assessment](#)
- [Assessment report](#) (to be completed by the consultant)



SECTION Four

Preparing for your assessment

When will my assessment be?

If this is your first assessment, you can discuss with your consultant when you think you are ready. Once you have been assessed we recommend that you have an assessment every three years.

You will need to give your consultant at least six months notice of your preferred dates. Once you have agreed dates, you should receive a confirmation email from the Accreditation admin team and will be invoiced any outstanding fees, which need to be settled at least four months before the assessment.

If you need to postpone or cancel your assessment let your consultant know as soon as possible. You can read our cancellation and postponement policy [here](#).

What is the purpose of the assessment?

The assessment helps you to identify what you are doing well and what could be improved in how you support autistic people.

It also provides evidence for our committee to give you an award at Aspiring, Accredited or Advanced level.

What key questions will be considered?

- What key approaches are used to develop autistic people's social communication and self-reliance, to address sensory issues and promote emotional regulation and wellbeing?
- How well do staff implement and personalise these approaches when working with autistic people?
- How are personal centred support plans created and reviewed?
- What outcomes do autistic people achieve with the support offered to them?
- What do those who are supported think about how well staff work with them and understand their autism?



SECTION Four

Preparing for your assessment



What evidence will be considered?

- Individual support plans and case-studies.
- Interviews with staff and where appropriate people supported by the provision.
- On-line survey of people supported by the provision and/or the family member representing their best interests.
- Observation of practice where appropriate and possible.

What paperwork do I need to send in before the assessment?

Three weeks before your assessment you should return:

- The Specialist Award Manual with the self-audit, action plan and (optional) the case studies completed.
- Key Policy documents related to the provision for autistic people (max. of 5) for example Policies on autism; communication: sensory Issues; independence; wellbeing; behaviour support; assessment etc.
- Visitor guidance for example dress code: documentation required; lunchtime arrangements etc.
- Service Prospectus or Brochure.

Please do not expect the consultant to consider lots of paperwork. You need to be selective or provide a summary of key points from documents or otherwise documents will be left unread and important evidence may be missed.



SECTION Four

Preparing for your assessment



How are the views of autistic people who are supported by the provision considered?

Accreditation expects to see evidence that autistic people are actively involved in their support plans and their views are sought and acted upon. This is commented on in all reports.

In addition, as part of the Autism Accreditation assessment, we send you a link to confidential surveys. These links should be sent out to autistic people and where relevant to relatives, carers or advocates who represent their best interests.

Adults over the age of 16:	Requirement unless the provision has determined that they lack the capacity to understand and respond to the survey even with reasonable adjustments in place.
Young people of secondary age (11-16):	Recommended and considered good practice unless they lack the capacity to engage in the survey even with reasonable adjustments in place.
Children of primary age (below 11):	Discretionary.
Relatives/carers/advocates who represent the best interests of individual:	Requirement unless the autistic person is over 16, has capacity and do not wish their views to be represented by others.

It is your responsibility to make sure that the links are made available to anyone who is entitled to take part without good reason. You should also take reasonable actions to raise awareness that the survey is taking place for example via your website or through social media. You can also ask autistic people or their families/advocate to complete the survey onsite using any available device. The survey will still be confidential and cannot be recalled once submitted.

Whilst it is in your interest to actively encourage people to complete the survey, we trust you to act with professional integrity to ensure that the responses accurately reflect individual's views without undue duress or interference.

SECTION Four

Preparing for your assessment



What reasonable adjustments can I make to enable an autistic person to complete the survey?

There are two versions of the autistic person survey. Where an individual has learning disabilities the easy read version is likely to be most appropriate but you can discuss this with your consultant.

Reasonable adjustments should be made to support an individual in completing the survey so they are not disadvantaged because of their autism or another disability.

For example:

- The survey questions could be read out to the individual and their spoken responses recorded on the survey for them
- The survey can be copied and presented in a format that the individual finds more accessible, for example large print, symbols etc.
- Augmentative or alternative communication systems could be used to present questions and obtain responses.

Will I have an opportunity to talk to my consultant before the assessment?

Yes your consultant will offer you a pre-assessment session at least a month before your assessment, either as a visit or a virtual meeting.

At the pre-assessment meeting, they will discuss with you what should be included in the observation timetable and who should be included in interviews.

You should plan a timetable of observations which should be sent to the consultant in a draft format at least a week before the assessment. The consultant may ask you to make some changes.

As much as possible the observations should provide insight into the range of activities typically offered by the provision. In a small provision we would expect each autistic individual and most of the staff team to be observed at least once, unless there is good reason why this would not be possible. In a larger provision such as a school we would expect observations to reflect a cross-section, for example each year group, different staff, and a range of activities.



SECTION Four

Your assessment



How does your assessment start?

The assessment starts with you giving a presentation to the consultant. The presentation should describe key approaches you use to support autistic people in:

- Social communication, interactions and relationships.
- Functional skills and self-reliance.
- Sensory experiences.
- Emotional wellbeing.

You should also include in the presentation how you consult with autistic people (and where appropriate those that represent them) about the support they receive.

You should identify what you consider to be your overall strengths and next steps.

You may wish to give a pre-prepared presentation or if you prefer answer questions from the consultant on the topics listed above. You can discuss with your consultant whether the presentation can be given to them when they are on site or whether it would be more practical to present virtually.

SECTION Four

Your assessment



What interviews should I arrange?

Interviews can be conducted face to face, virtually or over the phone. You will need to timetable interviews with:

- Staff who work directly with autistic people to find out about what training and support they have received. This might include recently inducted staff as well as those who are responsible for mentoring or training their colleagues.
- Staff with responsibilities for delivering particular methods or approaches. For example, therapists or Behaviour Support Co-ordinators.
- Staff with particular responsibilities for assessing, setting targets and monitoring progress for individual autistic people.

There is only a limited time available to carry out interviews so please be selective and think about who would be best informed to answer key questions.

Staff can be interviewed in small groups as this can be highly productive and an effective use of time. These could be grouped around a specific topic for example Professional Development; Therapeutic approaches; Behaviour Support etc.

Provide a brief description of the role of the person being interviewed in relationship to provision for autistic people.

Discuss with the consultant the feasibility of interviewing autistic people. You can also ask your consultant whether any interviews with relatives/carers or advocates should be arranged. The consultant may not consider these necessary if survey feedback has been obtained.

People being interviewed over video should not record the interview. However, the consultant may wish to record the session to help them write the report. Recordings will only be used to write the report, stored securely, and deleted after the report has been written.



SECTION Four

Your assessment



What personal support documents will the consultant need to access?

The consultant will need to review a sample of person centred support plans. They can do this during a visit but in order to reduce time spent on site we ask for you to email them. All reasonable steps will be taken to keep emailed documents confidentially stored and they will be deleted once the report has been completed. However, if you prefer you can send copies with personal details removed.

Depending on the size of your provision, a sample will normally be around 10 to 15 plans representing a cross-section for example from different school year groups; from different residential properties. The consultant may ask for you to send more plans following the initial sample.

You may also provide the consultant with summative qualitative and quantitative data that shows outcomes achieved by the school or service in relationship to autistic people for example reduction in the use of physical interventions; summary of survey results conducted with autistic people etc.

Safeguarding autistic people

Consultants and moderators have professional expertise in the field of autism and are DBS checked. However, they should not be asked to carry out regulated activities as defined by the Disclosure and Barring Service, should not be left alone with a child or vulnerable adult or asked to give specific, detailed advice on how to support an individual.

Accreditation is not a safeguarding authority and will not investigate a safeguarding concern or an allegation against a member of staff as this could jeopardise a subsequent investigation by the local authority or the police.

If abusive practice is directly observed by a representative of Accreditation during an assessment then it will be referenced in the assessment report and will impact on what level of award is given. It will also be reported to the designated safeguarding lead and when considered necessary directly referred to the appropriate authorities.

In keeping with our framework of best practice, we expect provisions to employ behaviour support methods which are proactive, preventative and non-restrictive.. We would only expect to see restrictive physical intervention used in emergency circumstances and under strict controls. Where this is not the case restrictive interventions may be considered a safeguarding concern

Whilst the focus of our assessments is on autistic specific approaches we expect that such approaches are delivered within the context of a service meeting statutory expectations regarding the safeguarding and wellbeing of children and vulnerable adults. For this reason, the assessment findings are triangulated with survey results and the outcome of the most recent statutory inspection. You can find out more about this [here](#).

SECTION Four

The Autism Accreditation assessment



**National
Autistic
Society**

**Social communication, interactions and
relationships**

Functional skills and self-reliance

Sensory experiences

Emotional wellbeing

Feedback from autistic people

**Feedback from families, carers and/or
advocates**

Summary of the assessment



Assessment Findings - completed by the Assessor

Key outcomes identified from personal support documents and staff discussions:

The school have access to a private SALT (Speech and Language Therapist) one day each week. As part of their role, the SALT assesses the needs of the young people, developing SALT reports, which inform the programmes of support or support strategies. The SALT also supports the school by offering training throughout the year, with recent training delivered on Gestalt Language Processing, monotropism and Alexithymia. In interviews, staff described the strength of the school's Continuing Professional Development (CPD) programme which provides "purposeful learning opportunities" which supports the development of their practice. The school have a High-Level Teaching Assistant (HLTA) who works as a SALT assistant, implementing communication supports and delivering/managing the SALT prescribed programmes.

The school use WellComm, a speech and language screening tool, to baseline all pupils at the beginning of each year. In interviews, staff described how the data from the assessment is used to inform curriculum planning, as well as the daily additional needs groups, with staff sharing evidence which demonstrated the positive outcomes and progress achieved by pupils.

Each autistic pupil's personal preferences, skills and strengths in communicating and socially interacting with others are routinely recorded on their pen portrait. Pen portraits also include reference to the individual challenges that each autistic person may experience in communicating and socially interacting with others, as well as practical strategies and approaches to support them. Each pupil's pen portrait includes a section referencing 'how best to support me' with a heading referencing support in 'communication and interaction'. Support strategies include reference to specific specialised approaches, as well as information around tone of voice, visual supports and processing time.

The support provided to each autistic person, in communicating and socially interacting with others, is regularly reviewed with the autistic person and their circle of support so that any changes can be made, if necessary, and positive outcomes celebrated. Each pupil has an individual education plan (IEP) which includes targets informed by assessment data and EHCP (Education Health Care Plan) goals. Pupils are all baselined using the autism framework tracker, which includes a section which focuses on social communication and social interaction. The outcome from the tracker, as well as information from the WellComm assessment, informs targets for pupils, which are reviewed twice each year by classroom staff. Targets also include information around teaching strategies, resources and opportunities to support pupils to practise the target, and staff evaluate the progress made towards these in February and July.

In interviews, staff were confident in talking about how they support autistic pupils in their communication and social interaction, as well as the progress which has been made as a result of their support. Staff particularly highlighted the strength of the school's additional needs groups, with groups including a focus on communication, friendship and other SALT/WellComm goals.

Case studies describe personalised approaches to support individuals in their communication and interaction and identify outcomes achieved as a result of this support. Individual case studies evidence the development of communication and language skills as a result of support and strategies implemented by the school, as well as the development of social skills and relationships with peers. Alongside the case studies, and in interviews, staff shared examples of strategies which have been implemented to support pupils in their communication, including those which supported staff to communicate routines.





Assessment Findings - completed by the Assessor

Key outcomes identified from observation/review of key activities:

Within all observations, each autistic pupil was supported to understand what was being communicated to them by staff modifying their spoken language. Throughout all observations, in classrooms, as well as during lunch, play and outdoor learning, staff communicated in a calm and low arousal manner, skilfully simplifying and structuring their verbal communication to reflect the pupil's needs or the scenario. Staff consistently allowed adequate processing time for pupils, with a good example observed when staff gave a warning to pupils that they were going to be asked the next question.

Within all observations, each autistic pupil was supported to understand what was being communicated to them by staff using bespoke strategies and visual supports. Where appropriate, staff used visuals to reinforce their verbal communication, including the use of social rules/expectations. In a PE lesson, staff were observed using red and green cones to reinforce stop and go, and within the sensory circuits, staff have developed a range of visuals to support the pupils to understand what was expected of them.

Within all observations, each autistic pupil was supported to express their views, feelings and wants by having access to bespoke resources or tools. Where appropriate, pupils had individual communication boards or devices which supported them to communicate with staff. Zones of Regulation displays were also used by pupils to communicate their current emotion, with some also using it to comment on why they felt in a particular zone. Throughout all observations, the pupils appeared to have the skills and be confident to share their views, thoughts and feelings, with one pupil being able to communicate that he would rather work in an alternative environment when the assessment team visited his class, which was valued and facilitated by staff.

Each autistic pupil was supported to socially interact with staff and with their peers. Throughout observations, social interactions between staff and the pupils were positive and staff appear to have developed positive and supportive relationships with the young people, regularly exchanging jokes and appropriate social communication. Throughout observations, pupils appeared to have positive and supportive relationships with their peers, regularly choosing to spend time together, particularly during break and lunch. During lunch, staff have introduced a number of optional clubs for pupils which aim to provide a safe and supportive space (sensory or sport's sanctuary) for pupils, as well as providing opportunities for them to interact with peers who have similar likes and interests. During the assessment, these groups were observed to be a positive social environment for pupils, with pupils choosing to engage in joint Minecraft worlds, joint craft projects, chess and sports, as well as being able to choose to just spend time socially with their friends.

Within observations, each autistic pupil was supported to take part in structured and purposeful social skills activities. Within lessons, staff regularly provided opportunities for the pupils to work collaboratively with their peers as part of structured learning tasks. Additional needs sessions, which happen each day and provide an opportunity for pupils to work towards their EHCP targets, were also used to provide structured opportunities for pupils to practise and develop communication skills, including through the WellComm programme and social groups. Each class also had a social focus for each of the classes on display on their class notice board.

Throughout observations, staff facilitated opportunities for each autistic pupil to take part in social activities which they appeared to find enjoyable, relaxing and rewarding. In interviews, staff described how they use information from a pupil survey (SHEU - Students Health Education Unit), as well as pupil voice, to inform the clubs and activities available to pupils at break and lunch, with the school recently investing in more balance and regular bikes. Clubs were seen to be a hive of activity, with pupils and staff engaged and motivated to communicate around the activities which they were participating in.





Assessment findings - completed by the Assessor

Key outcomes identified from personal support documents and staff discussions:

Each autistic pupil's personal preferences, skills and strengths in functional life skills and independence are recorded within their pupil pen portrait and IEP. Documents also record any challenges that each autistic pupil may experience in functioning life skills and independence, as well as flexibility of thought and problem-solving. Personal documentation also references the practical strategies and approaches used to support each autistic pupil in becoming more independent and developing daily life skills, with pupils having specific strategies on their IEP to support learning, independence and community participation. Each pupils pen portrait includes a section referencing 'how best to support me' in problem solving and flexibility of thought, and within this section support strategies include reference to specific specialised approaches, as well as information around transitions, learning style and staff's approach.

The support provided to each autistic pupil, in becoming more independent and developing daily life skills, is regularly reviewed with the autistic pupil and/or their circle of support so that any changes can be made, if necessary, and positive outcomes celebrated. Independence and community participation is tracked on pupil's IEP, informed by the Autism Progression Tracker, EHCP targets and discussions with families, enabling the school and families to work collaboratively on independence skills eg toileting, dressing and self-care.

In interviews, staff were confident in talking about how they support autistic pupils to become more independent and develop daily life skills, and what progress has been made as a result of their support. Staff described how information from the autism tracker is used to inform the curriculum, including opportunities for pupils to participate in community-based sessions, practising travel training skills, road safety, shopping and cycling. Life skills are taught through a specific lesson, informed by the independence curriculum and during the assessment, staff shared photograph evidence of the positive outcomes achieved as a result of life skill's sessions.

In a case study, staff evidenced how the curriculum was developed, ensuring that the pupils have practical opportunities to grow and develop spiritually, emotionally, physically and socially in the natural world around them. As part of the curriculum, the school have a number of focus weeks, eg being healthy and safe week which provides practical opportunities for pupils to experience things like making healthy meals, visiting the doctors and visiting the dentist. Staff also described the positive impact of the independence days, which the school use to provide opportunities for pupils to practise a range of independence skills within a practical and topic-based way. Staff gave an example of how they used Christmas as the overarching topic, with pupils practising wrapping, laying the table, writing a card, paying for stamps, cutting, hanging and other skills linked to the topic.

In interviews, staff also described the positive outcomes achieved by holding the residential locally – allowing the pupils to come for the day, or stay into the evening. Staff also described how some pupils choose to stay one or two nights, based on their experience on the first day, and how their flexible and relaxed approach to the residential trips supports engagement.

Case studies describe personalised approaches to support individuals in becoming more independent and developing daily life skills, as well as positive outcomes achieved as a result of the school's support. Alongside the case studies, and in interviews, staff shared examples of strategies which have been implemented to support pupils in their independence, including those which support them to understand their routine, classroom expectations and to promote their independence when completing tasks; eg washing their hands. Another case study about the additional need's groups evidences how the school provide daily opportunities for pupils to gain skills for life and independence, based around their personal EHCP targets and assessment data.





Assessment findings - completed by the Assessor

Key outcomes identified from observation/review of key activities:

Within all observations, each autistic pupil was supported to understand what was going to happen now and what they were required to do next by activities and tasks being presented within a structured framework, reinforced by visual prompts. There is a consistent approach to the school day which has been strategically planned by staff to support engagement, this includes; welcome, phonics, English, maths and the additional needs groups taking place in the morning, followed by a topic/skills-based activity in the afternoon. Each classroom visited had a visual timetable, breaking down the school day into the lessons, using an arrow to identify the current lesson. Within lessons, staff used a variety of approaches to support the pupils to understand the structure and content of lessons, including visual breakdowns, checklists, task lists and now and next boards. Across school, there were observed to be well established and predictable routines in place which appeared to support the pupils to feel safe and secure.

Within all observations, each autistic pupil could access non-verbal prompts and reminders to help them complete each step of a task as independently as possible. Within lessons, staff were observed using visual task breakdowns, white boards and checklists to support pupils to understand what was happening now and next. Staff also skilfully used a range of approaches to support pupils to understand and complete tasks, including demonstrations, modelling and practical opportunities to test theories. The school's environment is set up to enable autistic pupils to carry out tasks independently. Each classroom is low arousal and visually structured and the visual labels across the rooms supported pupils to independently collect resources. Staff used the visual structure to good effect during the assessment, asking pupils to collect and hand resources out, which they could do independently due to the visual structures in place.

Within all observations, staff appeared to provide the right level of support to enable each autistic pupil to experience a sense of completion and success, whilst helping them develop skills of self-reliance and resilience. The school has a good staff to pupil ratios in classes, which enabled classes to be split into groups, based on their learning need, or for staff to facilitate a carousel of activities. During observations, pupils were supported in a timely manner, whilst still being given opportunities to try things for themselves. In a maths book, which was reviewed whilst in a lesson, there was evidence of Friday being an opportunity for pupils to test their skills in resilience, as part of problem-solving Friday. The review of personal books also evidenced that pupils have opportunities to work independently, as well as with TA support, as required and indicated next to pieces of work.

Within all observations, autistic pupils were supported to actively express their preferences, make choices and take decisions. Across all observations, pupils appeared confident and empowered to share their thoughts and feelings with staff, with some teachers also using whiteboards as part of question and answer sessions. Pupils also appeared confident to share their thoughts and feelings with the assessment team, regularly engaging in conversations and being proud to share their work.

Through the curriculum, each autistic pupil is provided with opportunities to consolidate and develop daily functional skills. In observations, key independence skills appeared to be being instilled from young age, with pupils encouraged to manage their own drinks and equipment from Key Stage 1. During break, pupils had the option to buy things from a snack station, managing their own money and practising skills related to paying within a shop. As part of additional needs groups, pupils had the opportunity to practise a variety of life skills, from riding a bike to fine and gross motor tasks, eg using scissors and practising their pincer grip to support with eating and writing.

To further build on the good practice in place, the school could consider introducing a weekly independence focus for the classes, alongside the already displayed social focus, providing an aim for the class over the week, which could be built into lesson planning. This would also ensure that the social focus is a specific social focus, as in some classes there appears to be a cross over between the two. (eg one class's social target was around getting dressed.)



Assessment findings - completed by the Assessor

Key outcomes identified from personal support documents and staff discussions:

Sensory experiences and activities which have a positive impact on each autistic pupil are identified and recorded on their pupil profile for example, those which help them to feel calm, ready to learn and regulated, or provide enjoyment and pleasure. In interviews, staff described how, if necessary, they receive support from a private occupational therapy (OT) service who supports the school by completing OT assessments, which are then used to inform pupils' support. OT assessments, pupil voice and sensory checklists, completed by classroom staff, inform the challenges that each autistic pupil may experience in sensory processing, as well as practical strategies and approaches which can be used to support with regulating sensory input. Each pupil's pen portrait includes a section referencing 'how best to support me', and within this section, support strategies include reference to specific specialised sensory tools and approaches, as well as information around sensory circuits, proprioceptive and vestibular activities and adapted seating. Staff also capture information around sensory needs using a "how I feel about" questionnaire, using the information to inform pupil's support or their personal regulation tools, eg wet play, seating, sounds etc.

The support provided to each autistic pupil, to help them to regulate sensory input, are reviewed with the autistic pupil and their circle of support so that any changes can be made, if necessary, and positive outcomes celebrated. Pupils are all baselined using the autism framework tracker, which includes a section focusing on sensory processing. The outcome from the framework informs pupil's targets, which are reviewed twice each year. Targets also include information around teaching strategies, resources and ideas for how staff could facilitate opportunities for pupils to practise the target, which staff evaluate in February and July.

In interviews, staff were confident in talking about how they support autistic pupils to regulate sensory input, describing the progress which has been made as a result of their support. Staff described how they have been supported to make changes to the environment, adapting rooms around the needs of pupils by using their voice. One staff member also described how "SLT (Senior Leadership Team) are enthusiastic to learn from the view point of the autistic staff and pupils, using their input to make purposeful changes. Staff described how pupils and staff recently conducted an environment walk of the building, reflecting on colour, clutter, light, smell and sound in a variety of areas. As a result of the project, changes were made to the environment and some displays.

In interviews, staff described how sensory circuits are adapted around the needs of pupils. The school have a sensory lead who sets up and delivers the sensory circuits, with some pupils accessing them at the start of each day. The duration and format of the individual sensory circuits are adapted around the needs of pupils to support with their regulation, where as other pupils access the sensory circuits as a class, planned in as part of their daily schedule. As they work further up the school, staff encourage pupils to access a magic mile or class-based activities (described in a case study). In interviews, staff described how they support pupils with regulation by providing organising and calming activities to support with transitions. Staff described how they have been collecting data on sensory circuits, reflecting on the impact that they have had on supporting pupil's regulation and engagement – tracking their Zone when coming in and out of the circuit, as well as gathering data on their attention levels in class before and after the circuit.

Case studies describe personalised approaches implemented to support pupils to regulate sensory input, including positive outcomes achieved as a result of this support. Individual case study 3 particularly highlights the positive outcomes achieved as a result of introducing sensory supports, eg sensory circuits, fidgets, chewelry and ear defenders.





Assessment findings - completed by the Assessor

Key outcomes identified from observation/review of key activities:

Within all observations, autistic pupils had access to sensory activities which they appeared to find enjoyable or relaxing. Within lessons, pupils were seen independently accessing fidgets, chews, adapted seating and ear defenders, as and when required. In an interview, staff described how they aim to create sensory and sport sanctuaries for pupils, particularly at break and lunch, supporting them to feel safe and access activities which they enjoy and find relaxing.

Each day pupils have the opportunity to access a sensory circuit, both as a class or as an individual, as required. During observations, the sensory circuits appear to be well established, with pupils able to work through the three areas (alerting, organising, calming) independently, using the clear visual structures in place. The sensory circuits are managed and organised by the sensory lead, who worked positively alongside pupils, modelling the activities and supporting some co-regulation activities at the calming station. The circuit appeared to have a positive impact on pupils, who appeared to return from their class ready to learn. To further build on the good practice seen within the sensory circuits, you could consider introducing some of the sensory circuit resources into the in-class sensory rooms, further promoting self-regulation and making these areas more structured/linked to the skills learnt in the sensory circuits.

In all observations, autistic pupils were supported to tolerate a range of sensory experiences within a safe and secure context. The environment across school is consistently low arousal, with classrooms free from clutter and displays being organised, low arousal, purposeful and structured. The environment is also maintained and adapted to support autistic pupils to self-regulate, with each classroom having an adjoining sensory room and access to a private outdoor area, available to pupils as and when required. Some classrooms also contain quieter areas for pupils, with some teachers creating reading corners. During the assessment, although the sensory rooms and relaxation spaces were constantly accessible to pupils, pupils appeared regulated and didn't need to access these spaces.

Within all observations, autistic pupils were supported to regulate sensory experiences which could interfere with what they are trying to do or cause them discomfort. Throughout observations, staff's approach was low arousal and calm, which was also observed around school and in transitions. In a small number of observations, staff proactively identified that a pupil might have needed sensory support, and were quick to offer personal tools associated to this (eg walks, regulation activities), or signpost the pupils to the Zones of Regulation display. In one observation, one pupil was using a workstation to complete their work, with the area personalised around the pupil's individual needs.





Assessment findings - completed by the Assessor

Key outcomes identified from personal support documents and staff discussions:

Pen portraits and regulation plans focus on the wellbeing and quality of life of each autistic pupil, as well as actively reflecting their likes, dislikes and what matters to them. Personal documents may also identify factors that might cause each autistic pupil to become anxious, stressed or upset. Staff capture information from pupils to understand their regulation needs, using a regulation plan which is developed as part of the Zones of Regulation additional needs groups, which run for the first 4-weeks of each school year. In interviews, staff shared examples of the regulation plans created by the pupils, identifying how they feel when they become dysregulated, alongside personal regulation tools, likes and interests. The plans also include information around 'my thoughts', 'trusted adults' and details around where they feel certain emotions in their body, using a diagram.

Practical strategies and approaches used to support each autistic pupil in maintaining their emotional well-being, self-esteem and safety are identified in personal documentation. Although all staff have received training in Team Teach, a positive behaviour management approach, no pupils currently have been identified as needing additional support in this area, as would warrant a behaviour profile, therefore personal regulation strategies and approaches are recorded on pupil's pen portraits, IEPs and regulation plans. The support provided to each autistic pupil, to help them maintain their emotional well-being and to be engaged in a range of rewarding and meaningful activities, are regularly reviewed with the autistic pupil and their circle of support so that any changes can be made, if necessary, and positive outcomes celebrated. Pupils are all baselined using the autism framework tracker, which includes a section which focuses on emotional understanding and awareness. Each individual's framework informs their IEP targets, which are reviewed twice each year by classroom staff and annually as part of the EHCP process.

In interviews, staff were confident in talking about how they support autistic pupils to maintain their emotional well-being and self-esteem and to take part in a range of rewarding and meaningful activities, including those that develop their social inclusion. All staff receive annual refresher training in Team Teach, and staff described how they use the training to develop an understanding of proactive and preventative support strategies. In an interview, staff described how they only ever use restrictive practices as a last resort, with no holds being used to support pupils for over two years. In an interview, members of SLT described how Team Teach training places an emphasis on proactive and de-escalation strategies, which links to the ethos of the school, particularly by supporting pupils to de-escalate through having positive relationships. Staff also commented on how the high staff ratio, specialist spaces and the school's environment support with regulation.

In another interview, staff described the positive outcomes achieved by changing perceptions to sport and PE, with staff describing how the PE curriculum is modified to support engagement, with a mentor working with the school to support them to reflect on and develop their practice. All TA's attended the Youth Sport Trust's PE and Autism course, allowing all staff to better understand how they can support pupils in PE. Staff described how they have seen more participation in clubs and events as a result of making adaptations and creating a positive and supportive environment/mindset when engaging in PE, with staff using survey data to inform the clubs and activities available to pupils and classes.

The school have a 'pyramid of need' model, which is used to identify priority areas of support for each pupil, identifying information in safeguarding, attendance, behaviour, attainment, as well as pupil premium data and in class and home observations. From the data, a pyramid of need is created for mental health, which the school use to inform the individual interventions and additional support in place, eg CAMHS next steps programme.

All of the individual case studies reviewed described personalised approaches which have been introduced and supported individuals to maintain their emotional well-being and self-esteem, resulting in a positive impact on their quality of life.





Assessment findings - completed by the Assessor

Key outcomes identified from observation/review of key activities:

Within all observations, each autistic pupil presented as feeling safe, calm and at ease. It was noted by the assessment team that throughout observations, pupils appeared to feel safe, confident, regulated, motivated and engaged in their learning. The leadership and classroom staff were compassionate, caring and aspirational, and throughout observations this positive and supportive culture shone through. Proactive and preventative strategies were observed to be in place to avoid anxiety, confusion or distress from occurring or escalating, with staff consistently working in a timely and pupil focused way to support pupils. Restrictive practices were not observed and staff described how they would only be used under the strictest controls and extreme circumstances.

Throughout all observations, autistic pupils were supported to understand and regulate their emotions. Each classroom visited had a Zones of Regulation display, which pupils had used to check in during the day. During a check in session with the youngest children in school, the pupils clearly had a good understanding of the approach, able to reference their current zone. Staff also further supported conversations in this area, asking pupils if they would like to share why they felt that they were in that Zone. Staff were positive and supportive in their approach to this, valuing pupils' feelings and supporting peer to peer conversations. Although all pupils were able to check in and share their emotions, staff should be mindful in their approach following a check in, ensuring that they celebrate the identification of emotions rather than making being in the green zone the right answer by it being the most celebrated answer.

Within all observations, autistic pupils were treated with dignity, status and respect and provided with meaningful positive feedback to boost confidence, self-esteem and self-worth. Throughout all observations, staff celebrated the positive outcomes achieved by the pupils which appeared to motivate the pupils and fill them with pride. Across observations, pupils were able to experience a sense of completion and achievement, with staff differentiating goals and outcomes for pupils so that they had an opportunity to experience successes.

Throughout observations in classes, lunch and break, each autistic pupil was able to engage in a range of activities which they appeared to find fun or interesting. During lunch, pupils have the option to attend clubs which are informed by their likes and interests. The diverse number of clubs included chess, colouring, sewing, Minecraft, jigsaws, bikes and football, where as some pupils chose to spend this time socially with peers or on the playground and gym equipment. During lessons, staff were creative in their approach, offering practical and engaging lessons to motivate pupils in their learning. Particularly in the afternoon topic-based activities, and as part of science week, pupils were observed participating in pond dipping activities, animal hunts and a space experience, where staff had created a motivating activity around going to space, which clearly excited the pupils in the class.

In all observations, autistic pupils were encouraged to enjoy the challenge of trying out or learning a new activity or skill. Throughout observations, the safe and nurturing environment ensured that staff could offer challenge whilst supporting the young people to feel safe and confident. Lesson and daily structures are consistent across school, and in interviews, staff described how this predictability ensures that the pupils feel safe, secure and ready to learn. The school appear to be aspirational in their curriculum, providing opportunities for the pupils to experience new things through a broad and balanced curriculum, with opportunities for pupils to visit their community and attend trips throughout the year.

Across school the environment is maintained and adapted to support the well-being of autistic pupils. Each class has access to safe spaces within their classroom and an adjoining sensory room, which was available to access if they felt they needed it. The school also have an inviting library area, which was seen to be well used for regulation, group reading and for additional needs groups.





Assessment findings - completed by the Assessor

Survey ratings

Version 1

Number surveyed	Number of responses
64	64

Question	No	Sometimes	Yes
The help I get is good.		3 (5%)	61 (95%)
Staff know what I find hard and what I am good at.		4 (6%)	60 (94%)
Staff ask me how best they can help me.		9 (14%)	55 (86%)
Staff help me to do things in my life that I want to do		6 (9%)	58 (91%)

Who filled in the form?	Number
I did by myself.	13
I did with support.	50
A friend or family member.	
A member of staff.	1

Version 2

Number surveyed	Number of responses

Question	I do not know	Poor	Ok but could be better.	Good	Excellent
The support I get is:					
Question	I do not know	Never	Sometimes	Often	Very often
Staff understand my skills, challenges and what my autism means to me.					
Staff ask me about how best to support me and act on what I tell them.					
Staff help me do things that I enjoy doing and that are important to me.					
Staff help me to set and achieve important goals in my life.					





Assessment findings - completed by the Assessor

Comments included in surveys:

Additional relevant information:

Assessment findings - completed by the Assessor

Survey ratings



Number surveyed	Number of responses
64	25

Question	Poor	Ok but could be better.	Mostly good	Always good
The support my relative is given is...			3 (12%)	22 (88%)
The understanding that staff have for my relatives autistic needs is...			5 (20%)	20 (80%)
The way I am kept informed and asked my views about how my relative is supported is...		2 (8%)	4 (16%)	19 (76%)
The advice I get from the service on how to help my relative is...		2 (8%)	2 (8%)	21 (84%)





Assessment findings - completed by the Assessor

Comments included in surveys:

Additional relevant information:



Assessment findings - completed by the Assessor

Topic	What the provision does particularly well:	What the provision could develop further:
Social communication, interaction and relationships:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Positive, supportive and appropriate social relationships were evident in all observations. • In all observations, staff communicated in a calm and low arousal manner, skilfully simplifying and structuring their verbal communication when working with different pupils • Throughout all observations, pupils appeared to have the skills and be confident to share their views, thoughts and feelings. 	
Functional skills and self-Reliance:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is a consistent approach to the school day which has been strategically planned by staff to support engagement. • Transitions and structures are well established at the school, with morning sessions being consistent and predictable. • Each classroom visited had a consistent visual timetable, and pupils also had access to personalised systems. • During observations, pupils were supported in a timely manner, whilst being given opportunities to try things for themselves. 	To further build on the good practice in place, the school could consider introducing a weekly independence focus for the classes, alongside the already displayed social focus, providing an aim for the class over the week, which could be built into lesson planning.
Sensory experiences:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The school's now well-established sensory circuit was accessed by pupils to support proactive regulation. The systems in place around the circuit supported the pupils to access it independently. • Classrooms and communal areas are low arousal and visually structured informed by autistic pupils and autistic staff. • Low arousal approaches were observed in teachers' approach. • Pupils were supported to independently manage their sensory tools and activities. 	To further build on the good practice seen within the sensory circuits, you could consider introducing some of the sensory circuit resources into the in-class sensory rooms, further promoting self-regulation and making these areas more structured/linked to the skills learnt in the sensory circuits.
Emotional wellbeing:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The leadership team and classroom staff are compassionate, caring and aspirational, and throughout observations this positive and supportive culture shone through. • Pupils were supported to understand and regulate their emotions, with the Zones of Regulation being clearly understood and interacted with by the pupils. • During lessons, staff were creative in their approach, offering practical and engaging lessons to motivate pupils to learn. 	Although all pupils were able to check in and share their emotions, staff should be mindful in their approach following a check in, ensuring that they celebrate the identification of emotions rather than making being in the green zone the right answer by it being the most celebrated answer.



Assessment findings - completed by the Assessor

Topic	What the provision does particularly well	What the provision could develop further
Consultation with Autistic People:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The school use a bi-annual survey to gather the thoughts and feelings of pupils. • A high percentage of pupils were supported to complete the survey, with 95% feeling that the support they receive is good. • Pupil voice was valued throughout all observations, particularly when a pupil felt nervous around visitors to their class. 	
Consultation with the Families, Carers and/ or Advocates of Autistic People:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The school's home link worker is flexible in their approach, supporting families by building a positive and trusting relationship with them, and supporting them to implement routines and structures at home. • 100% of families feel that the support that their relative receives is always (88%) or mostly good (12%). 	
Other areas:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The additional needs groups provide a daily opportunity for pupils to work towards their long term EHCP targets. • The school make good use of external expertise to support them to upskill their staff and develop their provision. • The school's values were evident throughout all observations. • The school's autism framework tracker ensures that targets are evidence based and progressive. • Autistic staff and pupils are encouraged to give input on how the school can develop from their perspective. • The curriculum is regularly reviewed and adapted to meet the changing needs of pupils. • Staff described how CPD is relevant and purposeful, with the leadership responsive to the training needs of staff members. • Staff are happy at the school, describing their being a focus on a positive work life balance. Staff also described how SLT are receptive to change, if that change better enables them to support pupils. 	



SECTION Five

- [Committee decision](#) – **to be completed by the Quality Manager**
- [Next Steps](#)



National
Autistic
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SECTION Five

Committee outcome

What happens at the end of the assessment?

At the end of the assessment, the consultant will arrange a meeting to give you verbal feedback.

The consultant will feedback on what the service does well and what it could consider developing further. The consultant will also summarise findings from the surveys.

The consultant cannot comment on whether you have met the criteria for Aspiring, Accredited or Advanced status as this is not their decision.

The consultant will complete an Assessment report which will be submitted to the Accreditation Awards committee.

Within a month of the completion of the assessment you will be informed by email of the Committee decision- whether you have been awarded Aspiring, Accredited or Advanced. This will be based on our award criteria.



SECTION Five

Committee decision and next steps -

Completed by the quality manager on behalf of the committee



**National
Autistic
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Committee decision:

Advanced

Date of committee decision:

06/06/2025

Comment:

The Autism Accreditation Committee found clear evidence in the report that staff at Orrets Meadow demonstrate a robust working knowledge of evidence-informed approaches aligned with good autism practice. These specialist approaches are flexibly adapted to ensure highly person-centred support, tailored to individual abilities, interests, preferences and challenges. The school maintains a consistent daily structure, strategically planned to support pupil engagement. Transitions and routines are well established, fostering predictability and stability. Classrooms are equipped with visual timetables, and pupils have access to personalised systems that further enhance their ability to navigate the school day independently. Staff maintain a calm, low-arousal approach, ensuring verbal communication is structured and accessible, which promotes engagement and understanding.

Staff take a creative approach to teaching, offering practical and engaging lessons that inspire pupils and support their motivation to learn. Additional Needs Groups provide structured opportunities for pupils to work towards long-term EHCP targets, reinforcing individualised support. The autism framework tracker supports the development of progressive, evidence-based targets, ensuring alignment with pupil needs. Timely and responsive interventions enable pupils to attempt tasks independently before receiving assistance. The sensory circuit plays a key role in proactive sensory regulation, with pupils accessing it autonomously through well-structured systems. The physical environment reflects low-arousal principles, informed by input from both autistic pupils and staff.

The school embodies a culture of compassion, care and aspiration, which is evident throughout interactions and observations. A strong sense of positive and supportive relationships exists between pupils and staff. Pupils demonstrate confidence in expressing their views, thoughts and feelings, supported by an environment that fosters inclusivity and respect. They are actively supported in understanding and regulating their emotions. Autistic pupils and staff are encouraged to provide input on how the school can evolve, ensuring neuro-affirmative perspectives are integrated into school development.

The committee also reviewed the very positive feedback from surveys and commended the school for its efforts in obtaining pupil input. Case studies submitted by the school highlighted positive outcomes for individual pupils who received highly bespoke programmes of support. Key innovations, including the curriculum redesign, the creation of Additional Needs Groups, and the introduction of the Magic Mile, were also noted. However, the committee expressed interest in learning about more recent developments, as the innovations described date back three or more years.

While some areas for development were highlighted, these build upon existing good practice and do not detract from the excellent work being carried out at the school. The Committee considers that Orrets Meadow should be awarded Advanced Accreditation and congratulates the school on sustaining and further developing high-quality practice in supporting autistic children.

SECTION Five

Next Steps



National
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Maintaining and progression

Once you have agreed terms and conditions you can expect to receive your certificate and logo. You can continue with your current Autism Accreditation plan or amend it by increasing or reducing the number of consultation visits.

Please contact your consultant to discuss your options.

You will also be asked to complete an online survey about your experience of the process. Your feedback is very important to us so please take the time to complete it.

You can expect to receive a final version of your assessment report and the date and level achieved will be published in our directory. We do not publish the assessment report but you are welcome to share or publish it if you want to. You may wish to share or publish a sample of the report, rather than the full manuscript. We are happy for you to do so but request that this is done in a way which does not misrepresent our findings, for example by only publishing what we found that you do well without acknowledging that we may also identified some areas of development. If you are not sure what would be acceptable please feel free to ask.

We recommend that you undergo another assessment in three years' time to show that you have maintained standards or progressed to a level where you can be given a higher Award. You can request an earlier reassessment if you don't want to wait this long.





National
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SECTION Five

Committee outcomes

Applying for Beacon Status

If you have achieved an Advanced Award you can now apply for Beacon Status. This is awarded to provisions which in addition to providing consistent high quality support to autistic people, share their knowledge and understanding of good practice with families, external professionals and the local community. Application forms and guidance on applying can be found on the Accreditation membership page. Please read this guidance carefully. Completed forms should be returned to the Autism Accreditation Quality Manager at

Stephen.dedridge@nas.org.uk.

The Panel can award Beacon status if the application form provides clear evidence that the provision carries out exceptional work that has had a significant impact on how:

- Families understand and support relatives who are autistic.
- Other professionals understand and work with autistic people, including helping them to appreciate the personal experiences of autistic people.
- The local community or members of the public understand and work with autistic people; autistic people are socially included within their community.
- The provision contributes to developing knowledge and understanding of autism, for example by contributing to research.

The application form should also explain how the provision works in partnership with autistic people. Beacon status will be withheld if the provision requires improvement in meeting statutory requirements.



About the National Autistic Society

The National Autistic Society is here to transform lives, change attitudes and create a society that works for autistic people.

We transform lives by providing support, guidance and practical advice for the 700,000 autistic adults and children in the UK, as well as their three million family members and carers. Since 1962, autistic people have turned to us at key moments or challenging times in their lives, be it getting a diagnosis, going to school or finding work.

We change attitudes by improving public understanding of autism and the difficulties many autistic people face. We also work closely with businesses, local authorities and government to help them provide more autism-friendly spaces, deliver better services and improve laws.

We have come a long way but it is not good enough. There is still so much to do to increase opportunities, reduce social isolation and build a brighter future for people on the spectrum. With your help, we can make it happen.

The National Autistic Society is a charity registered in England and Wales (269425) and in Scotland (SC039427) and a company limited by guarantee registered in England (No.1205298), registered office 393 City Road, London EC1V 1NG. 3718 30/11/21