Autism Provider Handbook

About this handbook

This *Autism Providers Handbook* offers autism-specific guidance to help care and support providers to meet the needs of individuals whose primary support requirement is autism. By structuring the handbook around the priorities of the Norfolk's All Age Autism Strategy 2024 to 2029, it reflects what matters most to autistic people (18 years plus) and ensures that the voices of those it aims to support are at its heart. An index of resources is provided at the end of this document.

Understanding autism

Autism is a lifelong developmental difference that affects how people communicate, interact and perceive the world around them. While autistic people may share some similar characteristics, it is important to understand that everyone is unique, and autistic people have a variety of strengths and support needs. Autism is not a learning disability or a mental health condition, but autistic people may also experience co-occurring conditions such as learning disabilities, mental health challenges or physical health issues. Some autistic people live independently, while others may require specialist care and support.

Autism in numbers

According to the national autism strategy, approximately 1 in 100 people in the UK are autistic – around 700,000 autistic adults and children. However, recent research from University College London suggests a more accurate estimate may be between 1 to 3%, equating to over 1.2 million autistic people nationwide.
Based on Norfolk's population, this could mean approximately 27,400 autistic people live in the county. Furthermore, based on the 2021 birth rate, an estimated 237 autistic babies may be born in Norfolk each year.

Feedback

We welcome your feedback to help us improve this handbook—please share your thoughts, suggestions, or experiences by completing our online form

Policies, strategies and quality improvement

The following frameworks aim to improve the lives of autistic people by addressing areas such as diagnosis, education, employment, health and community support.

National framework

- Autism Act 2009
- Care Act 2014
- Data Protection Act 2018
- Equalities Act 2010
- Health and Care Act 2022
- Health and Social Care (Safety and Quality) Act 2015
- Human Rights Act 1998
- The Supported Accommodation (England) Regulations 2023

National strategies and regulations

- The national strategy for autistic children, young people and adults: 2021 to 2026 updated 22 July 2021
- The Supported Housing (Regulatory Oversight) Act 2023: debate in parliament

Local strategies and position statements

- Norfolk All Age Autism Strategy 2024 to 2029
- Better together for Norfolk 2021 to 2025
- Promoting Independence Strategy
- Adult Social Care Workforce Strategy
- NASB Safeguarding Strategic Plans
- Norfolk Safeguarding Children Partnership Policies and Procedures
- Norfolk market sustainability plan
- Norfolk and Waveney Integrated Care Strategy and Norfolk Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy
- Norfolk Market Position Statement
- Pathological Demand Avoidance, Position Statement

Inspections audits and quality improvement

- CQC guidance for providers
- Norfolk County Council Providers Assessment and Market Management Solution - PAMMS
- LeDeR Programme

Improve understanding and inclusion of autism

"By 2029 we want Norfolk to be a much more autism inclusive county, where Norfolk's autistic population are included in society, and feel safe and welcomed. We want to improve the understanding of autism within the general public, and among those providing support and services to autistic people". Norfolk All Age Autism Strategy

Providers have a key role in fostering environments where autistic adults feel understood, respected and included. This means ensuring all staff receive autism-specific training that goes beyond awareness to build real understanding of communication styles, sensory needs, and the diversity of autistic experiences. Providers should actively involve autistic people in shaping their own support and in service development, using co-production wherever possible. Inclusive practice also means challenging stigma, promoting neurodiversity and adapting service to reduce barriers – whether social, sensory or procedural. By embedding inclusive values into everyone's practice, providers can help create communities where autistic adults are empowered to thrive.

Better understand of autism in society

The Norfolk Autism Partnership Board plays a key role in shaping and improving autism-related services across Norfolk. The Board promotes the active involvement of autistic people and their families in service design, helping providers deliver more person-centred and responsive care. It also supports awareness-raising and professional development through training opportunities and public engagement activities. **Providers** can access this collaborative network to enhance service quality through partnership working, co-production, and shared learning.

- Access practical resources and guidance on the Norfolk Autism Partnership's website: https://www.norfolkautismpartnership.org.uk/

Hear Me, See Me: The National Autism Strategy – Reasonable Adjustments is a video resource produced by Autism Bedfordshire that explores the importance of reasonable adjustments from the perspective of autistic people. It highlights how services can better meet individual needs through practical changes and increased understanding. **Providers** can use this resource to reflect on current practices, gain insight into autistic experiences, and identify meaningful adjustments that improve support and accessibility.

- Access the video on the Autism Bedfordshire website: Hear Me, See Me: Reasonable Adjustments

The National Autistic Society offers a wealth of support for service providers working with autistic people. Their resources include practical tools, training

material, and guidance designed to help providers provide informed, person-centred care. They also offer evidence-based advice on how to communicate about autism, drawing on research into the language preferences of autistic people, their families and professionals. **Providers** can use these resources to foster respectful and inclusive environments.

- Access information and resources on the National Autistic Society website: how to talk and write about autism

Too Much Information was a campaign run by the National Autistic Society from 2015 to 2018 to increase public understanding of the five core features of autism and to give people an understanding of what actions they can take to help autistic people. **Providers** can use the information produced for the campaign to understand more about sensory overload, barriers to work, needing extra time and unexpected change.

- Access the Too Much Information resources on the National Autistic Society website: Too much information

Autism Friendly Communication Top Tips is a co-produced guide designed to help services communicate more effectively with autistic people by understanding and responding to their individual needs. It encourages autistic adults to reflect on what works and doesn't work for them in different situations. **Providers** can use the guide to support autistic people to identify and share their communication preferences, helping to create more respectful, responsive, and inclusive interactions.

- Access the guide on the Norfolk Autism Partnership website: Autism Friendly Communication Top Tips

Accessible Environments Checklist is a practical resource from the National Autistic Society that helps organisations assess how autism-friendly their environments and services are. It includes a guide and checklists to identify adjustments that can improve accessibility for autistic people and their families. **Providers** can use these tools to review current practices, make meaningful changes to physical spaces and service delivery, and adopt autism-friendly approaches that promote inclusion and comfort.

- Access the National Autistic Society Accessible environment guide here: Accessible environment
- Access the National Autistic Society Autism-Friendly Checklist here: Autism-friendly checklist

Reasonable Adjustments for People with Learning Disabilities and Autistic People is a manual and reference document developed by Norfolk and Suffolk NHS Foundation Trust to help health services make reasonable adjustments and what autistic people and their supporters can reasonably expect. Although health-focused, the guide is also useful in social care settings. **Providers** can use the guide to review current practices, identify

necessary adjustments, and implement changes that support autistic people more effectively. It covers key areas such as communication, sensory differences, and predictability, along with practical steps to improve service accessibility.

- Access the guide here: Reasonable Adjustments for people with learning disabilities and autistic people

Guide to Reasonable Adjustments for Autistic Adults is a resource developed by Coventry and Warwickshire Partnership NHS Trust with input from autistic people to help identify and implement adjustments that support autistic individuals effectively. While health-focused, the guide is also useful in social care settings and includes a video explaining why adjustments matter, along with practical advice on communication, sensory differences, predictability, and other challenges autistic people may face. **Providers** can use the guide to assess what adjustments are needed, what is currently offered, and what changes could improve outcomes for the autistic person they support.

- Access the guide on the Coventry and Warwickshire Partnership NHS Trust website: A Guide to Reasonable Adjustments for Autistic Adults

Autistica – Get Involved in Research offers opportunities for autistic adults and their families to take part in research projects that aim to improve everyday life, such as making public transport more accessible or developing apps with evidence-based resources. These projects are shaped by lived experience and focus on practical outcomes. **Providers** can support autistic people who are interested in research by helping them explore current opportunities and get involved in shaping future developments.

- Access more information about the current research projects on the Autistica website: Home | Autistica | Autism research and campaigning | Autistica

Disability Rail Card entitles the holder and an adult companion to one-thrid off most rail train fares across England, Scotland and Wales.

- Access more information about disability rail cares: Are You Eligible - Disabled Persons Railcard

Understanding of autism in public services

Autism Training

Providers' responsibilities for autism training is based on the statutory guidance issued under the Autism Act 2009. The guidance below distinguishes between staff who require autism awareness training and those who require more specialist autism training. All providers supporting adults, regardless of specialism, should ensure that staff have the skills, knowledge and confidence to work effectively with autistic people. The **Autism Act 2009** and associated statutory guidance require local authorities and NHS bodies to ensure staff supporting autistic people have the right skills and knowledge. The **Health and Care Act 2022** introduced a legal requirement for all CQC-registered providers to ensure their staff receiving learning disability and autism training appropriate to their role. Please refer to the Brief guide: Mandatory training requirement on learning disability and autism - Care Quality Commission and the Core Capabilities Framework for Supporting Autistic people that sets out knowledge and skills expected at Tier 1 and Tier 2.

The Tier 1 and Tier 2 levels referred to relate to the knowledge and skills described in the Core Capabilities Framework for Supporting Autistic People. They do not refer to the Tier 1 and Tier 2 levels used within the Oliver McGowan Mandatory Training on Learning Disability and Autism (OMMT). Providers may use OMMT to meet autism training requirements where the content is appropriate to the staff role and aligns with the relevant capabilities described in the autism framework.

Tier 1 – Awareness

- Staff who may have contact with autistic people but do not provide direct care or support.
- Covers autism awareness, communication, sensory needs and reasonable adjustments

Tier 2 – Specialist

- Staff providing direct care, support, assessment, care planning or decision-making support.
- Covers personalised support, communication, co-occurring conditions, autonomy and decision-making.

The government preferred and recommended training for CQC-registered providers is the Oliver McGowan Mandatory Training on Learning Disability and Autism (OMMT). Alternative training may be used where it meets the autism training requirements relevant to the role and aligns with national frameworks.

- Eligible providers can access funding for Oliver McGowan Mandatory Training (OMMT) through the Learning and Development Support Scheme. For more information visit: Learning and Development Support… | Norfolk & Suffolk Care Support. To access funding,

providers must ensure their Adult Social Care Workforce Data Set (ASC-WDS) account is up to date. Providers should check the "Does your data meet funding requirements?" section within ASC-WDS to confirm eligibility and identify any required updates. Sign in or create an ASC-WDS account

- All providers can commission their own training as long it meets the Core Capabilities Framework for Supporting Autistic people, which defines the knowledge and skills expected at Tier 1 and Tier 2. Please also refer to the Good learning disability and autism training.
- Providers who are not CQC registered and do not support people with learning disabilities could complete the Norfolk Autism Partnership's training.
  For more information about the co-produced, UEA accredited autism awareness and specialist autism training, visit : Autism Awareness Training - Norfolk Autism Partnership. Autism awareness e-Learning is free of charge. Specialist autism face-to-face training is co-delivered with an autistic trainer, and details of costs are available on the webpage.

All providers (CQC-registered or not) delivering services to autistic people should

- ensure staff receive autism training appropriate to their role
- maintain accurate and up-to-date training records
- ensure new staff complete training during induction
- refresh training in line with Skills for Care guidance and local policy
- ensure any in-house training is align with Skills for Care's Core Capabilities Framework.

CQC expect providers to demonstrate

- Compliance with the Health and Care Act 2022 training requirement
- Use of Tier 1 and Tier 2 training aligned with Skills for Care frameworks
- That training is embedded in practice and improves outcomes
- That reasonable adjustments are understood, recorded and implemented.

Pathological Demand Avoidance (PDA). The Norfolk Autism Partnership Board has published a comprehensive position statement on Pathological Demand Avoidance, highlighting the need for improved understanding and tailored support for autistic people with this profile. The PDA society and the National Autistic Society offer practical guidance and resources to help providers identify and respond to the needs of people with a PDA profile.
Providers can use this statement and the resources to enhance their approach to care and to further support service delivery.

- Access the PDA position statement on the Norfolk Autism Partnership website: NAP: Pathological Demand Avoidance
- Access PDA-specific resources on the National Autistic Society website: National Autistic Society: Demand avoidance

- Access PDA resources and wider information on the PDA Society website: PDA Society: More about PDA

Positive Behavour Support (PBS) is a person-centred approach that aims to improve quality of life and reduce behaviours that challenge by understanding their causes and creating supportive environments.
However, PBS has been historically linked to Applied Behaviour Analysis (ABA), which some autistic people and advocates have criticised for focusing on compliance rather than autonomy. This has raised concerns about how PBS is applied, especially in relation to respecting neurodiversity.
Providers can use this information to ensure PBS approaches are ethical, trauma-informed, and co-produced with autistic individuals and their families. They can also join the PBS Norfolk Community of Practice, delivered by Supporting Positively and commissioned by Norfolk County Council. Open to all health and social care staff across Norfolk and Waveney, the group meets quarterly via Microsoft Teams to share learning and develop good practice.

- To register or find out more information about the PBS Norfolk Community of Practice email: lesley.waugh@supportingpositively.com
- Access information about Applied Behavour Analysis vs Positive Behavour Support on the Dimensions website: ABA vs Positive Behaviour Support | Dimensions
- Access information on PBS – including strategies and principles of supporting individuals' behaviours of concern on the Norfolk County Council website: Positive behaviour support - Norfolk County Council
- Access a brief guide outlining expectations for PBS in regulated services, and helping providers understand how to apply PBS in line with quality standards available on the CQC website: Brief guide: Positive behaviour support for people with behaviours that challenge
- Access a series of training videos designed to help providers access and apply PBS effectively on the Supporting Positively website: Supporting Positively

Trauma Informed Training. The specialist substance misuse treatment service periodically offers free Trauma-Informed Training for care providers. This training introduces the principles of trauma-informed care and explores how adopting this approach can improve practice across health and social care settings.
Providers who support autistic individuals can find trauma-informed training especially important. It helps staff understand the potential impact of trauma, recognise signs of trauma, and create safe, supportive environments. Autistic people are disproportionately vulnerable to experiencing trauma and may face additional barriers to accessing appropriate support due to communication and sensory differences. A trauma-informed approach enables providers to deliver more compassionate, person-centred care.

- Access Trauma Informed training available on the Eventbrite website: Trauma Informed Training

Autism and Suicide Awareness is a free online course co-produced with autistic people to help increase understanding of autism and suicide risk. **Providers** can use this training to improve awareness of the challenges autistic people may face, learn how to recognise signs that someone may be struggling, and develop confidence in having supportive conversations about suicide. The training includes real-life experiences, interactive scenarios, practical guidance, and a certificate of completion.

- Access the free Autism and Suicide Awareness Training on the Zero Suicide Alliance website: https://www.zerosuicidealliance.com/suicide-autism-training

Information and Resources

The Norfolk Autism Partnership provides a comprehensive range of information, tools, and resources designed to support autistic people across Norfolk. **Provider** can use these freely accessible resources to enhance service delivery, improve understanding of autism, and tailor support to better meet the needs of autistic individuals.

- Access practical resources and guidance on the Norfolk Autism Partnership's website: https://www.norfolkautismpartnership.org.uk/

Norfolk Autism Directory is a one-stop shop for autism services in Norfolk, managed by the Norfolk Autism Partnership Board. It was developed in response to feedback during the co-production of the autism strategy, highlighting the need for clear, accessible information about available support. **Providers** who offer services to autistic people and their families are encouraged to add and regularly update their listings to ensure the directory remains accurate and useful.

- Access the Norfolk Autism Directory website to add or amend a listing: Norfolk Autism Directory

Improve access to education and support transitions into adulthood

"By 2029, we want autistic children and young people to get the right support so that every child and young person in Norfolk can flourish. We want transitions into adulthood to improve so that young people can live well in their communities, find work or continue in education". Norfolk All Age Autism Strategy

Providers have a key role in supporting autistic people to access education and navigate the transition to adulthood. Providers should work collaboratively with education settings, families, and other professionals to ensure that support is person-centred and tailored to individual aspirations. This includes helping people understand their options, advocating for reasonable adjustment and promoting inclusive learning environments. Providers should also support the development of life skills, confidence and independence to ensure that transition planning starts early, is well coordinated and reflects the person's goals for further education, employment and adult life.

Support in schools, colleges and other education settings

National Autistic Society and Autism Central offer guidance on starting college or university. Providers play a vital role in supporting autistic people as they transition into and navigate student life. This period can present unique challenges, including changes in routine, increased social demands, and navigating complex acedemic environments. **Providers** can help by offering tailored person-centred support that promotes independence, wellbeing and academic success.

- Access information about starting college or university on the National Autistic Society website: starting college or university
- Access information and resources about the transitions to adulthood on the Autism Central website: Transition to College or University | Autism Central

Disability Student Allowance (DSA) is a government funded support package available to students in higher education who have a disability, including autism. **Providers** can play a vital role in raising awareness, understanding and promoting access to DSA to ensuring students receive the adjustments and resources that they need. They can also help autistic students understand their eligibility, navigate the application process and prepare the necessary evidence. Evidence can include the diagnostic report or the reasonable adjustments letter that is provided by the Norfolk commissioned diagnostic service Be U Norfolk post screening.

- Access information about Disability Students' Allowance if you're a student with a learning difficulty, health problem or disability on the GOV.UK website: Help if you're a student with a learning difficulty, health problem or disability: Disabled Students' Allowance - GOV.UK

Communication

The **Self Advocacy Toolkit** from the Autism Education Trust is a free downloadable resource designed for autistic young people, though it can also be used effectively by adults. It helps individuals build self-awareness and confidence in expressing their needs and preferences across different areas of life. With clear guidance and practical tools, it supports the development of self-advocacy skills. **Providers** can promote its use by introducing the toolkit, supporting engagement with it, and incorporating its insights into person-centred planning.

- Access more information and the toolkit on the Autism Education Trust website: Autism Education Trust - - Self Advocacy Toolkit

Transition into adulthood

SEND Preparing for Adult Life (PfAL) programme offers a structured framework and practical resources to support autistic young people aged 14–25 as they transition into adulthood. **Providers** can use tools such as the PfAL Planning Toolkit, Picture My Future, and Relationship Maps to personalise support, promote independence, and strengthen social connections. By embedding these resources into service planning and delivery, providers can ensure smoother transitions, better outcomes, and more responsive support tailored to the needs and aspirations of autistic individuals.

- Access the information and resources on the Norfolk County Council website: Preparing for adult life - Norfolk County Council

Ambitious about Autism offers preparing for adulthood resources designed to support autistic young people as they move into adult life. These include toolkits on employment, further education, relationships, mental health and independent living – many of which are co-produced with autistic people to ensure relevance and authenticity. **Providers** can use these resources to better understand the challenges and aspirations of autistic adults, tailor support plans and facilitate smoother transitions by embedding practical strategies into their services. By applying these tools, professionals can promote independence, boost confidence, and help autistic people thrive in adulthood.

- Access the resources on the Ambitious about Autism website: Preparing for adulthood | Ambitious about Autism

Support adults into employment

"By 2029, we want more autistic adults to be in employment. We want autistic people's experience of being in work to have improved, and for employers to be more confident about hiring and supporting autistic workers". Norfolk All Age Autism Strategy

Providers have a key role in helping autistic adults to access and sustain meaningful employment. This includes understanding their individual strengths and interests, working collaboratively with employment services, providing tailored support (such as travel training), embedding employment goals into support plans and regularly reviewing progress. They can also advocate for reasonable adjustments in recruitment and workplace practices.

Getting a Job

Norfolk County Council's Help with Employment webpage offers tailored support for autistic individuals seeking work, including access to job coaching, CV and interview guidance, and supported employment programmes. **Providers** can use these resources to connect autistic people with vocational opportunities, build confidence, and offer personalised pathways into meaningful employment.

- Access information on the Norfolk County Council's Help with Employment webpage: Help with employment - Norfolk County Council

Pro Autism offer a free online course designed for autistic university students and graduates. It can help them plan their career path, build their confidence to ask for reasonable adjustments and prepare them for interviews. **Providers** can support autistic people to access the online course and plan their career pathway.

- Access the course on the Pro Autism website: Home - PRO Autism

Keeping a Job

The National Autistic Society offer employment guides and an employment module for autistic people looking for a job, as well as information for autistic people in work. These tools can help autistic people build skills, understand their rights and feel more confident at work. **Providers** can play a key role by downloading and sharing these guides with autistic people, supporting them to complete the employment model and using the resources to inform inclusive workplace practices.

- Access information on the National Autistic Society website: Support to get work experience and find a job

Working Well Norfolk delivered by seetec offers dedicated employment advisers that support autistic people to return to work and offer 1:1 advice and coaching to help them stay in work. **Providers** can encourage and support autistic people to contact Working Well Norfolk, help them access personalised employment coaching and promote the service as part of wider support planning.

- Access information on the Working Well Norfolk website: Working Well Norfolk - Seetec or call 0800 334 5525

Routes into employment and education for adults

The Autistic Boss is a free online platform that is run by and for autistic people, providing support and encouragement to help autistic people achieve their goals. **Providers** can access the free, downloadable resources designed to support autistic adult at work to maximise their full potential and achieve happiness and success in the workplace.

- Access the resources on The Autistic Boss website: Home - The Autistic Boss

Norfolk County Council Skills and Employment Team (SET) works with organisations to facilitate paid employment opportunities for people with a disability or disadvantage. Working in partnership with a wide range of employers, the team helps to generate paid roles and promotes inclusive practice through initiative like the Disability Confident Scheme – which helps employers recruit, retain and support disabled people. **Providers** can engage with SET to generate paid employment opportunities to autistic people.

- Access information on the Skills and Employment Team website: Become a disability confident employer - Norfolk County Council

Tackle health inequalities for autistic people

"By 2029, we want autistic people to be able to access the health support they need to live healthier lives. We want to see improved health outcomes and a reduction in the gap in life expectancy that currently exists for autistic people". Norfolk All Age Autism Strategy

Providers have a key role in addressing the health inequalities faced by autistic adults. This includes ensuring that people can access timely, appropriate and equitable healthcare by support them to attend appointments, understand health information and communicate their needs. Providers should work closely with health professionals to advocate for reasonable adjustments and promote autism inclusive practice across services. It's essential to recognise and respond to the sensory, communication and anxiety-related barriers that may prevent autistic people from engaging in healthcare. Providers should also encourage preventative care and help people understand and manage their physcial and mental health. By embedding these practices, providers can help reduce disparities and improve long-term health outcomes.

Diagnosis

Be U Norfolk delivered by ABL Health offers an adult autism diagnostic assessment for adults aged 18 years and over who do not have a learning disability or current autism diagnosis. It will also provide a navigation service to support people to wait well for a diagnostic assessment. **Providers** can support autistic people experiencing challenges associated with autism and don't currently have an autism diagnosis to contact their GP. The GP will discuss diagnostic pathways that may include a referral to Be U Norfolk.

- Access information about adult autism diagnosis pathway on the Be U Norfolk website: Home - Be U Norfolk

Ambitious about autism offers helpful resources that can empower autistic adults to better understand themselves and advocate for appropriate support. The resources include videos, guidance on making sense of a diagnosis and explaining autistic needs. **Providers** can help by signposting newly diagnostic autistic adults to Ambitious about autism resources, support individuals to explore the video and written guidance, and help them to reflect on their needs and communicate these effectively in work, education and daily life.

- Access resources about making sense of an autism diagnosis on the Ambitious about Autism website: Getting diagnosed in adulthood

Recovery College is offered by Norfolk and Suffolk NHS Foundation Trust who deliver free courses to help autistic people develop strategies for living well with autism. These courses build confidence, self-awareness and practical coping strategies. The college providers sessions such as Introduction to Autism and Living Well with Autism. **Providers** can encourage autistic people to explore the Recovery College courses, support them to register and attend sessions and use the course content to reinformed learning and promote wellbeing in other settings.

- Access the free courses on the NHS Norfolk and Suffolk NHS Foundation Trust Recovery College website: Browse our Recovery College courses and begin your personal recovery journey | Norfolk and Suffolk NHS

Health services

Autism Annual Health Check are currently being piloted in part of England to address the poor physical and mental health in autistic people. These checks are based on the successful model used for people with learning disabilities, which has shown improved health outcomes. Although these checks are not yet available in Norfolk for autistic people without a learning disability, Autistica is working with NHS England to research their effectiveness and aims to ensure every autistic person is offered an annual health check by 2030. **Providers** can stay informed about the development of autism annual health checks through checking the Autistica website. They can also advocate for autistic people to be included in any future pilots and services and use the Autistica Health Checks Plan to raise awareness and promote inclusion in health service.

- Access information about autism annual health checks on the Autistica website: Autistica

My Health Passport is a practical tool promoted by NHS England to help autistic people communicate their needs to doctors, nurses and other healthcare professionals. Providers can support autistic people by helping them to complete the passport using the online or printable template, ensuring it reflects their specific needs. It is recommended to keep two copies – one for the person's records and one to take if admitted to hosptial. **Providers** could also assist in making sure the passport is handed to the healthcare team and placed within patient notes during hospital stays.

- Access the template and guidance on the National Autistic Society website: My Health Passport

Autism and Learning Disability Liaison Nurses work across Norfolk's three main hospitals – Norfolk and Norwich University Hospital, James Paget University Hospital and The Queen Elizabeth Hospital King's Lynn. Their role is to improve the hospital experience for autistic patients by promoting person-centred care, reducing barriers to access, and advising staff on best practice. **Providers** can support autistic people by helping them plan for hospital stays. This can include contacting the Liaison Nurses in advance. Providers can encouraging autistic people to share relevant health information - such as completing My Health Passport - to ensure the person feels prepared and supported throughout their admission.

- Access information about the Autism and Learning Disability Liaison Nurses on the following websites: Norfolk and Norwich University Hosptial, James Paget University Hospital, The Queen Elizabeth Hospital King's Lynn

Cervical Screening is offered to women aged 25 to 64 to detect early signs of cervical cancer. Autistic women may face additional challenges during this procedure due to co-occuring conditions such as gastrointestinal issues or joint hypermobility, as well as sensory and communication needs. **Providers** can support autistic people by helping them prepare – this may include discussing what to expect, choosing comfortable clothing, writing down questions in advance, and using calming techniques before the appointment. Resources such as the NHS easy-read guide and videos from Surrey County Council feature experts by experiences helping an autistic woman to feel more informed and confident. These tools can be used to promote understanding and reduce anxiety around cervical screening.

- Access the easy read guide to having a smear test on the NHS website: Having a smear test
- Access the resources from Surrey County Council on their website: Cancer screening from the learning disability and autism hub

Breast Screening is offered to women aged between 50 and 71 to help detect early signs of breast cancer. Research through NHS England 2021 show that autistic women are less likely to access this screening, often due to sensory sensitivities, anxiety, or lack of accessible information. **Providers** can support autistic people to help them make an informed choice – this could include discussing the process with the autistic person using the range of resources available. These tools include expert-led explanations that can help autistic people understand what to expect and feel more confident about attending.

- Access resources on helping health professionals support personal informed choice in screening on the GOV.UK website: Helping health professionals support personal informed choice in screening – PHE Screening

- Access the breast cancer screening easy read guide on the NHS website: Breast cancer screening - an easy read guide about a health test for women aged 50 and over
- Access the cancer screening easy read guide from the Surrey County Council website: Cancer screening from the learning disability and autism hub - Surrey County Council

Abdominal aortic aneurysm (AAA) is a health test for men who are over 65 years old. Having a screening will help find aneurysms early so they can be either monitored or treated. The screening is a test to check if there is a swelling in the aorta, which is the main vessel that carries blood from the heart to the stomach. A person cannot tell if they have an AAA so it is important the screening is completed. **Providers** can use the NHS AAA screening guide to support autistic men to understand and be more prepared for the test.

- Access the Abdominal aortic aneurysm (AAA) screen easy read guide on the NHS website: AAA screening guide

Bowel screening is offered to people from age 50 using a home testing kit that checks for small amounts of blood in the stool. As this process may be unfamiliar or cause anxiety. **Providers** can support autistic people by explaining why the test is important and helping them to feel confidence about completing it. Easy-read guides and videos – such as those from Surrey County Council's Learning Disability and Autism Hub – can be used to explain the process clearly and reduce uncertainty.

- Access the NHS Bowl Cancer Screen Easy Read guide: Bowel cancer screening an easy read guide
- Access the Surrey County Council easy read guide on cancer screening: Cancer screening from the learning disability and autism hub

Digital Flags support reasonable adjustments in healthcare. It is a marker on a patient's NHS record that highlights the specific adjustments that they need to access health and care services more effectively. It helps ensure that autistic people don't have to repeatedly explain their needs at each appointment and supports healthcare professional in meeting their legal duties under the Equality (Act 2010). **Providers** can support autistic adults by helping them identify the adjustments that work best for them and encouraging them to ask their GP or other healthcare professionals to add or update these details on the NHS Spine. This ensure the flag is visible across services and helps improve access, safety and experience.

- Access more information about the NHS Reasonable Adjustment Flag on the NHS England website: NHS England Reasonable Adjustment Flag

Flu and Covid Vaccines provides essential protections again seasonal flu and Covid 19 that can be particularly challenging for some autistic people. This is due to sensory sensitivities, anxiety and difficulties with unfamiliar environments. Some may also find the vaccination process itself stressful. Providers can support autistic adults by helping them prepare – this may include identifying reasonable adjustments using the My Health Passport, discussing the process in advance, and ensuring any allergies (such as to egg protein) are considered when choosing a vaccine. Autistic people living in care homes or with weakened immune systems may be eligible for free flu vaccines. **Providers** can support autistic people to check their eligibility, book appointments and access walk-in sites. Easy-read guides and the NHS resources can be used to explain the process and reduce anxiety.

- Access information to book, change or cancel NHS flu vaccination on the NHS website: Book, change or cancel a free NHS flu vaccination at a pharmacy
- Access information about the Covid 19 vaccine on the NHS website: COVID-19 vaccine - NHS

Weight Management and supporting healthy lifestyles for autistic adults. Autistic adults are at increased risk of obesity compared to the general population. This is due to factors such as sensory sensitivities, restrictive eating patterns, barriers to physical activities and medication side effects. **Providers** can support autistic people by creating supportive environments that encourage healthy eating, regular movement and personalised strategies that take into account sensory and communication needs. If an autistic adult expresses interest in losing weight, providers can help them explore suitable weight management support options.

- Access information about local weight management services on the Norfolk County Council Ready to Change website: Help with weight management

LeDeR is the national NHS programme for reporting the death of an autistic person aged 18 and over. Its aim is to learn from these deaths to ensure that the experiences of autistic people are understood and used to drive improvements in care. **Providers** can report the death of any autistic adult they support to LeDeR but are asked to also advise the family of this as they may be invited to contribute to the review process. If a provider does not wish to report the death to LeDeR we ask that they do notify adult social care and ask that this is done.

- Access information about LeDeR and how to report a death on the NHS LeDeR website: Report the death of someone with a learning disability or an autistic person

Mental health services

Recovery College is offered by Norfolk and Suffolk NHS Foundation Trust who deliver free courses to focus on mental well-being. These colleges provide free educational courses, workshop and resources designed to help people improve their mental health and wellbeing, often delivered in a peer-support and recovery focused enviornment. **Providers** can encourage autistic people to explore the Recovery College courses, support them to register and attend sessions and use the course content to reinformed learning and promote wellbeing in other settings.

- Access the free courses on the NHS Norfolk and Suffolk NHS Foundation Trust Recovery College website: Browse our Recovery College courses and begin your personal recovery journey | Norfolk and Suffolk NHS

SANEline is a national mental health helpline offering specialist emotional support, guidance, and information to anyone affected by mental illness, including family members, friends, and carers. **Providers** can support autistic adults and their families by signposting them to SANEline for confidential support during difficult times. The helpline is available by calling 0300 304 7000, daily between 4pm and 10pm.

- Access more information on the SANE website: SANEline services - SANE

Samaritans offer a confidential listening service for anyone who needs to talk about what's troubling them, at any time, day or night. Whether it's stress, anxiety, or any other concern, trained volunteers are available to provide support without judgment. **Providers** can support autistic adults and their families by encouraging them to reach out when they need someone to talk to. The service is free and available 24/7 by calling 116 123 or emailing their thoughts and feelings to jo@samaritans.org.

- Access more information on the Samaritans website: Contact Us | Samaritans

The NHS 111 Mental Health Option offers 24/7 urgent support from trained professionals for anyone in crisis—callers simply dial 111 and select the mental health option. This service is especially helpful for autistic people, providing accessible, calm, and immediate guidance. All call handlers have now completed the Oliver McGowan Mandatory Training on Learning Disability and Autism. **Providers** can support access by promoting the service, where appropriate including it in care plans, and helping autistic individuals and families understand what to expect when calling.

- Access information about the NHS 111 Mental Health option on the NHS Norfolk and Suffolk NHS Foundation Trust website: Changes to 111 option for mental health crisis | News and events | Norfolk and Suffolk NHS

SHOUT 85258 is a free, confidential 24/7 crisis text service for anyone struggling with their mental health—just text "SHOUT" to 85258 to connect with a trained volunteer. This service is particularly supportive for autistic people who may prefer text-based communication during distress. **Providers** can help by sharing this resource, where appropriate including it in care plans, and encouraging autistic people and families to use it when verbal communication feels overwhelming.

- Access more information about Shout on their website: Shout: the UK's free, confidential and 24/7 mental health text service for crisis support | Shout 85258

The Dynamic Support Register (DSR) is a vital tool for identifying autistic individuals – children, young people and adults – who are at risk of admission to mental health inpatient services. Providers can use the DSR to help ensure that appropriate support is offered in the community, reducing the need for mental health hosptial admissions. Inclusion on the DSR must be based on informed consent and requires a formal autism diagnosis. **Providers** should actively engage with the DSR progress to ensure the person's needs are reflected in service planning, commissioning and delivery. This includes contributing to regular reviews and working collaboratively to develop safe, person-centre alternative to inpatient care.

- Access information about the DSR register on the Norfolk and Waveney Integrated Care System website: Dynamic Support Register (DSR)

Norfolk and Waveney Wellbeing Services also known as Talking Therapies, provide psychological support to people aged 16 plus across Norfolk and Waveney. The free NHS service helps people to manage stress, low mood and anxiety through various therapies. **Providers** can support autistic people who are willing to engage in wellbeing support through completing a referral form.

- Access information about Norfolk and Waveney Talking therapies on their website: Home | Norfolk

Building the right support in the community

"By 2029, we want autistic people to be able to live well in their communities. We want improvements in support to mean that fewer autistic people reach crisis point. When autistic people spend time in hospital, we want them to be able to return home or move to suitable accommodation with the right support as soon as they are ready". Norfolk All Age Autism Strategy

Providers have a key role in working collaboratively to build personalised, flexible, and inclusive support that enables autistic adults to live well in their communities. This means recognising each person's unique strengths, preferences, and needs, and co-producing support plans that promote independence, wellbeing, and meaningful engagement. Providers must ensure that information for autistic people is co-produced and autism friendly. They should offer consistent and reliable support within autism-friendly environments. Support should enable access to education, employment, social opportunities, and healthcare. Strong partnerships with families, health services, and community organisations are essential, alongside a commitment to continuous learning and improvement. By embedding person-centred and strengths-based approaches, providers can help autistic adults lead fulfilling lives within their communities.

Early Intervention

Autism Alert Cards are credit card-sized tools designed to help quickly explain an autistic person's behavour or needs in difficult or emergency situations. They can be carried by autistic people or those who support them, helping others understand that the person may need extra time, space or assistance. There are two types of cards available. Autism Alert Card from Autism Anglia – available for autistic people. There is a small cost and proof of diagnosis is required. This Person is Autistic Card is a free downloadable card for autistic people and their supporters, useful for everyday situations where extra understanding may be needed. **Providers** can assist autistic people in applying for or downloading these cards and encouraging their use in public settings to promote safety, understanding, and confidence.

- Access the Autism Alert Card from the Autism Anglia website: Autism Alert Card | Autism Anglia
- Access the This Person is Autistic Card from the National Autistic Society website: This person is autistic card

Self Advocacy Booklet is a practical resource developed by Autism Bedfordshire to help autistic people prepare for everyday situations by making notes about what they may need to say or ask. The booklet can be used for scenarios such as healthcare appointments, visits to the hairdresser, or speaking with service professionals like gas engineers. **Providers** can support autistic adults by working through the booklet together, helping them feel more confident and prepared.

- Access the Self Advocacy Booklet on the Norfolk Autism Partnership Website: Self-Advocacy-Booklet-2.11.23.docx

Safe and Better Journey Cards are designed for bus users' who may need some extra assistance when communicating with drivers. They include messages such as "please give me time to find a seat" and "please speak slowly". **Providers** can help autistic people to print and laminate these cards and helping them use them confidently, offering tailored support and visual aids that make travel more comfortably, less stressful and more inclusive.

- Access the public transport accessibility resources on the Norfolk County Council website: Public transport accessibility - Norfolk County Council

Managing Money Guide from the National Autistic Society resource is designed to help autistic people understand and manage their finances. It includes information about financial rights and available support, e-learning modules covering key topics (such as budgeting, bank accounts, borrowing money and claiming benefits). The content was co-designed by autistic people and autism specialists to ensure it is relevant, accessible and practice. Some modules are free to access, while others can be purchased individually or as part of themed bundles. **Providers** can use these resources to support autistic adults who may find financial management overwhelming. This includes helping individuals to navigate benefit systems, learn budgeting skills and access support to manage any debts. It aims to build financial confidence and independence using tailored autism friend tools.

- Access the guide on the National Autistic Society website: Managing money
- Access the online modules on the National Autistic Society website: Managing money e-learning module

Turn2Us Benefits Calculator is a free, easy-to-use online tool designed to help people understand and access financial support. It provides a benefit check to identify which benefits an autistic person may be entitled to claim, a grants search to find charitable grants that may be available based on individual circumstances and step-by-step videos and resources to guide users through each stage of the Personal Independence Payment (PIP) application process. **Providers** can use Turn2Us with the autistic people they support to explore benefit entitlements, identify potential grants and build confidence in navigating the PIP process. This can reduce financial stress and improve access to essential resources.

- Access the Turn2us resources on their website: Get support with claiming benefits and grants | Turn2us

Money Helper is a free service that offers clear, impartial guidance on everyday money matters, including benefits, budgeting, and financial planning. It helps individuals make informed decisions and manage their finances with confidence. **Providers** can support autistic adults by helping them access Money Helper to obtain information and tools that promote financial independence and wellbeing.

- Access information and resources on the Money Helper website: Benefits | MoneyHelper

Norfolk County Council Adult Learning provides a wide range of free and low cost courses designed to help autistic adults build essential life skills. These include courses on cooking, nutrition, diet and exercise to support daily living. They also include money management workshops to improve financial confidence and independence and an independent living skills programme for people who need extra support with learning and want to gain confidence in everyday tasks. **Provider** can assist autistic adults in exploring and enrolling in suitable courses that match their interests and needs. These opportunities can boost self-esteem, promote independence and enhance overall wellbeing.

- Access the adult learning courses on the Norfolk County Council Adult Learning website: courses Life skills courses - Norfolk County Council

Report a Safeguarding Concern if someone you support is experiencing abuse or may be at risk of mistreatment or neglect. Call **0344 800 8020** to raise a concern and use the safeguarding checklist to ensure you have the right information. If the person is not in immediate danger, you can complete the online safeguarding adult concern form on the Norfolk County Council website. **Providers** play a vital role in recognising and reporting safeguarding issues to protect autistic adults from harm.

- To report a safeguarding concern go to the Norfolk County Council, Report a concern – safeguarding website: Report a concern - safeguarding - Norfolk County Council

Autism Central provides free support and resources for parents and families of autistic adults in the East of England, including a Peer Education Programme. The service offers information on topics such as diagnosis, employment, and mental health, alongside one-to-one support and opportunities to connect with others through workshops, coffee mornings, and virtual meet-ups. **Providers** can help families access Autism Central to share experiences, build knowledge, and feel more confident in supporting autistic adults.

- Access more information on the Autism Central website: Autism Central for Parents and Carers | Autism Central

Carers Matter Norfolk provides support, advice, and information for unpaid carers, including access to carers assessments. The service helps carers understand their rights, connect with support networks, and access practical help. **Providers** can support carers of autistic adults by signposting them to Carers Matter Norfolk and encouraging them to contact the Carers Advice Line on **0800 083 1148**, available Monday to Friday between 9am and 5pm.

- Access more information on the Carers Matter Norfolk website: Support, Advice & Education for Carers | Carers Matter Norfolk

Support for autistic people

Relationship and Intimacy is a resource provided by Ambitious about Autism. The resources include topics like making friends, navigating romantic relationships, LGBTQ+ identity, and common fears around dating. **Providers** can use these resources to support autistic people in developing social confidence, understanding personal boundaries, and exploring identity safely. Using these resources providers can facilitate open conversations, tailor support to individual needs, and promote healthy, inclusive relationship education.

- Access the resources on the Ambitious about Autism website: Relationships and intimacy | Ambitious about Autism

Support Loving Toolkit – Supporting Relationships is a resource developed by Choice Support to help providers offer meaningful support around relationships. While primarily aimed at people with learning disabilities, many of the tools and approaches can be applied to autistic individuals where appropriate. The toolkit encourages providers to build their knowledge, confidence, and resources to support autistic people in forming and maintaining positive relationships. **Providers** can help by exploring the toolkit, using its materials where appropriate in support planning, and promoting healthy relationships as part of person-centred care.

- Access more information on the Choice Support website: Choice Support | Supporting relationships

Making Friends – A Guide for Autistic Adults is a resource from the National Autistic Society designed to support autistic people in building and maintaining friendships. It offers practical advice tailored to the unique social experiences and challenges autistic adults may face. **Providers** can support by sharing the guide, discussing its content during support sessions, and helping autistic individuals apply strategies in real-life settings. It can also be included in personal development or social goals within care plans.

- Access the guide on the National Autistic Society Website: Making friends - a guide for autistic adults

Molehill Mountain App is a free tool developed by Autistica and King's College London to help autistic people understand and manage anxiety. Based on Cognitive Behavioural Therapy and adapted for autistic users, the app allows individuals to log worries, complete daily exercises, and access practical, evidence-based tips to build confidence and reduce anxiety. **Providers** can support autistic adults by helping them download the app from the App Store or Google Play and explore its features to better understand the causes and symptoms of anxiety.

- Access more information about the Molehill Mountain App on the Autistica website: Molehill Mountain | Autistica

Focus Bear App is a productivity tool created by autistic adults, specifically designed to support autistic adults in managing distractions and building daily routines. It includes distraction blocking features to help maintain focus, habit tracking tools to support consistency and structure, real-time guidance for managing daily tasks and routines and additional resources on managing anger and emotitional regulations. The app is built with lived experience in mind, making it especially helpful for those who experience challenges with executive functioning. A basic version is free, with additional features available through a paid upgrade. **Providers** can introduce autistic adults to the Focus Bear App, help them explore its features, and encourage its use as part of a structured daily routine. This can promote independence, reduce overwhelm, and support emotional wellbeing.

- Access the Focus Bear App on their website: Proven Methods: How to Deal with Autism Anger in Adults

What's on – Norfolk Autism Events is a regular updated selection of activities and events across Norfolk for autistic people and their families. Managed by the Norfolk Autism Partnership, it includes everything from ongoing support to social groups to one-day events and special celebrations. **Providers** can use the calendar to help autistic people and their families to find opportunities to connect, participate and access local support.

- Access the event calendar on the Norfolk Autism Partnership's website: What's On? – Norfolk Autism Directory

Relay UK is a free national relay service that supports people who have difficulty communicating over the phone, by enabling text-based communication during calls. While not specifically designed for autistic people, it can be especially helpful for those who find verbal conversations challenging. The service works via the Relay UK app, which can be downloaded to a mobile, tablet, or PC, and users only pay their normal call charges. **Providers** can support autistic people by helping them download and set up the app, including where appropriate Relay UK in communication plans, and promoting it as a useful alternative for phone-based interactions.

- Access more information on the relay UK website: Relay UK - homepage | Relay UK

Housing and independent living

Choosing where to live on the Norfolk County Council website offer clear guidance about supported living, shared housing and independent living with varying levels of care. The site offers clear guidance on choosing where to live, eligibility, costs, and the types of support available—such as 24-hour care or community-based assistance. Providers can use this guidance to have informed conversations with autistic people about their preferences, promote independence, and ensure that housing choices align with their care and support needs.

- Access more information on the Norfolk County Council website: Choosing where to live - Norfolk County Council

The Autism and Homelessness Toolkit is aimed at staff and organisations working in homelessness and supported housing. It provides a toolkit to help autistic people to take up and stay in accomodation. **Providers** can use the toolkit to inform service delivery, and managers may find it useful for training, presentations, or workshops.

- Access the toolkit here: Autism and Homelessness Toolkit

The SCIE Place-Based Housing Toolkit is designed to support local areas in developing strategic housing plans for autistic adults and adults with a learning disability. Funded by the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC), it offers a structured approach to thinking methodically about housing needs and solutions. **Providers** and commissioners can use the toolkit to inform planning, improve service design, and support inclusive housing strategies.

- Access the toolkit on the Social Care Institute for Excellence website: Toolkit for place-based strategies for housing for autistic adults and adults with a learning disability

The Housing Toolkit is a practical guide to help autistic people and people with learning disabilities think about where they want to live and how to pay for it. It covers key areas such as independent living, housing rights, planning, finding the right home, understanding options, design considerations, support networks, and the legal framework. **Providers** can use the toolkit to support informed decision-making and person-centred housing planning.

- Download the toolkit here: The Housing Toolkit

Living in the Community Housing Design for Adults with Autism – Andrew Bland while not explicitly using neurodivergent-affirming language, it serves as a valuable foundational resource for those involved in designing inclusive living environments. It offers practical insights into spatial considerations, sensory sensitivities and environmental adaptions that can significantly enhance the quality of life for autistic adults. Providers such as supported living services, housing associations and commissioning teams can benefit from this guide by integrating its principles into their planning and service delivering. In doing so it can foster more respectful, person-centred housing solutions aligned to the diverse needs of autistic adults.

- Download the guide here: Living in the Community Housing Design for Adults with Autism

Improve support within the criminal and youth justice system

"By 2029, we want autistic people who come into contact with the criminal and youth justice system to get the support that they need. Through early intervention we want fewer autistic people to become victims of crime or to be convicted of a crime. We also want those who have been convicted of a crime to get the additional support they may need to fully engage with their sentence and rehabilitation". Norfolk All Age Autism Strategy

Providers have a key role in improving outcomes for autistic adults who come into contact with the criminal and youth justice system. Providers should work closely with justice services to ensure that autistic people are identified early, understood and appropriately supported. This includes advocating for reasonable adjustment during police interactions, court proceedings and custodial settings and ensuring communication needs and sensory sensitivities are recognised and accommodated. Providers should contribute to multi-agency planning, offer tailored support to reduce the risk of reoffending, and promote access to specalist advocacy and legal advice. Building staff awareness of autism and embedding trauma-informed, person-centred approaches are essential to ensuring fair and inclusive treatment within the justice system.

Early Intervention

Mate Crime refers to situations where someone deliberately befriends an autistic person to take advantage of them, often financially, emotionally, or socially. Ambitious about Autism provides guidance on recognising mate crime, understanding why autistic people may be targeted, and knowing how to stay safe and seek help. **Providers** can support autistic adults by helping them identify signs of mate crime, understand their rights, and take steps to protect themselves.

- Access the information and resources that are available on the Ambitious about Autism website: Mate crime | Ambitious about Autism

Tricky Friends is a short animation designed to help people understand what healthy friendships look like, how to recognise when a relationship might be harmful, and what they can do about it. **Providers** can use this 3-minute video to support autistic adults in thinking about the intentions of others, starting conversations about safety, and encouraging positive opportunities to build and maintain friendships.

- Access the animation and further information that is available on the Norfolk Safeguarding Adults Board website: Tricky Friends animation | Norfolk Safeguarding Adults Board

Support in police stations and courts

The Crown Prosecution Service's Easy Read Victims' Guides use simplified language and visuals to help people understand their rights and what to expect when reporting a crime or going to court. These guides are especially valuable for autistic individuals who may find standard legal documents overwhelming or inaccessible. **Providers** supporting autistic people can use these resources to explain legal processes clearly, reduce anxiety around criminal justice involvement, and ensure individuals feel informed and empowered. This approach can enhance the overall experience for autistic victims navigating the justice system.

- Access the guides on the Crown Prosecution Service website: Easy Read Victims' Guides | The Crown Prosecution Service

Appropriate Adults are provided by Anglia Care Trust (ACT) to support vulnerable adults in custody, and benefit and fraud investigation interviews by the DWP. They ensure autistic people's rights and wellbeing are protected during police and investigation procedures. The appropriate adult role was established under the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 (PACE). Providers can support autistic people by advising them to inform the police of their additional needs and request an appropriate adult.

- Access more information about the role and about the support available on the ACT website: Appropriate Adult Services | Anglia Care Trust

Criminal Justice – A Guide for Autistic Adults is a resource from the National Autistic Society that provides clear information for autistic people who may witness a crime, be a victim, need to speak with the police or attend court. It explains what to expect and how to navigate these situations with confidence. Providers can use the guide to support autistic adults in understanding their rights and preparing for any involvement with the criminal justice system.

- Access the guide on the National Autistic Society website: Criminal Justice - a guide for autistic adults

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