

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 started 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 1,000 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 towards 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 on autism practice and our kitemark 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 kitemark:

Our kite mark is recognised as a sign of best autism practice by autistic people, families and professionals. It offers 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	<u>6</u>
• Our framework of best practice	<u>9</u>
• Awards criteria	<u>10</u>

Section two

Your self-audit	<u>12</u>
• Completing your self-audit and action plan	<u>14</u>
• Self-Audit- to be completed by the provision	<u>20</u>

Section three

Submitting your case studies	<u>38</u>
• Case studies templates - to be completed by the provision	<u>40</u>

Section four

The Autism Accreditation assessment	<u>46</u>
• Preparing for your assessment	<u>47</u>
• Your assessment	<u>51</u>
• Assessment report (completed by the consultant)	<u>54</u>

Section five

Committee decision and next steps	<u>69</u>
• Committee decisions – to be completed by the Quality Manager	<u>71</u>
• Next steps	<u>72</u>



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



Section One

Your Autism Accreditation journey: An overview

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





Your Autism Accreditation journey	
<p style="text-align: center;">Pre-assessment</p> <p>Carry out a comprehensive and detailed review of current practice using our self-audit tool.</p> <p>Implement an accreditation action plan based on the self-assessment.</p> <p>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.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Assessment</p> <p>Assessment days include observation of practice, oversight of key person-centred documentation, and discussions with key people within the provision (including autistic people, where possible)</p> <p>Observations may also be undertaken by an independent moderator.</p> <p>Online accreditation survey is sent to autistic people and/or families/advocates.</p> <p>A report summary of assessment findings and areas of strength and development is produced by the consultant and sent to the Committee awarding body.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Committee decision</p> <p>The Accreditation Awarding Committee consider assessment report and decide if an Award can be given and at what level: Aspiring, Accredited or Advanced.</p> <p>Once a provision has achieved an Advanced Award, there is an option of applying for Beacon Status in recognition of the work they sharing expertise and knowledge of good practice in supporting autistic people.</p> <p>You can read the full criteria here.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Maintaining and progression</p> <p>Provisions are offered a new assessment plan if they wish to stay in the programme.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>We recommend this occurs within three years to ensure that our Award can be considered a meaningful reflection of current practice.</p>



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 six 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 specific departments or classes in a school. 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 downloaded from the Accreditation members' section of the National Autistic Society website.



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 are 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.





<p>Aspiring</p>	<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.
<p>Accredited</p>	<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 promote 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.
<p>Advanced</p>	<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.
<p>Beacon Status</p>	<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 ratingsupport as always or mostly good, with more in the always good category. The rest should be in the ok category with 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 requires 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 reserves 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



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.



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 where autistic people most frequently experience differences when compared to neurotypical 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 is 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

Setting up a Quality Action Group

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

The QAG should ideally include representation from different departments and levels of management and 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 are 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. For example:

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 you use an Appreciative Enquiry Approach to complete the self-audit. This is a strengths-based approach that focuses on what is already working and builds 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



Creating an 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 template 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 will 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 six 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



Getting support

Our members area:

We have an Accreditation members area on 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 do 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



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. 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 applies to any Autism Accreditation visit and can be found [here](#).

Consultation session (virtual)

If you need 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

Completing your self-audit and action plan



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**



Commitment

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).

Commitment



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 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
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	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.		



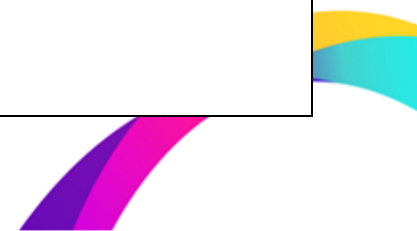
Action plan - completed by the provision

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

Empty text area for notes on strengths and areas to carry on doing.

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

Empty text area for notes on areas for improvement or new ideas to introduce.



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 opinions.		
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
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	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 focused, 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
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	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
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Rating	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 provide 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 wellbeing.		



Emotional wellbeing (2)



Rating	Not applicable = 0	Not met = 1	Partially met = 2	Fully met = 3
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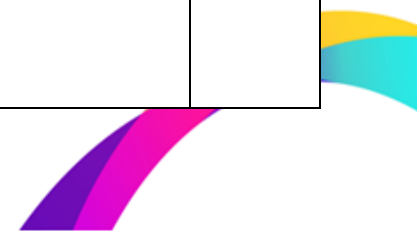
	Indicators	How we do this	Rating
E5	Staff organise the environment to support autistic people in their emotional wellbeing, to avoid anxiety and stress and to maximise participation and engagement.		
E6	Each autistic person is supported to understand and regulate their own emotions and recognise how 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.		





Rating	Not applicable = 0	Not met = 1	Partially met = 2	Fully met = 3
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	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
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	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 their likes and dislikes 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.		

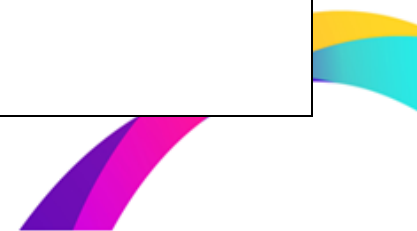




Action plan - completed by the provision

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 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 autistic individuals, that shows what difference the support they have received has made to 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	<i>Use Initials or number (no names)</i>
Period of time covered	
What support was introduced? What approaches, strategies, methods were used?	
Description 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	<i>Use Initials or number (no names)</i>
Period of time covered	
What support was introduced? What approaches, strategies, methods were used?	
Description 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	<i>Use Initials or number (no names)</i>
Period of time covered	
What support was introduced? What approaches, strategies, methods were used?	
Description 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 person-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
- online 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 five), 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, 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 does 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. 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 each 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.



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 their work 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 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, it will be referenced in the assessment report. 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



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:

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Assessment findings - completed by the assessor

Key outcomes identified from observation/review of key activities:

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Assessment findings - completed by the assessor

Key outcomes identified from personal support documents and staff discussions:

--





Assessment findings - completed by the assessor

Key outcomes identified from observation/review of key activities:

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Assessment findings - completed by the assessor

Key outcomes identified from personal support documents and staff discussions:

Empty box for recording key outcomes identified from personal support documents and staff discussions.





Assessment findings - completed by the assessor

Key outcomes identified from observation/review of key activities:

--





Assessment findings - completed by the assessor

Key outcomes identified from personal support documents and staff discussions:

--





Assessment findings - completed by the assessor

Key outcomes identified from observation/review of key activities:

--





Assessment findings - completed by the assessor

Survey ratings

Version one

Number surveyed	Number of responses

Question	No	Sometimes	Yes
The help I get is good.			
Staff know what I find hard and what I am good at.			
Staff ask me how best they can help me.			
Staff help me to do things in my life that I want to do.			

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

Version two

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

Question	Poor	Ok but could be better	Mostly good	Always good
The support my relative is given is...				
The understanding that staff have for my relative's autistic needs is...				
The way I am kept informed and asked my views about how my relative is supported is...				
The advice I get from the service on how to help my relative is...				





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, interactions and relationships:		
Functional skills and self-reliance:		
Sensory experiences:		
Emotional wellbeing:		



Assessment findings - completed by the assessor

Topic	What the provision does particularly well	What the provision could develop further
Consultation with autistic people:		
Consultation with the families, carers and/ or advocates of autistic people:		
Other areas:		



SECTION Five

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





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 feed back 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

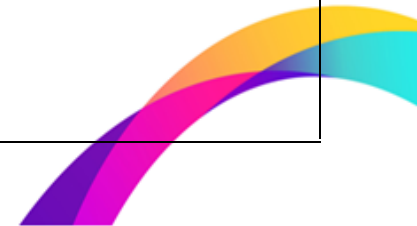


National
Autistic
Society

Committee decision:

Date of committee decision:

Comment:



Section five

Next steps



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 you do well without acknowledging that we may have 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.



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.