

# Autism Act 2009

**This section is about the Autism Act which was introduced in November 2009. The Act placed a legal duty on the Government to have an autism strategy and statutory guidance for local authorities and the NHS to improve services for autistic adults. Written into the Act was a commitment to monitor progress and identify where further action was required.**

Watch this video from the National Autistic Society:



[Click here to watch the video](#)

## Fulfilling and Rewarding Lives

Fulfilling and Rewarding Lives: The Strategy for Adults with Autism in England was published in March 2010 and set out 5 key actions and recommendations:

1. Increasing awareness and understanding of autism
2. Developing a clear and consistent pathway
3. Improving access to the services and support people need to live independently within the community
4. Helping adults with autism into employment
5. Enabling local partners to develop relevant services to meet identified needs and priorities

[Click here to read Fulfilling and Rewarding Lives](#)



## The strategy included the following statement:

“ The Government’s vision for transforming the lives of and outcomes for adults with autism: All adults with autism are able to live fulfilling and rewarding lives within a society that accepts and understands them. They can get a diagnosis and access support if they need it, and they can depend on mainstream public services to treat them fairly as individuals, helping them make the most of their talents.

## For adults with autism, this means:

- having a right to receive an assessment of need from social services
- getting the same opportunities for education and further education
- being supported to get a job and stay in work
- being able to choose where to live - just like anyone else
- having relationships and social networks

## Family Carer Advocacy Resource

- having their health needs properly met in a way which is appropriate for someone with autism
- being safe from hate crime and discrimination
- living in a society where people understand, respect and accommodate difference, receiving support to live independently, as appropriate

The Act strengthens and reinforces other acts such as the Human Rights Act, the Equality Act, the Care Act and the Children and Families Act. Whilst the Act is just for adults, updated strategies and statutory guidance now cover children and young people. This move is in recognition of the importance of receiving the right support as early as possible and across the lifetime. The Act has always included people with a learning disability who are autistic.

### Updates to the strategies

In 2014 an updated strategy was published: 'Think Autism Fulfilling and Rewarding Lives, the strategy for adults with autism in England - an update' and in 2015 the statutory guidance for local authorities and the NHS was updated and published.

[Click here to read Think Autism](#)



[Click here to read the statutory guidance for local authorities and NHS organisations](#)



The update included all the original key actions and recommendations with some additions. The full list is:

- Identification and diagnosis of autism in adults, leading to assessment of needs for relevant services
- Planning in relation to the provision of services for people with autism as they move from child to adulthood (transition)
- Local planning and leadership in relation to the

provision of services for adults with autism

- Preventative support and safeguarding in line with the Care Act 2014
- Reasonable adjustments and equality
- Supporting people with complex needs, whose behaviour may challenge or who may lack capacity
- Employment for adults with autism
- Working with the criminal justice system

### The national strategy for autistic children, young people and adults

**Read the Government's latest national strategy for improving the lives of autistic people and their families in England here:**



[Click here to read more](#)

The latest strategy also makes a commitment to building the right support in the community and supporting people in inpatient care. It states:

“ We will achieve the targets set out in the NHS Long Term Plan to reduce the number of autistic people and people with a learning disability being admitted into inpatient mental health services. We will do so by improving the treatment of autistic people in mental health legislation to prevent people from being avoidably admitted to inpatient care and improving the provision of community mental health and crisis support. We will also improve the suitability and availability of housing support and social care. In addition for people who do need to be in inpatient mental health settings, the quality of care will be better and more tailored to their individual needs and people will be discharged back into their communities as soon as they are well enough to leave.

## Family Carer Advocacy Resource

**Follow this link to the National Autistic Society website for a timeline of what has been achieved since the introduction of the Act:**

[Click here to read more](#)



Some family carers and/or their relatives still struggle to get an autism diagnosis. Without a diagnosis it can be a challenge to access services, especially in the current climate where there are limited resources. The Autism Act, Autism Strategy and Nice guidelines are all clear about the assessment process for autism.

**Read Autism spectrum disorder in adults: diagnosis and management (NICE guidelines):**

[Click here to read more](#)



If a person has one or more of the following:

- Persistent (ongoing) difficulties in social interaction
- Persistent (ongoing) difficulties in social communication
- Stereotypic (rigid and repetitive) behaviours, resistance to change or restricted interests, and

One or more of the following:

- Problems in obtaining or sustaining education or employment
- Difficulties in initiating (starting) or sustaining (continuing) social relationships
- Previous or current contact with mental health or learning disability services
- A history of a neurodevelopmental condition (including learning disabilities and attention deficit disorder) or 'mental disorder'

If two or more of the above are present, then a comprehensive assessment which includes diagnostic, risk and needs assessments should be offered. You (family carer) or your relative can

ask your GP or another healthcare professional (e.g. speech and language therapist, occupational therapist) for a referral for a comprehensive assessment.

**Organisations which can offer you and your relative support:**



[National Autistic Society](#)



[Autism Alliance UK](#)



[Ambitious about Autism](#)



[The Challenging Behaviour Foundation](#)  
(if your relative also has a severe learning disability and displays behaviour described as challenging)

Your local authority has a legal duty, through the Care Act, even if you and your relative are assessed as not being eligible for support, to provide information about the organisations, services etc. available in your area.