

The National Autistic Society:

The National Autistic Society (NAS) was founded in 1962 by a group of parents who were later joined by people with a professional interest in autism. Today, the Society has become the UK's foremost charity for people with autism and Asperger syndrome, and for their parents and carers. The NAS leads national and international initiatives providing a strong voice for autism. The organisation works in many areas to help people with an autism spectrum disorder live their lives with as much independence as possible.

The National Autistic Society:

- runs schools and adult centres
- supports local authorities in the development of their own specialist services
- maintains a library available to parents and researchers by appointment
- publishes a range of books and leaflets
- runs the Autism Helpline for parents and carers and people with autism spectrum disorders
- organises conferences and training programmes
- offers specialist diagnosis and assessment services
- supports local groups and families around the country
- organises parent workshops
- encourages research into the causes of autism
- offers advice and advocacy for special educational needs
- raises awareness and creates a better understanding of autism
- organises volunteering schemes
- provides information and consultancy to professionals and organisations working in the field of autism
- offers an accreditation programme for autism-specific education and care services
- runs Prospects, a supported employment service, for adults with autism spectrum disorders
- campaigns to improve services for autism in Westminster, the Scottish Parliament and the Welsh Assembly.



The National Autistic Society

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Registered office: 393 City Road, London, EC1V 1NG. Registered as a Charity No 269425.

England and Wales

AUTISM: RIGHTS IN REALITY

How people with autism spectrum disorders and their families are still missing out on their rights

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Acknowledgements

The authors would like to thank all NAS staff, volunteers and members who participated in the work for this report. Particular thanks to:

Anne Cooper, Ann Fernandez, Anna French, Clare Graham, Norman Green, Charlotte Hawkins, Laetitia Lacey, Dawn Larman, Jill Lennon, Fiona Loynes, Sheena Macdonald, Robert McKay, Shabnum Mustapha, Carol Povey, Pauline Roland, Mari Saeki, Jacqui Scholes, Jan Snook, Bettina Stott, Natasha Swaffer and Sandra Thoms

The following acted as external readers for the report, and their comments on the draft were greatly appreciated:

Judith Barnard (Leonard Cheshire)

Richard Holmes (Disability Alliance)

Christine Lenehan (Council for Disabled Children)

Designed by Column Communications

Printed by Chromatec

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Terminology

Throughout this report the term 'autism spectrum disorders' is used to cover the whole range of developmental disorders which include autism and Asperger syndrome. However, in places we write specifically of 'people with Asperger syndrome' referring to those with this diagnosis as a subset.

In addition, people with autism spectrum disorders have sometimes been described as 'lower', 'medium' or 'higher' functioning. This relates to a question asked of all respondents about their assessment of the person they care for. We appreciate that while some people with autism spectrum disorders may refer to themselves in these 'medical' terms, they may cause offence to others.

However, these terms were used for data collection as a more useful indicator of ability than the actual diagnosis received. 'High functioning' relates to the more able end of the autism spectrum where the true level of disability and vulnerability may be masked by an average or above average intelligence. 'Lower functioning' relates to the less able end of the spectrum, where people may also have an additional learning disability.