

# Our 2021-2025 Strategy







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# Autism Hampshire Vision, Values & Mission



Our HEART values were created by people residing in our supported living services



## Foreword

"Every life matters." We'd all probably agree with the statement and yet it is a step behind the statement, "Every life has value."

Valuing every human life, no matter what their background or future potential is, in my view, at the heart of the attitudes we hold about others. It's easy to spot the obvious, isn't it? If a person needs substantial support because their life is profoundly affected by autism their difference is probably visible. They don't need a label or a diagnosis for others to change their behaviour towards them. What's missing is the ability to spot the significant – how the person feels inside, their wishes, their preferences and their need for acceptance.

People are first and foremost human before they are autistic. They have value for who they are rather than value because they have potential to be someone else. A newborn baby is a brilliant example – who knows what they'll achieve or how their life will turn out? Yet that little life is valued by their parents, by society and by the legal system.

When we meet someone with an autistic brain I feel it's important to progress beyond the labels of 'autism' and 'autistic'. The person in front of us has value in spite of everything. We go beyond our cultural bias and connect with another person in a way they can reciprocate. Difference doesn't have to remain our focal point.

These values are important to me and I'm pleased to be associated with Autism Hampshire, who puts the person first rather than the difference. Autism Hampshire supports the family and individual as they make their journey to discover more about themselves and the society in which they live whether that be in their youth or in their more senior years. The charity's commitment to providing support, whether by phone or in one of their residential settings, means they have experience which spans the broadest needs of individuals rather than a specific group. They involve others touched by autism in their key strategy thinking rather than assume they have the insight and knowledge of everything. They are open to learning more, sharing what they do know and influencing the people who play an important role in the lives of those they support.

Let me encourage you to become involved in their plans to progress towards a nation which says "Yes" to autism.

**David Burns MBE**  
**Expert by Experience - Autism Hampshire**



# Future Strategic Direction

Finding the keys to open doors through our Six Strategic Priorities;



Autism touches the lives of many people across Hampshire, Portsmouth and Southampton. It is therefore essential that we have an all-age Strategy which enables us to work in partnership with key stakeholders to support people and their families in the most effective way. This includes raising awareness and understanding to ensure everyone reaches their full potential, gains employment, has a choice of housing, and is able to access local services that are autism-friendly.

Over the years Autism Hampshire has developed and delivered high quality services that meet the diverse needs of people on the autism spectrum and their families through:

- Assisting local and national government departments in the development of strategic and commissioning plans
- Helping understanding and raising awareness of autism across Hampshire and wider
- Providing support, information, advice and guidance to families, individuals and professionals
- Help and support pre, during and post diagnosis to people of all ages and their families
- Working with schools and colleagues on successful placements and transitions
- Supporting tenants living in residential, supported living homes and to people in their own homes
- Supporting students at university through our mentoring service
- Supporting people into work placements and assisting companies on reasonable adjustments required
- Facilitating wider community engagement through our Serendipity social groups across the county
- Working with the Criminal Justice System and emergency services to assist people when in crisis
- Support through our Spectra5 Autism Assistant App, the Alert Programme and Try before you buy

This strategy has been developed through co-production and engagement with our partners, stakeholders, and importantly experts by experience. It takes into account the historical experience of the Charity and current influences that are likely to affect the delivery and development of services. A key example being the COVID-19 pandemic which has tested our resilience and impacted our service delivery and therefore the experience of the people we support. Moving forward, the lessons learnt from this will guide our overall approach and practice especially in relation to the positive benefits of using IT and Business Continuity planning.

Despite the challenges facing us, we are determined to find ways to increase and improve our services to be in a better position to respond around the clock to people in need. In all areas of provision we aim to offer first class services, to be the provider of choice and seek to gain effective feedback from everyone who uses our services through the 'Friends and Family Test'.

Autism Hampshire works in collaboration with and supports other local Charities and not-for-profit organisations and attends the local strategic boards in Hampshire, Portsmouth and Southampton. This ensures that the organisation is kept aligned with the vision and objectives of key Health and Social Care commissioners and partner agencies. This strategy reflects the following key national documents; The Autism Act (2009) and "Think Autism" (2014), The Equality Act (2014), The Care Act (2014) and Children and Families Act (2014), Transforming Care Recommendations, Safeguarding requirements, NICE Guidance, and The NHS Long Term Plan (2020).

Over the coming years we will be widening our focus to other neuro-developmental conditions, this may also require a revision of our organisations title. We will also aim to grow with key stakeholder partners, therefore our brand logo representing our partnership working ethos will stand firm throughout the life of this strategy.

Autism Hampshire is also one of the 17 charities (please see page 31) who come together as The Autism Alliance. The Alliance is a registered charity and as CEO I am one of it's Trustees. The Alliance meets regularly to discuss national strategy, research and innovation. As one voice, the charity is able to run national campaigns and attend parliamentary, strategic and national forums.

**Debra Harrison-Sales**  
Chief Executive Officer - Autism Hampshire





# Our Team



**Lord Addington**  
President



**Debra Harrison-Sales**  
Chief Executive Officer



**Lawrie McMenemy M.B.E**  
Honorary Fundraising President

## Board of Trustees



**Jonathan Hardie**  
(Chairman) Trustee



**Andrew Edmonds**  
(Treasurer) Trustee



**Graham Shields**  
(Secretary) Trustee



**Ivan White**  
Trustee



**Jayne Turnbull**  
Trustee



**Lee Corless**  
Trustee



**Elizabeth Williams**  
Trustee



**Alec Parry**  
Trustee



**Deborah Nash**  
Trustee

## Experts by Experience



**Luke Syddall**



**Leigh Taylor**



**Deborah Goatley-Birch**



**Gill Prestidge**



**Jon Adams**



**Lee Corless**



**Su Seymour**



**Alex Forshaw**



**Dave Serpell Stevens**



**David Burns MBE**

### Board of Trustees

Autism Hampshire is governed by a Board of 9 Trustees who meet bimonthly to consider, approve and monitor the organisation's Quality Assurance, Finance, Risk management and Strategic plans. The Trustees come from a wide range of professional backgrounds and some have personal/family experience of autism and/or neurodiversity. Lord Addington has recently joined us as our Charity Patron. He is also the President of the Dyslexia Association.

### Senior Management Team

Led by the Chief Executive, the Senior Management Team consists of officers responsible for each of the organisation's service areas; Supported Living and Domiciliary Services, Community Partnership Services, Finance, Human Resources and Quality/ Safeguarding.

### Experts By Experience Forum

Our Experts by Experience hold an important leadership role for our organisation; each person either attends our social groups or is employed/engaged by us. Our experts also speak locally/nationally and some internationally from first-hand experience. They are also advocates and campaigners, or are involved in research and other innovations, while others are educated to PhD and Master's degree level. We also have esteemed local artists and a published author on Autism, who has a recently awarded MBE. Of those not employed at Autism Hampshire, members work at high level in the Computer industry, for the local Council, and two are taking up secondary careers through studying again at university. To complement all of the above, one of our Trustees, who is also part of the group, has recently won the 'most inspiring individual on the autism spectrum award 2020' with the National Autistic Society.

### Fundraising

Sir Lawrie McMenemy MBE is our fundraising Patron. Over the last few years he has raised over £250,000. Autism Hampshire also has an active Fundraising department, which has a dual role in raising awareness of autism and the work of the charity, along with raising funds, both to support and enhance our current services and to facilitate the development and maintenance of new ones. We currently have 20 impressive volunteers who support fundraising and our Serendipity Social Groups



# Community Partnerships

## Information, Advice and Guidance Service

Our IAG Service is available to children, their families, and adults living in Hampshire, Portsmouth and Southampton who are on the diagnostic pathway or have been diagnosed with autism. Referrals can be made by the person themselves or by professionals/family members. Overall, this forms a vital lifeline for many people who would otherwise be trying to get access to statutory services. We provide consistent, safe and effective services through our fully trained and effective workforce, following clear and precise operational procedures in a three-tiered approach, according to the need.

## Autism Alert Programme

Our Autism Alert programme supports people who are on the autism spectrum should they find themselves in any type of contact with the police or other emergency services. There is a wallet card, a car badge and an autism assistant app, all of which are provided free to Hampshire residents.

## Serendipity Groups

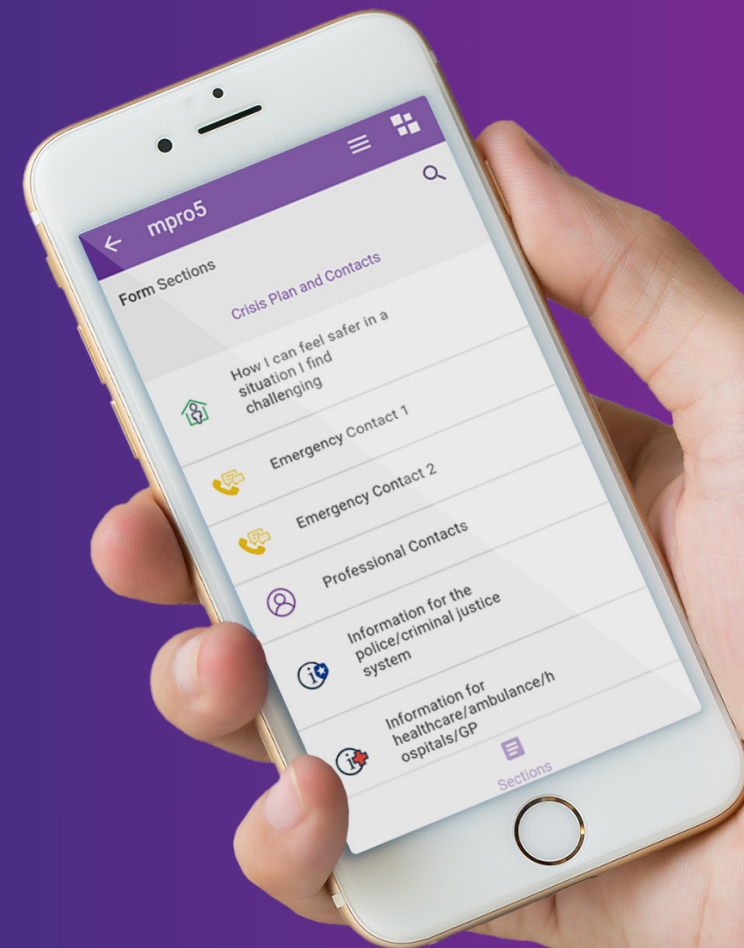
The Serendipity Social groups are user-led groups, which aim to empower and engage local adults who are on the autism spectrum by providing a friendly environment to support well-being, increase social inclusion and to promote opportunities for learning, volunteering, community engagement and in some cases employment. The groups meet in venues like pubs, cafés or community centres and are facilitated by volunteers, many of whom are on the autism spectrum. The groups can be attended independently, but friends, partners or carers are welcome. Members do not need to have a formal diagnosis.

## University Mentoring

Our team of qualified Specialist Mentors are experienced in providing 1:1 support to Higher Education students at the University of Portsmouth who are on the autism spectrum and may also have mental health issues or a learning difficulty. This DSA accredited service aims to empower students to develop condition-specific strategies that enable them to overcome barriers to learning and coping with university life.

## Training and Consultancy

Autism-related training courses have been delivered externally to parents, carers and many organisations over the last ten years with great success. Autism Hampshire trainers collaborate with Experts by Experience on the design and content of our training to ensure personal perspectives are an integral part of all the courses.





# Supported Living Services

Our Supported Living Services offer people the opportunity to live away from the family setting in an environment which best meets individual needs.

We have a range of dwellings which include individual apartments and shared living with personal space for bathing, eating and sleeping. We are currently de-registering all our residential homes and working with our commissioners, developers and investors to either redevelop our current homes or acquire new properties. This will ensure all people residing in our services benefit from being formal tenants in their homes with tenancy rights.

Our service embraces the principles of Positive Behaviour Support with the focus on personal choice, individuality, empowerment and independence being key. Support when needed is given with the aim to reduce this level as the person's skills and confidence grows. We encourage full social inclusion and support access to all community facilities, higher education and work opportunities alongside facilitating family and friends contact. We work with commissioners to support people to move onto the next step to more independent living as part of a positive life journey if possible.





# Strategic Intentions

## Where are we succeeding?

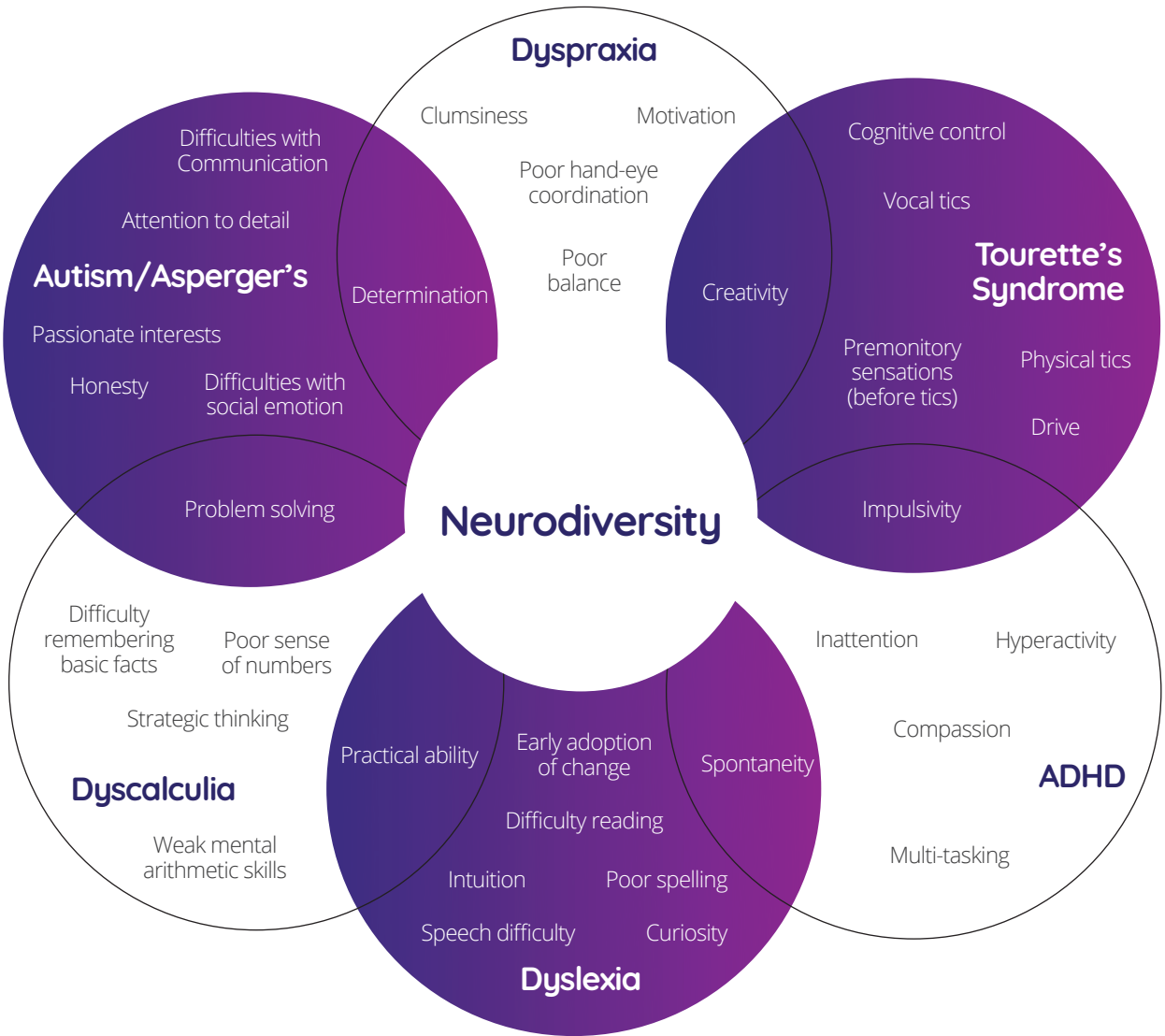
EBE leadership	Partnership working	Great reputation for living our cultural and organisational values
Training, consultancy and mentoring	Great outcomes for individuals and their families	Staff knowledge, skills and experience

## Areas for development/sustainability

24/7 service provision to respond to crisis situations across Hampshire and wider	Neurodiversity - Expanding our focus	Increase range of independent living opportunities
Expanding our pre, during and post diagnostic services	Work proactively to support parents and individuals through workshops and innovative approaches	De-registration of our registered services

# Expanding our Focus

To complement our current focus of autism, learning disability, learning difficulties, mental health, physical disability and elderly care, we are now expanding our focus to the other elements of neurodiversity as pictured below:





# Autism Hampshire Six Strategic Priorities 2021-2025

Awareness

Inclusion

Partnerships

Focused Support

Employment

Diagnosis

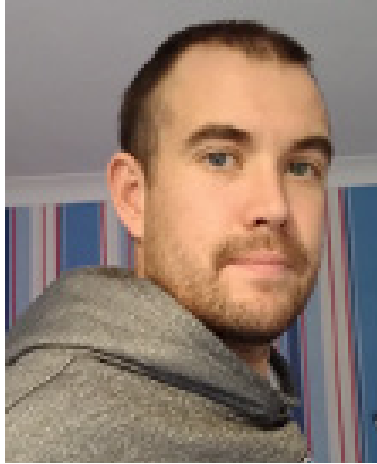
*Finding the keys to open doors*

## 2021-2025 Strategy Priority Areas



This Strategy seeks to ensure that the people we support, their families and carers can achieve their full potential and rights by bringing together health and social care, educational, employers, service providers, voluntary organisations and the police. To achieve this, our Strategy is centred on 6 key priority areas





# Neurodiversity/Autism Awareness and Professional Training

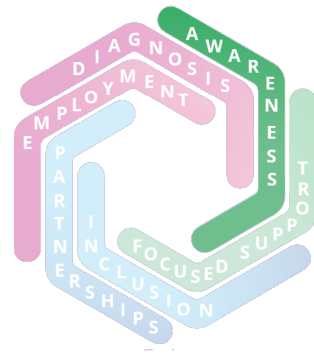
In order for peers and colleagues to show empathy and support reasonable adjustments, it is important for somebody on the autism spectrum to be understood. In the workplace, autism awareness is best conducted by a professional expert, either internal or external, possibly alongside an autistic person. I am fortunate to have someone in my own organisation who can deliver training and educate other staff members to this effect.

Within the school environment, SENCOs or other trained members of staff can support the child in the classroom as well as the wider school. It is really important for the whole school to understand the needs of children on the spectrum to ensure that the environment is helpful for all learners, by getting the basics right to support each child’s needs. In particular, showing patience helps to create a pleasant experience of school. If, however, a child or young adult experiences less than the above, the true impact could be profoundly damaging. For everyone, being better understood leads to feeling better about themselves and helps them realise that anything can be achieved, big or small, with the right knowledge and adjustments.

Access to university and acquiring a good job is dependent on the person believing in themselves and others in them. Everyone should be allowed to excel. Training overall needs to be structured well to get the message across, as well as interactive and engaging, where all the learners can be involved and test out their thinking. Examples given should inspire the people listening to support those on the spectrum throughout their life journey and in the workplace.

It is important that everybody reflects on what they have learnt and how to apply it to their environment to make the world more interesting, more understanding, more empathetic and more encouraging for people on the autism spectrum. Each individual should be cherished and embraced for who they are.

**Luke Syddall**  
Expert by Experience-Autism Hampshire



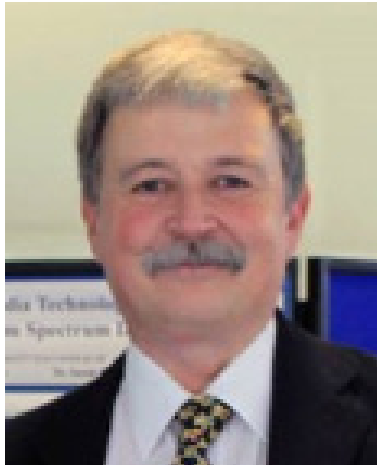
## Success measures

Awareness and professional training is vital to ensure that everyone supporting children, young people, and adults demonstrate a good understanding of neurodiversity, autism, reasonable adjustments and support needed to enable people to access services, education, employment and housing.

- Tier 2 Core Competency training for statutory providers
- Pre and post graduate medical training provider
- Positive feedback re making a difference
- Annual conference for key stakeholders.
- Recognised Training and Consultancy lead
- BASW competency standards for Social Workers

Our vision into action	How we will implement this
<b>Widen our organisational approach to incorporate related conditions and embrace neurodiversity</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Reconsider our brand and organisation name to be more inclusive</li><li>• Extend our training team to ensure profession approach</li><li>• Extend our training to staff and stakeholders to widen knowledge</li><li>• Patron of AH is also president of Dyslexia Association</li></ul>
<b>Training</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Update Autism Pathway/E-Learning to incorporate neurodiversity</li><li>• Autism Ambassadors partnership to continue with Hampshire Autism Voice to deliver Tier 1 awareness training</li><li>• Oliver McGowan Core Capabilities Training, learning disability/autism – to offer our CPD training in line with the above to Tier 2 staff in statutory services</li><li>• Working with individuals and educating/supporting staff with reasonable adjustments</li></ul>
<b>Autism Hampshire Awards</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Quality checks – demonstrate competency</li><li>• AH to become the awarding body for local strategic partnership working and Award allocation based on quality checks that demonstrate competency of supporting and assisting people who are neurodivergent/autistic</li></ul>





# Diagnosis

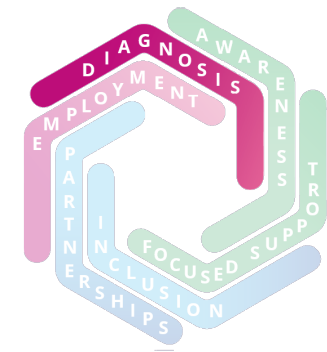
It would be a remarkable parent who in the first instance would welcome a diagnosis of autism in their child yet by the time a diagnosis is received there is often a profound feeling of relief that at last there is understanding and perhaps a way forward. For an adult in an ill-fitting world struggling to cope with feelings of insecurity, anxiety, low self worth, self-blame, isolation and despair, autism diagnosis can be a real turning point.

I was diagnosed with Asperger’s Syndrome on Friday 6th May 2011 at 50 years of age. With the help of Autism Hampshire this transformed my life; it’s like a second birthday to me. Because of my diagnosis I have received legal protection under the Equality Act 2010 and connection with the autistic community (my tribe). I am now a public speaker including to a conference of 200 social workers, GP and employers workshops and a joint keynote address at the Digital Bubbles university seminar series. I am a published author (albeit one chapter), a guest lecturer at Southampton University and have taught computer engineering at Southlands Asperger’s special school. Autism is an inseparable part of my identity. I am openly autistic and accepted at work. I achieve because of my autism amongst an autism enriched workforce at an autism appreciative employer. I am proud of my autistic friends, my colleagues and my company.

Diagnosis is a journey from dread to discovery, from doubt to affirmation. Whereas initially the prospect of an autism diagnosis may feel like a life sentence, I see it as a gateway to a better future. There is a place for Autism Hampshire alongside each person and those who love them on the diagnostic journey and beyond. Diagnosis must be available, accessible, accurate, authoritative, credible, timely and complete. Current provision excels at none of these and will not easily be fixed. There is both challenge and opportunity here. The journey may be difficult but the prize is worth the effort.

Autism Hampshire has a very special place in my life and I thank each and every one of you.

**Leigh Taylor MA,**  
**Consultant Software Engineer, Roke Manor Research**  
**Expert by Experience-Autism Hampshire**



## Success measures

- Improving access and support pre, during and post diagnosis compliant with National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) guidance.
- Reduction in trauma experienced by those seeking and receiving a diagnosis
  - Greater understanding for parents/carers of autistic children
  - Using feedback from those previously on diagnostic pathway
  - Help to ensure fewer misdiagnoses
  - Use NICE guidance and research to support positive outcomes

Our vision into action		How we will implement this	
<b>Diagnostic service</b>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Explore the opportunity for providing a private diagnostic service for areas where this provision is urgently lacking/required.</li><li>• Ensure ongoing proactive support to Sussex and Surrey NHS Trusts as part of our sub-contract for their diagnostic pathways.</li><li>• Support Hampshire and the Isle of Wight services with the current waiting list issue by supporting people pre, during and post diagnosis.</li><li>• Work in partnership with all NHS and private providers to consider diagnosis pre-screening to reduce process timescales.</li></ul>	
<b>Making a difference pre, during and post diagnosis</b>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Support and work in partnership with adults/parent/carers whilst they wait and undergo the diagnostic process through workshops and individual appointments</li><li>• Support primary care and social services with proactive support</li><li>• Emphasis on support during the process, to reduce fear and isolation.</li><li>• Signposting – LAD, Autism Alert App, try before you buy, Autism Hampshire library, Serendipity groups.</li><li>• Promoting neurodiversity awareness to all</li></ul>	
<b>More specific support for those seeking diagnosis</b>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Individualised and holistic approach to facilitate reasonable adjustments and transitions across different environments.</li><li>• Balanced approach – highlighting positive aspects of being neurodivergent/autistic for those who are struggling to adapt.</li><li>• Facilitating Peer Support among people on the diagnosis pathway -Serendipity social groups.</li></ul>	





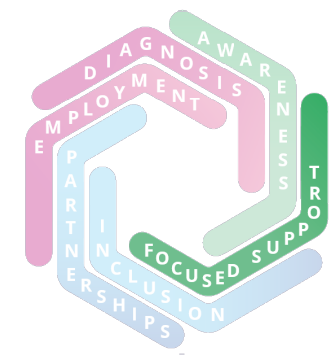
# Focused support

My first contact with Autism Hampshire was via telephone to arrange a face to face appointment with one of the Community Access team (now the IAG). As a family, we had desperately been seeking support during our son's autism diagnostic journey.

The personable and positive approach from the very beginning made Autism Hampshire stand out from the other Autism charities I had contacted in the past. This was not just another a call centre; this was an individual who made us feel that we finally had a voice. Being listened to, understood, and able to speak in confidence about all manner of issues relating to our family, our son and his care has been invaluable to our general wellbeing. We were provided with social stories, a chance to discuss strategies, and borrow equipment and books. A follow up email was sent after each of our appointments and we did not feel at all worried about making further contact or asking questions no matter how trivial they may have felt. Owing to our contact with Autism Hampshire's IAG team, we no longer feel isolated and on the basis of our family's relationship with the staff, I have continued to reach out to them during my own diagnostic journey and since.

The IAG have a wealth of knowledge and experience providing an advisory sanctuary for adults, children and their carers. This is a service I can trust and confide in, a service who never fail to deliver impartial advice from a friendly and familiar person over the phone or face to face. I am fortunate to be part of a charity that has autism-led development at the heart of its practice, the success of which is evident in the quality and breadth of services it provides in the community.

**Deborah Goatley-Birch MA,**  
**Expert by Experience and Serendipity Development Officer**  
**at Autism Hampshire**



## Success measures

To provide more consistent and effective early intervention support to children, young people, adults, and families; timely advice, information, self-management strategies and support to ensure effective, well-led transition between services, environments and life changes.

Preparing for adulthood is a recognised challenge. While many young people will not need specialist services as an adult, some will need support as they move towards adulthood in developing independence: learning additional life skills, travelling independently, seeking opportunities for further education, employment, and independent living. We are here to help on this life journey.

- Community Access – inclusion
- Safeguarding
- 24/7 support – rapid access
- Using feedback to inform practice
- Reducing preventable crisis and trauma
- Deregistration or our registered homes
- Increasing apartment living

Our vision into action	How we will implement this
<b>Community Partnership Services – working and integrating with other services to facilitate holistic approaches</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Expanding our information and advice service to be able to respond 24/7 to people in crisis</li><li>• Person-focused approach – through the outcome stars, help to set effective plans to achieve aspirations, inclusion and empowerment</li><li>• Warm transfers and signposting to access appropriate support for PIP, housing and care assessments</li><li>• Extend parent and individual course workshops pre, during and post diagnosis to enhance understanding, support transition and reduce anxieties</li><li>• Expansion of our App to younger adults and older children to assist independent living</li></ul>
<b>Regulated Services-extending our 24/7 support</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Increasing our Supported living and Domiciliary support service for people who require housing and support away from the family home</li><li>• Expand Positive Behaviour Support Model to maximise outcomes and avoid restrictive practice.</li><li>• Reduce Autism Hampshire's landlord responsibilities to maximise time for support requirements.</li><li>• Deregistration of all of our registered homes to maximise support</li><li>• Redevelopment of apartment style complexes with our partners and investors</li></ul>
<b>Focus on older people using services</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Working in partnership with OPMH, chiropody/podiatry</li><li>• Research into neurodiversity and aging – care home alternatives</li><li>• Support people who are neurodiverse in nursing/care homes – difficult sensory environments</li></ul>





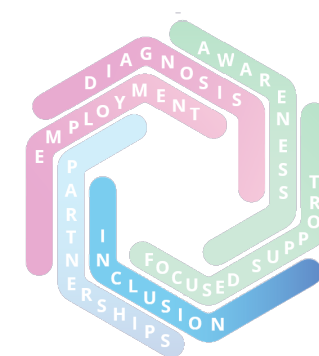
# Inclusion

During my time studying in Oxford for my bachelor's degree, I had no more knowledge that I was autistic than the other undiagnosed intellectuals and geeks around me. However, due to the academic nature of the environment and the wealth of like-minded people, I didn't struggle as much as most autistic people do at university. For a couple of years, I knew that I was probably autistic, having had some CBT counselling for depression and found it completely unhelpful, but I saw no need to seek a diagnosis nor to intentionally socialise with anyone who had one. As it was, I only knew of one such person. Given that Asperger's wasn't diagnosed in the UK until 1994 and ASD was only recognised in those with very high support needs though, this wasn't surprising, but as a result, the majority of us went unnoticed and therefore unsupported. This is particularly the case for girls, who often end up masking to cope with social pressures, often without knowing we're doing it.

But, as many of us know, this cannot last, and when circumstances brought me back to Hampshire to live with my parents once again, I needed more than just a diagnosis to cope with an environment with so few like-minded people. Things soon came to a head and I had to pause my PhD and receive some further counselling, this time CBT adapted for autism, offered by iTalk. We discussed some issues I'd been having with a group of friends, and my counsellor suggested that I joined an autism social group. She knew about Autism Hampshire and so she put me in touch. I soon went along to the original group – Fareham Highlands Hub – where I started to make friends within a few weeks. The best thing about the group was not that there were shared intellectual interests and high level discussion – only one member even had a degree – but that everyone knew what it was like to feel like you didn't fit in or that there was something wrong with you. We all understand how it feels to have meltdowns, after a number of small things pushed us over the edge, and most of us had experienced depression and anxiety among other things. This we could talk about freely and support each other with.

I have also enjoyed being invited to take part in studies, including the employment profile by Portsmouth University, and the Autism Hampshire E-Learning, and it was through the Serendipity group that I came to work at the charity, initially doing research and web design, before moving onto the archiving project, which is a perfect job for someone with Asperger's. I continue to go to the groups and have been helping our volunteer run activities, as I have grown in confidence with leading. I recommend the groups to every autistic person, even if you need to come with a carer, as a way of getting support and learning through a safe environment to interact with others, no matter how shy you are, as long as you're prepared to just be yourself. No-one is too quirky!

**Dr Gill Prestidge PhD,**  
**Admin Assistant: Information and Data, member of Fareham Serendipity Group, and Expert by Experience-Autism Hampshire**



## Success measures

Facilitating independence and enhancing lives. We want people to feel safe and lead as independent a life as possible, living close to family and social networks, taking part in leisure and social activities and gaining meaningful employment where possible.

- Inclusion/engagement/achievement
- Reach out to all - community groups e.g BAME groups
- Neurodiverse - friendly communities
- City of sanctuary (Portsmouth)
- City of culture (Southampton)

Our vision into action	How we will implement this
<b>Increase partnerships with nurseries/schools/colleges/universities</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work with all education providers to offer a holistic, strategic, and consistent approach</li> <li>• Work to support families going through the assessment process, and as an advocate for children/young people to ensure correct option</li> <li>• Homeschooling – ensure family are not isolated if this is required</li> <li>• Expand our Mentoring Service to Southampton, Winchester and wider</li> </ul>
<b>Transition support</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Offer 1:1 support to children and adults as required when transitioning into new areas of support or opportunity</li> <li>• Create virtual insights so that people can view environmental factors before entering into new opportunities to ally fears</li> <li>• Expand the App to support children and young people and for those in custody and prison</li> <li>• Nationwide marketing of the App to ensure AH is seen as innovative provider in transition/community access and support</li> </ul>
<b>Serendipity Social Groups</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Safe and secure environments/safe haven</li> <li>• County-reach - expand the number of groups to be accessible in all neighbourhood areas</li> <li>• Further develop the groups' aspirations into music, arts and writing events</li> <li>• Expansion of groups – young people, female-only, enterprise opportunities</li> <li>• Inspire self-employment opportunities amongst group members</li> <li>• Expand opportunities for the creation of enterprises</li> <li>• Create groups and support structures for younger adults</li> <li>• Assist people with digital aspects in order to keep safe during pandemic and stay in touch</li> <li>• Have a county-reach through acquiring transport to see people close to home who are isolated</li> </ul>
<b>Increasing access to Autism Hampshire's services</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Expand into additional hubs/shops across the county to enable access, facilitate jobs and volunteer opportunities plus income</li> <li>• Acquire a vehicle to reach isolated people at home with the dual purpose of supporting IT skills and offering friendship hubs</li> <li>• Annual ball, Music festival and Art exhibition to ensure county-wide networking and highlight skills of the people we support</li> </ul>
<b>Enterprise opportunities</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Expand our enterprise projects to other companies to offer employment opportunities.</li> </ul>





# Partnerships, Research and Innovation

Sometimes it's difficult for an autistic person to make contact and initiate change. It's even harder to reach out on your own behalf, especially if isolated through suffering harmful attitudes and actions in the past. Autistic people live and breathe in all areas of this world and, I feel, long to integrate into society without having to hide, mask or conceal their true nature. Minorities in the past have had to 'pass' in societies that often show not only ignorance towards their innate being but open hostility.

It often seems the autistic narrative is appropriated, subsumed and written by others without reference to authentic autistic experiences. We are often expected to be 'something' we are not and if we don't act in a prescribed way told, we are broken, made to feel we don't belong. This has an impact on quality of life, leaves us unfulfilled when we have so much richness to offer and often leads to severe mental health issues. If you wanted to know what it was like to stand on the Himalayas and breathe in the air would you ask a person who had actually been, or an expert who hadn't, e.g. parents, doctors or someone who'd read about it in a book? If you wish to know what an autistic person needs, feels or their opinion on barriers or support why don't you simply ask and initiate that conversation that leads to an honest partnership.

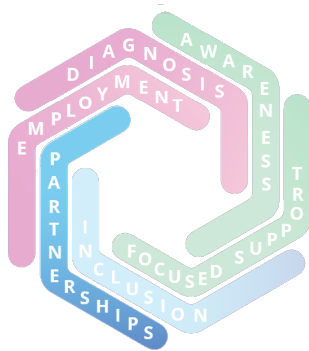
Partnerships are important but they need to be bilateral and authentic as autistic people seem to be included but not involved. We are there to lend a sense of hollow happening, but in reality, we need active and radical acceptance that we are not lesser broken human beings unable to have an opinion.

I feel being autistic informs my humanity, but so much has been researched, written and 'done to us without us' in the name of traditionalism. We need to be involved fully as co-instigators and 'investigators by experience' in all aspects of research, and mental health is case in point. With good mental health comes strength and participation but all too often autistic people have been treated so badly in the past that we come with trauma, severe anxiety and suicidality as a base starting point. This may be misunderstood by mental health services along with others, and stereotyping, leading to autistic people either receiving inappropriate support or being abandoned as 'too difficult'. In the last few years, partnerships between researchers and autistic people has initiated 'research of relevance' within mental health leading to ground-breaking changes, but we need to see this feeding through on the ground to talking and primary services.

Non-neurosectarianism understanding, advocacy and conversation is needed hand in hand with autistic people in all aspects of society. Looking towards generating a lasting trust and belonging is the gold standard we should all aim for. It's never easy but it gives autistic people hope to know their experience and narratives count towards a potential sea change in radical acceptance.

**Jon Adams,**  
**Artist, Founder of Flow Observatorium, and Expert by Experience**  
**Autism Hampshire**

*Autism Hampshire is now working alongside mental health services across Hampshire to address some of these issues, but there is still a long way to go.*



## Success measures

Autism Hampshire works in collaboration with and supports other local Charities and not-for-profit organisations and attends the local strategic boards in Hampshire, Portsmouth and Southampton. This ensures that the organisation is kept aligned with the vision and objectives of key Health and Social Care commissioners and partner agencies.

- AH Expansion of contracts with statutory authorities
- AH-Corporate partnerships with private companies
- AH Awards for delivering best practice and Innovation
- Expansion of research partnerships
- Expansion of our App nationally

Our vision into action	How we will implement this
Schools and Colleges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Ensure positive links with Head Teachers and SENCOs across all schools to deliver training and support requirements.</li><li>• Deliver transition support to children and young people.</li></ul>
NHS-Acute Hospital and Community Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Engage with Southampton, Portsmouth and Winchester hospitals to ensure effective pathways of support and effective signposting to AH services as required</li></ul>
CC-ICS strategy Transforming Care provision	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Become a recognised provider for step down out of hospital care solutions.</li></ul>
Gap in provision for children across Hampshire	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Work with ICS in creating effective solution - parent workshops being key</li></ul>
Mental health, CAMHs, OPMH & Learning Disability Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Work with Solent and Southern NHS Trusts to ensure effective access and support.</li><li>• Work in partnership with Learning Disability Intensive support team to deliver effective preventative solutions to people in their own homes.</li><li>• Mental Health Charter – ensuring effective access into appropriate services</li><li>• Person-centred, holistic approach – trauma informed support</li><li>• Adapted psychological therapies e.g. CBT, mindfulness, EMDR</li></ul>
Universities and research facilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Work with Portsmouth, Winchester and Southampton Universities to Increase research opportunities.</li><li>• Expand Serendipity services across Universities to engage isolated students.</li></ul>
Social Care Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Partnership training with council providers.</li><li>• Expand role in partnership boards.</li><li>• Advocate for effective Community Care assessments as required.</li></ul>
Local government – transport and housing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Supporting people through these services - Lanyard Sunflower/AH badges.</li></ul>
Corporate partnerships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Work with lead innovators and interested parties who can see the mutual benefit of partnership working. Prime examples being SERT and MicroLink</li></ul>





# Employment

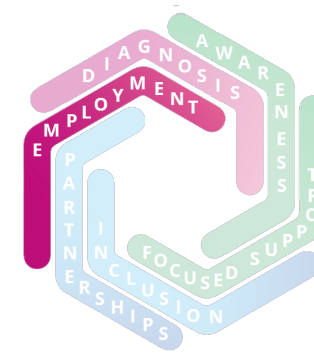
It is fair to say that the majority of people want to work. It brings independence, financial stability and a real purpose to each day. However, when we look at the figures for those people who are diagnosed on the spectrum, it makes for really appalling reading. Currently around 85% of autistic people able to work full-time are either unemployed or under-employed i.e. their skills are not being utilised fully if at all. This is appalling. Worse, one of those people is my 18-year-old son, a genius at tech, a maths superstar, yet his social skills and anxieties constantly let him down at interviews, and his lack of experience often does not even get him to this stage. Does this sound familiar?

I am lucky. I was diagnosed in my 30s, and by this time, I had started running my own business, entered the corporate world, and begun making progress, albeit very slowly. I was often overlooked along the way without truly understanding why, until that diagnosis opened my world and gave me the focus I had perhaps always lacked. I am now a corporate leader in one of the world's largest companies, proof if ever needed that people on the spectrum have strong individual skills, and offer and deliver a unique perspective, providing them the platform to achieve their own goals and ambition skills.

I now work hard to open corporate eyes to the talent they have overlooked for years, and within my own company not only to drive change, but additionally to use that knowledge and experience to drive change across all companies large or small. I have also made it a personal mission to support individuals to improve their opportunities, working on CV writing training and interview preparation, and this is where I see an opportunity for Autism Hampshire to take the lead. I have struggled to find 1:1 support for individuals, a place they can go to help with applications, and to search for the right job with the right company, but we can step into this area and really make a difference to these individuals.

We also have the opportunity to offer training and guidance to business, the opportunity to influence the corporate world's awakening to this talent. Focusing our strategy on providing support to the individuals, balanced with training to the companies they will work for, means we are contributing to reducing that horrendous statistic of 85% of our friends, family, colleagues not achieving their full potential or living the full and meaningful lives they deserve.

**Lee Corless,**  
**Corporate Leader, JP Morgan,**  
**Trustee and Expert by Experience - Autism Hampshire**



## Success measures

To increase the number of people who are in full or part time employment and help others to explore self-employment opportunities.

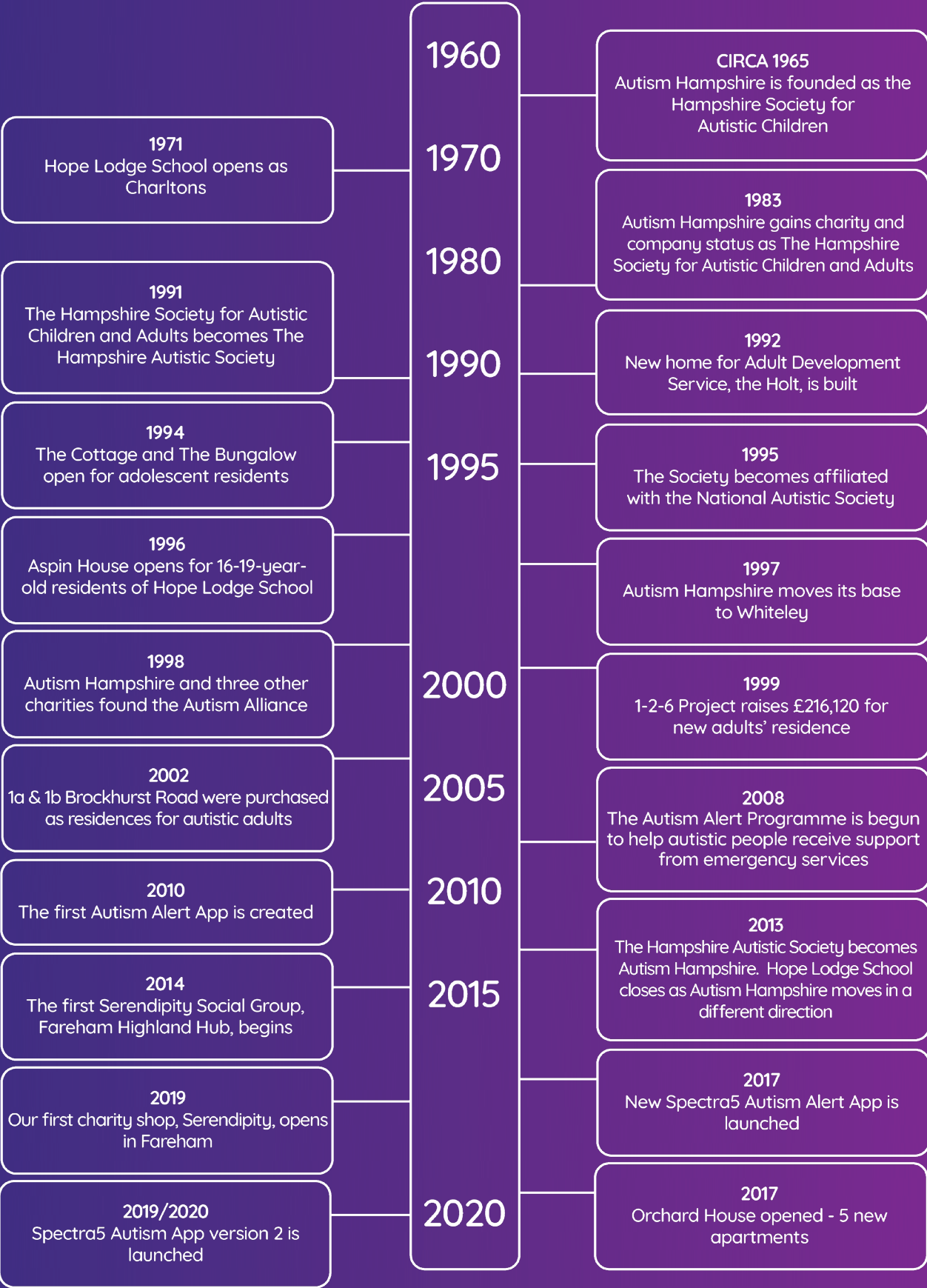
- Increase percentage of neurodiverse people in full-time employment
- Increase percentage of neurodiverse people in part-time and self-employment
- Autism self-awareness increased within companies
- Reasonable adjustments fully accepted in the workplace
- Support Police Force and Navy workforce strategies on neurodiversity

Our vision into action	How we will implement this
<b>Employment support for individuals</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Accessing grant opportunities to expand Charity services into employment:</li><li>• Supporting individuals looking for work – offered through job centres, Access to Work</li><li>• CV writing and interview preparation workshops</li><li>• Virtual reality and then physical introduction into the work environment</li><li>• Mentorships for individuals once in employment</li><li>• Introduce options to people who prefer to be self-employed</li></ul>
<b>Training /support for employers</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Employers awards to celebrate good practice</li><li>• Awareness, interviewing and supporting in the workplace</li><li>• Partnership with DWP/NCS to identify placement opportunities</li><li>• Training of unions to understand neurodiversity/autism</li><li>• Reasonable adjustments training and design</li><li>• Supporting with company policies and procedures</li></ul>
<b>Supporting statutory work placements</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Support Police Force, Army, Navy neurodiversity work programmes</li><li>• Help to develop HR policies to achieve inclusive workforce</li><li>• Support open day events to ensure engagement</li></ul>



Autism Hampshire

# A Brief History







# Afterword

It is often asserted that autistic people ‘live in a world of their own’. True, many of us learn to raise defensive shields in response to what we perceive to be repeated attacks from an external world with whom we seem to be engaged in a form of asymmetric war. This is a natural human response to danger and not at all unique to those who are autistic. Like most, once that danger is reduced or eliminated, we can emerge from behind our shields and redirect our energies into more creative and productive ‘peacetime’ pursuits. This would seem simple enough if not for the fact that what triggers the danger response in us often appears trivial or incomprehensible to those who don’t share our perspective. We may share the same world, but some of us experience it in an unusually intense and immediate way and this can be both a blessing and a curse depending on the setting.

I have been training parents of autistic children for about a decade now. Many describe the relentless weekday morning routine of cajoling, bribing and/or pleading with a clearly distressed child to attend school and the post school ‘tiptoe through the minefield’ when the most innocent question, enquiry or a simple Wi-Fi malfunction can trigger an explosion of directionless anger or frustration, this in a child described not half an hour earlier by their school staff as being the very model of calm and composure, then the evening repeat of the morning performance, but this time trying to convince a now completely burnt out child to do homework. This is assuming that the child is actually in school, as autistic pupils are 3 times as likely to be excluded as their peers. Paradoxically, many such children are bright, curious and eager to learn so what can explain this seeming dissonance?

The late Kenneth Robinson a tireless campaigner for greater creativity in education said,

“We have to recognise that human flourishing is not a mechanical process; it’s an organic process. And you cannot predict the outcome of human development. All you can do, like a farmer, is create the conditions under which they will begin to flourish.”

He argued that the current educational preoccupation with conformity, compliance, and relentless testing creates a sort of monoculture that tends to weed out original thinking and creativity to the detriment of many, regardless of their neurology. Now imagine that you are a pupil who is intelligent, curious and engaged but whose brain can only operate effectively on the basis of ‘one damn thing at a time’. Learning itself is not the issue, but your thirst for knowledge is all but smothered under multiple layers of miscommunication, ill-defined or incomprehensible social expectations and rules, and a teetering mound of jangling sensory clutter. As if this isn’t enough, the methodologies prescribed in each subject area seem to be completely at odds with your natural cognitive style and in many cases prove to be a real hindrance.

You are nonetheless bound to adopt them or risk lowering your grades on what seems to you a mere technicality. Many within the education system feel its current pressures and constraints quite keenly. The precious potential of many autistic and other neurodivergent students may be expended merely in fighting for breath.

“The idea that there is one “normal” or “healthy” type of brain or mind or one “right” style of neurocognitive functioning, is no more valid than the idea that there is one “normal” or “right” gender, race or culture... when embraced, diversity can act as a source of creative potential” – Nick Walker

The good news is that creating the conditions in which autistic minds can flourish and grow need not be complex or expensive in terms of staff, resources or money.

The pursuit of knowledge, particularly that associated with a strong interest can be a joy. Books, articles, the internet etc. have the advantage of delivering information in a ‘pure’ form, which is unobscured by a complicated and exhausting social and sensory environment. Autistic people do better when tasks are broken down, itemised and where, providing they are fair, logical and realistic, expectations and parameters are clearly communicated from the outset.

Realising that ‘breaks’ are perhaps better spent alone and providing quiet spaces for this to happen goes a long way to preventing social burnout. None of these measures involve expensive and disruptive structural alterations but rather demand understanding and a profound change of attitude in order to develop creative and ‘out of the box’ solutions together with autistic people. In the absence of such transformation, a worrying number of autistic people develop a lifelong aversion to education potentially depriving the world of a vital counterpoint to mainstream thinking and creativity.

Autism Hampshire is actively engaged in bringing about the changes necessary to ensure that autistic people are better understood, accepted and accommodated both in the realm of education, and in wider society. Our training, information and university mentoring services work with students, their parents and carers, school, college and university staff to affect a move away from rigid stereotypes, and towards understanding, celebrating and nurturing diverse ways of thinking and being. Increasingly, we are employing autistic people themselves to facilitate this transformation, recognising that only through listening to their unique, rich and authentic, experiences of being human can we effectively work towards real equality of opportunity rather than simply ‘awareness’.

**Dave Serpell Stevens**  
**Senior Autism Practice and Training Specialist**



# Our partners

The Autism Alliance is the major network of specialist charities in the UK



Autism Anglia



Ambitious  
about Autism



Autism  
BEDFORDSHIRE



Autism  
Hampshire



A haven for families affected by autism



the  
kent autistic trust  
a better life, a better future



AutismNI  
Northern Ireland's Autism Charity



Cheshire Autism  
Practical Support



AutismInitiatives  
real partnerships, unique solutions, positive outcomes

north east  
autism society



Spectrum  
Working together to  
change lives

autism  
west midlands



Autism  
East Midlands  
Quality of Life for People with Autism

AUTISTICA  
With knowledge comes understanding



aspens  
Care • Support • Empower



ON A JOURNEY TOGETHER  
Wargrave House  
LEARNING ABOUT LIFE



Autism  
Hampshire