

The Moonshot Vision

What a society that works for autistic people *really* looks like



Foreword



Becoming the Chief Executive of the National Autistic Society in 2019 was my dream job. It wasn't just the next step in my journey with the organisation I'd been involved with for over 20 years, since my son was diagnosed with autism; it was a chance to be part of a movement to change society - to make it work better not just for my son, but for all autistic people and their families. That motivation is what gets me up in the morning, as I suspect is the case for hundreds of thousands, even millions, of people across the country.

The National Autistic Society aims to create a society that works for autistic people. But what would this actually look like? The Moonshot Vision answers this question. We called it this because it's really ambitious - we're talking about huge changes to society. And just like the NASA moon-landing mission, we can't do it on our own. I'm delighted to be able to launch our Moonshot Vision with the publication of this report.

Thank you to everyone who helped shape the vision, whether you answered a survey, shared a video, joined a focus group or sent us your artwork. It would not have been possible without your contribution.

The society Moonshot Vision describes might feel a long way off. Autistic people of all ages and backgrounds told us what a profound impact inequality and discrimination have on their daily lives. So our vision is about everyday equality, equity and respect for all autistic people. We won't accept anything less.

What excites me most about the Moonshot Vision is its potential. It will influence everything the National Autistic Society does. It will also influence how we work with and empower the autistic people, families and other organisations who share our goal and our passion. I hope you find it exciting too. I can't wait to stand alongside you to finally create a society that truly works for autistic people and their families.

Caroline Stevens
Chief Executive
National Autistic Society

What is the Moonshot Vision?

When our founders first sat down to establish the movement that eventually became the National Autistic Society, their motivation was clear. They wanted to create a world that worked better for their autistic children, and others like them, when they grew up. Sixty years later, that is still our goal.

But in those 60 years, society has changed a lot, as has what we know about autism and what autistic people rightly expect from the world around them. We're still working to create an autism-friendly society – but until now, we didn't know exactly what that society would really look and feel like for autistic people and their families.

This question is crucial for society as a whole and for us as the National Autistic Society. The Moonshot Vision is our answer to the question. It's based on what we have been told by autistic people and their families, from people with a wide variety of needs and from different backgrounds. It defines a shared vision of what we're all working towards, side by side.

Everyone's individual perfect world will look slightly different, but through our research we heard from people who wanted to feel understood, respected, supported and powerful. That is how we have framed our vision. We have set it out in two parts:

- **Future Realities:** these describe the society we want to see, across key areas of life
- **Milestones:** these are the steps we will need to take to get there.

We've called the Vision "Moonshot" because it's ambitious, and reaching it is going to take years of hard work on many different things – just like landing someone on the moon did all those years ago. But the fact that it won't be easy makes it even more important. If it were easy, it would have already happened.

This is our vision for the whole of society. It's not something we can do alone. Nor is it something we own. It is something to help express the ambition we all share, and to empower people to shape the future that we, our families, friends, colleagues and neighbours all want.

For the National Autistic Society, the Moonshot Vision will be central to everything we do. Our new organisational strategy will put us on a path to achieve it. Everyone who is supported by us, works with us, volunteers or fundraises for us will be part of achieving it too, and will understand the pivotal role they play.

Every step of this project has involved autistic people, from the research through to developing and describing our vision. This report has been co-written by an autistic person.

From the foundations of our first 60 incredible years, the Moonshot Vision will propel us into our future – a future that works for autistic people and their families.



Methodology

Our Moonshot Vision methodology was carefully designed to make sure that autistic people's lived experiences remained front and centre throughout the insight-gathering stage and development of the vision.

Planning

The opening phase of the project included a "Burning Platform" session, where National Autistic Society staff and volunteers discussed the various aspects of life that would have to be considered in describing an autism-friendly future society. We also held a stakeholder mapping exercise to identify the key individuals and groups we needed to consult, including autistic people and their families. We held discussions with internal subject experts and our Autistic Colleagues' Network on the design of the insight-gathering work, to make sure it was accessible, inclusive and sensitive.

Insight gathering

The insight-gathering phase allowed people to tell us about the challenges they currently face - and the society they want to see - in a way that suited their needs and preferences. For example:

- 150 people completed a survey.
- More than 350 people shared their views on social media.
- Twenty groups and individuals submitted short videos.
- Over 50 people took part in focus groups with our Autistic Colleagues' Network, our Board of Trustees and our Branches.
- We held two consultation sessions with National Autistic Society day services in Gravesend and Manchester.
- We interviewed key stakeholders across health and social care, policy bodies, the media and other charities.

"Future Gazing"

Using the initial insights gathered and a range of expert and lived experience, we held four "Future Gazing" sessions. These identified problems with how society currently works, and flipped them to consider how it could work better in future. Participants also explored how the ways society is changing could present opportunities for autistic people, for example through technological advances. Participants included representatives from the charity's leadership, autistic staff, autistic content creators, volunteers and some of our autistic young ambassadors.

Ensuring accessibility

Many of the insight-gathering sessions and the Future Gazing workshops were made accessible to autistic participants by using an online platform called MURAL. This enabled people to share their thoughts, comments and opinions without needing to engage in verbal conversations if they didn't wish to. Participants were also able to continue contributing to discussions after the workshop had moved on to another exercise or had finished. This meant that people who need longer to process their thoughts or to share them in writing could still fully engage with all the activities. We also invited people to contribute in non-verbal ways, through drawing and craft sessions.

Defining the Future Realities and Milestones

The Future Gazing sessions resulted in the definitions of our five "Future Realities", which are presented in this report. Working with internal experts, including autistic staff, through a Theory of Change exercise, we then mapped out the steps we would need to take along the way to achieve the Future Realities - our "Milestones".



The Moonshot Vision principles

Autistic people were central to defining our vision. A society that truly works for all autistic people must be shaped by autistic people's wishes, ambitions and experiences.

We wanted to make sure the description of our vision is:

- > **Applicable to all autistic people** - it describes universal themes and changes that will impact everyone, regardless of age, needs or diagnosis.
- > **Specific to autism** - it relates to the particular experiences of autistic people, not just changes we want to see to society in general.
- > **Written from a whole-society perspective** - there may be some parts of this change that the National Autistic Society will not play a big role in.
- > **Future proof** - it will still be relevant as society changes over the coming decades.
- > **Clear and concise** - it uses language that can be understood by everyone.

Throughout the project to define our vision, we have been mindful of how the overlapping impacts of discrimination based on class, race, gender, sexuality, religion and other aspects of an autistic person's background can impact the way they experience the world. We made specific efforts to ensure that we heard from people from minority or marginalised communities.

Future Realities: what a society that works for autistic people and their families looks like

The autistic people, family members and others we spoke to told us powerful stories about the inequality and unfairness they currently face. For many, describing a perfect world was really difficult, because it seems so far away from their everyday reality.

However, when we pulled together everything that we were told in the insight-gathering phase, several common themes emerged. We took these as the starting point for defining our **Future Realities** - the five key things an autism-friendly society would do.

Future Realities

A society that works for autistic people and their families:



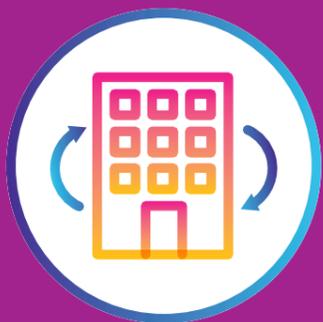
Values autistic individuals



Maximises autistic power



Guarantees support



Adapts public spaces and services



Is free from discrimination

We'll know that, together, we have created a society that works for autistic people and their families, when society:

Values autistic individuals



It understands and appreciates what autism is and how it is unique for each individual

People told us that to truly value autistic individuals, society must recognise the depth of uniqueness to everyone's experiences of life. This also means acknowledging that many factors can impact on an autistic person's life, including other prejudices, biases and traumas.

Society must also appreciate that there is no "one size fits all" approach for autism and that every autistic person will have an individual profile of their sensory differences, needs to be met, strengths and challenges. Public understanding and attitudes are at the heart of this - and it is these, not autistic people, that need to change. We heard fear from some autistic people and their families about what the future holds for public understanding, highlighting how important it is to improve autism acceptance and appreciation as quickly as possible.

Maximises autistic power



Autistic people are empowered to control how they live their lives and make distinctive contributions that influence the world

"Power" is itself a powerful word, and we heard clearly that autistic people want a society where they are empowered to make choices about their own life and to shape wider society.

To maximise autistic power is to put autistic people's wishes front and centre, while also meeting their need to have control over their lives, ambitions and achievements. In essence, we want autistic people to have the same opportunities to be powerful as everyone else. We want a society where autistic people help shape the world around them - whether that's through their daily choices about where to go and what to do, or in wider society through influencing policy and creating change for others.

Guarantees support

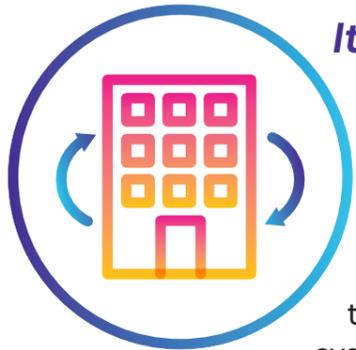


It provides seamless diagnosis, support and care for autistic people from all backgrounds, at all moments of need throughout their lives

Too many autistic people, families and support networks are currently being left to struggle, with local services not having the funding or staff they need to meet demand.

Stakeholders in health and social care underlined that there is a real gap in support around diagnosis and key moments of transition in adulthood. They told us about “postcode lotteries” of support, with many autistic people facing additional barriers because of their ethnicity, sexuality, gender identity, class or other disability. We also heard very clearly that there needs to be more recognition that support needs will change over the course of an individual’s life. A society that works for autistic people and their families will understand these things. It will have the services in place to meet autistic people’s needs, without them having to fight for it.

Adapts public spaces and services



It designs spaces and services that are autistic inclusive, with flexible adjustments that recognise that not all autistic people have the same preferences

Public spaces and services should be open and accessible to all. Being excluded – whether from healthcare, the justice system, employment support or museums, shops or sports stadiums – because of sensory needs or communication differences, is not acceptable. In a society that works for autistic people and their families, adjustments would be built in from the start. There would be a proactive and flexible approach to individual needs, without the pressure being on autistic people or their support networks to have to ask.

Is free from discrimination



It rejects stereotypes and stigma, removes the expectation to mask, and doesn’t accept being told to fit in as acceptable

Autistic people should never be discriminated against for being autistic, nor for any adjustments they need or actions that may occur due to distress, excitement or overload.

The harmful, outdated stereotypes of the past need to be eliminated and society’s expectations of people updated to allow for autistic people to be their authentic selves when they choose to be. A society that works for autistic people and their families wouldn’t rely on autistic people having to mask, and it wouldn’t make wrong assumptions that harm autistic people.

Applying the Future Realities to different areas of life

We wanted these Future Realities to be wide statements that apply to all of society. We then broke them down into more tangible outcomes for each of the following areas of life: public understanding and representation; education; work and employment; before, during and after diagnosis; public services and specialist care; families and support networks. These are set out in the table on the following page.



A society that works for autistic people...		Areas of life					
		Public understanding and representation	Education	Work and employment	Before, during and after diagnosis	Public services and specialist care	Families and support networks
Future Realities	Values autistic individuals. Understands and appreciates what autism is and how it is unique for each individual	Society has a shared understanding of what autism is and encourages all autistic people to be their true selves	There are safe and enjoyable classroom experiences for all, and the role of autistic students, parents and school staff is welcomed	Autistic employees are a respected part of the workforce, can access opportunities they find meaningful and progress in them	Realistic and relatable stories about diagnosis are widespread and show people of all backgrounds, at all stages of life	Society promotes the rights of autistic people to live a fulfilled and happy life, regardless of need, diagnosis, age or background	Society values the integral role of autistic people and their friends, families and carers in each other's lives
	Maximises autistic power. Autistic people are empowered to control how they live their lives and make distinctive contributions that influence the world	Autistic people have a platform to shape public narratives, perceptions and communities, so that autistic representation and stories are commonplace	Autistic people's individual strengths are amplified, and their passion, curiosity and ambition is encouraged	The talent of autistic people is prominent in all types of work, giving a sense of fulfilment and community	Diagnosis is a springboard for autistic people to define their autistic identity, unlock opportunities, and build wellbeing from pre-diagnosis and beyond	Support is based on personal needs, strengths and preference, not cost or availability	Autistic people have relationships and family lives they want, with active communities of support for themselves and their loved ones
	Guarantees support. Provides seamless diagnosis, support and care for autistic people from all backgrounds, at all moments of need throughout their lives	Widespread access to trusted and expert information enables anyone to understand autism and be equipped to support autistic people of all ages	There is sustainable, tailored education for all, and this eases key transition moments	All autistic people who want to work can do so and are supported, including through times of change	Diagnosis in whatever form is convenient, free for all and available when it is needed, with a clear, robust, joined-up pathway of support after diagnosis	Society provides easily navigable health and social care services and affordable housing, tailored for autistic people as their needs evolve over time	Carers and loved ones have information and support, from pre-diagnosis to planning for when they are not around
	Adapts public spaces and services. Designs spaces and services that are autistic inclusive, with flexible adjustments that recognise that not all autistic people have the same preferences	Adjustments are integrated into all communications and public spaces, online and offline	Fair access to educational opportunity is supported by widespread adaptations to curricula and learning environments	Hiring/management practices and workplaces allow autistic candidates, volunteers and staff to be their best selves	The impact of diagnosis is recognised, and diagnosis is delivered in a familiar, stress-free way for autistic people and their loved ones	Autistic people's needs are recognised, and met with specific, evidence-led health and social care pathways	Society adapts to allow loved ones to create the family life they want, without trade-offs
	Is free from discrimination. Rejects stereotypes and stigma, removes the expectation to mask, and doesn't accept being told to fit in as acceptable	Anti-autism stereotypes and misinformation are a thing of the past; stigmatising and other autistic characteristics are respected	Autistic people experience school, university and other educational settings free from bias, ignorance and stigma	Discriminatory work and hiring practices cease to exist	The right to diagnosis is protected, and stigma never prevents autistic people from receiving the support they need	All public services are free from discrimination towards autistic people	The role of family, friends and carers is respected as a force for good

Milestones: the steps to reach our Future Reality

Our Milestones are the things that the whole of society will need to achieve to get us closer to the Future Realities. The Future Realities are very ambitious and far-reaching, so the Milestones break them down into several short-, medium- and long-term steps, which need to be worked through in order. Here are examples of some of the Milestones to be achieved for each of the five Future Realities.

Future Reality	Example short-term Milestone	Example medium-term Milestone	Example long-term Milestone
Values autistic individuals. Understands and appreciates what autism is and how it is unique for each individual	Life area: public understanding and attitudes		
	An ongoing campaign is established to improve autism understanding	Public understanding of autism has reached millions of people	Public understanding of autism has reached tens of millions of people
Maximises autistic power. Autistic people are empowered to control how they live their lives and make distinctive contributions that influence the world	Life area: public understanding and attitudes		
	There is improved representation of autistic people in local and national political parties and public policymaking	More autistic people are selected as national and local elected representatives	The UK has autistic cabinet ministers, council leaders and senior decision makers
Guarantees support. Provides seamless diagnosis, support and care for autistic people from all backgrounds, at all moments of need throughout their lives	Life area: education		
	There are more options for different types of school places to meet the needs of autistic young people	Autistic pupils have positive experiences when they move between schools and into adulthood	Autistic young people have equal chances to go on to, and thrive in, higher and further education

Adapts public spaces and services. Designs spaces and services that are autistic inclusive, with flexible adjustments that recognise that not all autistic people have the same preferences	Life area: families and support networks		
	Government, public services and businesses acknowledge the adjustments or additional costs that needing support from a carer might involve for an autistic person and find ways to address these	Public information about venues always includes information for carers - and is easily accessible	No autistic person faces additional costs going somewhere or doing something because they need help from a carer
Is free from discrimination. Rejects stereotypes and stigma, removes the expectation to mask, and doesn't accept being told to fit in as acceptable	Life area: work and employment		
	Guidance clarifies reasonable adjustments for autistic people, ensuring the <i>Equality Act</i> protects autistic employees	Autistic people's employment rights are secured through legal challenges where necessary	No autistic person is ever unfairly dismissed or discriminated against in work

The complete list of Milestones for each Future Reality, arranged by life area, is in the [appendix](#) of this report.

We recognise that even the Milestones will require several different actions to be taken - which themselves will need a lot of work, both to implement and to measure their impact. At the National Autistic Society, we'll use the Milestones to help us plan what work we should be doing in our next organisational strategy... and the next one... and the one after that... and we'll keep on going until our Moonshot Vision is a reality.

Conclusion

In 1962, when he was describing the US mission to land a spacecraft on the moon, President Kennedy said:

“We choose to go to the moon in this decade and do the other things, not because they are easy, but because they are hard, because that goal will serve to organize and measure the best of our energies and skills, because that challenge is one that we are willing to accept, one we are unwilling to postpone, and one which we intend to win.”

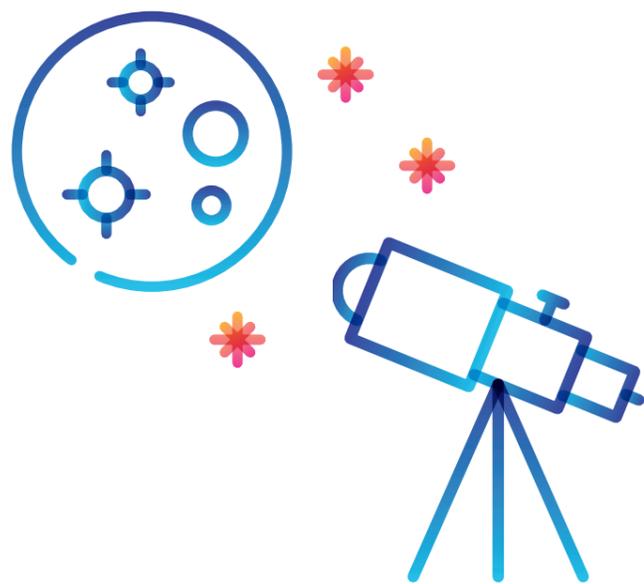
We think this sums up our goal well too.

With our own Moonshot Vision, we have tried to describe exactly what we're all working for so it can help us plan to get there and encourage more people to join us in the journey. We hope you'll find that the Future Realities resonate with you and describe the world you want to see. Your ideas might look a bit different, and some things might be more important for you than others. But if you find our Future Realities and Milestones helpful, please use them - whether you're acting as an individual or as part of a small group or a large organisation.

We'll be using them to shape everything we do, but we can't do it alone. And we want to work with others to support their ideas too.

We really believe that creating a society that works for autistic people is a goal that can organise all our energies and skills, and is something that needs to happen urgently. For many, it's not a new mission: people have been striving to make society work for autistic people and their families for generations. At the National Autistic Society, we follow where our founders started. Many others have gone before us, and have had an incredible impact on the world. With Moonshot Vision, we hope to build on what they have achieved.

We know creating a society that works for autistic people won't be easy. We know it will be hard! But we choose to do it, along with hundreds of thousands of others. And we won't stop until we succeed.



The Moonshot Vision

Appendix: Milestones for achieving the Future Realities

Our Milestones are the short-, medium- and long-term steps which have to be worked through, in order, to achieve the Future Realities. They are arranged by each of the following areas of life: public understanding and representation; education; work and employment; before, during and after diagnosis; public services and specialist care; families and support networks.



Appendix: Milestones

Public understanding and representation

Future Realities (society-wide outcomes)	Short-term Milestones	Medium-term Milestones	Long-term Milestones
<p>Values autistic individuals. Society has a shared understanding of what autism is and encourages all autistic people to be their true selves</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> An ongoing campaign is established to improve autism understanding, including the use of statistics around prevalence, humanising language and representation of all types of autistic experiences. All autistic organisations run campaigns that reflect and represent all autistic people and the full range of autistic experiences. There is improved representation of autistic people in local and national political parties and public policymaking. Government funds a new study on the prevalence of autism and other neurodevelopmental conditions, that gives more accurate information on the size and needs of the neurodivergent community. The language used to talk about autism empowers autistic people. All autism awareness training is co-produced and delivered in partnership with autistic people. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All schoolchildren in the UK complete understanding autism courses to make schools and society more accepting. Public understanding of autism has reached millions of people. Data shows that autistic people feel more comfortable in public spaces. All elected representatives undergo training or inductions to help them understand autism. More autistic people are selected as national and local elected representatives. Every nation in the UK has a senior decision maker who is responsible for improving the lives of autistic people. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The UK has autistic cabinet ministers, council leaders and senior decision makers. Public understanding of autism has reached tens of millions of people. Data shows that all autistic people feel comfortable to be themselves in public spaces. An increased number of autistic people are elected as MPs.
<p>Maximises autistic power. Autistic people have a platform to shape public narratives, perceptions and communities, so that autistic representation and stories are commonplace</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A campaign is established to get more autistic people from across the autism spectrum into positions of influence and power across TV, politics, journalism and business. A review of inequalities that autistic people face across society is held by the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) - chaired or co-chaired by an autistic person. Collaborations and training are launched with TV production companies, with autistic people at the centre of them. Interviews and programmes about autism feature autistic people, in their own words. There is improved representation of autistic people in media and popular culture, with diverse representation across the autism spectrum, age groups, ethnicity and backgrounds. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Professional bodies, including unions, royal colleges and trade associations have autism networks. Inequalities identified by the EHRC are being tackled and progress is being measured and made. All media outlets have autism training. New business practices and innovations find new ways for autistic people to have their voices heard. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increasing progress on tackling inequalities is outlined by the EHRC. Ultimately, these inequalities will be ended. Autistic people are on the boards of FTSE 100 companies, heading up national and international organisations.

Appendix: Milestones

Public understanding and representation continued...

Future Realities (society-wide outcomes)	Short-term Milestones	Medium-term Milestones	Long-term Milestones
<p>Guarantees support. Widespread access to trusted and expert information enables anyone to understand autism and be equipped to support autistic people</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Widespread autism understanding and acceptance training is provided across health, care and education (and other most relevant) sectors. Reliable sources of clear information about autism are available to the general public, with specific guidance available to families and autistic people from all backgrounds and at all life stages. More specialised information is publicly available for all employers, educators and service providers in the UK. Trusted sources of information on autism are accessible in all formats. Information is tailored through partnerships with other organisations that support people facing discrimination on the basis of their race, sexuality, gender identity, disability and other characteristics. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Autism acceptance training is a standard part of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) induction programmes across all sectors. All new teachers have dedicated autism training. All new health and care workers have dedicated autism training. All new mental health practitioners have dedicated autism training. All new police, probation and other staff in the criminal justice system have dedicated autism training. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All teachers understand autism. All health and care workers understand autism. All police staff understand autism. There is a massive decrease in the number of autistic people in the criminal justice system.
<p>Adapts public spaces and services. Adjustments are integrated into all communications and public spaces, online and offline</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There is a deeper and more rigorous understanding of what accessibility looks like for autistic people across the autism spectrum. Guidelines are published on accessibility for forms, websites, information, media etc. The need for space or a room for carers is understood by all public spaces and venues. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Universal, autism-friendly design standards are published for all public spaces and services, sponsored/endorsed by major brands. A campaign is established for a social media requirement to build in autism accessibility, set out in legislation. All public spaces have autism sensory/ accessibility ratings. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Planning laws and legislation require the creation of spaces that are adapted. The internet is fully accessible to autistic people across the autism spectrum.
<p>Is free from discrimination. Anti-autism stereotypes and misinformation are a thing of the past; stigmatising and other autistic characteristics are respected</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Discriminatory laws are challenged in court. Public understanding campaigns give the general public the knowledge and tools to tackle anti-autism discrimination wherever they see it. There is improved recording and reporting of crimes against autistic people, including hate crime and mate crime. Cross-sector campaigns on hate crime include autism. Equalities watchdogs across the UK understand autism. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> More discriminatory laws are tackled in the courts. Laws are tightened around discrimination (eg hate crime legislation). Equalities watchdogs investigate and tackle autism discrimination. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> New and existing laws no longer discriminate against autistic people.

Appendix: Milestones

Education

Future Realities (society-wide outcomes)	Short-term Milestones	Medium-term Milestones	Long-term Milestones
<p>Values autistic individuals. There are safe and enjoyable classroom experiences for all, and the role of autistic students, parents and school staff is welcomed</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A nationwide campaign for autism training in schools leads to commitment to make autism training for school staff mandatory. • An Autistic Alumni programme supports active speakers in schools. • An Alumni Board in every school reception area showcases the positive destinations of autistic pupils and those with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). • There is a national campaign to promote role models to ensure that the school curriculum is inclusive and affirmative. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All new teachers and education staff are trained to feel confident and know how to support their autistic pupils. • School and university career services have dedicated neurodiversity careers advice, support and opportunities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All teachers and education staff feel confident and know how to support their autistic pupils.
<p>Maximises autistic power. Autistic people's individual strengths are amplified, and their passion, curiosity and ambition is encouraged</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New principles are published on what co-production in education looks like, eg pupil voice leads to change in rules (in and across schools). • Autistic pupils are encouraged to join their school councils. • Careers advisers in schools and further education institutions have autism training. • Development of an Autistic Teacher Network offers opportunities for collaboration and peer support, leading to the development and sharing of effective pedagogy for autistic pupils. • Campaigns and support services are developed to ensure autistic teachers and other autistic employees maintain long-term employment in schools. • All school leaders receive training on supporting neurodiverse employees as standard. • Adult education is promoted to autistic adults to enable them to gain the skills they need. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All autistic pupils and those with special educational needs have an identified key worker. • Every school council has autistic pupil members. • A representative number of autistic people are employed in senior jobs, including within organisations such as the Department for Education. • A representative number of autistic staff in schools thrive and progress in leadership roles. • School curricula empower autistic pupils to gain the skills they want and need. • A representative number of autistic young people go to university and college. • All schools and further education institutions offer extra-curricular opportunities and environments that ensure access to autistic people from across the autism spectrum. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No autistic child has a ceiling put on their aspirations and dreams.

Appendix: Milestones

Education continued...

Future Realities (society-wide outcomes)	Short-term Milestones	Medium-term Milestones	Long-term Milestones
<p>Guarantees support. There is sustainable, tailored education for all, and this eases key transition moments</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Changes to SEND legislation enhance autistic children's rights and entitlements to timely support to meet their needs. • There are more options for different types of school places to meet the needs of autistic young people. • There is clear guidance that any child with an autism diagnosis might need their additional education, health and care (EHC) needs assessed. • Provision in EHC plans (and equivalents in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland) is standardised and nationally recognised as high quality. • General SEND support is better funded and targeted to meet the needs of autistic children in mainstream schools. • More research and good practice is developed in making sure that transition moments between schools and beyond work for autistic children. • Universities and colleges know their duties to provide support to autistic students and how to fulfil them. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No autistic child waits longer than the statutory time limit for an EHC needs assessment. • No autistic child is turned away from an assessment of their needs at school. • Remote learning and home schooling are seen as having equal value to traditional models of learning. • Sufficient specialist provision is available in every local area. • Autistic pupils have positive experiences when they move between schools and into adulthood. • Fewer families have to go to tribunal to get the support they need. • Less parental involvement is needed to secure the right provision. • Autistic adults who want to go back to college get the opportunity, and the support they need, to do so. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Every autistic child and student is listened to about their goals and needs, and supported with both. • Autistic children and students receive the support they need in a timely way. • Autistic young people have equal chances to go on to, and thrive in, higher and further education. • Autistic adult learners have every opportunity to develop their skills with courses that meet their needs. • Transitions between educational settings are clear, planned and well supported.
<p>Adapts public spaces and services. Fair access to educational opportunity is supported by widespread adaptations to curricula and learning environments</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All schools have quiet spaces for autistic children to use. • All autistic students (of all ages and educational environments) get reasonable adjustments for exams. • Autistic children don't get in trouble because of strict behaviour policies. • More schools, university and college campuses are autism-friendly spaces. • More schools have dedicated autism bases. • Local areas plan better for the school mix they need. • Flexible options for education (eg home education) are built around the child and support is provided. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reasonable adjustments to education for all autistic learners are available and proactively offered. • All newly built school, university or college buildings are accessible to autistic students. • Schools in every area have access to high-quality advice and training about autism to adapt their practices. • Mainstream schools are able to meet the needs of the vast majority of autistic children. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All autistic children get their first choice of place in a school that works for them. • Every school, university or college is autism friendly.

Appendix: Milestones

Education continued...

Future Realities (society-wide outcomes)	Short-term Milestones	Medium-term Milestones	Long-term Milestones
<p>Is free from discrimination. Autistic people experience school, university and other educational settings free from bias, ignorance and stigma</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Off-rolling and informal exclusions have ended. • Exclusion gaps have halved compared to 2022. • Attendance and attainment gaps are fully researched, and progress is made in closing the gaps. • No autistic child is unfairly excluded for having a meltdown. • There is a commitment to tackle bullying and collect data to monitor the reduction. • Every autistic child can talk to their school mental health service and be supported. • Autistic teachers feel more able to disclose their autism at work. • Different experiences of education of autistic children of different races, classes, genders and sexualities are identified and understood. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No autistic child is excluded because their school isn't properly supporting them. • Bullying is reduced for autistic children and students. • Attendance and attainment gaps have halved compared to 2022. • The contribution of autistic staff in schools, colleges and universities is recognised and promoted. • Specific actions at government and school level are taken to address the different experiences of education of autistic children of different races, classes, genders and sexualities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Autistic children are no more likely to be excluded than any other children. • No autistic child or student is bullied, ever. • Autistic children attend and succeed at school just like other children. • Every area has autistic teachers and school staff who are well supported when they need it and love their jobs. • Pupil voice leads to changes in provision (in and across schools). • Autistic pupils, students and staff play central roles in running schools, colleges and universities. • Autistic children's race, sexuality, class or gender does not impact their education.

Appendix: Milestones

Work and employment

Future Realities (society-wide outcomes)	Short-term Milestones	Medium-term Milestones	Long-term Milestones
<p>Values autistic individuals. Autistic employees are a respected part of the workforce, can access opportunities they find meaningful and progress in them</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The autism employment rate increases by 5-10% compared to 2022. Examples of employment include autistic people across the autism spectrum and from diverse communities. Research is carried out into the additional barriers autistic people from minority or marginalised communities face in getting and keeping jobs. 20 of the biggest employers in the UK lead the way in being autism-friendly employers. Big employers set up employee networks of autistic and neurodivergent people. There are widespread opportunities in work and meaningful activity for autistic people from all backgrounds and from across the autism spectrum. More employers of all sizes take up autism training. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The number of autistic people in work and meaningful activity doubles compared to 2022. Specific work is undertaken to increase employment of autistic people from minority or marginalised communities. Autistic people are regularly and meaningfully included in decisions about the business or organisation they work in. Autistic people have positive experiences of working in all of the biggest businesses. Every employer knows the potential of employing autistic people. Internal processes are autism friendly. Employers include autism in all mandatory training. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All autistic people who can and want to work have a job and are happy in it. There is an active, 'always-on' campaign to influence employers to ensure and seek out neurodiversity in their workforce. Workforce adaptations are commonplace and part of what is seen as normal. There are buddies and mentorship programmes in all workplaces.
<p>Maximises autistic power. The talent of autistic people is prominent in all types of work, giving autistic people a sense of fulfilment and community</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Case studies dedicated to improving perceptions of autism are widespread. Adjusted recruitment processes are widespread. There are autistic role models in all areas of the work sphere, showcasing how each autistic person is different (just like non-autistic people). Autistic jobseekers have choice over their career goals. A 'good employer' kitemark is launched to recognise employers that have trained and aware staff. Employers have information to help them identify what development looks like for each autistic individual. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There is support in schools to identify and foster individuals' talents. Autistic employees can pursue their development in the way they want. Autistic employees are promoted in line with their colleagues. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Autistic employee networks are involved in their own organisation's recruitment design. Autistic people are leaders in organisations.

Appendix: Milestones

Work and employment continued...

Future Realities (society-wide outcomes)	Short-term Milestones	Medium-term Milestones	Long-term Milestones
<p>Guarantees support. All autistic people who want to work can do so and are supported, including through times of change</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clear information and advice about employing autistic people is available for all employers. • Guidance for organisations explains the barriers that traditional recruitment processes present to autistic people. • Easily accessible guidance and information is published for autistic people seeking advice on career development and training. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comprehensive information and advice is available for employees and prospective employees. • Government work support programmes are adjusted for autistic people, and specialist support is available when needed. • Legislation is created (or existing legislation used) to prioritise employment of autistic people. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is a guaranteed job scheme for all autistic people (if they want it/opt in). • Career development and training for autistic people seeking meaningful activity is readily available in accessible formats.
<p>Adapts public spaces and services. Hiring/management practices and workplaces allow autistic candidates, volunteers and staff to be their best selves</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organisations have the information they need to make their spaces and processes autism friendly. • All job descriptions are clear and concise, and avoid open-ended terms/phrases. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Workplaces have accessibility audits. • Behaviour change campaigning with employees leads to increased take-up of autism-friendly processes and spaces. • Kitemarks and quality assurance schemes help autistic individuals to identify good employers. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Autism-friendly recruitment is standard and adjustments are commonplace. • Universal workplace design standards are applied across all workplaces, enforced by legislation.
<p>Is free from discrimination. Discriminatory work and hiring practices cease to exist</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Guidance clarifies reasonable adjustments for autistic people, ensuring the <i>Equality Act</i> protects autistic employees. • Companies are held to account for discriminatory practices against autistic applicants and staff. • Unfair recruitment screening processes are ended. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Autistic people's employment rights are secured through legal challenges where necessary. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No autistic person is ever unfairly dismissed or discriminated against in work.

Appendix: Milestones

Before, during and after diagnosis

Future Realities (society-wide outcomes)	Short-term Milestones	Medium-term Milestones	Long-term Milestones
<p>Values autistic individuals. Realistic and relatable stories about diagnosis are widespread and show people of all backgrounds, at all stages of life</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Professionals and commissioners understand the important reasons to seek an autism diagnosis. • The benefits of autism diagnosis for people across the autism spectrum, of all ages, ethnicities, classes and genders, are better understood by people in the health sector and beyond. • People's different and diverse journeys to and beyond diagnosis are shared widely. • Mandatory training for health and care staff is rolled out. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All stories and advice around diagnosis are representative of all autistic people. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No autistic person is ever told "you can't be autistic" because of their age, race, class, gender or other characteristic.
<p>Maximises autistic power. Diagnosis is a springboard for autistic people to define their autistic identity, unlock opportunities and build wellbeing</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People are listened to when they ask to be referred for a diagnosis. Their experiences are respected and acknowledged. • Models of post-diagnosis services support autistic people of all ages and across the autism spectrum to build and shape their own autistic identity. • There is readily available information about getting a diagnosis and support after diagnosis. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Autistic people and their families are involved in the design of local diagnosis services. • There are local choices about where and how to get a diagnosis. • There are clear routes to get other support, like benefits and social care. • Universal post-diagnosis programmes empower autistic people to shape their autistic identity. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People can choose how and where they get an autism diagnosis. • Access to other support autistic people are entitled to is automatic.
<p>Guarantees support. Diagnosis in whatever form is convenient, free for all and available when it is needed, with a clear, robust, joined-up pathway of support after diagnosis</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Government recognises the need to invest in reducing waits for autism assessment and support. • Clear data on the average length of wait for an autism assessment is regularly published. • The NHS and government set a target for assessment waiting times - and are held to account. • The capacity of existing diagnosis infrastructure is increased - with a clear plan for nationwide rollout of specialist teams. • The need for pre- and post-diagnosis support is better understood and models are researched. • Government and the NHS invest in training new autism diagnosticians. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The average wait for an autism assessment has halved compared to 2022. • New channels for diagnosis and support (eg self-diagnosis) are created and expanded. • Automatic parent referrals are widespread. • There is more structured access to peer support. • The number of autism diagnosticians has increased. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are enough diagnosis services and diagnosticians to meet demand in every area. • The average waiting time for an autism assessment is within the national target. Absolutely no one waits longer than six months. • There are universal support programmes for adults and children before, during and after diagnosis.

Appendix: Milestones

Before, during and after diagnosis continued...

Future Realities (society-wide outcomes)	Short-term Milestones	Medium-term Milestones	Long-term Milestones
<p>Adapts public spaces and services. The impact of diagnosis is recognised, and diagnosis is delivered in a familiar, stress-free way for autistic people and their loved ones</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Environments where autism assessments are conducted are audited to ensure they follow good autism practice. • All staff working in diagnosis services have good autism training, with those carrying out assessments having the highest-level qualifications. • New, accessible models of diagnosis are piloted and evaluated rigorously. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is improved access to autism assessment in prisons/criminal justice service settings. • There is improved access to workplace diagnosis. • A state of the nation report on diagnosis collates the most important lessons learnt to inform planning and commissioning. • New, accessible models of diagnosis are developed further. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Autism assessments can happen at a place of choice, eg at home. • Every physical or virtual diagnosis service is fully accessible to autistic people.
<p>Is free from discrimination. The right to diagnosis is protected, and stigma never prevents autistic people from receiving the support they need</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is government commitment to tackle inequalities based on gender, race, class, age (and other factors) in getting an autism diagnosis. • All screening tools are updated to reflect the diversity of autistic people. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Structural inequalities that prevent people from minority or marginalised communities from getting an autism diagnosis are tackled. • People who carry out autism assessments are trained in unconscious bias. • Screening tools work accurately to identify when someone might be autistic, including if they are from a minority or marginalised community. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Autistic people from minority or marginalised communities have equal access to diagnosis and pre- and post-diagnosis support.

Appendix: Milestones

Public services and specialist care

Future Realities (society-wide outcomes)	Short-term Milestones	Medium-term Milestones	Long-term Milestones
<p>Values autistic individuals. Society promotes the rights of autistic people to live a fulfilled and happy life, regardless of need, diagnosis, age or background</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Commissioners across all services have better data on the needs of autistic people in their area, across all ages, races, genders and classes. Local autism partnership boards lead work on meeting the needs of older autistic people. Autistic people have access to public services to prevent loneliness and isolation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Every local area has a fully comprehensive knowledge of the needs of autistic people and the networks of people who provide an individual with practical or emotional support across the autism spectrum. Every local area has a plan for meeting the needs of older autistic people. Autistic people can communicate in the way they want to. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Autistic people have the same levels of wellbeing and happiness as everyone else. All ways of communicating are equally valued, respected and acted on when providing or designing support. Local public services meet the needs of autistic people across the autism spectrum.
<p>Maximises autistic power. Support is based on personal needs, strengths and preferences, not cost or availability</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Every local area has an autism strategy or partnership board, with autistic people and family members on it. Partnership boards and commissioners commit to improving how they involve autistic people who also have a learning disability or don't communicate using speech. Best practice on involving autistic people and their families in decisions about their support are shared and included in all relevant public services training. The <i>Mental Capacity Act</i> is followed at all times. People's support is based on their needs, and support decisions that aren't needs-based are challenged in court to clarify duties. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Autistic people of all needs contribute to their partnership boards. Autistic people have more control over their daily lives and are meaningfully involved in decisions. All public services are clear about their duties to meet the needs of autistic people. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Autistic people are proactively engaged in designing local support. Cost no longer dictates the support autistic people receive.
<p>Guarantees support. Society provides easily navigable health and social care services and affordable housing, tailored for autistic people as their needs evolve over time</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Social care reform implementation includes autistic people, including funding the services that autistic people need. The next autism strategy in each nation of the UK includes a concrete commitment to roll out best practice to every area, with funding. The research base on what comprises good support for autistic people across the autism spectrum improves. There is more widespread and better quality information about the support available in each area. There is better information about what support autistic people are entitled to. Data sharing with consent between services improves to help autistic people move between public services. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Best practice on what good support looks like is fully shared and incorporated into public services commissioning. Every area has enough autism services and is working towards the latest best practice. Routes between public services are largely automatic. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> High-quality public services meet the needs of every autistic individual. There are seamless transitions between public services. Ultimately, there doesn't need to be a national autism strategy because support and services work for autistic people.

Appendix: Milestones

Public services and specialist care continued...

Future Realities (society-wide outcomes)	Short-term Milestones	Medium-term Milestones	Long-term Milestones
<p>Adapts public spaces and services. Autistic people's needs are recognised, and met with specific, evidence-led health and social care pathways</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Government sets a goal to make all public services accessible to autistic people. • Ways of recording autistic people's access needs and sharing them, with consent, are designed and evaluated. This process must involve autistic people. • Local areas identify where they need specialist autism-specific public services, and where general services could be made more accessible to autistic people. Each area sets out a plan to deliver this. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All public services allow autistic people to communicate in a full range of ways to support communication needs. • Public services work towards autism accessibility best practice. • Autistic people's access needs can be proactively shared to help them get the most from public services. • Local areas implement their plans for delivering specialist services and improving general services. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local areas finish implementing their plans for specialist and general services. • All public services are fully accessible to autistic people.
<p>Is free from discrimination. All public services are free from discrimination towards autistic people</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Government bans councils from turning away autistic people from social care just because they don't have a learning disability. • Research into the experiences of autistic people and families from minority or marginalised communities identifies the additional barriers they face. Government commits to overcoming these barriers. • Strategic litigation challenges discriminatory laws, including action by equality watchdogs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No autistic person is denied support because they don't have a learning disability. • Commitments to tackle additional barriers faced by autistic people and families from minority or marginalised communities are implemented. • Strategic litigation continues to challenge discriminatory laws. • Equality watchdog action on autism discrimination changes government policies. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The impact on autistic people is fully considered in all government impact and equality assessments; impacts to their detriment are avoided. • Autistic people have equal and fair access to the public services and support that they need.

Appendix: Milestones

Families and support networks

Future Realities (society-wide outcomes)	Short-term Milestones	Medium-term Milestones	Long-term Milestones
<p>Values autistic individuals. Society values the integral role of autistic people and their friends, families and carers in each other's lives</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is a campaign to expand awareness of who 'carers' are and the level of commitment required to be a carer. • A targeted campaign improves awareness, understanding and treatment of families and carers by health, care and education workers. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Carers' assessments lead to better support for families and support networks. • Each of the four UK governments has made a commitment and a plan to improve carers' rights. • An active community of families and support networks is committed to improving societal outcomes for autistic people. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is a vibrant peer support and campaigning community amongst families, friends and extended support networks of autistic people.
<p>Maximises autistic power. Autistic people have the relationships and family life they want, with active communities of support for themselves and their loved ones</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Councils don't rely on families and support networks to fill the gaps in autistic people's support. • Professional and family awareness of the <i>Mental Capacity Act</i> improves. • Support focuses on the positive relationships autistic people want, including friendships and romantic relationships. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is a specific focus on autistic people transitioning to retirement, with active peer communities and support services available. • Autism-specific family and relationship counselling is available. • The way the <i>Mental Capacity Act</i> is used improves to secure the rights and wishes of both autistic people and their families and support networks. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Specific specialised housing provision is ring-fenced to support autistic people of all backgrounds and life stages to live the home life they choose.
<p>Guarantees support. Carers and loved ones have information and support, from pre-diagnosis to planning for when they are not around</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Benefits, information and advice targeted at carers is widely available. • Access to carers' peer support improves. • There is better information about planning for the future, including after carers die. • Good practice on planning for the future is promoted to and implemented in councils. • There are campaigns to improve financial support for carers, eg government pays National Insurance contributions for those who are unable to work because of caring responsibilities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Every family and support network knows where to go for peer support. • Planning for the future involves autistic people, their families and support networks in a way that works for them. • Support services are trained and able to work with families and support networks, whatever their structure. • Financial support for carers improves. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Carers don't face financial hardship.

Appendix: Milestones

Families and support networks continued...

Future Realities (society-wide outcomes)	Short-term Milestones	Medium-term Milestones	Long-term Milestones
<p>Adapts public spaces and services. Society adapts to allow loved ones to create the family life they want, without trade-offs</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Public understanding campaigns include depictions of families that have shaped their lives to work for them. Awareness raising takes place with employers on the role and responsibilities of carers. Government, public services and businesses acknowledge the adjustments or additional costs that needing support from a carer might involve for an autistic person and find ways to address these, eg by reducing paperwork or evidence requirements for a carer to accompany them. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Carers have multiple options for respite support. Flexible working for carers becomes the norm. Reasonable adjustments relating to families and carers are respected. Public information about venues always includes information for carers - and is easily accessible. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No autistic person faces additional costs going somewhere or doing something because they need help from a carer.
<p>Is free from discrimination. The role of family, friends and carers is respected as a force for good</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Government leadership on carers puts autism front and centre. Employers are encouraged to celebrate and empower their carer employees. Autistic people and their families and carers are invited to events, the same as everyone else. Training for professionals encourages them to see carers as a person, rather than only in terms of their caring role. Stigma attached to families from minority or marginalised communities is tackled. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Carers feel their contribution to autistic people's lives is respected by others. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Autistic people and their families and support networks feel able to attend events, the same as everyone else.

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, information and practical advice for more than 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 there is still so much to do to increase opportunities, reduce social isolation and build a brighter future for people on the spectrum.

The Moonshot Vision sets out what a society that works for autistic people really looks like - as defined by autistic people and their families.

With your help, we can turn the Moonshot Vision into a reality.

Find out more at www.autism.org.uk



The National Autistic Society
393 City Road, London, EC1V 1NG
Switchboard: 020 7833 2299
Minicom: 0845 070 4003
Fax: 020 7833 9666
Email: nas@nas.org.uk
Website: www.autism.org.uk

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