

**Meaningful activity and leisure:**

All children and adults with autism will have access to leisure facilities and meaningful activity tailored to their needs and interests. This should be shaped in a way that promotes social inclusion and, where appropriate, should involve family members and friends.

**Welfare support:**

Autism will be explicitly designated as eligible for all appropriate disability benefits, including those pertaining to mobility, personal care, housing support and independent living. Information on the range of benefits and entitlements will be offered to families affected by autism at the point of diagnosis.

**Social support:**

All children and adults will be supported to develop their social skills and understanding. All adults with autism will be able to access social groups developed with their participation and tailored to their needs and interests.

**Further/higher education:**

All adults with autism who wish to receive further or higher education will be supported to do so financially and through the provision of educational and pastoral support services. These should reflect the specific needs of students with autism through person-centred assessment.

**Employment:**

All adults with autism will be supported to find a job through access to ongoing autism-specific employment advice and support in their local area. Such services will promote the positive advantages of employing such adults through awareness-raising campaigns and direct contact with employers.

**Housing:**

All local authorities will have established a range of supported accommodation options to meet the potential needs of current and future adults with autism in their area. The adaptations to the home that children with autism may require will be widely recognised. Agencies will ensure that they are provided with their own room and features are installed to ensure both their safety and the well being of the rest of the family.

For further information on the APPGA or to discuss the Manifesto, please contact Şenay Camgöz, secretary to the APPGA c/o The National Autistic Society:

Tel: 020 7903 3769

Email: [appga@nas.org.uk](mailto:appga@nas.org.uk)

With thanks to Stephen Wiltshire, a young man who has autism, for his picture of the Houses of Parliament.

# All Party Parliamentary Group on Autism



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Stephen Wiltshire

## APPGA Manifesto

The All-Party Parliamentary Group on Autism (APPGA) was established in February 2000 to raise parliamentary awareness of autism and campaign for changes to government policy. Members of the APPGA come from all the major political parties, working together to promote the interests of people with autism and their carers. The Officers of the Group have decided that the APPGA should publish a Manifesto setting out the goals that will drive its work. This Manifesto is the result of extensive consultation within the autism movement. It is intended to complement all existing initiatives, such as Autism Europe's *Charter of Rights for Persons with Autism (1993)* and the *Autism Awareness Year Manifesto for Change (2002)*.

*For the purposes of this Manifesto the term "autism" refers to the entire autism spectrum, including Asperger syndrome*

**T**he APPGA wants a society where autism is understood fully and where people with autism spectrum disorders and their families are respected, supported and receive the same rights and entitlements as others. We affirm that children and adults with autism spectrum disorders and their carers have a right to quality services appropriate to their needs. Autism is a lifelong disability and people with autism will have a spectrum of needs that must be met with a spectrum of provision.

The APPGA believes that agencies have a responsibility to work together to make a reality of social inclusion and person-centred planning for people with autism spectrum disorders. Central government must give firm guidance to local authorities and provide them with sufficient support to ensure consistency of service provision.

To deliver this vision, the APPGA will work to ensure that by 2013:

## General principles

**Training:** There will be a statutory requirement that all professionals or auxiliary staff working with people with autism will have received autism awareness and job specific training in autism prior to commencing their employment. All professionals working in the health, social care, education and criminal justice sectors will receive autism awareness and job-specific training in autism as part of their continuing professional development.

**Research:** Research into causes, costs and effective interventions for autism will be prioritised and facilitated by Government agencies. Funding authorities will then have a clear evidence base on which to allocate resources for interventions. This will also facilitate the training, accreditation and regulation of all types of service providers.

**Service provision:** A named senior manager in every local authority will be responsible for the commissioning and delivery of services for both children and adults with autism. This manager must provide services that deliver an appropriate level of support to all children and adults with autism, regardless of their age, diagnosis, cultural and ethnic background or ability to pay.

**Tracking and planning of services:** Compatible databases to record cases of autism spectrum disorders will be set up for all agencies at a local and national level in order to monitor prevalence and plan effectively for future services.

## Specific objectives

### Diagnosis and family support:

Autism-specific multi-agency diagnostic and assessment teams will be established in every local area, able to provide accurate and sensitive information on autism to families. There will be a clear target that all children with autism will be diagnosed by the age of five, with no more than six months between the time a parent first contacts a health professional to express concern and a confirmed diagnosis. Support and training services will be available for all carers, siblings and families immediately following diagnosis.

### Early intervention, primary and

**secondary education:** All children receiving a diagnosis of an autism spectrum disorder will be offered a prompt and appropriate early intervention programme based on best available evidence. This will be followed by the opportunity for the child, according to their educational and social needs and taking full account of parental/carer choice, to attend either:

- An autism-specific educational provision, including a unit attached to a mainstream school or
- A mainstream school where autism-specific support is provided, tailored to the individual or
- A special school with experience and expertise in autism or
- A recognised home-based educational programme or
- A combination of the above, tailored to the child's educational needs.

### Medical care and interventions:

The physiological symptoms often associated with autism, for example sleep disorders, sensory dysfunction or gastrointestinal disorders, will be widely recognised and people with autism will receive medical care and interventions appropriate to their needs from professionals trained in an understanding of autism.

### Respite provision/short breaks:

All families of children with autism and parents or other carers living with adults with autism will be entitled to a minimum of four weeks respite provision each year, to be delivered at a time or times and in a setting and manner that suits their needs. The intention will be to ensure that respite provision benefits all members of the family.

**Mental health:** A named member of each community mental health team with expertise in autism will be assigned the responsibility for meeting the mental health needs of children and adults with autism. People with autism will become automatically eligible for preventative mental health services after diagnosis, tailored to their needs and developed using an autism-sensitive person-centred planning process. Training in autism for mental health professionals will include awareness of the non-psychotic nature of autism and of the contribution of sensory problems to difficulties in processing.