



The National
Autistic Society
Scotland

"Count us in"



Count us in: it pays to listen

Accept difference. Not indifference.

Contents

- 5 Foreword: our Ambassador,
Richard Wilson OBE
- 6 Introduction: Dr Robert Moffat
- 7 Summary of key recommendations
- 8 The impact of autism in Scotland
- 9 Count us in: it pays to listen
- 11 Sustained employment
- 13 Choice and control
- 15 Challenging discrimination
- 16 Professional knowledge and access
to support
- 18 Conclusion
- 19 Appendix
- 22 Acknowledgements





Count us in: it pays to listen

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Foreword: our Ambassador, Richard Wilson OBE

When I became NAS Scotland's Ambassador in summer 2012, it was my great pleasure to spend a day in Glasgow, meeting young people with autism who support this campaigning charity.

They told me about the extreme challenges they experience in communication, social situations and understanding the world around them and how they struggle to understand their condition and how it impacts on their opportunities and life choices.

Many told me they had struggled to access a diagnosis of their condition. But once that diagnosis was in place, they had hoped it would be a gateway to understanding their autism and getting the right support.

But currently those expected to help, such as local authorities, health, welfare and education services often fail to support people after diagnosis, because they don't recognise autism, or understand its impact.

The young people I met told me they struggle to access employment and the social opportunities most of us take for granted.

For many of them, the world can be a confusing, anxiety-inducing and threatening place. While they try to make sense of it, they often experience prejudice and discrimination. The world they are



struggling to understand views them as difficult and their behaviour as odd, challenging and obsessive. They can become isolated, avoided and invisible.

They may see the world differently from many of us, but they had strong, valuable opinions on the kind of support needed to access the same opportunities most of us take for granted. There was palpable frustration that those organisations meant to help were not listening to what they have to say.

The right support at the right time can make the difference between someone with autism either experiencing isolation and related mental health problems or leading a

fulfilling life and actively contributing to society.

That's why I am backing NAS Scotland in its vital work to help make the opinions of people with autism heard. I encourage more people in Scotland to do the same, so that those with the condition can participate in society and experience real quality of life.

A handwritten signature of Richard Wilson OBE in black ink.

Richard Wilson OBE
NAS Scotland Ambassador

Count us in: it pays to listen

Introduction: Dr Robert Moffat



The National Autistic Society (NAS) Scotland is the leading charity for people with autism¹ and their families. We spearhead national initiatives and provide a strong voice for all people with autism. We help people with autism to live their lives with as much independence as possible.

Our campaigns are shaped by what our supporters, who are people with autism and their families, tell us they need to bring long-lasting, meaningful and positive change to their quality of life.

Our 2013 report, *Count us in: it pays to listen* strongly advocates partnership working between Government, local authorities, support organisations, and crucially, people with autism to bring about life-enhancing, cost-effective autism support.

Count us in: it pays to listen demonstrates clearly how we can do this. We can communicate with people who have autism. We can ask them what their priorities are. We can implement their advice with the aim of making real, positive improvements.

We greatly welcome the Scottish Government's Autism Strategy for Scotland. It is addressing the enormous challenges currently faced by the 50,000 Scots who have autism. The Government is also targeting £13.4million to better support people with autism. This is a significant sum of public money and everyone involved wants to make the most of the opportunities it presents.

Count us in: it pays to listen is a call to action for the Scottish Government to progress further its strong commitment to people with autism and their families by giving them a say in the decisions that affect them.

We are encouraging Government, local authorities and a range of organisations to listen to people with autism and work with them in order to maximise the effectiveness of the Autism Strategy for Scotland. We believe such a partnership is essential to improve quality of life for people with autism and their families.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Rob Moffat', with a stylized, flowing script.

Dr Robert Moffat
National Director, NAS Scotland

¹ In this report, we use the term 'autism' to include all diagnoses on the autism spectrum, including Asperger syndrome and high-functioning autism.

Summary of key recommendations

The Experts we consulted for this report – who are all people with autism or families who contributed on behalf of individuals – have told us what *Count us in* means.

Sustained employment

The Scottish Government should appoint an Autism Employment Ambassador to champion opportunities for people with autism in the workplace.

Local councils should map the need for employment support in their areas and include employment support for people with autism in their local plans.

Choice and control

With effective transition planning and support after diagnosis, people with autism should be empowered to advocate for themselves.

The availability of, and need for, independent advocacy services should be mapped across all services that people with autism need to access.

Challenging discrimination

The negative attitudes many people with autism experience are debilitating and must be challenged with a concerted campaign to raise public awareness and understanding of autism.

Professional knowledge and access to support

Sensitively handled, the experience of getting a diagnosis and support to understand its implications can make a huge difference to personal happiness. The Scottish Government should consider an NHS HEAT target to deliver post-diagnostic support across the whole country.

Local authorities should invest in specific services that help address social exclusion and the challenges of self-advocacy among people with autism from across the spectrum, and make sure that community care assessors are appropriately trained to develop person-centred plans for people with autism.



Count us in: it pays to listen

The impact of autism in Scotland

People with autism experience severe challenges in communication, social situations and understanding the world around them.

50,000 adults and children in Scotland have autism, that's more than 1 in 100.

Thirty-two local authorities and 14 local health boards are to lead improvements in autism support services across Scotland.

The lifetime cost for someone with autism ranges from £3.1million to £4.6million depending on the support they require.²

Autism is known as a 'spectrum' condition and includes Asperger syndrome, a form of autism.

The Scottish Government's Autism Strategy for Scotland aims to improve outcomes for people with autism, investing £13.4million in autism support services over four years.

Autism directly affects around 200,000 people every day.

² Knapp, M., Romeo, R. and Beecham, J. (2007). *The economic consequences of autism in the UK*. London: Foundation for People with Learning Disabilities.

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Working together

Count us in: it pays to listen strongly advocates partnership working between Government, local authorities, support organisations and, crucially, people with autism, with the aim of implementing productive and cost-effective autism support.

For everyone on the autism spectrum, the right help at the right time is of fundamental importance. Support services for people with autism must be available to those who need intensive, ongoing support and care relating to their physical, social and educational needs. However, people with autism and their families are also demanding that we look beyond traditional support services and find new ways for them to engage effectively with their communities, and to access the same social, employment and

educational opportunities most of us take for granted.

The *Count us in: it pays to listen* report demonstrates clearly how we can do this. We can communicate with people who have autism. We can ask them what they think will improve the quality of their lives and how they believe available funds should be spent to achieve this. We can listen to their advice and work with them to promote real, positive improvements to people's quality of life.

Getting behind the Strategy

The Scottish Government's Autism Strategy for Scotland is greatly welcomed by NAS Scotland and our supporters.

The Strategy is addressing the enormous challenges currently

faced by the 50,000 Scots who have autism. Change at this level is crucial to help create a better world for people with autism and their families. Our supporters tell us that the Autism Strategy represents a golden opportunity to create a Scotland where people with autism can have real quality of life.

In this report, we highlight how important it is for people with autism and their families to participate in and shape the Autism Strategy as it is implemented, and to feel empowered by it.

It pays to listen

The lifetime cost for someone with autism ranges from £3.1million to £4.6million depending on the support they require. These estimates span all public sector expenditure and recognise the high cost of autism to families. More effective use of current resources should bring about substantial savings to the public purse in the future and help people with autism to live the life they choose.

For example, it has been estimated that investment to support more people with autism into employment would mean that individuals would require fewer services and could contribute more to society and the wider economy.³ In contrast, ineffective support can exacerbate the loneliness and isolation experienced by people with autism, leading to severe mental and physical health

"Support packages for people with autism should focus on improving the quality of people's lives. They should be tailored to meet individual need. The support has to come from a provider who has enough information, training, knowledge and most of all enthusiasm

and compassion to meet people's needs. This invariably means that autism training alone does not solve the problem. Support providers need to listen to what people with autism have to say as they are the true experts when it comes to knowing what's best for them."

³Knapp, M., Romeo, R. and Beecham, J. (2007). *Ibid.*

Count us in: it pays to listen

problems, and ultimately necessitating a far greater long-term public spend.

The Government's Strategy is targeting £13.4million to better support people with autism. It is a significant sum of public money and everyone involved wants to maximise the opportunities it presents.

We sought advice from people with autism on how to best spend the available funds, by conducting a national survey and holding a series of workshops. The responses we received form the basis of *Count us in: it pays to listen*. Of those who responded to our survey:

- > 91% want more say over their support
- > 79% think that public understanding of autism is poor or very poor
- > 69% of adults with autism haven't had an assessment of their needs since turning 18
- > 66% feel they do not have enough support.

Call to action

The aim of the Scottish Strategy for Autism is to enable people with autism to take part in the local planning of services. The Scottish Government will provide more than £1million to develop local strategic planning for services and support for people with autism. Local councils should therefore involve a broad range of people with autism and those who care for them in deciding what actions are prioritised locally.



People with autism want to access the same opportunities that most of us take for granted. To bring about a real, positive improvement in their quality of life, our Experts told us it is crucial to focus on four priorities at a national and local level. These are:

- > sustained employment
- > choice and control
- > challenging discrimination
- > professional knowledge and access to support.

The Count us in consultation

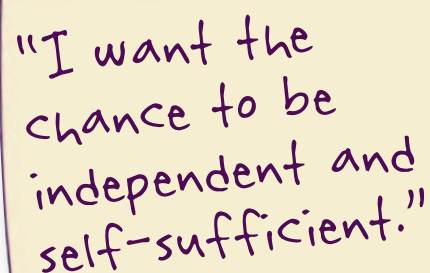
The findings contained in *Count us in* are the result of conducting an online survey and consultation workshops across Scotland during 2012.

We believe people who live with autism are experts in their own condition. Therefore, the *Count us in* report describes the people who took part in our consultation as the Experts. Our statistics and recommendations are drawn directly from their responses. Some people with autism completed the survey directly, but in order to ensure that the experiences of people with high support needs were included some of the responses were completed by families on behalf of the individual.

Further information about our consultation and the methodology used is available in the appendix.

Sustained employment

Not everyone with autism can work. But the majority want to, and see sustained employment as a gateway to independence, self-sufficiency and respect, removing their reliance on benefits or their family for financial support.



"I want the chance to be independent and self-sufficient."

Many people with autism have a wide range of skills, but research has found that qualification levels are not reflected in the types of jobs people with autism could get. Forty-three per cent of graduates or postgraduates with autism never achieve any sort of managerial position and 31% of those with a Higher National Certificate or Higher National Diploma, degree or postgraduate qualification are unemployed. Almost half of the people with autism surveyed have experienced 'career regression' and are consistently failing to achieve the average earnings of their peers.⁴

Our Experts reported that:

- > 24% have never been in paid employment since age 16
- > 66% rely to some extent on their family for financial support

- > 53% would like support with employment.

If you have autism, conventional means of workplace communication can be challenging. Of those surveyed:

- > 39% have lost a job due to their autism
- > 36% say they have experienced discrimination or unfair treatment at work
- > 55% would like help to develop social skills.

Many of our Experts experienced isolation and even antagonism from employers and colleagues, creating barriers to career progression. As a result, many report that their career aspirations are low.

"Although I worked for a very large public sector employer, when I was diagnosed with Asperger's, they had no system for offering me support, and frankly did not know how to proceed, or how to implement the reasonable adjustments that had been recommended. Over

a year later, and they still do not have any strategy or solutions in place to support autistic employees."

"I think specialist employment services have been essential in keeping me in employment. There have been several

occasions when I have been unable to communicate with my employer and my line manager due to being diagnosed later in life. I may have lost my job, self-esteem and could end up on prescription medication."

⁴ Autism Resource Centre, Glasgow City Council (2007). Autism spectrum disorder and employability questionnaire.

Count us in: it pays to listen

Our recommendations

The Scottish Government:

- > appoints a high-profile Autism Employment Ambassador to champion the importance of employing people with autism among employers across Scotland, building on the example of a similar post in Wales
- > directs the Autism Employment Ambassador to engage with employer organisations to raise awareness of autism, the benefits

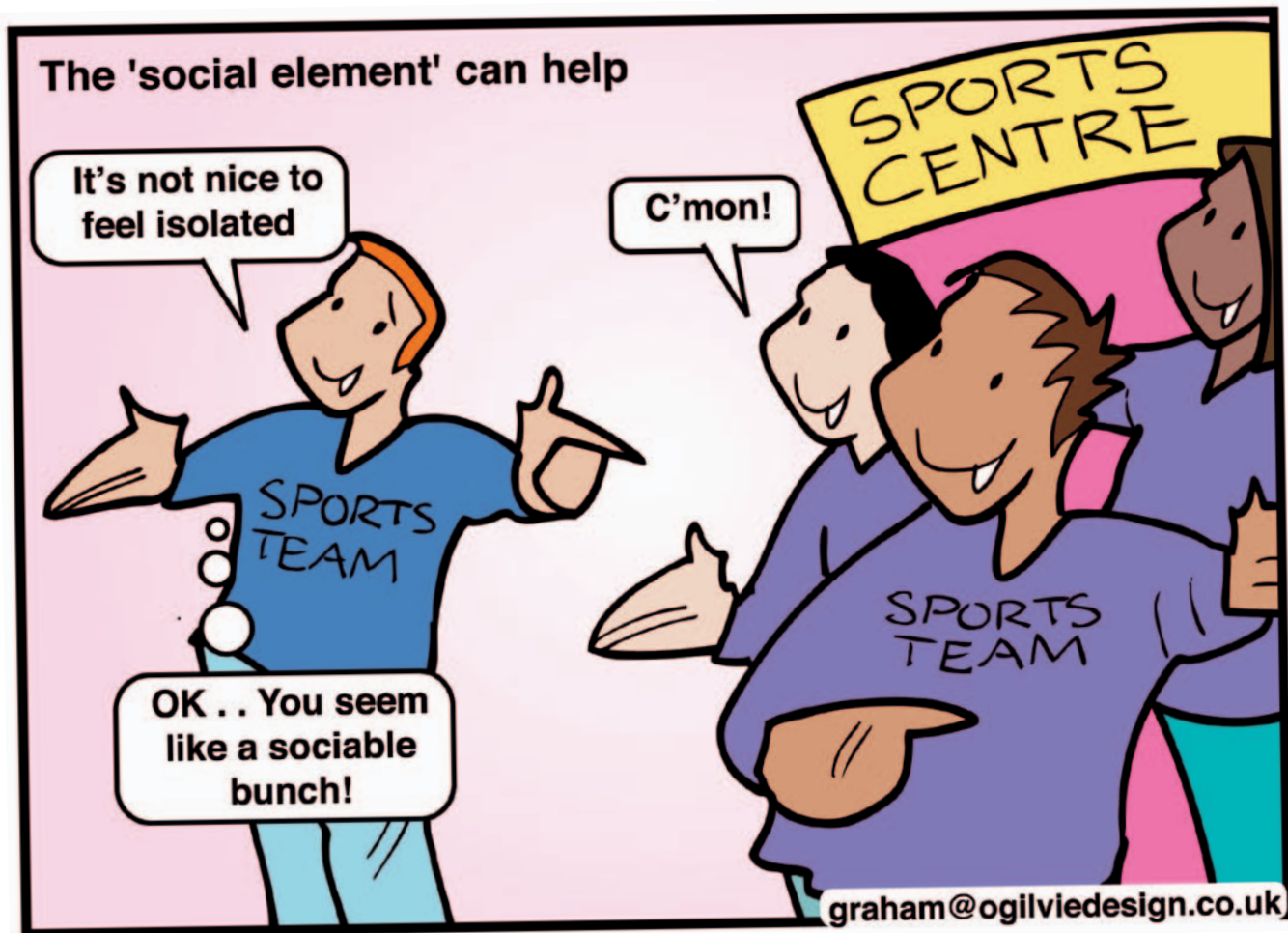
of employing people with autism and the adjustments that should be made, and to encourage the inclusion of autism within diversity training courses

Public bodies including the Scottish Government, local authorities and health boards:

- > lead by example by including autism in all their equality and diversity training and commit to identifying and supporting their own employees who have autism.

Local authorities:

- > ensure that in mapping local need they take into account the employment support needs of people with autism in their area
- > include employment support in their local plans
- > include employment outcomes in person-centred plans for individuals with autism, as appropriate.



Choice and control

Our Experts told us very clearly that making choices was fundamentally important to maintaining a sense of control over their own lives, and that their self-esteem was affected when they couldn't take part in decisions affecting them.

Some people with autism will need significant support to make and communicate decisions. Not everyone with autism has the capacity to make choices about every aspect of their lives, but everyone should be supported to take part in as many decisions as possible.

Independent Living In Scotland⁵ defines independent living as:

"All disabled people having the same freedom, choice, dignity and control as other citizens at home, at work and in the community. It does not necessarily mean living by yourself or fending for yourself. It means rights to practical assistance and support to participate in society and live an ordinary life."

People with autism can also be labelled as 'anti-social' but from their point of view, there is little help with communicating and it can be hard to get information that is accessible to them. Many others need support to communicate their views, particularly those who cannot communicate using words.

"I want to feel accepted for who I am."

Of those responding to our survey:

- > 91% would like more say over the support they receive
- > 66% have not made use of an advocacy service
- > 16% currently have access to advocacy
- > 37% would like advocacy support.

The Experts who were able to share their views with us said that often they didn't know how to express themselves when they knew things were wrong for them. For some

people having a good understanding of how autism affected them, and learning to use this self-awareness to advocate for themselves, helped to overcome the issue.

"I want to be recognised as part of my community and I want to understand how I can contribute."

Many people with autism need support to gain self-awareness and confidence and through this, to self-advocate. Such support can be offered through a well thought-out transition plan on leaving school, or be provided after a person receives a diagnosis.



⁵ The Independent Living in Scotland project is part of a wider initiative by the Scottish Government to deliver equality and human rights for disabled people by addressing independent living: www.ilis.co.uk

Count us in: it pays to listen

Our Experts said that empowerment, to them, meant receiving the right support as a result of making their own choices. They wanted to be clearly informed about the choices available to them.

"My ambition is to feel I can cope, that I'm in control and can 'sort out' my problems."

Family members and carers often have an important role to play in both, and by sharing their perspectives and supporting a person with autism to communicate their views.

Of those responding to our survey:

- > 49% say that a lack of understanding of autism has made it difficult to get the support they need
- > 45% haven't been able to ask for support because of a lack of information
- > 48% would like help with social skills.

Our recommendations

- > People with autism or their families should be empowered to advocate for themselves, through good transition planning and support after diagnosis.
- > People with autism or their families should have access to independent advocacy services as a way to help them access services. Having access to advocacy services can provide the temporary but specific help that people need.
- > As local autism strategies are developed, the availability of, and need for, independent advocacy should be mapped across all the services that people with autism need to access.

"I think learning to self-advocate is the most useful form of advocacy for someone on the autism spectrum to learn. This was particularly useful to me in employment. It's easier now that I am older and more confident, but it was scary having to do that for myself at the time and I can appreciate how other people who are less capable and confident could benefit from learning to advocate."



Challenging discrimination

Our Experts told us communication challenges can lead to a lack of respect for their basic rights. Many reported they were not listened to, and rarely made to feel their opinions matter.

"I want to be listened to, understood and respected."

Of those responding to our survey:

- > 79% think that the public's understanding of autism is poor or very poor
- > 78% of young people with autism think people outside of their family don't know enough about autism.

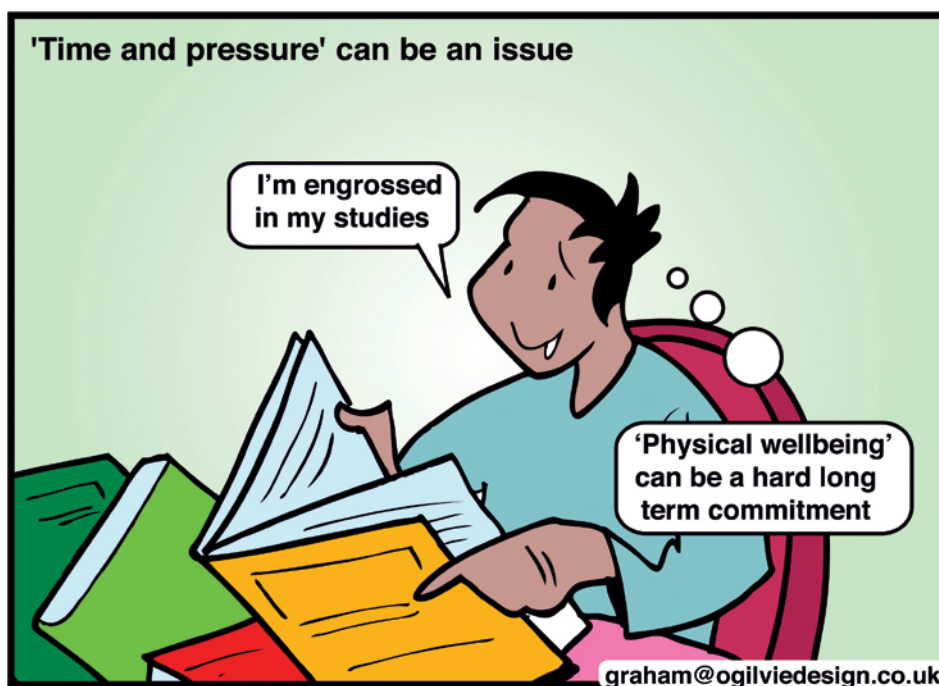
Challenges in communication can lead to frequent conflict. Our Experts

find that attempting to stand up for their rights can be extremely stressful, inducing feelings of panic and sensory overload. Of those responding to our survey:

- > 65% of young people with autism have been bullied at school
- > 33% of adults have experienced bullying or harassment at work
- > 36% have experienced unfair treatment or discrimination at work.

Our recommendations

- > The Government leads a nationwide campaign to raise public awareness and understanding of autism.



"Many of the things that mark us out as ASD [autism spectrum disorder] are not dangerous or even anti-social, just not what

the majority does! If we could all live in a society where the definition of 'normal' was wider then surely we would all benefit. ASD people

are disproportionately likely to be in groups which are already discriminated against - including as mental health patients."

Count us in: it pays to listen

Professional knowledge and access to support

Our Experts agreed that early diagnosis and the right support at the right time can have a strong, positive effect on a person's quality of life. However, 50% of our Experts said that professional understanding of autism is poor or very poor. They often found that the support available from health professionals and organisations meant to help them was ineffective.

An estimated 50,000 people in Scotland have autism. It is highly likely every medical practice will have children and adults with autism on their patient register. But our Experts reported that GPs and health professionals often fail to recognise the signs of autism and the most effective ways to support the condition.

Of those responding to our survey:

- > 33% say it has taken three years or more to get a diagnosis
- > 42% say the process was too stressful
- > 27% say they have been misdiagnosed
- > 6% have paid to access diagnosis.

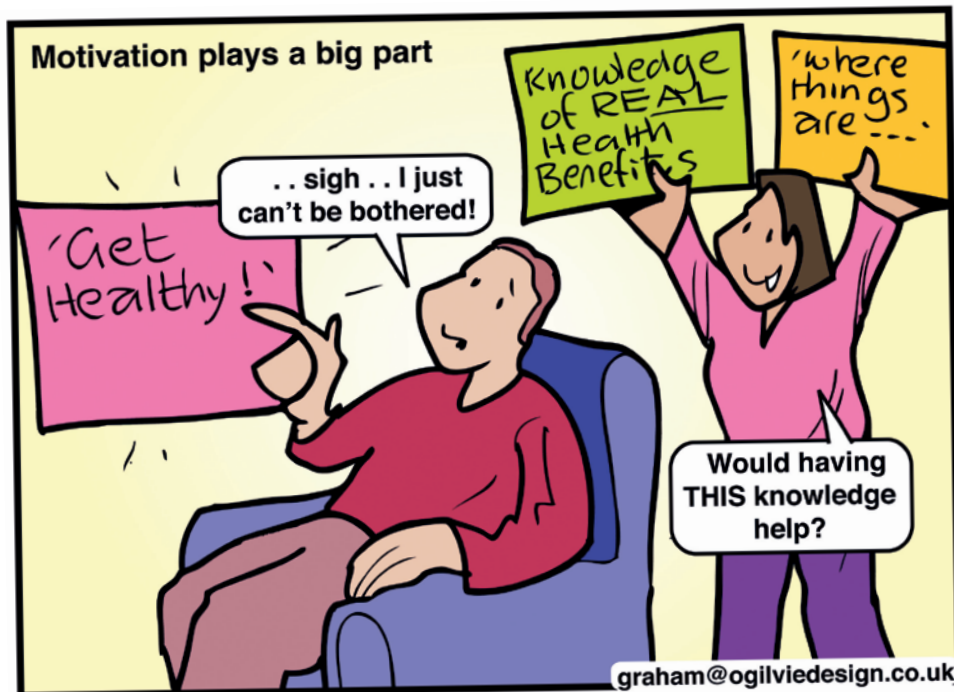
Not everyone who shows the signs of autism may desire a diagnosis, but autism is a recognised disability and 61% of our Experts told us they felt relieved when they received a diagnosis. If someone meets the criteria, he or she should have the opportunity to be diagnosed.

"There's so little post-diagnostic support. People in psychiatric, medical and social services often ask me, 'What's Asperger's?'"

A sensitively handled diagnosis allows someone with autism to make sense of their history, which is often marked by difficult experiences and misunderstanding by others. It can help them to understand themselves better and make necessary adjustments for their future. It can help families, friends, partners and carers to better understand and cope with the individual's needs and behaviour.

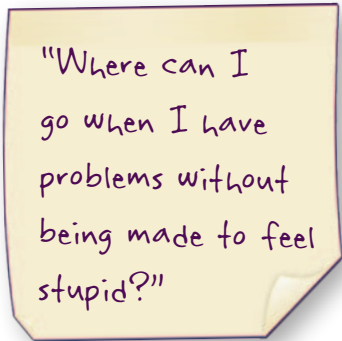
Diagnosis can be the first important step in accessing appropriate support – whether it be social skills groups, support in education or employment, social and housing services, or benefits. But our Experts found that, when seeking post-diagnostic support, they and their families often struggled to get the support they needed.

Some of our Experts felt strongly that their autism wasn't seen as disabling, and that assessments or qualifying criteria were unfair because professionals didn't know enough about autism.



In our consultations:

- > 69% of adults have not had an assessment of their needs from their local authority since they were aged 18
- > 66% say they do not have enough support
- > 62% of Experts who feel they don't have enough help say their general health would improve with more support
- > for those without support, 73% would feel less isolated if they could get support.



"Where can I go when I have problems without being made to feel stupid?"

"The clinical post-diagnostic support was very helpful when it was happening, but there was no support when it stopped, which was particularly hard, because it stopped without warning. I hadn't been told in advance when the sessions would end.

Accessing mainstream services can also be challenging if you have autism. Our Experts said they experienced difficulty making their needs known and felt frustrated when the people they turned to for support appeared to be ignorant of their needs. People felt there was not enough awareness of autism among the professionals they interact with and this lack of understanding affected how they were supported in making choices.

The overwhelming majority of our Experts – 91% – said they would like more say in the decisions that professionals make about their support. However, only 27% of people who have had a social work assessment have been offered the option of directing their own support.

People experienced difficulties accessing a range of services, including social work, health, housing, leisure and employment services.

When they stopped, I wondered if I was any better off. Temporary support for a permanent condition is not enough. If it's only temporary it should at least teach you the skills to cope without help, otherwise you find yourself wondering 'What's the point?'"

Where help with accessing services has been available, our Experts felt they were able to make informed choices and were much happier.

Our recommendations

The Scottish Government:

- > sets a HEAT (Health Improvement, Efficiency, Access to Services and Treatment) target to make sure everyone who receives an autism diagnosis receives appropriate post-diagnostic support. The Scottish Strategy for Autism has recommended the development of a range of diagnostic and post-diagnostic supports. This is very welcome and should go some way to addressing a number of the challenges faced by people with autism both in getting a diagnosis and in accessing post-diagnostic support. However, we need to monitor access to this support.

Local authorities:

- > invest in specific services that help address social exclusion and the challenges of self-advocacy among people with autism from across the spectrum (eg, social skills training, social groups, job preparation schemes, befriending, counselling and advocacy)
- > make sure that community care assessors are appropriately trained to develop person-centred plans for people with autism.

Count us in: it pays to listen

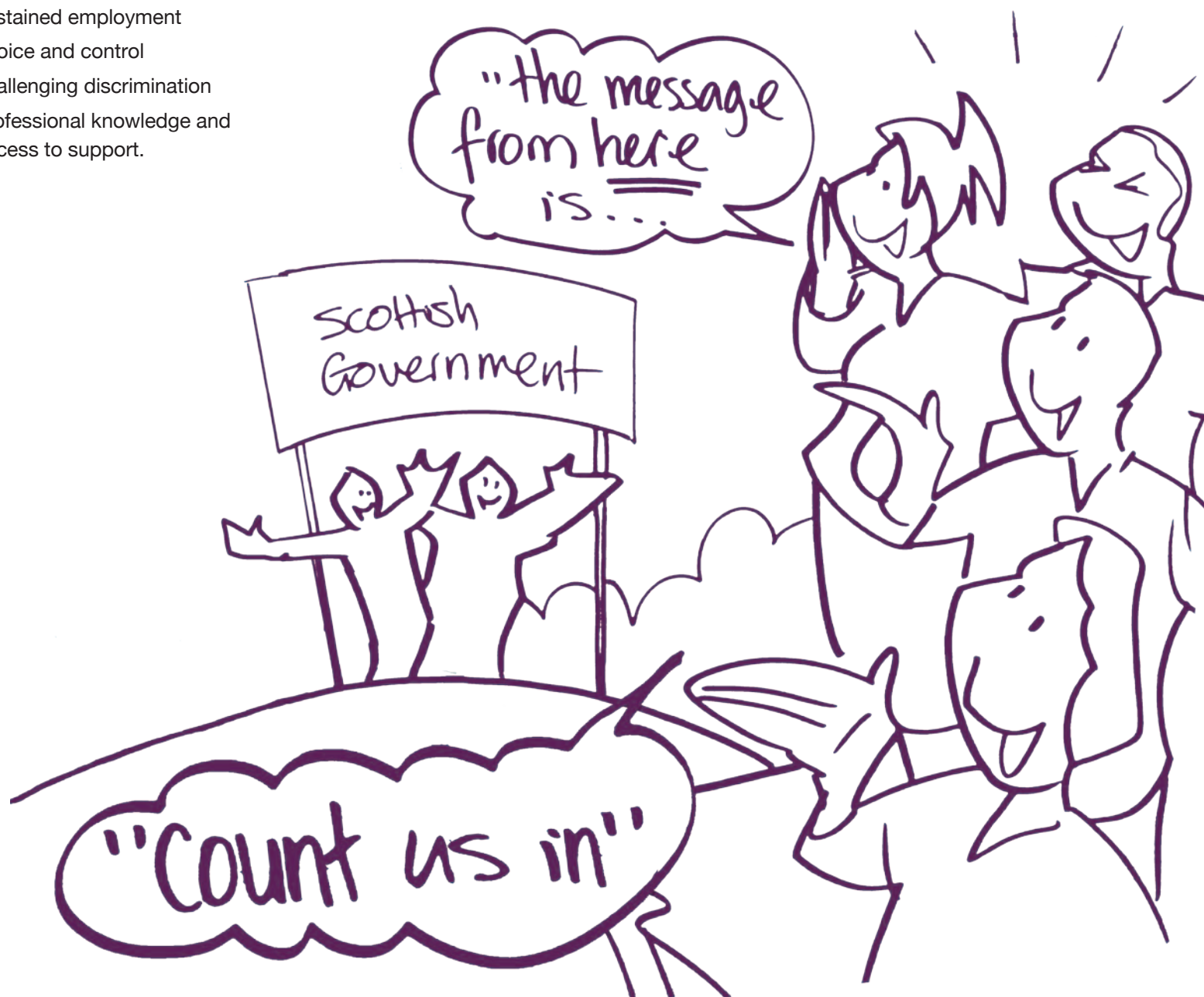
Conclusion

In this report, we have been strong advocates for partnership working between Government, local authorities, support organisations and – crucially – people with autism.

People with autism have told us what matters most to them:

- > sustained employment
- > choice and control
- > challenging discrimination
- > professional knowledge and access to support.

We think that, by working together, we can make the most of the opportunities the Autism Strategy presents, create cost-effective support and services that people want and need, and ultimately, improve quality of life for people with autism and their families across Scotland.



Appendix

Giving people with autism a voice

People with autism can experience severe challenges in communication, social interaction and making sense of the world around them. If you have autism, conventional communication doesn't always work for you.

We used varied and innovative ways to help give people with autism a voice. In consultation events across Scotland, we asked people with

autism what they need to achieve quality of life. The recommendations in *Count us in* are drawn from their responses.

We are encouraging Government, local authorities and other organisations to use similar, innovative ways of communicating, to better enable people with autism to share informed points of view and reach valuable decisions on the key issues that affect their quality of life.

People with autism: our Experts

We believe people who live with the challenges autism presents every day are experts in their condition. When they are communicated with in a way that works for them, they can share invaluable opinions and experience. People with autism:

- > led the consultations
- > decided on a consultation format that worked best for them
- > decided the key questions and issues.



David Breslin, 26, runs his own business, Speaking Literally, giving talks on Asperger syndrome to organisations across Scotland. A finalist in the Tayside Youth Business Scotland Awards 2012, David was diagnosed with Asperger syndrome aged 11.

"I often surprise people because I don't fit the autism 'stereotype'. I'm far from uncommunicative. Public speaking is my passion and I was

thrilled when NAS Scotland invited me to lead the *Count us in* consultations.

"Although I share information well, my condition means I can find reacting to information and analysing it a challenge, especially in the setting of a group discussion. To lead the consultation effectively, this was a challenge I needed to overcome.

"NAS Scotland introduced me to a specialist in supporting people with communication needs. By building on my public speaking skills, she worked with me and I quickly grasped the subtle differences between presenting and facilitating a consultation.

"I feel my background brought real value to the role of leading a consultation. For the Experts taking part in the consultations, the fact that someone with Asperger syndrome

was leading the discussion helped build the credibility of the process.

"My experience meant I could advise on simple adjustments that helped the Experts feel relaxed enough to give strong contributions. Sensory overload can be a challenge if you have autism – noise, lights, a group of new faces and voices can be too much to take in and can even create a sense of panic. When it came to preparing locations for the consultations, NAS Scotland put my suggestions in place, such as lower lighting and access to a quiet room where you can gather your thoughts. It really made a positive difference.

"I absolutely believe people on the autism spectrum can take a leadership role in a successful consultation. I'm living proof!"

Count us in: it pays to listen

Our consultation topics

Some people with autism need a specific support service, such as 24-hour residential care, to help them achieve a better quality of life. But this isn't the case for everyone. Some who don't need a care service still need help to complete a degree or to access sustained employment.

Our Experts told us that any discussion on how to achieve a better quality of life for all people on the autism spectrum must take this into account. To do this, we agreed with our Experts to introduce discussion topics from the Quality of Life framework (right).

The Quality of Life framework has been developed by researchers concerned with the delivery of services to people with learning disabilities and mental health problems.⁶ We found that using the Quality of Life framework to form discussion topics helped our Experts

Emotional wellbeing

Interpersonal relations

Material wellbeing

Personal development

Physical wellbeing

Self determination

Social inclusion

Rights

to reveal what can be a barrier to achieving quality of life. They also shared their experiences of the ways in which they had overcome these barriers. Their responses indicated both the challenges faced by people with autism and potential solutions. To broaden our understanding we also took into account results of The National Autistic Society's UK-

wide survey, conducted in 2012, which gives up-to-date responses from people with autism and their families on a range of issues, including educational, work and social opportunities. The survey was completed by 277 people with autism in Scotland.⁷ The survey was completed by people with autism directly and by family members on their behalf, in order to ensure that the experiences of people with higher support needs were not excluded.

The consultations

Our Experts are people with autism, ranging from teenagers to senior citizens. They volunteered to take part in consultations in Aberdeen, Dundee, Edinburgh, Glasgow and Inverness in summer 2012. They were both NAS Scotland members and people who use our services, or had links to a range of autism support organisations across the country.

Our Experts helped us choose locations for the consultations that were accessible, familiar and autism-friendly.

Attendance numbers per consultation ranged from 40 in Glasgow to one in Inverness. Not everyone with autism can take part in group discussions. It is crucial to collect views from those unable to take part. For our Inverness consultation we interviewed one Expert in his own home, where he felt comfortable and was supported by someone who knows him well.



⁶ Schalock, R. L. and Parmenter, T. (2000). *Quality of life: its conceptualisation, measurement and application*. In: Rapley, M. (editor). *Quality of life research: a critical introduction*. London: Sage. Also Plimley, L. (2007). *A review of quality of life issues and people with autism spectrum disorders*. British Journal of Learning Disabilities, 35, pp205-213.

⁷ Bancroft, K. et al (2012). *Autism: the way we are*. London: The National Autistic Society.

In the other consultations our Experts worked in small groups to discuss topics from the Quality of Life framework. They then wrote their

thoughts on Post-it notes and as a larger group put these onto discussion boards. We felt this enabled Experts who prefer to work alone to take

part, while the visual use of the board helped everyone understand the direction that discussions were taking.



Drawing out opinions in Dundee

Illustrator Graham Ogilvie worked with us on a new approach at our Dundee consultation. Our Experts saw their thoughts captured in dozens of cartoons. They were then asked to vote as a group on the pictures they felt highlighted their most important ideas.

The Experts told us they were very impressed with Graham's illustrations

and the way they helped express their thoughts and opinions. One said:

"The workshop was a great deal of constructive fun I have to say. Graham's artistic abilities were rather amazing. How he was able to articulate things in drawings as he did was something I don't think I have ever seen before."

What people thought about the workshops

"Hope some of our views are taken forward - I do believe that many folk with Asperger's found this beneficial."

"Very skilled facilitation. Very respectful to people's views and opinions."

"A really useful group discussion - felt that I learned a lot from the group."

"Enjoyed the workshop - well done."

"A great night: good to see everyone opening up."

"I felt that I could air all my thoughts and feelings to contribute to a wider debate."

"Good feedback and discussion on shared experiences."

"It offered potential for a greater insight into variations of one's own condition rather than each and everyone possessing all of it."

Count us in: it pays to listen

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www.number6.org.uk

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We are the leading charity for people with autism (including Asperger syndrome) and their families in Scotland. We provide information, support and pioneering services, and campaign for a better world for people with autism.

Over 50,000 people in Scotland have autism. Together with their families they make up over 200,000 people whose lives are touched by autism every single day. From good times to challenging times, The National Autistic Society Scotland is there at every stage, to help transform the lives of everyone living with autism.

We are proud of the difference we make.

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