

THE NATIONAL AUTISTIC TASKFORCE



NATIONAL
AUTISM
PROJECT

The National Autistic Taskforce is an innovative new body that aims to improve the chances for autistic people to have control over their own lives. It will look to challenge government and local communities to deliver the support, services and opportunities that autistic people are entitled to.

WHY HAS THE NATIONAL AUTISTIC TASKFORCE BEEN ESTABLISHED?

Over the past two decades, a number of new laws, policies and guidelines have been introduced to give autistic people more personal autonomy and choice. But autistic people, and their families and carers know that too often, the reality does not match the rhetoric.

Many of the gaps in provision were highlighted in *The Autism Dividend*, a comprehensive study of the effectiveness and cost-effectiveness of autism interventions, undertaken by the National Autism Project and published in January 2017.

The report found that government policy, support and services are often not based on sufficient evidence, that research to find out what services work best is underfunded, and that decision makers often do not understand that providing better services could help save money. The report has been shared widely and has formed the basis of a number of meetings and discussions with policy makers and research funders over 2017.

Critical to the success of the National Autism Project has been an advisory panel of autistic people who provided expert input and critique throughout.

To help build on the momentum of this positive experience, the National Autistic Taskforce has therefore been established to enable the voices and knowledge of autistic people to continue to impact national policy and local delivery.

HOW WILL THE NATIONAL AUTISTIC TASKFORCE BE RUN?

It will be wholly run and managed by autistic people. It is being funded through an open grant from The Shirley Foundation.

The National Autistic Taskforce will research, scrutinize and advocate on issues of importance to autistic people. It will have a focus on supporting autistic adults – including specifically those with less autonomy and higher needs – to gain a stronger voice in the decision and direction of their lives. The group will also aim to develop and establish a community of practice that can genuinely contribute to transforming care.

Based on the principle of co-creation, the National Autistic Taskforce's work will be run through a number of working groups. Each will be chaired by an autistic person and will likely have members who are both autistic and non-autistic. They will develop programmes of work in key areas, including:

- Communication, advocacy and family involvement
- Psychiatry, diagnosis, and autism strategies
- Care Standards and social work
- Research

The group is also hoping to develop a new web portal called AutNav, hosting accessible forums for autistic people and people with learning disabilities. The site will also provide information and links to a range of useful topics, including autistic organisations, consultants and trainers as well as news, resources and advice on understanding the law.

The National Autism Taskforce will be hosted via the National Autism Project on www.nationalautismproject.org.uk
Please check the website for more information.