



Rialtas na hÉireann
Government of Ireland

Autism Innovation Strategy



This is an Easy to Read version of the Strategy.

Putting the Autism Innovation Strategy together





The Programme for Government promises action on autism in Ireland.

This action is needed so we can have better services and supports for autistic people.



In 2021, Minister Anne Rabbitte said there would be a new national strategy on autism.

This would be called the Autism Innovation Strategy.



A strategy is a plan.



This plan is about improving the lives of autistic people and their families in Ireland.



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The Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth put the Autism Innovation Strategy together.



There were different steps to putting the Strategy together.

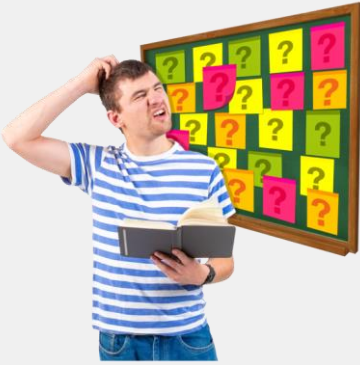


From the start, the Department wanted to talk to the autistic community, their families, and supporters. This is called a consultation.



We asked people for their views and ideas on the Strategy.

The Public Consultations



There were 2 public consultations.

During the first consultation in April 2022, we heard about the challenges for autistic people and their families in Ireland.



In February 2024, we asked people to look at a draft Autism Innovation Strategy.

We could make changes to the draft Strategy based on what people said in this consultation.



People told us which parts of the Strategy were the most important to them.



People said that health and social care and education were very important areas.



They said that a campaign to help the public to understand autism, and training about autism were important too.



People told us that autism is a disability that you cannot see.
Autistic people are all different and need different supports.



People said that the words we use to talk about autism are important.



They said we should do more research and collect better information on autism, called data.

The Oversight and Advisory Group



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In 2022, the Department set up a group to check on the Strategy and give advice.



It is called the Autism Innovation Strategy Oversight and Advisory Group.



The group members are autistic people, professionals that support autistic people, parents, and organisations.



Information from the consultations and from this group helped us to put the Strategy together.

Working together



Government departments and other organisations talked together about the Strategy.

This helped us to put the final Strategy together.



During these discussions, we thought about advice from the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Autism.



Government departments and other organisations will work together on the actions in the Strategy.

This will happen over 18 months.



The Autism Innovation Strategy will work with other policies and plans that support people with disabilities.

For example, the new National Disability Strategy that is also being put together.

What will the Autism Innovation Strategy do?





The Autism Innovation Strategy can make a difference to the lives of autistic people.



The Strategy is based on the values in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.



We want autistic people to live the lives that they choose.



We want a country where autistic people are understood and have the same rights as everyone else.



We want autistic people to be part of their communities.



We want autistic people to be supported better by public services.



The Autism Innovation Strategy has actions that can be achieved in 18 months.



The Strategy has 4 main areas, called pillars. There are actions in each of these pillars.



Each pillar of the Strategy has a vision statement.
This says what we want to achieve.



The Autism Innovation Strategy Oversight and Advisory Group will play an important role in monitoring.
Monitoring means to check how something is working.



There will also be an Autism Innovation Strategy Steering Committee.
This group will meet every 6 months.



We will have regular progress reports on the Strategy.



The Department will put together a final report on the Autism Innovation Strategy.



This report will say what actions have been achieved.

It will say what needs to be done in the future to support autistic people.

Pillar 1: Autism-affirming society

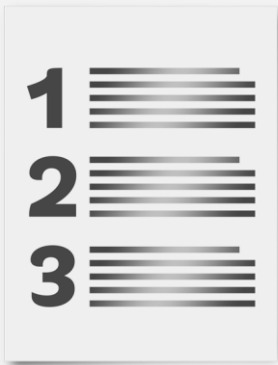




Our vision:

We want the public to understand autism and autistic people better.

We want the public to see that autistic people have an important role in society.



Here are the actions in Pillar 1:



Acceptance and understanding

- We will study information on the attitudes of people in Ireland to autism.
This will help us put together a public campaign on autism.



- We will have a campaign to help the public understand autism.
Autistic people will help to design this campaign.



- We will support ideas and plans that show autism in a good way in the media.



- We will have an Autism Innovation Fund. This money will pay for new and different activities that support autistic people around Ireland. It will pay for research that helps us to understand autism and autistic people.



Autism training in the public sector

- We will have a new eLearning course to help staff in the public sector learn about autism and other disabilities.



- We will put together a guide on autism training in the public services. We will work on all training with the autistic community.



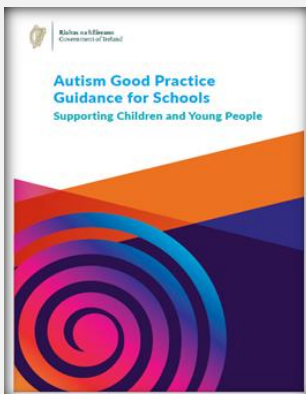
- We will support an autism training programme for staff working with autistic people. This will be for staff in the HSE and health and social care organisations.



- We will have training on autism for staff working in a national programme for self-harm and suicide.



- We will give training on autism to access officers in the HSE. This will help them to understand autism and to access health and social care services.



- We will tell people about, and give training on, the Autism Good Practice Guidance for Schools. We will make sure the training is reviewed so it shows the best ways to work with autistic students.



- We will support staff in Citizens Information Services and the National Advocacy Service to do the eLearning course on autism and other disabilities.

Pillar 2: Equal access to public services

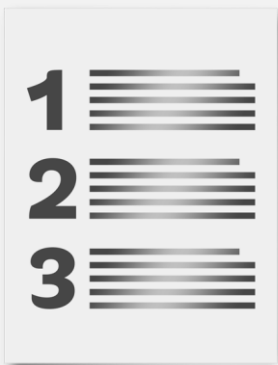




Our vision:

We want to give autistic people high-quality and accessible public services.

These services will respect autistic people of all ages.

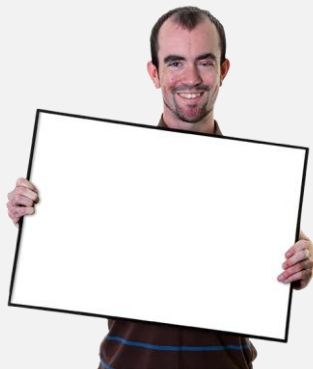


Here are the actions in Pillar 2:



Accessibility

- We will show that the needs of autistic people are part of Universal Design.
Universal Design means designing places and things so everyone can use them easily.



- We will make sure that words and language chosen by the autistic community are used in the public sector to talk about autistic people.



- We will support access to health and social care services for autistic people.

MyWelfare

- We will consult with autistic people and others with a disability to make the MyWelfare scheme accessible.



- We will look at supports that the Road Safety Authority could give to autistic people.
For example, supports for the driver theory test and to get a driving licence.



- We will make sure that autistic people have up to date information on supports and services.
This will be on citizensinformation.ie



- We will make sure that autistic people have access to information on services.
We will support the pilot National Autism Information Line and check how we can make it better.



Early Learning and Childcare

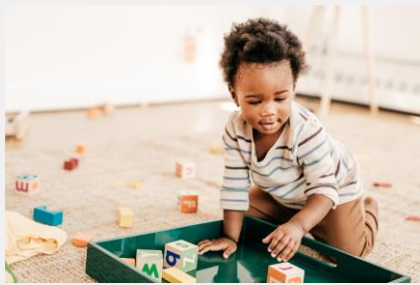
- We will give guidance about the needs of autistic children to staff working in early learning and childcare services.



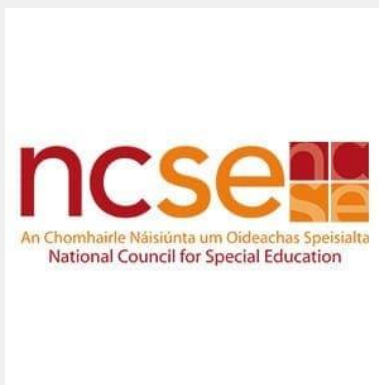
- We will give training about early learning and childcare services to make them accessible for autistic children.



- We will support autistic children moving from early learning and childcare settings to primary school.



- We will check the quality of early learning classes for autistic children.



Education

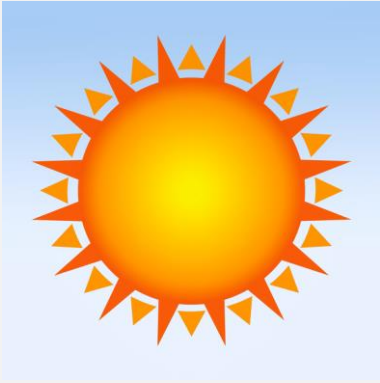
- We will have more people on the Autism Team in the National Council for Special Education.



- We will give money to the National Council for Special Education to support autistic children to meet other children in school.
This is called the Towards Inclusion programme.



- We will work with the Middletown Centre for Autism so parents and teachers have information on the best ways to work with autistic children.



- We will support autistic students and other students with special needs to use the summer programme.



Further and Higher Education

- We will keep rolling out the Universal Design for Learning Badge in further education and training.



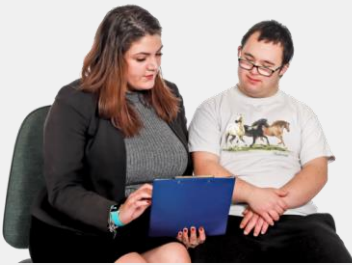
- We will give money to projects that support more students to take part in education, for example, sensory maps of campuses and autism friendly tours of campuses.



- We will talk with the National Apprenticeship Alliance about supports for autistic people to take part in apprenticeships.



- We will use the Fund for Students to support autistic students and other students in college.



- We will have courses for students with an intellectual disability in 10 colleges in 2024. Some of these courses will give students a chance for work experience.



Employment

- We will review information for employers on autism friendly workplaces.



- We will keep collecting information about the number of people with disabilities applying for jobs and working in public services.



- We will support autism friendly work hubs so autistic people can work remotely and can set up a business.
Working remotely is when you work away from your usual workplace.



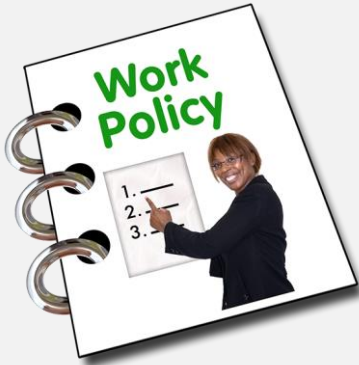
- We will collect information on the supports that autistic people need to work in the public sector. This will help us plan policies and systems for hiring staff.



- We will look at disability awareness training at Intreo.
Intreo supports people to find work.



- We will have a quiet, calm room in each Intreo office by April 2025.



- We will think about the needs of autistic staff in the civil service when we review policies on including people with disabilities.



- Local Enterprise Offices will look at their training programmes on starting your own business. They will make sure these programmes support autistic people better.



- We will use Universal Design to give everyone an equal chance to apply for all jobs in the public service.



- We will support projects that give autistic people jobs and careers in broadcasting and media.



Health and Social Care

- We will have a guide to support autistic people and other people with a disability to take part in the design of health services.



- We will develop autism information centres in 2 Community Healthcare Organisations.



- We will have clear and accessible information on autism, and on services and supports. This will be on the HSE website, in videos, and in printed leaflets.



- We will start work on a way for adults to get autism assessments and supports in the public system. We will have a trial project in one area.



- We will work to have better therapy supports for autistic children and teenagers.



- We will give resources so we can have more disability services and to make them more person centred.



- We will support autistic children and adults to get the right mental health services.



- We will have the right mental health services for autistic people that are suicidal or have problems with drug use.



- We will talk with autistic people and other people with a disability when we put together mental health policies.



- We will put together information and training for autistic people to stop suicide.



- We will support young people moving to day services to use public transport.
We will have a trial in one area so students can get experience using public transport.



- We will support day services to meet the needs of autistic people.
For example, we will roll out the eLearning course for staff on person-centred planning.



- We will think about the needs of autistic people and their families when we plan for more and better respite services.



Justice

- The Courts Service will think about the needs of autistic people, and the supports that could be given to autistic people when they use the court.



- We will keep working to support Autism Standards for the Irish Prison Service.



- We will work with the autistic community on a guide for people working in the justice system. This guide will say how to communicate with and support autistic people.

Pillar 3: Accessible, inclusive communities

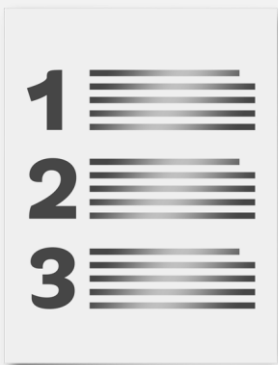




Our vision:

We want accessible communities that everyone can take part in.

Autistic people can have the same chance to belong.



Here are the actions in Pillar 3:



Arts and culture

- We will support cultural places to be accessible and autism friendly, such as, museums and galleries.



- We will support staff, working in cultural places, to have training on autism.

This will give them the skills to support autistic people to visit and use cultural places.



Libraries

- We will think about the needs of autistic people in our plans for libraries.
We will have autism training for library staff.



Public playgrounds

- We will have communication boards in public playgrounds across local authorities.



Sport

- We will think about the needs of autistic people in the review of the Sport Ireland Policy on Participation in Sport by People with Disabilities.



- We will make sure that staff, working in sport, get the right training to support autistic people.



- We will give money to projects that support autistic people to take part in sport and do outdoor activities.
We will share examples of good work in this area.



Transport

- We will work with Translink to have quieter carriages on the Dublin to Belfast trains.



- We will have more supports for autistic people at airports, such as storyboards, picture guides, and sensory rooms.



- We will have more of the Travel Assistance Scheme.
This is in Dublin and Cork now, and will be in Limerick and Galway in 2024, and Waterford in 2025.



In the community

- We will share information on ways to support autistic people across local government.



- We will support autistic people to take part in events in the community.
Local government will help to make events and festivals accessible for everyone.



- We will support autistic people and other people with a disability through the Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme.



- We will give money to projects that support the sensory needs of autistic children and adults.

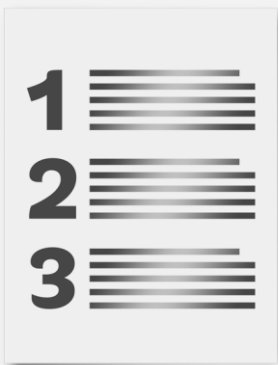
Pillar 4: Building capacity





Our vision:

We want to give power to autistic people so they can live the life they choose.



Here are the actions in Pillar 4:



Self-advocacy

- We will make sure that Disabled Persons Organisations for autistic people can build their advocacy skills under the National Disability Strategy.



Parent support

- There will be a new HSE website with information about autism.
This will give support and information to autistic people and their families.



- We will give training to public health nurses so they can support parents and autistic children that do not speak.



- We will give information on technology to parents of autistic children.
This technology can help autistic children to communicate, learn, and be more independent.



Assistive technology

- We will support people working in education, health and social care, to learn about technology and how it can support autistic people.



- We want people with disabilities to get person-centred assessments and supports.
The HSE and World Health Organisation will work on new technology to support staff to do that.



- The HSE gives money to a programme that supports people to get the communication systems they need.

This is called the Augmentative and Alternative Communication Support Programme.

The HSE will check if this programme is working well.

They will make sure that children and adults can get communication systems that meet their needs.



Data

- We will set up a group with autistic people to look at the type of information, called data, that should be collected on autism.



- We will look at how we collect data about autism.

We will think about how we should collect data in the future.



Research

- We will spend money on research to give us information on the best health and social care supports for autistic people.



- We will pay for research to find the best ways to give public services to autistic people that do not speak or that communicate in other ways.



- We will do research with autistic people to look at services for people that need emergency supports and respite services.



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This information was put together by the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth.



ACE Communication helped with this Easy to Read information.

Experts by Experience helped to put this booklet together.