



Where Autism
Professionals Connect

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The social care landscape in England

Two years ago the [Care Act came into force](#) in England, making a substantial number of changes to the way that autistic adults get care and support. Bringing together 37 old pieces of legislation, it created a new national set of eligibility criteria to replace the previous patchwork of thresholds across England. It also created new duties to meet the needs of carers.

For autistic people, around the same time as the Care Act came into force, new [statutory guidance implementing the adult autism strategy](#) was brought in. The guidance makes clear that Care Act duties to meet people's eligible needs apply to autistic people too, regardless of whether they also have a learning disability. But two years on, what is the picture now?

Care assessments

Some things remain the same. We hear regularly from people who have been told they don't need an assessment of their care and support needs, sometimes because they are told (without an assessment) that they won't be eligible, sometimes because there aren't services locally to meet their needs. Neither of these reasons comply with the Care Act.

We also hear from autistic people who have had an assessment but say it was of a poor quality: perhaps the assessor didn't understand autism or communicate with the individual properly. We sometimes hear of levels of support being capped at a level which doesn't meet an individual's needs. For those not eligible for support, we often hear that general or preventative services in their area are not autism-friendly.

Local government budgets have been under pressure for several years now and this past winter has seen unprecedented media coverage of the "crisis" in social care due to a lack of funding. So, where does this leave us?

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Meeting autistic people's needs

The National Autistic Society has, over the last couple of years, developed a number of [resources](#) for individuals who need support from social care. Our [consultancy team](#) is also on hand to advise local authorities about how their local services can better meet the needs of autistic people.

Key to this is that councils use accurate data on how many autistic people live in their area and what their needs are, so that they can commission the right services to meet those needs. We have produced a [guide for local commissioners](#), including examples of good practice, to help support them with this.

When we looked at the results from the last local authority [autism self-assessment exercise](#), we noticed that the number of councils with more than half their social care assessors trained in autism had decreased. With new regulations underpinning the Care Act requiring that assessors should be trained in conditions like autism, we are currently designing a resource for local authorities to help them ensure this training is in place. We will share this on Network Autism when it is published. If you are a commissioner wanting to find out more then please join our [commissioners' Network Autism group](#) and ask a question.

In coalition with around 90 other charities in the Care and Support Alliance, we have been calling for the funding that social care needs. In the Budget last month, the Chancellor announced an extra [£2 billion for social care](#) over three years and promised a green paper to explore future funding. This will keep the wolf from the door for the time being, but we will be examining the future green paper to make sure that local authorities get the funding they need to meet autistic people's needs.