

Autism Accreditation: Statement on Well-Being, Safeguarding and Privacy

As part of the National Autistic Society (NAS), Autism Accreditation is committed to promoting the well-being and safety of autistic children and adults. This guidance specifically relates to the Autism Accreditation process and should be considered alongside relevant NAS policies.

The Autism Accreditation Process

- 1.1 Accreditation assesses the extent to which support provided to autistic people in a provision (school or service) is informed by a knowledge of autism specific best practice methods and approaches. Based on the assessment findings, the provision may receive an award at an Aspiring, Accredited or Advanced level.
- 1.2 Accreditation is an entirely voluntary process which relies on the co-operation of the provision in allowing us to carry out activities according to a pre-agreed timetable.
- 1.3 Assessments normally take place over one to three days and involve observations, interviews and sampling of support plans.
- 1.4 Our assessment process is robust and objective offering a useful indicator to autistic people, families and other stakeholders of the level of practical knowledge and understanding of autism within a provision. However, we stress the importance of considering our evaluation alongside other sources of information. In particular, whilst we may identify a provision as providing good support specifically to those autistic individuals who access it this should not be interpreted as meaning that the provision is automatically right for all autistic people. The considerable diversity within the autistic population means that there is no such thing as a 'one size fits all' school or service.
- 1.5 Accreditation expects to see evidence that autistic adults and children are actively involved in their support plans and their views are sought and acted upon. This is reported on in all reports.
- 1.6 We also provide access to an on-line survey which can be completed by autistic people who are supported by the provision. The provision should notify any autistic person who they determine has capacity of how to take part in the survey. The survey can be completed by a scribe on behalf of the autistic person and support can be offered, for example questions can be read out, simplified or translated into another language, signs or symbols.
- 1.7

1.8 If an autistic person is a minor (under the age of 18) or has been assessed as not having capacity then a family member or other person who represents their best interests should be asked by the provision to complete our 'family member' survey. Where an autistic adult has capacity, asking a family member to complete our survey is discretionary according to the expressed wishes and interests of the individual.

1.9 Autism Accreditation does not contact autistic people or their families directly and it is the responsibility of the provision to ensure that reasonable actions are taken to ensure that anyone who is entitled to take part in our surveys are provided with the opportunity to do so.

1:10 We share our assessment report with the provision and publish the date, level and name of provision for each award. We do not publish the assessment, but the provision is not restricted from sharing or publishing it.

1:11 Accreditation aims to ensure that the information it provides about a provision is up-to-date and accurate. We ask provisions to support us in achieving this aim by keeping us informed about any significant changes.

Accreditation does not have the authority or remit to investigate concerns or complaints regarding how autistic individuals are supported or act as a mediator. We recommend that such concerns can be dealt with most effectively by following the provision's complaints procedure. If the concern relates to abusive practices we will deal with it as a safeguarding concern (See Section 5),

Protection of privacy

2.1 In the course of carrying out assessment activities assessors will hear or read personal information about an individual. This information is not required by the assessment team and is treated with the strictest confidentiality. Personal data is not recorded or shared by Accreditation.

2.2 Any document that contains the names and personal details of an autistic child or adult will be kept securely on site and returned to the provision at the end of the assessment.

- 2.3 Any document shared with the assessment team through electronic means that contains personal details will be stored securely and deleted at the end of the assessment.
- 2.4 Assessment reports will not contain any personal details that could identify an autistic person.
- 2.5 The identity of any person who completes an on-line survey is not shared with Accreditation or the provision. Respondents are cautioned that comments included in surveys will be seen by Accreditation and the provision and included in the report. They are advised not to include personal information that would identify them in these comments.

Representatives of Accreditation

- 3.1 People who represent Accreditation to offer advice or to carry out assessments have professional expertise in the field of autism and are DBS checked.
- 3.2 Representatives of Accreditation do not carry out regulated activities as defined by the Disclosure and Barring Service and should not be left alone with a child or vulnerable adult.
- 3.3 Representatives of Accreditation should not be asked to observe activities that involve intimate care or the removal of clothing and will withdraw themselves from an observation if this occurs without warning.

Emotional Well-Being and Safeguarding practices

- 4.1 Our self-audit toolkit requires schools and services to consider how the support provided to autistic people addresses their well-being.
- 4.2 Our assessments include a section on how the ways in which autistic people are supported in their well-being is informed by a knowledge of autism specific best practice methods and approaches. Considerable weighting is given to this section when deciding on what award (if any) can be given to a provision.

- 4.3. Within this section consideration will be given as to how a provision provides behaviour support. We expect provisions to employ behaviour support methods which are proactive and preventative. Restrictive physical interventions should only be used as a last resort by appropriately trained staff and according to recognised best practice and ethical guidelines. Where this is not the case physical interventions will be considered as a safeguarding concern.
- 4.4 Accreditation does not have the authority or expertise to evaluate whether medication has been over-prescribed or mis-prescribed.
- 4.5 Whilst the focus of our assessments is on autistic specific approaches we expect that such approaches are delivered within the context of a service meeting statutory expectations regarding the safeguarding and well-being of children and vulnerable adults. For this reason, the assessment findings are triangulated with survey results and the outcome of the most recent statutory inspection.
- 4.6 Where there is evidence that state regulations are adequately met, but with the need for improvements, we may consider withholding an Accredited award dependent on the nature of these concerns and the assessment/survey outcomes. Where there is evidence that regulations are not adequately met, no award will be given but the provision can remain in the programme.
- 4.7 If evidence is published in a reputable source of abusive practice or inadequate safeguarding, relevant to the period in which an assessment was carried out which was not available at the time, we reserve the right to revoke the award (see section 5).

Safeguarding concerns

- 5:1 It is not the role of Accreditation to investigate a child protection concern or an allegation against a member of staff. Any attempt to investigate the concern could jeopardise a subsequent investigation by the local authority or the police.
- 5:2 If abusive practice is directly observed by a representative of Accreditation during an assessment then it will be referenced in the assessment report and will impact on what level of award (if any) is given.

5:3 Safeguarding concerns will normally be reported to the designated safeguarding lead within the provision who will be expected to refer and investigate the concern in keeping with statutory regulations. Accreditation will seek written confirmation from the designated safeguarding lead that the concern will be dealt with in keeping with local authority and government regulations and guidance. Where necessary, Accreditation will make a direct referral to the appropriate authorities.

5.4 If after an award has been given, abusive practices or inadequate safeguarding procedures are reported by a government authority or established and accountable media source then the following actions will be considered:

Suspension of the award- this should be regarded as a temporary measure to allow time for further investigation and should not in itself be considered as evidence of wrong-doing. The provision can continue to access the services of Accreditation. A suspension will be reviewed within a 6 month period.

Downgrading an award for example from Accredited to Aspiring.

Revocation of the award so that it is null and void.

Termination of contract and removal of the provision from the Accreditation register.

Whilst a case by case approach will be taken, decisions will be informed by the following factors:

The nature of the concerns, for example whether they suggest widespread and endemic safeguarding issues.,

The relevance of the concerns to the scope and level of any award given- for example whether the issues relate to a part of an organisation which was not included in the assessment.

The timescale involved, for example whether the safeguarding issues relate to a period at least a year after the award was given,

The actions of the provision, for example whether the provision presents as strongly committed to addressing issues and providing Accreditation with accurate and relevant information.

