



Autism Strategy 2023-2028

Delivery Plan 2023-2025

Year Two Progress Report

July 2025

INTRODUCTION

On 13 December 2023 the Department of Health, published the Autism Strategy 2023-28 along with a two-year (2023-2025) Delivery Plan.

The Autism Act (NI) 2011 and Autism (Amendment) Act (NI) 2022 place a legislative responsibility on the Department of Health to develop a cross-departmental strategy to support the needs of autistic people throughout their lives.

As detailed in Section 3B of the Autism (Amendment) Act (NI) 2022, the Department of Health has a legislative requirement to provide Monitoring and Funding Reports on the implementation of the autism strategy on an annual basis.

A link to the Autism Strategy and associated Delivery Plan is provided below:

[Autism Strategy 2023-28 \(health-ni.gov.uk\)](https://www.health-ni.gov.uk/publications/autism-strategy-2023-28)

[Autism Strategy - Delivery Plan 23-25 \(health-ni.gov.uk\)](https://www.health-ni.gov.uk/publications/autism-strategy-delivery-plan-23-25)

BACKGROUND

The actions contained within the Strategy are set out under the following five commitments:

- Improving regional pathways of care;
- Working in partnership to ensure autistic people are supported and understood throughout their education;
- Increasing understanding of autism in the workplace;
- Increasing understanding of the housing needs of autistic people;

- Promoting the development more widely of inclusive environments to support the needs of autistic people, their families and carers.

At the time of development, Northern Ireland government departments were, and still are, experiencing unprecedented budgetary challenges, alongside political instability, that have placed some constraints upon initial implementation of this strategy, for example, the appointment of an Independent Autism Reviewer. A number of strategies and supports which were underway, and inclusive of autistic people, particularly in relation to provision of children's services in education and in employment and disability support, have been paused.

In consideration of these constraints, and to ensure that provision of support and services is not delayed and can continue to be delivered within the current financial constraints, an initial two-year Delivery Plan 2023-2025 commenced implementation of this strategy. The Delivery Plan sets out the actions to be achieved against commitments, timeframes associated outcomes, and the delivery partners involved. The Department of Health has commenced work with delivery partners to develop a delivery plan for the remaining 3 years of strategy implementation, with a focus on measurable targets.

The Strategy has been developed in response to consultation and stakeholder engagement with people who have lived experience of autism and organisations that advocate on their behalf, using the following methods:

- Pre-Consultation Questionnaire (August – October 2021)
- Consultation and Engagement with the Autism Forum, established by the Department of Health in 2021, with quarterly meetings focussed on specific themes, for example, housing, employment and health, and appropriate cross-departmental representatives in attendance.

- Two facilitated Strategic Outcome Workshops (September 2022) attended by autistic people, community and voluntary representatives, government departments and health and social care sector.
- Public Consultation (December 2022 – March 2023), this included ten public consultation sessions.
- Over 200 responses were received.

Through our engagement we were advised that individuals and families want to see a Strategy which is based on '**actions and not words**'; they also emphasised that lengthy documents and text can be challenging for autistic people to process. The Strategy has therefore been developed to be:

- People focused, whole life and based upon need.
- Practical and supportive in language and support.
- Focused on improving and enhancing supports which are outcome based.

Whilst it had been intended to publish the Strategy earlier in 2023, budgetary pressures across departments and political instability required a review of the cross-departmental actions to support the key priorities of the strategy as some, for example, the Disability Employment Strategy and the Disability Strategy being developed by the Department for Communities and a number of supports for vulnerable pupils being delivered by the Department of Education, had been paused.

To address this and ensure that key priorities of the Autism Strategy could still be met the two-year Delivery Plan with 'low cost/no cost' actions to commence initial implementation of the strategy proceeded along with a funding allocation of £300k to provide service user facing actions. This is in keeping with legislative requirements.

Work on implementation of the strategy is underway across government departments and public bodies and progress has been assessed through this second annual progress Report. This is in keeping with legislative requirements.

CURRENT POSITION

Significant progress has already been made within the first year of delivery and this is reflected in the year one progress report on the first year of the 2023 to 2025 delivery plan which is now available on the Department of Health website.

Whilst work is underway across government departments and public bodies to implement year two of the Delivery Plan, progress now needs to be assessed on implementation against the five Key Commitments which are set out in Monitoring Framework below. The Monitoring Framework will remain a 'live' document throughout the lifespan of the strategy to respond to emerging priorities and the introduction of new commitments as they arise. The development and implementation of these commitments will be monitored and reported with qualitative and quantitative measures, as applicable or available, to demonstrate progress on an annual basis and will be published on the Department of Health website.

The commitments set out in this document are underpinned by the ethos and vision for Autism Strategy - ***To respect, to listen, to involve***. This places emphasis on the importance of the inclusion of autistic people and their families in the development of actions, policy and services to ensure they are inclusive in how they are informed, developed and delivered.

METHODOLOGY

Departments and relevant organisations have completed the Monitoring Framework. For the year one progress report they were asked to:

- Assess the Framework against the Delivery Plan for completion of actions for their department/organisation, considering any new actions and projects, or projects being funded by their department/organisation, which supports or benefits autistic people and their families.
- Complete the relevant columns to ensure that information and progress achieved to date is presented.
- Where new actions/projects were identified to add these under the relevant Commitment.
- Where delays had been experienced, or plans changed to note the reason in the '*Progress at April 2024*' column.

Based on the year one progress report, Departments and organisations were asked to update the report to reflect progress by completing an additional column for '*progress at 31 March 2025*'

PROGRESS TO DATE

Some examples of actions implemented in response to issues raised throughout the public consultation which autistic people advised us impacted on their emotional and mental health, the Department is working collaboratively on the following pieces of work:

- Development and launch in December 2024 of guidance for employers to increase understanding and support for autistic people in employment in collaboration with the Equality Commission NI. This also included a joint Department of Health and Equality Commission NI follow up webinar in April 2025 to support the use of the guidance for Employers.
- Plans to roll out a further six Autism Capacity Building sessions for Northern Ireland Housing Executive, to date approximately 600 staff have been trained. The need for greater understanding of the sensory environment and communication needs of autistic people in providing housing advice and support was raised consistently throughout the public consultation. Training will be delivered by the Northern Ireland Housing Executive, Department of Health and Cedar Foundation.
- The Health and Social Care Leadership Centre has developed proposals for the development of a Regional Autism Information Service which will provide signposting to services and support. To ensure that the service meets the requirements the Department of Health engaged with other Departments across the piece to identify and scope out what should be included.
- The appointment of an Autism Reviewer in August 2024 who will provide an independent monitoring role in relation to the implementation of the Autism (Amendment) Act (NI) 2022 and the implementation of the Autism Strategy 2023 to 2028.

- The appointment of an Adult Autism Commissioning Lead within the Department of Health in February 2025 who will focus on improving services for Adults with ASD across Northern Ireland by developing, coordinating and driving forward delivery of regional work to address waiting lists and better meet population needs now and in the future.
- A commitment within the Autism Strategy 2023-2028, highlights that individuals and families will have access to early intervention and support which can meet emotional health and wellbeing needs through improved regional pathways of care. To deliver on this commitment, from a child and adolescent perspective, the Department is currently consulting on a fully inclusive draft child-centred and needs led Framework for Emotional Health and Wellbeing (EHWB). The direction of travel in the EHWB Framework will be a neurodiverse approach that is inclusive and does not apply diagnostic labels on children and young people. It is designed to help reduce stigma and the need to get a diagnosis in order to access support through health and education services.
- The Department of Health in partnership with colleagues from the Middletown Centre for Autism have designed for Health and Social Care staff three training modules that are research and practice/strengths based. The modules are due to be launched shortly.

The information provided for this report has been very encouraging and confirms the commitment across government departments and public bodies to the implementation of the Autism Strategy 2023 to 2028. Organisations where possible have provided input on expenditure. However, as reported in year one, due to some of the services/projects being part of a wider service it is not possible to provide an overall accurate figure for spend on Autism only.

In addition, Autistic people use a range of mainstream public services that do not specifically monitor autism. It can in many cases be a co-existing condition particularly with that of a Learning Disability. Therefore, as many people will have co underlying factors in many policy areas across government, Arm's Length Bodies and Health and Social Care it is not at this stage possible to provide a reliable estimate of the funding attributed to the implementation of the Autism Strategy. For that reason, we have included in the report funding information where provided in relation to a specific action only for 23/24 and 24/25.

A monitoring template outlining the progress of actions being implemented throughout the span of the Strategy was shared with Government Departments, Arm's Length bodies and Health and Social Care Trusts. For 23/24 and 24/25 it is clear that the need for greater understanding of autism has been widely acknowledged across departments and public bodies and the requirement and provision of training for staff has increased significantly. This has been particularly evident with Northern Ireland Civil Service staff and public facing bodies.

Format of this Report

The first part of the report provides an update on each action set out in the Delivery Plan 2023 to 2025.

At Annex A, a summary has been compiled using the template from the delivery plan for each commitment and under each commitment reporting on the progress provided by organisations under the following headings:

What did we do.

When did we do it.

What difference has it made.

How did we measure this.

How much funding was allocated to it.

Key Partner.

Progress at March 2024.

Progress at March 2025 (this column also includes where reported how much funding was allocated in 24/25).

Update on each action in Delivery Plan 2023-2025

Commitment 1 <i>Through improved regional pathways of care, individuals and families will have access to early intervention and support which can meet emotional health and wellbeing needs.</i>					
Action		Key Partners	Outcome	Timeframe/Progress	Progress at 31 March 25
1.	<p>We understand that the provision of support and intervention, based upon presenting need, at an early stage is vital for individuals both pre and post assessment.</p> <p>Through partnership working we will implement a new framework of care to support and provide early intervention to children and young people with emotional health and wellbeing needs, which will include autism.</p>	<p>Department of Health Health and Social Care Trusts Department of Education Community and Voluntary Sector</p>	<p>We will have a framework that will support health and social care services to collaborate broadly to develop and integrate high quality, evidence-based support, intervention and diagnostic pathways that will best meet the presenting needs of our children and young people, both pre and post diagnosis.</p>	<p>Consultation on the Framework to inform the Implementation plan will be completed by 31 March 2024</p>	<p>Consultation documents are being finalised;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - equality impact assessment, - rural needs assessment - child rights impact assessment - easy read version of The Framework
1.1	<p>We will consult on and finalise a Children and Young People's Emotional Health and Wellbeing Framework which will guide future development of services. The Framework will embrace a move towards understanding Autism within a broader neurodevelopmental approach and incorporate a regionally consistent single</p>			<p>Progress at 31 March 24 Comprehensive Scoping has been carried out by the key partners to gather overview of existing provision of therapeutic support for children young people and families within the Trust areas. Due to limited resources consultation has been delayed, work is ongoing with a view to going out to consultation in early 2025.</p>	

	point of entry and diagnostic pathway. In addition to providing post-diagnostic services and supports, the Framework will promote the provision of early support that is based upon presenting need.				It is anticipated that The Framework will be published for a 14-week consultation period on 30 April 2025. (The Framework was published for consultation on 22 May 2025)
1.2	As part of the consultation a Framework implementation plan will be developed in line with the requirements of the Children's Co-operation Act (NI) 2015. The implementation plan will be informed through a regional engagement process that will be facilitated through the National i-Thrive Programme and will be inclusive of all key stakeholders.		Through the Framework implementation plan we will enable key stakeholders to develop shared language, thinking and enhance collaboration across health, education and third sector.	Engagement and planning will take place from Sept 2023 to March 2024. Progress at 31 March 24 As above Engagements Completed.	A Personal and Public Involvement (PPI) project has been completed by the Department of Health's Strategic Planning and Performance Group(SPPG) and Public Health Agency (PHA) in relation to a needs based and child centred regionally consistent single referral form for accessing a Children and Young Peoples Referral Service (CYPRS). This PPI process examined how interventions and services to meet needs could be aligned with the concepts identified in the iThrive programme. Completed.

Action	Key Partners	Outcome	Timeframe/Progress	Progress at 31 March 2025
<p>2. We acknowledge that many autistic people will have complex needs or will have autism as a co-existing condition.</p> <p>We will work with key partners to develop a Learning Disability Strategic Plan which will include finalising an Adult Learning Disability Service Model and Children with Disabilities Framework, developing Learning Disability governance structure options.</p> <p>This will be informed through stakeholder engagement and through learning disability evidence and data.</p>	<p>Department of Health Department of Education Department for Communities Department for the Economy Department for Infrastructure Health and Social Care Sector Independent providers Service Users and families</p>	<p>The Learning Disability Strategic Plan will seek to address the growing pressures across learning disability services for children and adults and to provide a focus for future strategic planning and regional commissioning.</p> <p>The development of the Strategic Plan will also address the need for better transitions planning between children and adult services.</p>	<p>Will be completed to issue for consultation by 31 March 2024.</p> <p>Progress at 31 March 24 A draft service model for adult learning disability services was developed in collaboration with Trusts and the Voluntary and Community Sector.</p> <p>The next phase of work included the development of a strategic delivery plan ahead of a public consultation.</p> <p>In parallel, the Department commissioned the HSC Leadership Centre to undertake a review of learning disability and co-occurring autism.</p>	<p>The development of a strategic delivery plan is nearing completion ahead of launching a public consultation in Summer of 2025.</p> <p>The review of learning disability and co-occurring autism has been completed.</p>

Action		Key Partners	Outcome	Timeframe/Progress	Progress at 31 March 2025
3.	Recognising that referral for an autism assessment process may create anxiety and be lengthy, we will provide and publish improved communication and relevant information which will set out step-by-step guidance on each step of the autism assessment process.	Department of Health Health and Social Care Trusts Autistic people	The provision of accessible step-by-step guidelines will enable individuals and families feel informed and prepared throughout the referral and assessment process.	By 31 March 2025 Progress at 31 March 24 This will be taken forward as part of the work set out above on the Children and Young People's Emotional Health and Wellbeing Framework.	As reported in 1.2 above, a Personal and Public Involvement (PPI) project has been completed by SPPG and PHA in relation to a needs based and child centred regionally consistent single referral form for accessing a Children and Young Peoples Referral Service (CYPRS). These are foundational elements of a consistent approach to supporting children and young people with their emotional health and wellbeing needs including those with presentations associated with being neurodivergent. SPPG are leading on developing a consistent neuro developmental assessment care pathway aligned with National best practice examples.
4.	To increase understanding of the social, communicative and sensory challenges that autistic people experience in accessing and receiving care and support within our healthcare system, we will develop regional	Department of Health Health and Social Care Trusts Autistic people	The provision of training will enable GPs and HSC staff to have access to e-learning training which will assist them in providing practical support by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Understanding the 	First phase of development will be complete by 31 March 2024. Progress at 31 March 24 Work is at an advanced	

	<p>training videos for GPs and the Health and Social Care (HSC) workforce which will be co-produced by people who have lived experience of autism.</p>		<p>challenges experienced by autistic people.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identifying preferred communication styles for autistic patients. • Understanding the sensory challenges in the health and social care environment. <p>Implementing reasonable adjustments which can support them as they receive health and social care.</p>	<p>stage within Trusts. Videos available to access on Learn HSCNI for GP's.</p>	<p>GP videos now available regionally through Learn HSCNI for GP's</p> <p>Completed.</p>
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Action		Key Partners	Outcome	Timeframe/Progress	Progress at 31 March 2025
5.	Following a review which was undertaken of adult autism services across Northern Ireland, we recognise we must secure and sustain high quality, cost effective, person-centred social care services for autistic adults in Northern Ireland.	Department of Health Health and Social Care Sector Autistic people			
5.1	We will ensure that effective commissioning processes are in place and that accurate data for adult autism is collated to inform service planning.		Effective commissioning processes and accurate data for autistic adults will help inform and plan for service development.	By 31 March 2025 Progress at 31 March 24 The DoH's Strategic Planning and performance Group are currently recruiting an Adult commissioning lead to take this work forward.	DoH's Strategic Planning and Performance Group have recruited a project lead for Adult Autism who took up post in February 2025 to drive forward regional work across adult pathways
5.2	We will identify the investment required to provide intervention ensuring that effective commissioning processes are in place and that accurate data for adult autism is collated.		A costed implementation plan will be developed.	By 31 March 2025 Progress at 31 March 24 As above	Initial scoping and engagement exercise completed with HSC Trusts to map current provision of services to autistic adults without co-occurring learning disability seeking diagnostic assessment and post diagnosis support and intervention across Northern Ireland in 2025.
5.3	We will identify the investment required to provide intervention and address waiting lists for adult autism services.		This will be included in Action 5.2.	By 31 March 2025 Progress at 31 March 24 As above	
5.4	We will carry out a review of the current adult autism service model.		The review will inform the establishment of a consistent adult autism service model across	By 31 March 2025 Progress at 31 March 24	A first regional workshop focusing on

			<p>Northern Ireland which will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide clear pathways of care. • Age-appropriate assessment. • Intervention to support presenting need. • Establish targets for assessment. 	<p>Following a review which was undertaken of adult autism services across Northern Ireland, we recognise we must secure and sustain high quality, cost effective, person-centred social care services for autistic adults in Northern Ireland. Work is underway to have in place effective commissioning processes and accurate data for autistic adults which will help inform and plan for service development. As mentioned above the recruitment of an Adult Commissioning lead will address this.</p>	<p>care pathways for autistic adults without a co-occurring learning disability took place on 2 July 2025. The aim is to identify both immediate actions and longer-term solutions that we can collectively take to improve access to assessment and intervention.</p> <p>Ongoing</p>
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Action		Key Partners	Outcome	Timeframe/Progress	Progress at 31 March 2025
6.	Many siblings of an autistic family member may experience anxiety, and at times peer pressure, due to the challenges this can place on family life or in fulfilling the role of a carer.	Northern Ireland Civil Service Health and Social Care Sector Community and Voluntary Sector Private Sector People with lived experience			
6.1	We will work with key partners to identify sources of support and recreation to enable families, including siblings, to have opportunity to be supported.		We will provide sources of support for families, including siblings, to enable them to have time and space for their voices to be heard and needs considered.	By 31 March 2024. Completed Provision of sibling support has been provided through small grants process across the Northern Trust area in partnership with local voluntary/community organisations attached to The Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership.	Completed in 2024
6.2	Following a Reform of Adult Social Care consultation, we will establish a Social Care Collaborative Forum, an action of which be a 'Supporting Carers' workstream to take forward proposed reforms to improve support for carers.		We will work to strengthen the provision of information and advice for carers; evaluate the implementation of the current carer strategy; establish a cross departmental group to build recognition and strengthen cross government approaches to carers issues and we will review the current Health and Social Care Carers Register to explore potential enhancements, including data, to better support carers.	Establish Supporting Carers Workstream by 31 December 2023. Progress at 31 March 24 Workstream established and continue to meet quarterly. Completed.	Completed in 2024

Action		Key Partners	Outcome	Timeframe/Progress	Progress at 31 March 2025
7.	Transitions can present challenges and anxiety for autistic people and their families. Through partnership working and stakeholder engagement we will undertake a review of current processes and procedures of children with special educational needs transitioning from education into adulthood, including the examination of available pathways for young people who are autistic.	Department of Health Department of Education Department for the Economy Department for the Communities Health and Social Care sector	We will provide more efficient and effective transition arrangements with better clarification of agency roles and responsibilities for transitioning young people. We will maximise opportunities for enhanced inter-agency working ensuring statutory duties are met.	By 31 March 2025 Progress at 31 March 24 The Department established a Transitions subgroup as part of the Children Services Strategic Reform Programme. Work has commenced to develop a regional protocol to standardise the approach to transitions for children with learning disability or autism, aligned to NICE guidelines and the recommendations of the Northern Ireland Review of Children's Social Care Services by Professor Ray Jones.	EA attendance and support as part of DOH transition subgroup. Work ongoing. DoH co-chaired the Transitions Working Group with DE that was established to review the current Transitions planning process and improve pathways for young people with a Statement of SEN leaving education. The working group has informed a number of actions contained within the SEN Reform Delivery Plan that will be taken forward. A HSC protocol for transitions has been finalised and work is underway to progress a pilot exercise. Ongoing.
8.	As a requirement of the Autism (Amendment) Act (NI) 2022 the Department of Health will appoint	Department of Health	The Autism Reviewer will provide an independent monitoring role in relation to	By 31 March 2024. Progress at 31 March 24	Completed in 2024.

	an Independent Autism Reviewer for Northern Ireland.		the implementation of the Autism (Amendment) Act (NI) 2022 and the implementation of the Autism Strategy.	Due to budgetary pressures appointment was paused. [Appointment now made and Autism Reviewer in post since 2 September 24].	
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Commitment 2 <i>We will work in partnership to enable autistic people to feel understood and supported throughout their education, to experience environments which are inclusive to their needs and to have a workforce who are equipped with understanding to recognise and respond to the specific needs of autistic pupils and students.</i>					
Action		Key Partners	Outcome	Timeframe/Progress	Progress at 31 March 2025
9.	We understand school environments can be challenging for school children and young people resulting in overstimulation and anxiety as they try to manage the expectations of the school day and adapt to different surroundings and routines.	Department of Education Education Authority Autism Advisory and Intervention Service			
9.1	We will work with key partners to undertake a review of Education Authority Pupil Support Services, including the Autism Advisory and Intervention Service, to ensure children and young people are supported within their educational environment.		We will provide an enhanced model of support at the appropriate level to meet a child/young person's individualised presenting needs at the right time, whether they have been referred for an autism assessment or a diagnosis has been received.	By 31 March 2025 Progress at 31 March 24 Phased implementation of a new Special Education Needs (SEN) Framework will improve participation and empowerment through the assessment process. The draft SEN Regulations are in the final stages of completion and the associated Code of Practice is being updated to reflect changes.	Review of Education Authority (EA) Pupil Support Services, including Autism Advisory and Intervention Service (AAIS), was completed in October 24 as part of the End to End Review of SEN. EA has developed the new Local IMPACT Teams model of support which will go live in September 2025. The draft SEN Regulations are in the final stages of completion. Officials have been working through complex legal advice on proposed

					<p>changes to the new Regulations.</p> <p>For 2024/2025 schools were allocated £11m to assist in the implementation of the new SEN Framework. In addition, the SEND implementation team was allocated £1,271k to complete a range of preparatory work to allow full commencement of the new draft SEN regulations. In 2024/2025, this has included initial training on the Graduated Response Framework for schools with plans to deliver for more in depth training across 2025/26.</p> <p>Progress underway for the implementation of the Local IMPACT teams, for implementation in September 2025. Support will be provided to child/young person's individualised presenting needs at the right time regardless of their stage of the diagnostic journey. Autism Advisory and Intervention Service</p>
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9.2	We will develop guidance within our School Building Handbook to provide further advice and guidance on the design of inclusive learning environments and suitable accommodation for the delivery of the curriculum to children and young people with a wide range of needs including autism.		We will provide accessible learning environments to support children and young people's individualised needs.	By 31 March 2025 Progress at 31 March 24 As above	(AAIS) interim arrangements have been in place since September 2024 for providing targeted support for CYP referred for an autism assessment including 3 phase specific autism advice lines & autism insight clinics. The development of guidance for Inclusive Design in Education, co-produced with AHPs is an action in the SEN Reform Delivery Plan 2025-2030. To be taken forward in 2025/26. (To be included in the Autism Strategy Delivery Plan 2025 to 2028).
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Action		Key Partners	Outcome	Timeframe/Progress	Progress at 31 March 2025
10.	We acknowledge that educational staff would benefit from autism specific training so that characteristics of autism and appropriate interventions could be provided.	Department of Education Education Authority Middletown Centre for Autism	We will improve access to resources and training for parents and educational staff.	By 31 March 2025	<p>Progress at 31 March 24 Continued provision by DE for Middletown Centre for Autism (MCA) in conjunction with DE (Ireland).</p> <p>Education Authority, Autism Advisory and Intervention Service provides tier one and two training for all staff. This is under review with a refresh launch date of December 2025.</p> <p>Middletown Centre for Autism delivered outstanding education and inclusion outcomes across Northern Ireland in 2024–2025 through its training, assessment, capacity-building, and whole-school support programmes. Over 11,400 training places</p>
10.1	We will continue to work with Middletown Centre for Autism regarding provision of the resources and training being offered.				

					<p>were offered to parents, siblings, and professionals. More than 2,300 professionals and 1,000 parents and siblings in Northern Ireland accessed tailored training opportunities. 2,000 NI teacher training places were offered as part of an enhanced professional programme. A total of 58 active Learning Support and Assessment referrals were supported. The Whole School Programme reached schools with over 2,100 pupils. A formal capacity-building model was piloted in 3 NI schools. Graduate-level CPD provision continued and the Centre provided targeted support to Integrated and Irish Medium Education. Completed.</p>
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10.2	We will commence an end-to-end review of Special Educational Needs including examining initial teacher education and continual professional development.		Staff within the educational workforce will be better equipped to deploy reasonable adjustments within the educational environment to enable children and young people to feel understood and supported and improve outcomes for pupils with Special Educational Needs including those with a diagnosis of autism.	<p>By 30 September 2024</p> <p>Progress at 31 March 24</p> <p>End to End Review commenced in February 2023. DE is currently developing an outcomes framework with input from academia, practitioners and professionals to explore how each of these 'Rights' can be delivered so that outcomes for children and young people will be improved. On target to complete by March 25. DE are working with DoH to finalise a delivery plan.</p>	<p>End to End review of SEN was completed in October 2024 and informed the SEN Reform Agenda and Delivery Plan 2025-2030 published in February 2025. 'Right People' is one of the four pillars in the SEN Reform Agenda and there are a range of actions within the Delivery Plan which seeks to ensure teachers and support staff are confident and highly skilled in supporting children with SEN. One of the projects to be funded from the Public Service Transformation Fund is the Design and Trial of a Teacher and CA Professional Learning Programme – this will commence in the 2025/26 academic year. An Outcomes Framework drafted</p>
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					and preparing for publication within Spring of 2025. Completed.
Action		Key Partners	Outcome	Timeframe/Progress	Progress at 31 March 2025
11.	Access to Educational Psychologists remains a challenge for many children, families and schools. We will review Educational Psychology Services as part of a Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Transformation Programme.	Department of Education Education Authority	Through exploring new models of delivery, we will improve access to educational psychologists for both pupils and schools.	By 31 March 2024 Work is ongoing as part of the DE End to End Review of SEN and the EA SEND transformation programme.	EA Psychology Service no longer holds a gate keeping function for stage 2 Pupil Support Services, this has been replaced by the introduction of the Referral for Involvement form. Ongoing.

Action		Key Partners	Outcome	Timeframe/Progress	Progress at 31 March 2025
12.	We understand that working in partnership across Health and Education sectors is essential in ensuring children and young people's needs are supported.	Department of Health Department of Education			As required by the section 4 of the SEND Act 2016, discussions are ongoing around the EA/Health Joint Plan which will evidence cooperation across organisations. Ongoing.
12.1	We will establish a joint Oversight Group to enhance strategic planning of services for children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disability and develop integrated models of support.		We will improve identification and assessment pathways by enhanced strategic planning of children and young people's services.	By 31 March 2025 Progress at 31 March 2024 A joint Oversight Group has been established between DE, DoH, EA and PHA. In December 2024, PHA commenced a needs assessment of the healthcare needs of children with complex needs.	The Joint Health and Education Oversight Group, continues to meet in order to oversee key emerging issues for children and young people at the health / education interface. Completed.
12.2	We will progress the appointment of a joint partnership worker who will deliver a special school pilot project.		We will increase opportunities for community engagement.	Completed.	Completed.

12.3	We will progress the appointment of a joint data analyst to scope the healthcare needs of children and young people and work with colleagues across both health and education to develop integrated models of support.		We will improve the use of data to inform and shape development of services.	By 31 March 2025 Progress at 31 March 2024 DoH and DE are undertaking a review of HSC and SEN data to better forecast population trends and service demand needs.	The introduction of agreed data sharing arrangements between Education, Health and Economy is an action within the SEN Reform Delivery Plan to support planning for key transition points and integrated support. This will be taken forward under the broader umbrella of SEN Reform. Ongoing.
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Action		Key Partners	Outcome	Timeframe/Progress	Progress at 31 March 2025
13.	We acknowledge that an autism advocate or nominated 'link person' would be beneficial to enable autistic students to navigate and adapt through college and university life, particularly in the early stages of their academic experience.	Department for the Economy Regional Colleges Universities FE Colleges	We will work with key partners to train academic workforce to increase understanding of autism, identify key points of contact and quiet spaces in further and higher education campuses and support autistic students throughout the transition process from post-primary education to further and higher education.	By 31 March 2025 Progress at 31 March 24 CAFRE have in place Enhance and awareness for service providers/front line services and education service staff, to increase understanding and promote acceptance of autism. They have provided training opportunities particularly for academic staff and residential support teams to increase understanding and promote acceptance of autism. 53 people have availed of this training.	CAFRE continue to support increased understanding of and promote the acceptance of autism. The Student Support Service provides training opportunities for academic staff to increase their understanding and promote acceptance of autism within the teaching environment. Approximately 100 staff have completed this training during 2024/25. In FE colleges a Learning Support Manager/ Co-Ordinator will be allocated to each student who had made a referral for learning support.

					<p>The Learning Support Teams within FE colleges are currently working with Student engagement staff to provide clubs for neuro diverse students to support them to engage with increasing self-reliance. Ongoing.</p>
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Commitment 3 We will seek opportunity for increased understanding of autism in the workplace to enable individuals to feel supported within employment and enhance career opportunity.					
Action		Key Partners	Outcome	Timeframe/Progress	Progress at 31 March 2025
14.	<p>We understand that careers advice needs to be adapted to support individualised needs of autistic people and provided by staff, who have an understanding of the communicative and sensory needs of autistic people, to support them in recognising skills and making career and employment choices.</p> <p>We will develop and promote guidance and training to increase understanding of an autistic person's individualised needs within employment and the services we deliver.</p>	<p>Northern Ireland Civil Service Equality Commission for Northern Ireland Community and Voluntary Sector Autistic People</p>	<p>Through the provision of guidance and training to increase understanding of an autistic person's individualised needs, employers and staff will have a better understanding and approach in how they engage with and advise autistic people, working with them to identify strengths, skills and challenges and how these can be managed in pursuing career opportunity and employment.</p>	<p>By 31 March 2024</p> <p>Progress at 31 March 24 DfE Careers Service has initiated a market sounding exercise to garner market views on the provision of an online solution which can be used by Autistic young people and adults to navigate their career pathways and learn more about the range of opportunities available, both in education and the world of work. Information received from this exercise will be evaluated by the Department and used to inform decisions on a future procurement process. This work will continue during 24/25.</p>	<p>DfE has reported that work is continuing on the implementation of a new interactive careers tool tailored specifically for autistic clients. Market Sounding Exercise with potential suppliers is complete (August 2024). User insight surveys, seeking views and preferences of autistic clients, parents, teachers, and the wider autism community, also complete (Citizen Space, May 2024). Feedback from both exercises has been used to develop a technical specification and project approach. This project will take a phased approach, with initial implementation</p>

					planned for the 2025/26 business year. To be completed shortly.
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Action		Key Partners	Outcome	Timeframe/Progress	Progress at 31 March 2025
15.	Many autistic people can feel anxious and misunderstood within the work environment, through partnership working, we will provide guidance which will be accessible to employers to raise understanding of autism and reasonable adjustments and support to underpin and enhance life skills to support autistic individuals as they manage transition and adapt into careers and employment.	Department of Health Equality Commission for Northern Ireland Northern Ireland Councils Community and Voluntary Sector	Employers will have access to guidance which will set out steps that can be taken to provide reasonable adjustments in relation to communication, workstyle and sensory challenges, within the recruitment and work environment to support the needs of autistic people.	By 31 March 2024 Progress at 31 March 24 Ongoing. Work slightly delayed to allow time to ensure that all interested parties had an opportunity to provide input. This Guide was launched by Minister Nesbitt on 3 December 2024.	A joint Department of Health and Equality Commission NI follow up webinar about the guidance for Employers was delivered in April 2025. Completed.

				<p>An extra c1,000 colleagues have completed the e-learning module since April 2023</p>	<p>The “Supporting Autistic People” e-learning module continues to be hosted on the learning bundle on the staff learning portal and is accessible to all staff. An internal communications campaign is under development for delivery in early 2025/26 to further promote the module.</p> <p>During 2024-25 as part of the NICS’ annual programme of disability awareness training it delivered a series of webinars in collaboration with Employers Disability NI on topics including “Disability Positive” (with all 23 attendees being awarded the Disability Positive accreditation) and Neurodiversity. In August 2024, the NICS was accredited as a JAM Card friendly organisation with</p>
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					17,000 staff completing the JAM Card training. Completed.
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Action		Key Partners	Outcome	Timeframe/Progress	Progress at 31 March 2025
17.	To improve awareness and understanding of reasonable adjustments, the Civil Service as an employer will review and implement a new reasonable adjustment policy and processes and will launch a range of supporting resources for managers including new guidance, e-learning modules, and FAQs.	Department of Finance NICS Diversity Champions Network NICS Disability Working Group NICS Disability Staff Network NICS Autism Working Group Equality Commission for Northern Ireland Employers for Disability NI	The policy and underpinning guidance and learning resources will outline practical steps which can be taken to provide reasonable adjustments throughout the employee lifecycle, which will include supporting the needs of autistic and neurodivergent people.	By 31 March 2024 Progress at 31 March 2024 A draft policy, supporting guidance and resources under development.	A review of the NICS reasonable adjustment process progressed in 2024. A draft policy and supporting guidance have been developed, informed through a working group, with a range of stakeholders, including colleagues with lived experience, Trade Unions, and external independent disability advocates. Ongoing
18.	We will work with key partners to monitor the conclusion of European Social Fund and the introduction of UK Share Prosperity Fund (SPF) closing to assess the potential impact on those with a Learning Disability including those who are autistic.	Department of Health Health and Social Care Trusts Community and Voluntary Sector	By identifying the potential challenges on people who have a Learning Disability and/or are autistic, measures can be put in place to mitigate any impact.	By 31 March 2024 Progress at 31 March 24 The Department continues to engage with DoF, DfC and DfE to monitor the impact of ESF cessation and plan ahead of the closure of the SPF.	The Department continues to engage with partners across department, VCS and UK government on the succession fund to the SPF.

Commitment 4 <i>Through increased understanding of autism, our housing providers will be more equipped to provide supportive engagement and adequately support the needs of autistic people.</i>					
Action		Key Partners	Outcome	Timeframe/Progress	Progress at 31 March 2025
19.	We will work with key partners to support transitional arrangements for autistic people seeking housing and obtaining housing information, for example, details of housing options and financial support which may often prove difficult for autistic people.	Department of Health Health and Social Care Trusts Northern Ireland Housing Executive	We will ensure applications will be supported throughout the process of seeking housing accommodation.	Ongoing Progress at 31 March 24 The Housing Executive's Housing Solutions and Support Service was established in 2017, providing person centred services which are tailored to meet the needs of individuals.	Ongoing business as usual with plans to review the Housing Needs report during 2025/26 Completed.

Action	Key Partners	Outcome	Timeframe/Progress	Progress at 31 March 2025
<p>20.</p> <p>20.1</p>	<p>We acknowledge the need for housing providers to be provided with opportunity to gain a greater understanding of autism as a condition and the specific needs of autistic people, for example in relation to communication and sensory needs.</p> <p>We will work with key partners to provide training to Northern Ireland Housing Executive staff to increase their understanding of autism and autistic people's needs including customer facing environments.</p>	<p>Department of Health Northern Ireland Housing Executive Community and Voluntary Sector</p>	<p>Staff will have a broader knowledge of the communicative and sensory challenges that autistic people experience and make reasonable adjustments to address this in the provision of information and delivery of services.</p>	<p>By 30 September 2024.</p> <p>Progress at 31 March 24 Autism Spectrum Disorder Training has been delivered to 600 staff in NIHE. There is an ongoing requirement to provide this training & budget to do this is currently being explored.</p> <p>ASD training for staff ongoing with further provision of Autism Experience Sensory bus. Gave staff a real world experience of what living with ASD is like for customers and colleagues, to use in their front line duties and for future development of policies. This was offered as new training during 24/25. Cost was £1,090 per visit for 24 – 30 staff.</p>

20.2	We will review our Communication Support Services in relation to autism.	Northern Ireland Housing Executive	Staff will have a better understanding of ways to communicate with autistic people to support them and meet their individualised needs.	By 31 March 2024 Progress Ongoing	Ongoing
20.3	We will develop a housing advice leaflet for autistic people in relation to housing application pathways.		The leaflet will give autistic people a clear understanding of the planning and preparation process for housing applications.	By 31 March 2024 Progress at 31 March 24 Work is ongoing including consultation with interested parties as each stage is developed. Leaflet expected to be available shortly.	Leaflet expected to be published shortly.
Action		Key Partners	Outcome	Timeframe/Progress	Progress at 31 March 2025
21.	We will work with key partners in seeking appropriate housing solutions for autistic people reducing any barriers to their ability to develop and maintain independence.	Department of Health Health and Social Care Trusts Northern Ireland Housing Executive	We will accommodate the needs of autistic people by joint working between health and housing to seek appropriate housing solutions in a timely fashion.	By 31 March 2025 Progress at 31 March 24 Customer Outlet and Workplace Working Group established with a subgroup reviewing Customer Facing Environments. This will be for all customer requirements, including consideration of the needs of autistic people. Work is in progress to review accommodation and facilities. Work on target to complete by March 25.	Ongoing. This will be brought forward to the next delivery plan for 2025 to 2028.

Action		Key Partners	Outcome	Timeframe/Progress	Progress at 31 March 2025
22.	We understand everyone's journey is different as are their needs.	Northern Ireland Housing Executive		By 31 March 2025	
22.1	The Northern Ireland Housing Executive's Options service will seek to provide advice and assistance to everyone with a case management approach to enable the Northern Ireland Housing Executive to understand the customer's individual needs and explore their housing and support options including understanding current and future housing aspirations.		For more complex cases Housing Support Officers will provide specialist services for those who require a housing solution outside the general housing solutions remit.	<p>Progress at 31 March 24 A Framework approved by Department for Health & Department for Communities in September 2021 has been expanded in 2023/24 to include regional and local partnership forums. Work is ongoing as business as usual.</p>	<p>Ongoing business as usual whilst commencing a Supporting People Modernising Programme to ensure housing related support services are effective and maximising service user outcomes.</p> <p>Ongoing</p>
22.2	We will set up a Regional Escalation Panel to manage the needs of individuals who have complex needs including those who are autistic.		The Panel will ensure individuals with complex needs, including those who are autistic, are supported and their needs are managed effectively.	By 31 March 2024	<p>Progress at 31 March 24 Completed. The panels are an ongoing requirement. The NIHE has reported that since 2022 the number of autism cases referred was 8 from a total of 102 Escalation panels held to date.</p>

					factor in complexity of case. Completed.
Action		Key Partners	Outcome	Timeframe/Progress	Progress at 31 March 2025
23.	We will work with key partners to develop an Inclusive Design Guide taking into consideration the needs of people living with cognitive and sensory impairments including autism.	Department of Health Northern Ireland Housing Executive	The Inclusive Design Guide will complement adaptive toolkits to design and improve homes for autistic people.	By 31 March 2024 Progress at 31 March 24 Work is at an advanced draft stage, consultation on draft document is due to commence shortly. NIHE has recently reported that work is progressing to complete the final draft and anticipated launch in April/May 2025.	Currently going through final draft process with NIHE Comms with official launch expected Summer 2025. Costs are £6,100 in addition to staff resources to develop guide.
24.	We will commit to continued engagement with Disability Forums, including Autism Forums to enhance collaborative working between Housing and Health.	Northern Ireland Civil Service Northern Ireland Housing Executive Community and Voluntary Sector	Engagement with key partners will provide opportunity for collaboration and feedback and to inform policy, guidance and service delivery.	By 31 March 2024 Progress Completed	Engagement is ongoing. Completed

Commitment 5 <i>We will work within our community to increase understanding and acceptance of autism and create inclusive environments to support the needs of autistic people and their families and carers.</i>					
Action		Key Partners	Outcome	Timeframe/Progress	Progress at 31 March 2025
25.	<p>We understand autistic people often feel anxious and isolated within community life.</p> <p>We will work with key partners to identify and promote proactive methods of increasing understanding and acceptance of autism within our communities.</p>	<p>Department of Health Northern Ireland Councils</p>	<p>By encouraging and promoting autism friendly facilities and activities, autistic people and their families can feel accepted, supported and understood.</p>	<p>By 31 March 2025</p> <p>Progress at 31 March 24 The NHSCT are working in partnership with Mid and East Antrim (MEA) Council to roll out their Autism Friendly Borough Initiative as part of the Councils Community plan. The SHSCT's Speech and Language therapist has guided accessible communication and inclusive language advice for council staff. (ABC council). In addition, other partners have delivered in this area - details are set out in Annex A.</p>	<p>The NHSCT continue to work partnership with Mid and East Antrim (MEA) Council to roll out their Autism Friendly Borough Initiative as part of the Councils Community plan.</p> <p>Completed.</p>

Action		Key Partners	Outcome	Timeframe/Progress	Progress at 31 March 2025
26.	<p>We acknowledge autistic people and their families can often feel overwhelmed by the need to access information and services and require greater signposting and ease of access to navigating sources of support, points of contact and community life.</p> <p>Through partnership working, we will commence development of a Regional Autism Information Service to provide signposting to support and services for autistic people and their families</p>	<p>Northern Ireland Civil Service Health and Social Care Sector Community and Voluntary Sector Autistic People</p>	<p>Phase 1 of the development of the Regional Autism Information Service will include extensive stakeholder engagement to establish what sort of information autistic people, their families and carers would like to be able to access.</p>	<p>Phase 1 to be completed by March 2024</p> <p>Progress at 31 March 24 Due to be completed shortly. [Final report received in August 24. This will lay the foundation for provision of an Information Service].</p>	<p>To ensure that the service meets the requirements the Department of Health engaged with other Departments across the piece to identify and scope out what should be included.</p> <p>Phase one is Completed.</p>
27.	<p>We are aware autistic people, and those with neurodivergent conditions, can have sensory challenges and anxiety in public areas and buildings requiring support.</p> <p>We will work with key partners, ensuring people with lived experience are involved and included, to revise and refresh the Accessible Business Checklist which will be published by the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland.</p>	<p>Department of Health Equality Commission for Northern Ireland Northern Ireland Councils Community and Voluntary Sector Autistic People</p>	<p>The revised Accessible Business Checklist will increase awareness and promote and enable the needs of autistic people to be reflected and accommodated within our business community.</p>	<p>By 31 March 2024</p> <p>Progress at 31 March 24 Temporarily Paused. Due to limited resources initial discussions have taken place with ECNI re how this piece of work can be taken forward.</p>	<p>This will be brought forward to the next Delivery plan for 2025 to 2028.</p>



AUTISM –STRATEGY

2023-2028

CROSS-DEPARTMENTAL MONITORING FRAMEWORK

This Annex has been updated for position at 31 March 2025

Commitment 1 <i>Through improved regional pathways of care, individuals and families will have access to early intervention and support which can meet emotional health and wellbeing needs.</i>							
What did we do?	When did we do it?	What difference has it made?	How did we measure this?	How much funding was allocated to it?	Key partner	Progress at 2024	Progress at 31 March 2025
Finalised draft of HSC Children's Emotional Health and Wellbeing (EHWB) Framework for consultation.	Throughout 2023	Support achievement of this commitment	The draft has been shared with HSC Trust Assistant Directors and Heads of Service responsible for Autism services and feedback provided.	No cost-funded through existing posts	HSC Trusts; Public Health Agency; DoH Autism Strategy Delivery Team; Regional and Trust Autism Forums	Framework ready to be signed off to go out to public consultation in 2024/25.	Framework will be published for public consultation in Spring 2025. (The Framework was published for consultation on 22 May 2025).

What did we do?	When did we do it?	What difference has it made?	How did we measure this?	How much funding was allocated to it?	Key partner	Progress at 2024	Progress at 31 March 2025
Develop a regional 'Needs Based' referral form for EHWP referrals' that will include referrals ASD and be included within Clinical Communications Gateway.	April 2023 – March 2024.	Used i-Thrive principles with Health, Education, Community and Voluntary organisations to develop discussions using common language and identified needs within a common framework.	There were 523 attendees at the webinars and workshops. Feedback from the events highlighted areas where better co-ordination could be achieved to meet needs. SHSCT reported attendance at these sessions.	Consultation and engagement cost; 66k.	SPPG; The National iThrive Programme; DoH, Autism Strategy Delivery team; Department of Education.	Work complete, adopting framework across Northern Ireland to be considered.	N/A
Work with key partners to develop a Learning Disability Strategic Plan which will include finalising an Adult Learning Disability Service Model and Children with Disabilities Framework, developing Learning Disability governance structure options.	April 2023 – March 2024.	Too early to assess	Too early to measure	No cost to date-funded through existing posts.	Department of Health Department of Education Department for Communities Department for the Economy Department for Infrastructure Health and Social Care Sector Independent providers Service Users and families	A draft service model for adults with learning disabilities has been developed and work is ongoing to finalise an implementation plan. A pre-engagement exercise has been carried out with a view to launching a public consultation. Completed	Work in progress to develop consultation documents with the aim of launching a public consultation in Summer 2025.

What did we do?	When did we do it?	What difference has it made?	How did we measure this?	How much funding was allocated to it?	Key partner	Progress at 2024	Progress at 31 March 2025
Establish a Supporting Carers Workstream to take forward proposed reforms to improve support to carers.	December 2023	A series of extensive stakeholder engagement events to scope out and identify where improvements could be made in current information and signposting services, have been held.	Informed by the feedback received from engagement events an early options analysis paper containing a list of Improvement ideas has been produced for consideration by workstream members.	N/A	DoH, HSCTs, PHA, Carers and Community and Voluntary Sector	Workstream established and continue to meet quarterly. Completed.	Completed in 2024
Southern Health and Social Care Trust Wraparound Clinic – joint delivery of Autism Assessment clinic with Community Paediatrics	January 2025	Families and children on this pathway have a more streamlined and timely assessment journey with access to a range of professionals at one time and in one place.	Parent and carer feedback is to be sought.	No additional funding required.	SHSCT Community Paediatrics and SHSCT AHP's	Commenced January 2025.	This clinic is in its infancy and further planning is required to ensure a continued joined up approach is embedded across all the services involved.

What did we do?	When did we do it?	What difference has it made?	How did we measure this?	How much funding was allocated to it?	Key partner	Progress at 2024	Progress at 31 March 2025
<p>Creation of Electronic Booklets – Assessment and Intervention by SHSCT. These can be accessed via links and QR codes.</p>	<p>Officially launched April 2024 to parents/carers, Colleagues in EA, DOH, other Autism Co-Ordinators and SHSCT Autism Forum.</p>	<p>SHSCT can review how many times these electronic booklets have been accessed. 216 for the assessment since 25 April 24 419 for intervention from date since 25 April 24 Parents/carers have access to advice and invention in an accessible and timely manner. These are shared at point of referral and on all correspondence to parents/carers from the service.</p>	<p>SHSCT can review how many times these electronic booklets have been accessed. This will be continuously monitored by the service. Prior to the launch of these electronic booklets feedback was sought from parents/carers known to the service and the Trusts CYPS Care Experience Hub</p>	<p>Funding from within Autism Services.</p>	<p>DoH</p>	<p>SHSCT will continue to update and amend resources that are available on these electronic booklets.</p>	<p>SHSCT continue to update and amend resources that are available on these electronic booklets.</p>

Information Video for GP's created by SHSCT staff.	February 2024	Not yet launched but aim will be to provide GP's and other services with information about SHSCT Autism Services, how to refer for an Autism Assessment and intervention and what support is available.	Not yet measured. when launched, the amount of views accessed and referrals to Autism services by GPs will be reviewed.			In draft form. Still to be launched.	Now available online for GP's as training information.
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What did we do?	When did we do it?	What difference has it made?	How did we measure this?	How much funding was allocated to it?	Key partner	Progress at 2024	Progress at 31 March 2025
In Northern Trust the Paediatric ASD Service offers an intervention service which includes post diagnostic support and support to those with a historical diagnosis.	Ongoing	Supports autistic children and young people with a wide range of challenges that impact on daily life.	Outcome measures utilised by the service (i.e. goal based outcomes)	N/A	Staff in house	Ongoing with continuing evaluation and redesign of intervention services.	Ongoing with service initiatives that include – Train the trainer programme to train others in providing support to autistic individuals. Telephone Consultation Service Expanded the LAC autism pathway to include intervention training and support.

							<p>Delivered IQI project with Surestart.</p> <p>Costs for 24/25 – met within existing budget.</p>
Continued to develop digital supports that are available to all (pre and post diagnostic)	Added sleep and toileting resources Jan 24	Both these digital supports are now utilised as a resource by the team	Cleared Waiting list for C/YP awaiting sleep/toileting support	N/A	Staff in house	Completed. Ongoing project to revamp external website into ASD hub.	<p>Development of resources including digital.</p> <p>Developed evidence based staff guide on developmental norms for social and emotional sensory development and behavioural development.</p> <p>Developed a leaflet focused on management strategies for self-stimulation of the genitals (boys).</p> <p>Developed a leaflet focused on strategies to</p>

							<p>support regulation and sleep for children sharing bedrooms.</p> <p>Development of a leaflet focused on supporting emotional based school avoidance jointly with EA.</p> <p>In house costs</p>
<p>Northern Trust has piloted a project to co-deliver social emotional regulation (SER) group between Children's Early Intervention Service (CEIS) & Paediatric ASD</p>	<p>October 23- to December 23</p>	<p>Developed more integrated working, reducing duplication of services and upskilled staff from both Paediatric ASD & CEIS services in a variety of neurodevelopmental conditions. This allows SER intervention to be accessible based on need not diagnosis (pre & post diagnostic)</p>	<p>Outcome measure pre & post group with staff & service users</p> <p>Ongoing monitoring and evaluation of contract and service user feedback which is very positive.</p>	<p>N/A</p>	<p>Staff in house</p>	<p>Pilot group completed. Next step to evaluate the pilot project-co-delivering social emotional regulation group between CEIS and PASD</p>	<p>These groups now run within CEIS.</p> <p>In house costs.</p>

What did we do?	When did we do it?	What difference has it made?	How did we measure this?	How much funding was allocated to it?	Key partner	Progress at 2024	Progress at 31 March 2025
Northern Trust has Contracts in place with Autism NI to deliver early intervention within the Paediatric ASD Service.	Contract re-awarded to Autism NI Jan 24, and legacy contract extended to March 2025	Paediatric Autism Service is designing support and intervention exploring a Neurodiversity Affirmative Service Model.	Ongoing monitoring and evaluation of contract	7 years and under - £68,936.30 7+ - £37,370.59	Autism NI	Continuing to provide early intervention.	Re-awarded contracts and continuing to provide early intervention Costs 24/25 – 7years and under (pre-diagnosis) extended to 10 years and under £78,645.89 7+ post diagnostic - £43,437.42
Social opportunities offered through x2 contracts with NOW Group and NAS.	September 2022 – 2 year contract	This provides gaming opportunities for young people aged 12-17 and online social opportunities for autistic adults 18+	Ongoing monitoring and evaluation of contract	NOW Group - £5,482 NAS - £4,309.86	NOW Group and NAS	Continuing to provide social opportunities and support.	Continuing to provide social opportunities and support. NAS 24/25 £4,552.56 NOW Group 24/25 - £5,790.70

<p>Northern Trust Paediatric ASD is reviewing and redesigning intervention services focusing on the I-thrive model of service delivery.</p>	<p>Workshop October 23</p>	<p>Paediatric Autism service is designing support and intervention exploring a Neurodiversity Affirmative Service Model.</p> <p>Staff informed. I-Thrive model already embedded in many services.</p>		<p>N/A</p>	<p>N/A</p>	<p>Service plan in place for 24/25 to include mapping current service provision against I-thrive model.</p>	<p>Ongoing.</p> <p>Service plan for 25/26 to consider the further use of neuroaffirmative language.</p> <p>In house costs.</p>
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What did we do?	When did we do it?	What difference has it made?	How did we measure this?	How much funding was allocated to it?	Key partner	Progress at 2024	Progress at 31 March 2025
Production by Northern Trust of 2 animation videos for Paediatric ASD diagnostic process.	Scripted & designed animations completed April 2024	Will provide step by step guidance on the diagnostic process- one for parent/carers and one for teenagers. Service users and their families are signposted to this resource at time of acceptance into the service.	To be determined.	£6,000 (£4000 provided by DOH/SPPG and £2,000 internal costs)	Staff in house	To work with corporate communications to redesign Paediatric ASD homepage & assessment section to include animations & other resources.	Animations widely available for families on NHSCT website. Service user feedback in place and promotion of Care Opinion.
Provision of sibling support through small grants process across the Northern Trust area in partnership with local voluntary/community organisations attached to The Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership.	Jan 24 – Mar 24	These projects provided an opportunity for siblings to engage in fun/recreational activities along with other family members, as well as gain an insight through psychoeducation and having a voice to detail their needs for the future.	Outcome measures completed by participants alongside identification of future needs of siblings to inform future planning.	£5,386.52 (Funding of £5,250 provided by DoH / SPPG, remaining balance internal costs)	Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership – Locality planning groups delivered projects.	Projects complete and compiling evaluation and future needs of siblings.	Further small grants made available to CYPSP Locality planning members based of future needs identified in 23/24. 153 individuals benefited from the small grants in year. Cost - £3,559.30
Northern Trust organised the delivery of a 6-week creative writing course for autistic adults including students at UU, Coleraine	February – March 24	Autistic adults provided with the opportunity to tell their story of what autism means to them through creative writing/stories/poetry, allowing them to express themselves as well as educate the	Ongoing evaluation and feedback throughout 6-week course. Course led and directed by needs of the group.	£756.20 (£750 provided by DOH/SPPG)	University of Ulster	Complete	Further Face to Face and online creative writing courses provided to autistic adults, with planning underway to develop a publication to

		general public during World Autism week 2024.					showcase creativity and impact. Costs including resources - £1,843.81 Eleven autistic adults benefited from creative writing course, alongside being offered one on one zoom sessions.
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What did we do?	When did we do it?	What difference has it made?	How did we measure this?	How much funding was allocated to it?	Key partner	Progress at 2024	Progress at 31 March 2025
In Western HSC Trust the tier 1 Early Intervention Service introduced a new text messaging service to remind parents/carers of their upcoming appointments with the Early Intervention Service.	From 1 September 23.	The aim of which is to increase attendances at appointments.	Attendance at Tier 1 and Tier 2 Early Intervention Service	N/A	WHSCT	Feedback from families has been overwhelmingly positive. During 2023/24 946 attended the Tier 1 Early Intervention Session.	During 2024/25 the service facilitated 50 Tier 1 sessions, 26 face to face and 24 virtually supporting 1,014 families. The service delivered 82 Tier 2 support sessions and 20 different tier 3 support sessions to parents/carers, children and young people. Parents/Carers can access support by contacting the EIS

							service via email. The service received 4,615 emails during 2024/25.
Children's and adults services engaged in Five Autism Support Cafés have been hosted across the Trust in local communities in partnership with Health Improvement, Locality Planners, local Councils, Voluntary Community Sector and families.	October 2023 to March 2024	Each of these events have brought information, support and interventions to families who have a child on a waiting list or with a diagnosis of Autism. These events bring this support directly to communities rather than in clinics.	Attendance at events and service user questionnaires.	£10K.	WHSCT Other partners included Local Councils, Community & Voluntary Sector	255 Service Users attended in total in 2023/24. Feedback has been immensely positive. The former policy lead for Autism within the Department of Health visited the most recent event as she is currently supporting other Trusts to develop these events within their areas. The Autism Support Cafes won an award at the Western Trust Staff Recognition Awards 2023/24 under the Improvement, Innovation and Involvement category.	The Western Trust received £3000 of non-recurring funding in 2024/25 which enabled the Trust to facilitate a further five autism support cafes across the Trust area. 154 service users attended the events. Service users commended the support these cafes provided. Cedar supported all Autism Cafes across the WHSCT The local councils worked in partnership with the Western Trust in securing venues for the Autism Cafes.

What did we do?	When did we do it?	What difference has it made?	How did we measure this?	How much funding was allocated to it?	Key partner	Progress at 2024	Progress at 31 March 2025
<p>In Belfast HSC Trust Working Groups were set up within Trust to review Single point of referrals (SPOT) processes in relation to the vision set out within the draft EHWB Framework.</p>	<p>During 2023</p>	<p>Development of Parents Plus support group for parents of teens. Scoping indicated much support offered took place through youth mentoring. This group met a gap in provisions, supporting parents of teens in navigating challenges experienced</p>	<p>Feedback from Service User Experience Forms.</p>		<p>Partnership with Child and Adolescent Autism Service (CAAS). They are working together at Single point of referrals (SPOT) and inching our way towards introducing the new Regional Referral form and provide access to online resources and signposting for families.</p>	<p>The Belfast Trust has now offered support to just over 1400 families on waiting lists for assessment within the Trust. Approximately one third of these families have engaged with their service.</p>	<p>EHWB Team moved to a referral pathway piloting the Regional referral form where possible in May 2024 identifying key services/orgs to refer CYPF for support.</p> <p>From a pilot project in partnership with the PHA & EHWB Team in late 2024 they looked at a sample of incoming referrals (SPOT BHSCT) to reveal 15 common categories with Emotional Regulation (78%) being top of their list. Scoping exercises continue and feedback from families help them to plan the right types of support.</p> <p>From May 2024 - May 2025 EHWB has received 647 referrals. Over a</p>

							third of these were from colleagues in the Community and Voluntary sector.
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What did we do?	When did we do it?	What difference has it made?	How did we measure this?	How much funding was allocated to it?	Key partner	Progress at 2024	Progress at 31 March 2025
<p>Belfast Trust has reported that scoping in service delivery and partnership indicated gaps in provision for children under five. This informed initial development of a group for parents of children under five, referred for autism assessment. Programme developed was informed by components of other evidence-based programmes and was co-designed with parents to ensure accessibility and acceptability of format.</p> <p>Partnership with Ashton Centre and Belfast City Council allowed delivery in community settings for parents, as well as online evening attendance option.</p>		<p>Development of Toileting and Feeding Workshops with an option of additional individualised support in small groups the format allows breadth of levels of support – workshop can be attended by families who wish to avail of information and resources. Follow up and support allows support to families with more complex challenges in these areas, more individualisation and consideration of the family system and relationships.</p> <p>July-December 2023- additional scoping undertaken on developmental needs of children by Occupational Therapist and Speech and Language Therapist.</p>			<p>EHWBT are involved with BHSCT Autism Forum, BHSCT Disability Steering Group, National Deaf Children Advisory Board, Belfast Locality Planning Group, Infant Mental Health Steering Group, BHSCT EHWP Operational Group and Trust Groups addressing support needs of families from Refugee and Asylum seeking backgrounds.</p>	<p>The Trust have now offered support to just over 1400 families on waiting lists for assessment within the Trust. Approximately one third of these families have engaged their service.</p> <p>They now have ten programmes actively running for families.</p> <p>They are planning follow up ‘check-in’ support sessions for families and a more informal ‘drop-in/ Neurodiversity Café.</p> <p>Based on Quality Improvement projects carried out on all the</p>	<p>EHWP Team offer groups throughout the year the following:</p> <p>Little hearts minds and bodies 0-5; Tuning into Emotions 5-6;</p> <p>Little Worriers to Little Warriors 7-8;</p> <p>Helping Us Grow (outdoors groups) 9-10 & 11-12;</p> <p>Working things Out 12-16 (for teens);</p> <p>Neurodiversity Group 6-12 (for parents);</p> <p>Parents plus for parents of Teens 12-16 and</p> <p>Sleep Support, Toileting Support and Feeding Support.</p> <p>Individual work with babies, toddlers, children and Young people and families. (Interpreters</p>

<p>Further partnerships developed with Health Visiting to facilitate Sleep Intervention Workshop and small parent group support. Alongside team recruitment, additional interventions developed and offered for primary school age children, parents of primary school age children, parents of teenagers.</p>						<p>pilot groups and workshops they have devised a Work planner for the coming year Sept 24-Sept 2025. They are offering a range of morning and evening supports, with online and face to face options.</p>	<p>provided when needed).</p> <p>Neurodiversity Café (monthly across Belfast) started Nov 2024.</p> <p>Monthly Check-ins for returning CYPF for further supports/signposting.</p> <p>Some programmes also offer either Evening or online options.</p> <p>Community settings are offered to families when possible for their convenience and access.</p> <p>Little hearts minds and bodies (LHMB) programme was delivered to families in most local Sure starts from 2024. This year LHMB training was delivered to Sure start staff and this is continuing to be rolled out. At the request of the Early Intervention Team,</p>
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							training was delivered to C&V and Statutory organisations Content included Early intervention, Emotional Regulation, Neurodiversity, Education Pathways and the combined lifespan model of CAAS and ASD service BHSCT. This will be added to the Trust's training calendar.
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What did we do?	When did we do it?	What difference has it made?	How did we measure this?	How much funding was allocated to it?	Key partner	Progress at 2024	Progress at 31 March 2025
South Eastern HSC Trust has reported that for Child Health Single Point of Entry, they have a twice weekly Triage Panel to review all Child Health Services referrals with MDT panel.	Ongoing	Ensures access to the most appropriate diagnostic pathways based on presenting need. Enables signposting to early help services at the point of Referral.		Autism and EHWF Funding	Key Trust Services – community paediatrics, neurodevelopmental (asd/adhd). CAMHS, AHPs	Recruitment of new Band 7 post to coordinate early help and support.	Band 7 post has been recruited and is in post. Contributes to pre triage of referrals, signposting for early intervention and is part of steering group for new proposed ND pathway. QI project established to improve accessibility to early intervention and sources of support across ASD and ADHD.
South Eastern Trust Review of Neurodevelopmental pathway.	Ongoing	New project to review existing pathways for ASD and ADHD in the Trust in line with the EHWF.		No additional funding	Key Trust Services – community paediatrics, neurodevelopmental (asd/adhd).	n/a new project	Steering group established with six key Task & finish groups agreed to focus on; Triage, Data/ Outcomes, Clinical Pathways, Communications, Intervention and Benchmarking.

<p>South Eastern HSC Trust's Children and Young People's Autism Service Task and Finish group established to develop updated Neurodevelopmental Questionnaires, based on NICE guidelines and DSM criteria for ASD and ADHD.</p>	<p>Since August 2024 and ongoing review</p>	<p>New questionnaires with increased sensitivity and specificity for screening to appropriate pathway. Ensuring children are allocated to appropriate pathway at an early stage and to avoid unnecessary waits.</p>	<p>Feedback from stakeholders</p>	<p>No additional funding</p>	<p>Key Trust services – ASD/ADHD and Single Point of Entry.</p>	<p>New project since March 2024</p>	<p>New questionnaires implemented and shared regionally. Reviewed in February 2025 based on feedback.</p>
<p>South Eastern HSC Trust's Children and Young People's Autism Service Coproduced information pack for healthcare professionals to support their provision of care to autistic children.</p>	<p>April 2024</p>	<p>Using lived experience from parents/carers, developed guidance for healthcare professionals in children's services regarding autistic children's experience of attending healthcare appointments.</p>	<p>Parents/carers and children/young peoples lived experiences.</p>	<p>No additional funding</p>	<p>Service users, children health care services.</p>	<p>New project – implemented for Autism Awareness month April 2024</p>	<p>Information collated and guidance pack distributed to children's health care professionals, including GPs in March 2025.</p>

What did we do?	When did we do it?	What difference has it made?	How did we measure this?	How much funding was allocated to it?	Key partner	Progress at 2024	Progress at 31 March 2025
<p>Department of Education has Continued implementation of the joint DE/DoH Children and Young People's Emotional Health and Wellbeing in Education Framework to promote wellbeing in educational settings through a holistic, multi-disciplinary approach to respond to presenting needs in a targeted way.</p>	<p>The Framework was published in February 2021 with an accompanying implementation plan. All projects, which were developed on the basis of prevention and early intervention, have now been implemented with the remaining two having commenced in the 2023-24 academic year.</p>	<p>Through a strong focus on promotion of wellbeing, early intervention, and capacity building of school staff, children and young people are being supported to build resilience and self-esteem and be emotionally healthy.</p>	<p>The framework was based on evidence of need for a continuum of supports across a number of the projects identified and rolled out across the education system.</p> <p>Data on the number of schools accessing the projects, feedback and evaluation of short-term improvement as well as measures of the children and young people wellbeing in statistical reports including the tri-annual Edinburgh Warwick Scale are developing the baselines and future improvements.</p> <p>Ultimately a reduction in numbers of children who require</p>	<p>£4.1m was provided by DE and £1.5m from DoH in 2023-24 (reduction from £5m from DE due to budget cuts)</p>	<p>Joint Department of Education and Department of Health responsibility, with other Departments and agencies supporting / delivering.</p>	<p>The delay in implementing some DE projects has impacted the ability for the full continuum to work collectively.</p> <p>Projects that have been running since 2021/22 have had positive feedback, however the whole school project is needed to promote and link all projects as well as wider statutory, voluntary and community supports to individual schools, having assessed their needs.</p>	<p>Completed Framework funded projects continuing in 2025-26.</p>

			<p>specialist intervention from Mental Health Services will be a further measure.</p> <p>Each project completes termly progress reports and an annual OBA (Outcomes Based Accountability) report demonstrating activity and outcome of the project / service.</p>			<p>The ongoing challenging financial position requires urgent consideration of projects that can continue to operate effectively and to consider a revised Implementation plan as necessary.</p> <p>Further work is continuing on the evaluation and longer-term impact analysis.</p>	
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What did we do?	When did we do it?	What difference has it made?	How did we measure this?	How much funding was allocated to it?	Key partner	Progress at 2024	Progress at 31 March 2025
<p>DAERA has reported that CAFRE review Student Support Policies to ensure that they are reflective of the support measures which enhance the learning environment providing opportunity for learners to reach their potential.</p> <p>Ensure that learners with a diagnosis access support services in a timely manner.</p>	2022 – Present	Learners with specific needs have a bespoke learning plan in place to help them to achieve their potential to succeed and progress whilst studying at CAFRE. In most instances for ASD learners this includes the provision of a 'time out' scheme in the learning environment and access to a learning support mentor.	The learner health survey identifies learners with additional learning needs, disabilities, or long-term illness. This survey acts as the main referral to the Student Support service which allows the team to put in place reasonable adjustments early in the academic year. Completed review of the Learner Support Policy.	Not known	CAFRE Student Support Service	CAFRE employed an additional Student Support Officer since August 2022. This has reduced waiting time for referrals and the implementation of reasonable adjustments, enabling targets to be met. During the 2023/24 academic year 23 learners with an ASD diagnosis were supported by the Student Support Service. CAFRE works closely with the EANI transitions team to ensure that there is a smooth transition to college life.	Since January 2025, CAFRE increased the number of Student Support Officers from 2 to 3. This has enabled increased targeted learner support. During the 2024/25 academic year 36 learners with an ASD diagnosis were supported by the Student Support Service. CAFRE continues to work closely with the EANI transitions team to ensure that there is a smooth transition to college life.
Department for Economy reported that Colleges offer transition/orientation visits.	Ongoing from point of application.	Students are better prepared to manage college environment.	Student retention	Departmental funding to Colleges.	EA SENCOS. Social Workers in Trust. Inspire.	Ongoing.	Each College offers Orientation visits and/or virtual tours to applicants who may be anxious about attending College.

Initial Needs Assessment before enrolment. Ensure that learners with or without a diagnosis access support services in a timely manner.	At point of application / disclosure	Student feedback. Higher rates of attendance and success.	Conversion rates of application to enrolment.	Departmental funding to colleges.	Internal Learning Support Teams in collaboration with EA, Cedar, other external stakeholders	Collaboration across the FE sector which improves consistency.	Ongoing.
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What did we do?	When did we do it?	What difference has it made?	How did we measure this?	How much funding was allocated to it?	Key partner	Progress at 2024	Progress at 31 March 2025
Links with Education Authority (EA) & school SENCOs in advance of enrolment. Access to counselling from Inspire. Open days.	At point of application and disclosure, or during term time when a student appears not to be coping.	Students are better prepared to manage college environment. Higher retention and attendance rates.	External feedback e.g. parents/social work teams/EA transition.	Funding provided by Dept for the Economy.	Links with EA Transition Teams, SENCOs, Chartered Psychologists.	Ongoing.	FE Colleges are working hard to build stronger relationships with EA and schools. In some area, the Step Up (educational passport is used) to ensure the person with autism is heard.
DfE Careers Service - Market Sounding Exercise - Provision of Digital Technology and Tools to Support the Delivery of Careers Advice and Guidance to Autistic Clients. In addition, an Information gathering stakeholder survey has issued.	From 2024		The Careers Service has initiated a market sounding exercise to garner market views on the provision of an online solution which can be used by Autistic young people and adults to navigate their career pathways and learn more about the range of opportunities available, both in education and the world of work. Information received from this exercise will be evaluated by the Department and used to inform decisions on a future procurement process.	Nominal funding required at this stage of the procurement. Business case development will be in next phase and will be dependent on market sounding and survey information.	Key partners will come on board later in the project.	Project timetable: Procurement phase (commencing with Market Sounding exercise) in progress.	Market Sounding Exercise with potential suppliers is complete (August 2024). User insight surveys, seeking views and preferences of autistic clients, parents, teachers, and the wider autism community, also complete (Citizen Space, May 2024). Feedback from both exercises has been used to develop a technical specification and project approach. This project will take a phased approach, with initial implementation planned for the 2025/26 business year.

Commitment 2 <i>We will work in partnership to enable autistic people to feel understood and supported throughout their education, to experience environments which are inclusive to their needs and to have a workforce who are equipped with understanding to recognise and respond to the specific needs of autistic pupils and students.</i>							
What did we do?	When did we do it?	What difference has it made?	How did we measure this?	How much funding was allocated to it?	Key partner	Progress at 2024	Progress at 31 March 2025
In Southern Trust the AAIS (Autism Advisory Intervention Service) quarterly meetings continue with Autism Services for children/young people known to both services.	This is ongoing.	Collaborative working, sharing of information and streamlining support for children and young people known to both services.	This has not been measured.	No additional funding needed.	AAIS- The Autism Advisory and Intervention Service (AAIS) is a regional EA (Education authority) service that provides advice and support for pupils with Autism Spectrum Disorder within their educational provision.	Ongoing.	Ongoing.
AAIS staff provided a virtual parent/carer information session through Autism Services.	February 2024	Parents/carers received valuable information about AAIS and how families can access school-based support.	395 parent/carers registered to attend the virtual parent/carer information session.	From within Autism Services	AAIS	Due to success a joint approach will continue to ensure parents/carers are aware of supports available.	As reported in 2024, due to success a joint approach will continue to ensure parents/carers are aware of supports available.
AAIS shared online access and links to training modules with Autism Services staff.	January 2024	Sharing of these resources and links to training has provided staff with additional information and support for Autistic children/young people.	This has not been measured, data on staff uptake of training modules will be collated.	EA funding	EA	Autism Services continue to share these training modules with staff.	As reported in 2024, Autism Services continue to share these training modules with staff.

What did we do?	When did we do it?	What difference has it made?	How did we measure this?	How much funding was allocated to it?	Key partner	Progress at 2024	Progress at 31 March 2025
<p>South Eastern HSC Trust Children and Young People's Autism Service: EBSA Project (Emotionally Based School Avoidance)</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>	<p>Three live workshops for parents/carers each year, presented jointly with Middletown Centre for Autism and EA Education Welfare Service.</p> <p>EBSA resources also sent out on a regular basis to all families on pre and post diagnostic databases.</p>	<p>Feedback from service users</p>	<p>No additional funding</p>	<p>Education Authority and Middletown Centre for Autism.</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>

What did we do?	When did we do it?	What difference has it made?	How did we measure this?	How much funding was allocated to it?	Key partner	Progress at 2024	Progress at 31 March 2025
<p>Department of Education has reported that Phased implementation of a new Special Education Needs (SEN) Framework will improve participation and empowerment through the assessment process.</p>	<p>Phased implementation of the new Framework commenced late 2021. (Note – duty on Education Authority (EA) about having regard to views of the child (Section 1 of 2016 SEND Act) was commenced on 18/12/20)</p>	<p>Improved and reduced timescale for the SEN statutory assessment and statementing process resulting in speedier access to special education provision a child needs to help them achieve their full potential.</p>	<p>New governance and monitoring arrangements will measure achievement of the new statutory timescales and appropriate use of exceptions.</p>	<p>Excepting staffing costs, there are no direct costs associated with the ongoing development of the SEN Framework. However, DE recognises the additional pressures that schools will face in meeting many of the new requirements associated with the new Framework and has highlighted a budgetary need of circa £30m per annum to assist implementation of the SEN Framework. Due to budgetary constraints, it has not been possible for schools to be allocated the full amount each year; however, they have always received some level of funding.</p>	<p>Department of Education Department of Health Education Authority Health and Social Care Trusts Department of Justice.</p>	<p>The draft SEN Regulations are in the final stages of completion and the associated Code of Practice is being updated to reflect changes.</p> <p>When the Regulations are made, officials intend to commence provisions of the SEN and Disability (SEND) Act 2016 as soon as reasonably practicable.</p>	<p>The draft SEN Regulations are in the final stages of completion.</p> <p>Officials have been working through complex legal advice on proposed changes to the new Regulations.</p> <p>DE continues to work closely with the EA and Health in relation to the new draft SEN Framework ensuring readiness for commencement across all relevant organisations.</p> <p>Across 2025/2026 the EA SEND Implementation team will be delivering in depth training to all schools on the Graduated Response Framework which will assist teachers</p>

							and practitioners in applying the new draft statutory Code of Practice (CoP) appropriately.
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What did we do?	When did we do it?	What difference has it made?	How did we measure this?	How much funding was allocated to it?	Key partner	Progress at 2024	Progress at 31 March 2025
<p>Department of Education has reported that Phased implementation of a new Special Education Needs (SEN) Framework will improve participation and empowerment through the assessment process. (continued)</p>	<p>Core funding agreed for April 2023 – March 2024.</p>	<p>Improved participation and empowerment for all children going through the SEN assessment and statementing process.</p> <p>The new statutory Personal Learning Plan (PLP) will help schools and the EA improve, and keep under review, their programme of special educational provision for each pupil who has special educational needs.</p> <p>The EA, in developing the new Local IMPACT Teams, has taken into account the need to incorporate PLPs and this will be used as the primary information source for schools when referring a child for Stage 2 services. This should represent a significant reduction in the bureaucracy surrounding referrals.</p>	<p>To be confirmed as development progresses.</p> <p>To be confirmed as development progresses.</p>	<p>Allocated funding for 2023/2024 was £11m</p> <p>Funding for 2024/25 will be finalised as part of the department's overall budget considerations</p>		<p>DE is working closely with the EA to agree a phased timeline for the other sections of the Act to be commenced.</p> <p>Training on the PLP has been completed with 77% of schools.</p> <p>Discussions are ongoing around the Joint Plan and RQIA/ETI have been approached to consider how this will be inspected.</p>	<p>Allocated funding for 2024/2025 was £11m.</p> <p>The EA's SEND Implementation Team were funded £1,271k for 2024/25 to complete a range of preparatory work to allow full commencement of the new draft SEN regulations.</p> <p>To date, 77% of schools have attended PLP training with 41% of schools showing some level of engagement with the PLP on C2K.</p> <p>As required by the section 4 of the SEND Act 2016, discussions are ongoing around the EA/Health Joint Plan which will evidence cooperation across organisations.</p>

							The Joint Health and Education Oversight Group, continues to meet to oversee of key emerging issues for children and young people at the health / education interface.
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What did we do?	When did we do it?	What difference has it made?	How did we measure this?	How much funding was allocated to it?	Key partner	Progress at 2024	Progress at 31 March 2025
Continued provision for Middletown Centre for Autism (MCA) in conjunction with department of Education and Youth (Ire)	April 2023/ March 2024.	Improved co-operation between education and health to ensure children receive the help they need as quickly as possible. Improved partnership across Northern Ireland and Republic of Ireland in relation to the understanding and development of autism practice.	An EA/Health Joint Inspection Plan on co-operation will be devised by Education Training Inspectorate and Regulation and Quality Improvement Authority.	£1.5M 23/24 (DE 50% of funding – total amount of funding to organisation is £3m)	Department of Education Department of Education and Youth (Ire) Middletown Centre for Autism.	Work is ongoing to develop a workplan which will set out key areas of opportunity for co-design approach and potentially joint commissioning of services.	In 2024–2025, the Centre launched a dedicated Early Years online resource, designed to support foundation-aged children awaiting diagnosis. This resource draws on evidence-informed practice and is tailored to the needs of parents, early years professionals, and the voluntary sector. In 2024–2025, Middletown Centre for Autism continued to play a lead role in a Department of Health–commissioned (and funded) e-learning programme designed to build capacity and understanding across the entire HSCNI workforce—totalling 64,000+ staff.

<p>Through the Education Authority (EA) block grant make provision for the EA Autism Advisory and Intervention Service (AAIS) who provide advice and support to mainstream schools/preschool settings, parents/carers and children & young people (C&YP) relating to ASD (Autism) across all mainstream educational phase</p>	<p>Commenced February 2023.</p>	<p>Universal support is provided in terms of advice and signposting to resources, while more targeted support and training provision can be provided to school staff and parents/ carers where particular needs have been identified.</p>	<p>A Joint health/ Education Group has been established to enhance opportunities for integration across the two systems. MCA submit quarterly returns on progress against their annual business plan.</p> <p>Number of new referrals to AAIS (annually). Number of C&YP registered with AAIS (annually).</p>	<p>£4M 22/23</p>	<p>Department of Education Education Authority.</p>	<p>Ongoing</p> <p>Ongoing</p>	<p>Ongoing</p> <p>Ongoing</p>
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What did we do?	When did we do it?	What difference has it made?	How did we measure this?	How much funding was allocated to it?	Key partner	Progress at 2024	Progress at 31 March 2025
End to End Review of SEN		<p>The objective of the End-to-End Review is that children and young people with SEN will have their needs met with the right support from the right people at the right time and in the right place. An implementation plan will be brought forward which in practical terms will lead to:</p> <p>Our children with SEN enjoy the benefits of inclusion and have the same opportunities as their peers without SEN;</p> <p>Staff and schools are confident and capable to meet needs;</p> <p>Parents and carers are assured and confident in the system; Services are high quality, timely and cost-effective.</p>	DE is currently developing an outcomes framework with input from academia, practitioners and professionals to explore how each of these 'Rights' can be delivered so that outcomes for children and young people will be improved.	<p>The review will be completed on a cost neutral basis however implementation of the emerging recommendations will require significant investment.</p> <p>Officials are currently working on to develop costed actions for delivery of reform of the system.</p>	Education Authority, Department for Economy, Department of Health, Department for Communities	<p>Four phase approach- Phase 1 - completed May 2023 Phase 2 - stakeholder engagement phase is nearing completion resulting in a number of suggestions for the way forward. Both phases will be followed by the development of options (phase three) and the way forward which includes an implementation plan (phase four).</p>	<p>Completed. The outworkings of the End to End Review of SEN will be taken forward by the actions within the SEN Reform Agenda Delivery Plan.</p>

What did we do?	When did we do it?	What difference has it made?	How did we measure this?	How much funding was allocated to it?	Key partner	Progress at 2024	Progress at 31 March 2025
Joint Health Education Partnership Lead	April 2023 – March 2024	Currently working across 9 special schools to develop community links and examples of best practice in supporting children/ young people with complex SEN, disabilities and medical needs.	Outcomes measurements underdevelopment	80k (DE 50% contribution and DoH 50% – total funding for post £80k)	Department of Education Department of Health Education Authority Public Health Agency Health and Social Care Trusts	9 locality groups established around the special schools. Additional funding of £78k provided through PHA Participation fund to run a pilot non-traditional therapeutic intervention programme across the 9 schools.	Regional Strategic Special School Steering Group established with 3 year collaborative action plans developed in each pilot school (September 2025 – September 2028). Work continued to engage the voices of children and young people with complex disabilities through music, art and play therapies. Initial scoping of summer opportunities for children and young people with complex disabilities.
EAs AAIS ran a social media campaign for Autism awareness month. A picture a day was posted from Autistic CYP to raise awareness	March 2025	Good level of public engagement to raise autism awareness.	Public engagement. Facebook Reach: 482,064 Engagement: 23,771 X/Twitter Reach: 28,317 Engagement: 528 Overall Reach: 510,381 Engagement: 24,299	No funding	AAIS & Autistic CYP & families	N/A activity applies to 24/25 only.	Completed

of "What Autism Means to me.			(likes and shares)				
AAIS in partnership with a group of autistic young people developed a six minute long video designed for viewing in school assemblies and in form classes during the month of April to celebrate Autism Acceptance Month	March 2025	The aim was to enhance peer understanding and acceptance of neurodiversity and autism and to start a conversation on how we need all different minds for a thriving society.	School engagement – currently this has been viewed by over 50,000 school age pupils.	No Funding	AAIS & Autistic young people	N/A activity applies to 24/25 only.	Completed.
DAERA Encouraged staff to undertake Just-A-Minute (JAM Card) awareness training.	2023 - forward	Increased staff awareness and understanding of the needs of those with autism and other hidden disabilities who face communication barriers	Training course feedback	No additional funding was required.		72% of Policy, Economics & Statistics Division staff have undergone training	DAERA completed a Jam Card training initiative in conjunction with NICSHR, successfully encouraging DAERA staff to complete training. At June 2024, 90.44% of DAERA staff passed this training.

What did we do?	When did we do it?	What difference has it made?	How did we measure this?	How much funding was allocated to it?	Key partner	Progress at 2024	Progress at 31 March 2025
<p>Department for Communities' People & Place Strategy – Neighbourhood Renewal (NR) funding has helped to provide small capital funding and also to support core community infrastructure which supports the delivery of programmes and services, some of which include provision for people with Autism and related conditions. These services can assist in addressing educational needs, living independent lives and enable better informed choices, which in turn may increase interaction with wider society and provide a pathway to an enhanced and more involved role in society.</p>	<p>April 2023 to March 2024</p>	<p>Neighbourhood Renewal NR capital investment enabled the purchase for much-needed specialist nurture equipment to assist pupils experiencing social, emotional, and behavioural issues to further develop, remove barriers to their learning and help them reach their full potential. The carefully chosen equipment has had a positive effect on the mental health and well-being of the rest of the school community, including staff and parents. The investment addressed inequalities and obstacles within the Lurgan NR area which directly affect the everyday lives of all disabled people, including autistic people.</p>	<p>Baseline data is requested as part of the application process to record the current position. Positive data to inform the post project evaluation was gathered to assess what benefits had been realised from the funding provided. The school Principal confirmed as an example “We had one pupil who suffers from selective mutism and has not spoken since attending school two years ago. The role play furniture, including a kitchen and shop, purchased as part of this project have provided a breakthrough in getting her to speak to her peers”</p>	<p>£10,000.00</p>	<p>Community Empowerment Division DfC in conjunction with Education Authority</p>	<p>One of small capital project which has completed.</p>	<p>Project completed in March 2024.</p>

<p>Department for Communities' People & Place Strategy – Neighbourhood Renewal (NR) funding has helped to provide small capital funding and to support core community infrastructure which supports the delivery of programmes and services, some of which include provision for people with Special Educational Needs, including autism. These services can assist in addressing educational needs, living independent lives and enable better informed choices, which in turn may increase interaction with wider society and provide a pathway to an enhanced and more involved role in society.</p>	<p>April 2024 to March 2025</p>	<p>Neighbourhood Renewal NR capital investment enabled the purchase for much-needed specialist outdoor education equipment for a local school to assist SEN pupils experiencing social, emotional, and behavioural issues to further develop, remove barriers to their learning and help them reach their full potential. The carefully chosen equipment will have a positive effect on the mental health and well-being of the rest of the school community, including staff and parents. The investment addressed inequalities and obstacles within the Lurgan NR area which directly affect the everyday lives of children with SEN, including those with autism.</p>	<p>Baseline data is requested as part of the application process to record the current position. As the project only completed at the end of March 2025, DfC don't yet have the data to measure the project's success however, data to inform the post project evaluation will be gathered to assess what benefits had been realised from the funding provided.</p>	<p>£29,529.00</p>	<p>Community Empowerment Division DfC in conjunction with Education Authority</p>	<p>This is a new project that commenced in April 2024</p>	<p>One of small capital project which has completed March 2025.</p>
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Commitment 3 <i>We will seek opportunity for increased understanding of autism in the workplace to enable individuals to feel supported within employment and enhance career opportunity.</i>							
What did we do?	When did we do it?	What difference has it made?	How did we measure this?	How much funding was allocated to it?	Key partner	Progress at 2024	Progress at 31 March 2025
The Northern Ireland Housing Executive (NIHE) has established internal Disability Workstream group	January 2023	The Disability Workstream has raised the visibility of our commitment to Equality, Diversity & Inclusion	We gathered feedback through our colleague engagement survey, as well as evaluation of the Autism training and other awareness sessions	Not quantifiable – embedded in partnership arrangements and other budgetary commitments.	N/A	Disability workstream operational	Disability Workstream and EDI Steering meets regularly and currently developing staff engagement plan for 2025 with consideration being given to staff survey, and speakers at staff conference.
The NIHE has in place Reasonable adjustments policy for job applicants, interview process & induction. Risk Assessments for new & existing staff.	Reasonable adjustments policy launched June 2023	Full consultation with the individual requesting the reasonable adjustment. Provides managers responsible for reasonable adjustments with information regarding their obligations under the policy and the procedures to follow.	Through the number of requests	N/A	Engagement with Equality Commission NI and Access to Work through DfC when needed	Ongoing business as usual	Completed in 2024.

Commitment 3 <i>We will seek opportunity for increased understanding of autism in the workplace to enable individuals to feel supported within employment and enhance career opportunity.</i>							
What did we do?	When did we do it?	What difference has it made?	How did we measure this?	How much funding was allocated to it?	Key partner	Progress at 2024	Progress at 31 March 2025
South Eastern HSC Trust has reported that Staff from Childrens and Adults team have contributed to Trust working group on Neurodiversity in the Workplace.	Ongoing	Trust will produce managers toolkit and guidance for staff who are neurodiverse	Not yet measured	No additional funding	Trust Equality Department.	Ongoing	Draft documents are being prepared.

What did we do?	When did we do it?	What difference has it made?	How did we measure this?	How much funding was allocated to it?	Key partner	Progress at 2024	Progress at 31 March 2025
Department for Infrastructure DfI) as part of Enabling all government departments to become JAM (Just A	March 2022.	Our government services will have an increased understanding of the need to provide 'Just a Minute' to those who may have a	Through annual review of training completion rates followed by promotion of the online awareness training through internal	NK	NICS Learning and Development NOW Group	Ongoing within DfI	DfI completed Jam Card training in conjunction with NICSHR. As of June 2024, 57.4% of DfI staff

Minute) Card friendly organisations.		communication barrier or require additional support.	communications.				completed JAM Card training.
Translink has remained committed to supporting the JAM (Just a Minute) card, agreeing a Corporate Strategic Partnership with the NOW Group	April 2024	Formalised an ongoing partnership with the NOW Group and our continued commitment to 'Just a Minute' (JAM) Card.	Business analysis of needs to further embed the JAM Card	£11,983pa	NOW Group	JAM card awareness continues to be raised as part of induction briefings and updates for customer facing staff. As the Corporate Partnership is embedded, there will be further training and awareness activities.	JAM card awareness continues to form part of induction briefings and training. Over 100 managers have participated in online learning training on Neurodiversity.
Northern Ireland Water is currently in the process of becoming JAM (Just A Minute) Card friendly organisation.	April 2023	It will increase understanding of the need to provide 'Just a Minute' of patience to customer and colleagues who may have a communication barrier or require additional support.	Through training completion rates, followed by promotion of the online awareness training through internal communications.	£5000 + Vat	NOW Group/ Customer Experience Team.	Training has been included in all new staff inductions.	Currently 1,376 staff having completed JAM online awareness training. New staff are directed to completed JAM card training as part of their on boarding.

What did we do?	When did we do it?	What difference has it made?	How did we measure this?	How much funding was allocated to it?	Key partner	Progress at 2024	Progress at 31 March 2025
<p>Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs Promoted the Autism Strategy 2023-2028 and Supporting Autistic People e-learning course on LInKS to all staff. Permanent Secretary followed this up with a video to all staff during Autism Week.</p>	<p>On 22 January, and 19 & 26 February 2024, and again during Autism Week 2 April 2024.</p>	<p>The profile of the Autism Strategy and associated supporting training has been continually raised.</p>	<p>Page views for the video are being reviewed.</p>	<p>No additional funding was required.</p>	<p>Not applicable.</p>	<p>Ongoing.</p>	<p>DAERA now has a dedicated Autism Representative and Diversity Champion. Details of all Representatives and Champions have been published on the DAERA intranet for staff information. Following a review, all Champions and Representatives are now part of an Equality and Diversity Working Group (EDWG) which support the work of the Departmental Board in equality and diversity matters. The EDWG further provides</p>

							assurance on the Department's equality, diversity, good relations and human rights obligations, demonstrating its commitment to promoting equality and good relations across all aspects of its business; in its policies, information and service provision for customers, visitors and staff, and ensuring that all of its services are accessible and delivered in ways that meet the needs of its diverse customers.
Department for Communities (DfC) are Developing a new Disability & Work Strategy for Northern Ireland.	Ongoing	This Strategy will set a refreshed strategic approach in supporting Deaf and disabled people, and those with long term health conditions to move closer, find, sustain and progress in employment.	Measures to report on progress against the Disability & Work Strategy will be considered as part of the co-design process.	Not made available	Department for Communities in collaboration with statutory and non-statutory organisations	Strategy development progress: Overarching research into disability within the Labour Market published. Over 60 hours of focussed co-design completed with stakeholders. Statistical	Strategy development progress: Following consideration and endorsement of strategic direction by DfC Minister, the draft narrative and action plan has undergone an extensive quality review series with

						<p>modelling of 10-year target complete.</p> <p>Draft strategy narrative and action plan developed in anticipation of Ministerial consideration</p>	<p>stakeholders and action owners. A final Strategy will now be presented to DfC Minister for approval. Planning is in place to progress for Executive consideration, before undertaking a 12-week public consultation. Draft Equality Impact and Rural Needs Assessments have been completed in preparation.</p>
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What did we do?	When did we do it?	What difference has it made?	How did we measure this?	How much funding was allocated to it?	Key partner	Progress at 2024	Progress at 31 March 2025
Access to Work (NI), Workable NI and Condition Management Programme have supported people with disabilities including those with Autism.	April 23 to March 24 and April 24 to March 25.	Support in employment and/or management of health condition for those that require it.	Branch records don't collate measurements for people with specific conditions.	Not quantifiable.	Access to Work (NI) assessment support delivered by Access Centre NI, RNID and Armstrong Health Professionals	4,080 people with disabilities including those with Autism have been supported.	4,733 people with disabilities including those with Autism have been supported.
Department of Finance (DoF) delivered a promotional campaign to encourage completion of the "Supporting Autistic People" e-learning module.	March 2023 – April 2024.	Civil servants have a better understanding of autism including how to support autistic colleagues within the workplace (to include families and carers) and a greater understanding of how we can develop and deliver our services to support autistic people (to include families and carers).	Department of Finance (Learning and Development) monitors the number of colleagues enrolling and completing e-learning.	None – delivered by People & Organisational Development as part of the NICS programme of diversity and inclusion work 2023/24.	Department of Finance. NICS Diversity Champions Network.	The e-learning module now features in a new Equality, Diversity and Inclusion learning bundle which launched in May 2023. An extra c1,000 colleagues have completed the e-learning module since April 2023.	The "Supporting Autistic People" e-learning module continues to be hosted on the learning bundle on the staff learning portal and is accessible to all staff. An internal communications campaign is under development for delivery in early 2025/26 to further promote the module.

What did we do?	When did we do it?	What difference has it made?	How did we measure this?	How much funding was allocated to it?	Key partner	Progress at 2024	Progress at 31 March 2025
<p>DoF delivered Awareness sessions on areas of neurodivergence along with internal communications to celebrate diversity days such as Dyslexia Awareness Week, ADHD Awareness Month, and Neurodiversity Celebration Week.</p>	<p>March 2023 – April 2024</p>	<p>The sessions were delivered by Employers for Disability NI (EFDNI). Attendees have a better understanding of the areas of neurodivergence and how to better support neurodivergent people.</p>	<p>Attendees had to register to attend the session and complete an evaluation afterwards. A survey of the entire programme is underway which will inform the 2024/25 programme of learning.</p>	<p>Learning is provided via the Civil Service’s lead partner membership of EFDNI (c£6,000).</p>	<p>Department of Finance. EFDNI</p>	<p>18 hours of disability awareness training delivered – 14.5 of which covered areas of neurodivergence. The programme included two three-hour disability positive sessions which offered attendees the opportunity to undertake an assessment to become “Disability Positive”. Accredited. A separate Disability Positive session was also delivered to Diversity Champions. 30 colleagues from across the Civil Service have been accredited.</p>	<p>During 2024-25 as part of the NICS’ annual programme of disability awareness training it delivered a series of webinars in collaboration with Employers Disability NI on topics including “Disability Positive” (with all 23 attendees being awarded the Disability Positive accreditation) and Neurodiversity.</p>

What did we do?	When did we do it?	What difference has it made?	How did we measure this?	How much funding was allocated to it?	Key partner	Progress at 2024	Progress at 31 March 2025
DoF also carried out an internal communications campaign to promote the JAM Card training to all colleagues as part of the renewed partnership with the NOW Group.	March 2023 – April 2024	The campaign has been widely promoted across all Civil Service departments and ensures government services have an increased understanding of the need to provide 'Just a Minute' to those who may have a communication barrier or require additional support.	Monthly completion rates of the training provided for each department are monitored and submitted to the Diversity Champions Network and departmental training co-ordinators.	£4,000 for 3-year license (April 2022 – March 2025)	Diversity Champions Network Department of Finance NOW Group	The Civil Service remains committed to being a JAM Card friendly organisation – at April 2024 74.42% of the Civil Service workforce (17,654 colleagues) completed the training.	In August 2024, the NICS was accredited as a JAM Card friendly organisation with 17,000 staff completing the JAM Card training.
DoF carried out Phase one of the review of the reasonable adjustment policy and processes commenced, focusing on in-work support for existing disabled colleagues. (Phase two will be taken forward in late 2024 to consider recruitment, selection and onboarding)	April 2023 - ongoing	A working group has been established to progress the review to deliver improvements to ensure line managers are equipped with the relevant knowledge and skills; and to provide an effective and efficient reasonable adjustment process for users which complies with legal obligations under the Disability Discrimination Act 1995, reflects best practice, and supports service delivery/business needs.	Terms of reference for the policy review have been developed.	None – delivered by People & Organisational Development as part of the NICS programme of diversity and inclusion work 2023/24.	Department of Finance. NIPSA. Civil Service Commissioners. NIPSA. NICS Disability Staff Network.	Progress to date: a working group established including those with lived experience; Terms of Reference for the review developed; benchmarking / best practice of other public sector organisations and sector experts completed; review of existing processes alongside an assessment of HR policy impacts completed; development of a user journey map	A review of the NICS reasonable adjustment process progressed in 2024. A draft policy and supporting guidance have been developed, informed through a working group, with a range of stakeholders, including colleagues with lived experience, Trade Unions, and external independent disability advocates.

						to inform policy review; and a draft policy, supporting guidance and resources under development.	
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What did we do?	When did we do it?	What difference has it made?	How did we measure this?	How much funding was allocated to it?	Key partner	Progress at 2024	Progress at 31 March 2025
“Empowering Neurodivergent Thinking in the NICS” hybrid event delivered (open to all colleagues).	October 2023	The event aimed to challenge perceptions about neurodivergent thinking and aimed to provide attendees with a better understanding of what neurodivergence is.	A survey was undertaken with attendees - post event attendance: on a scale of 1-5 (1= very unaware – 5= very aware) attendees’ average awareness of neurodiversity in the workplace increased from 2.9 to 4.	TEO led on the event and will include funding allocated.	The Executive Office Department of Finance NICS Disability Champion NICS Autism Working Group	The hybrid event promoted the value of neurodivergent thinking in the workplace; the Civil Service’s commitment to being a diverse and inclusive employer; and how together we can better empower our workplace.	Event held. Completed.
A new “Neurodiversity: Line Manager’s Toolkit” was developed.	October 2023 – March 2024	The new toolkit will improve understanding of neurodiversity –the challenges a neurodivergent colleague might face; the adjustments they may need in the workplace; how line managers can better support them.	Stakeholders in the development of the toolkit included those with lived experience. Positive feedback from colleagues and stakeholders received.	None – delivered by People & Organisational Development as part of the NICS programme of diversity and inclusion work 2023/24.	Department of Finance NICS Diversity Champions Network NICS Disability Staff Network NICS Autism Working Group Equality Commission for Northern Ireland Employers for Disability NI Neurodivergent colleagues.	The Neurodiversity: Line Manager’s Toolkit launched on 17 April 2024 as part of Autism Awareness Month 2024.	Following the launch of the Neurodiversity Line Manager’s Toolkit’s in April 2024 to mark Autism Awareness Month, it has been promoted via internal communications and the NICS has met with other employers to showcase the toolkit and share learning. The toolkit is publicly available on the DoF website:

							Neurodiversity: NICS Line Manager's Toolkit Department of Finance
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What did we do?	When did we do it?	What difference has it made?	How did we measure this?	How much funding was allocated to it?	Key partner	Progress at 2024	Progress at 31 March 2025
<p>The Northern Ireland Civil Service's participation in phase two of the JobStart Scheme as an employer launched.</p>	<p>February 2024 – ongoing</p>	<p>The JobStart Scheme aims to provide employability opportunities to those furthest removed from the labour market through specialist pathways, which includes young disabled persons and provides an opportunity for the NICS as an employer to provide work experience and potential job opportunities to disabled persons, including neurodivergent persons.</p>	<p>Civil Service departments were asked to identify placement opportunities to allow the Civil Service to participate in the scheme as an employer.</p>	<p>Funding for work experience placements will be provided by the JobStart Scheme. Placements are currently being advertised - final number actual placements therefore not yet available.</p>	<p>Civil Service departments NI Civil Service Commissioners</p>	<p>Opportunities are being launched in tranches – the first tranche launched on 21 February 2024 and were based in the Department for Communities (DfC). At April 2024, seven JobStart Scheme placements are active in the Civil Service. Final placement numbers will be known by 30 June 2024.</p>	<p>25 individuals completed their placement with the NICS via the Job Start Scheme. 18 of whom satisfactorily completed their placement and were converted to o permanent employment via an exception to the merit principle as agreed with the Civil Service Commissioners. 17 of the 18 were disabled. DAERA reported that they provided a placement for two participants who successfully completed the scheme. One has since gained permanent employment as an Administrative Officer with the department, subject to the successful completion of their probation period.</p>

What did we do?	When did we do it?	What difference has it made?	How did we measure this?	How much funding was allocated to it?	Key partner	Progress at 2024	Progress at 31 March 2025
<p>Enable all government departments to become JAM (Just A Minute) Card friendly organisations.</p>	<p>During 23/24</p>	<p>Department of Justice Increased awareness to all staff and promote a greater understanding of difficulties some people may have with communication.</p>	<p>Through feedback from staff and completion of training.</p>	<p>None</p>	<p>Healthcare</p>	<p>At April 2024, 84.14% (2,865) of DoJ staff completed JAM card training and continues to maintain its accreditation.</p> <p>An Autism awareness pack has been delivered to all recruits to the Northern Ireland Prison Service from 2012. All staff currently serving in NIPS have had the awareness session.</p> <p>The Prison Service College has recently reviewed the Autism awareness pack and it will be relaunched as "Neurodivergent individuals within our Prisons" later this year.</p>	<p>At April 2025, 86% (2,864) of DoJ staff completed JAM card training and continues to maintain its accreditation.</p> <p>In August 2024, the NICS was accredited as a JAM Card friendly organisation with 17,000 staff completing the JAM Card training.</p>

What did we do?	When did we do it?	What difference has it made?	How did we measure this?	How much funding was allocated to it?	Key partner	Progress at 2024	Progress at 31 March 2025
<p>DfE Careers Service - Market Sounding Exercise - Provision of Digital Technology and Tools to Support the Delivery of Careers Advice and Guidance to Autistic Clients.</p> <p>In addition, an Information gathering stakeholder survey has issued.</p>	<p>May 2024 ongoing</p>	<p>The Careers Service has initiated a market sounding exercise to garner market views on the provision of an online solution which can be used by Autistic young people and adults to navigate their career pathways and learn more about the range of opportunities available, both in education and the world of work. Information received from this exercise will be evaluated by the Department and used to inform decisions on a future procurement process.</p>	<p>N/A</p>	<p>Nominal funding required at this stage of the procurement. Business case development will be in next phase and will be dependent on market sounding and survey information.</p>	<p>Key partners will come on board later in the project.</p>	<p>Project timetable: Procurement phase (commencing with Market Sounding exercise) in progress.</p>	<p>Work is continuing on the implementation of a new interactive careers tool tailored specifically for autistic clients. Market Sounding Exercise with potential suppliers is complete (August 2024). User insight surveys, seeking views and preferences of autistic clients, parents, teachers, and the wider autism community, also complete (Citizen Space, May 2024). Feedback from both exercises has been used to develop a technical specification and project approach. This project will take a phased approach, with initial implementation planned for the 2025/26 business year. To be completed shortly.</p>

Commitment 4 <i>Through increased understanding of autism, our housing providers will be more equipped to provide supportive engagement and adequately support the needs of autistic people.</i>							
What did we do?	When did we do it?	What difference has it made?	How did we measure this?	How much funding was allocated to it?	Key partner	Progress at 2024	Progress at 31 March 2025
The Northern Trust supports The Employability working group made up of various partners (chaired by NOW Group)	Group ongoing – meets quarterly.	Various organisations plan together identifying local need and addressing the same.	Group focused on actions relating to housing and housing support.	Core funding for staff including admin.	NOW Group chair group, NHSCT provides ongoing support	Ongoing	Ongoing Engagement with employers and those with lived experience (Feb, March 25) to determine challenges/ barriers getting into employment. Results to inform work of group for 25/26.
Northern Trust rolled out a live and recorded employment webinar	February 2024	Provision of guidance and support to autistic individuals on getting into work and whilst in work. Recorded webinar also accessible on NHSCT website for referring back to.	Shared across wide range of relevant organisations. Feedback following live webinar.	N/A.	NHSCT support the chair and group	Complete	Resource available on Trust website and continues to be promoted widely across NHSCT area.

What did we do?	When did we do it?	What difference has it made?	How did we measure this?	How much funding was allocated to it?	Key partner	Progress at 2024	Progress at 31 March 2025
Northern Trust developed an employers guide focused on autism and reasonable adjustments to support and educate employers.	April 2023	Provision of advice and guidance for employers in relation to autism, reasonable adjustments and how to support autistic individuals in the workplace. Co-produced with those with lived experience.	Shared across wide range of relevant organisations and included in NHSCT Disability toolkit.	N/A	NHSCT support the chair and group.	Complete.	Promoted widely on an ongoing basis. Remains within the NHSCT Disability Toolkit.
Northern Trust produced a blog for National Inclusion Week (September 2023) for CIPD.	October 2023	Provision of advice and awareness raising for CIPD professionals focused on autism and employment, alongside the Northern Area working group in order to create deeper understanding. Various organisations plan together identifying local need and addressing the same.	CIPD LinkedIn page reach of 8,100 followers.	N/A	Northern Area Employability Working Group members.	Complete	Completed in 23/24

What did we do?	When did we do it?	What difference has it made?	How did we measure this?	How much funding was allocated to it?	Key partner	Progress at 2024	Progress at 31 March 2025
NHSCT supports the Independence choice and control (focused on housing) working group made up of various partners (including service users)	Ongoing	Various organisations plan together identifying local need and addressing the same.	Group focused on actions relating to housing and housing support. Guided by those with lived experience.	Core funding for staff including admin.	NIHE Chair the group – supported by NHSCT.	Ongoing.	Ongoing
Development of x3 guides to support autistic individuals.	Guide 1 finalised Advice for autistic people on finding a suitable home. Guide 2 - “Advice for autistic people on applying for housing” nearing completion	Will support autistic individuals in their housing journey based on feedback by those with lived experience	Group focused on actions relating to housing and housing support. Guided by those with lived experience.	N/A	NIHE Chair the group – supported by NHSCT.	Ongoing.	Guide 1 “Advice for autistic people on finding a suitable home” & Guide 2 - “Advice for autistic people on applying for housing” finalised by NIHE Comms. Guide 3 focused on tenancy sustainment to be commenced.

What did we do?	When did we do it?	What difference has it made?	How did we measure this?	How much funding was allocated to it?	Key partner	Progress at 2024	Progress at 31 March 2025
SHSCT direct families to 'make the call' service on NI Direct to avail of support regarding benefits and access to housing.	August 2023	Autistic young people are being signposted to the correct department to seek advice on housing needs.	This has not been measured.	No additional funding needed.	NI Direct Government	Ongoing	As in 2024, reported as Ongoing.
Autism Intervention Therapist can complete 1:1 support with Autistic adults to access improved independent living skills.	August 2023	Autistic young people are better informed on how to improve their independent living skills and access supports necessary.	This has not been measured.	No additional funding needed.	No additional partners	Ongoing	As in 2024, reported as Ongoing.
Northern Ireland Housing Executive (NIHE) provided Autism Spectrum Disorder Training for 600 staff.	Nov 22 – Sept 23	Raised staff awareness & understanding to enable them to support autistic customers and autistic staff.	Evaluation of training	£2,600 for 600 staff	DoH Cedar Foundation	There is an ongoing requirement to provide this training & budget is currently being explored.	ASD training for staff ongoing with further provision of Autism Experience Sensory bus. Gave staff a real world experience of what living with ASD is like for customers and colleagues, to use in their front line duties and for future development of policies. This was offered as new training during 24/25. Cost was

								£1,090 per visit for 24 – 30 staff.
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What did we do?	When did we do it?	What difference has it made?	How did we measure this?	How much funding was allocated to it?	Key partner	Progress at 2024	Progress at 31 March 2025
In NIHE, Customer Outlet and Workplace Working Group established with a subgroup reviewing Customer Facing Environments. This will be for all customer requirements, including consideration of the needs of autistic people	Early 2023/24	Work in progress to review accommodation and facilities.	Still to be measured	No budget allocated for work to date	Internal	Ongoing	Ongoing
In NIHE, Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Team are working with nonverbal/neurodiverse customers to provide effective communication for these client groups.	Late 2023/24	Work in progress.	Customer feedback	Difficult to calculate as it is embedded within Communication Support budget.	Employers Forum for Disability Department of Health Department for Communities Cedar Foundation.	Continued engagement with customers.	Ongoing.
NIHE are Co-designing an advice leaflet for Autistic People on finding a suitable home	Commenced in 2022 /23	Work in progress.	Consultation as each stage is developed	N/A	Northern HSC Trust Autism Initiatives Mid- Ulster Council two Autistic Service Users one Parent of Autistic child	Work in progress to complete 3 stages	Leaflet expected to be published shortly.

What did we do?	When did we do it?	What difference has it made?	How did we measure this?	How much funding was allocated to it?	Key partner	Progress at 2024	Progress at 31 March 2025
NIHE - Development of an Inclusive Design Guide for Cognitive and Sensory Impairment	Drafting during 2023/24	Work in progress. It will highlight the design standards required for people with Cognitive & Sensory Impairments and therefore improve living environments for the various client groups.	Work in progress.	£5k	Dementia Design Specialist Architect Health representatives Housing Advisory Unit Architect Illustrator O.T. Service QUB School of Architecture	Work is progressing to complete the final draft and anticipated launch is April/May 2025.	Currently going through final draft process with NIHE Comms with official launch expected Summer 2025. Costs are £6,100 in addition to staff resources to develop guide.

Commitment 5 <i>We will work within our community to increase understanding and acceptance of autism and create inclusive environments to support the needs of autistic people and their families and carers.</i>							
What did we do?	When did we do it?	What difference has it made?	How did we measure this?	How much funding was allocated to it?	Key partner	Progress at 2024	Progress at 31 March 2025
NHSCT working in partnership with Mid and East Antrim (MEA) Council to roll out their Autism Friendly Borough Initiative as part of the Councils Community plan.	Ongoing	<p>Mid and East Antrim (MEA) Council services and businesses have a better understanding of autism and how to adapt their services to meet the needs of autistic children, young people, adults and their families.</p> <p>Parents/Carers in the MEA Council area have a better knowledge of what support is available for different life stages for autism.</p>	<p>Autism friendly session evaluations.</p> <p>Post roadshow feedback/evaluations</p>	<p>NHSCT Core funding of NHSCT staff supporting including admin.</p> <p>£906.50</p>	MEA Council with NHSCT Lead for Community plan action.	<p>Impact award achieved for outside spaces and leisure centres, with sessions provided to businesses ongoing.</p> <p>Ongoing Impact Award with Museums & Arts. Complete</p>	<p>Autism champion's network commenced to ensure best practice and meet ongoing needs.</p> <p>Continued delivery of Autism friendly sessions.</p> <p>Training for Trainers package in development with those with lived experience.</p> <p>Supported MEA with the development of a billboard campaign.</p> <p>Project winner of NILGA Award – equality, diversity and inclusion category.</p> <p>Cost in year £500 for provision</p>

							of lived experience sessions for autism champions.
Southern Trust Join Armagh, Banbridge and Craigavon (ABC) Council meetings	January 2024	Speech and Language therapist has guided accessible communication and inclusive language advice for council staff.	This has not been measured.	No additional funding needed.	ABC Council	Autism services in SHSCT sit on the Inclusive ABC Strategic Working Group	As in 2024, Autism services in SHSCT sit on the Inclusive ABC Strategic Working Group.

What did we do?	When did we do it?	What difference has it made?	How did we measure this?	How much funding was allocated to it?	Key partner	Progress at 2024	Progress at 31 March 2025
Southern Trust provide Social Evenings with The Gathering Rooms	Started October 2023	Families have availed of support, recreation, and early intervention in a range of settings, various locations	447 attendees in total. Positive feedback/ comments received form families.	Funding from within Autism Services.	The Gathering Rooms	Due to success of this intervention SHSCT are considering further funding to continue these type of sessions.	Due to success of this intervention The Gathering Rooms sought their own funding to continue these events.
Western Trust's Staff from the Children & Young People's Autism Service have facilitated Autism awareness training - Supporting Professional in Supporting Families."	June 23 to March 24	Equips professionals working with children, young people and their families to be aware of the needs of people with autism.	Service User feedback questionnaires.	No Funding	WHST	155 Attended training.	Further training was provided in 2024/25 with 66 staff attending.
Department of Health's Strategic Planning and Performance Group and Middletown Centre for Autism designed for HSC three training modules that are research and practice/strengths based.	Commenced in July 2024	Not yet launched. This training will ensure that staff better understand how to make appropriate adjustments for each autistic person, and to ensure that our mental health service is person-centred, adapting treatment and care at every point throughout a person's journey.	Feedback will be monitored through evaluation sheets from end user of training package and service users of Mental Health services who have autism.	£52,000	Department of Health & Middletown Centre for Autism	N/A	It is envisaged that this training will be available by July 2025.

What did we do?	When did we do it?	What difference has it made?	How did we measure this?	How much funding was allocated to it?	Key partner	Progress at 2024	Progress at 31 March 2025
Western Trust developed Children & Young People's Autism Hub on Trust Internet Page	March 2024	The hub provides a central source of information and resources on autism services for service users	N/A	No funding	WHSCCT	Launched on 29 March 24	During 2024/25 the online hub had 2,702 visits from 1,629 individual users. 2,736 documents have been downloaded. The CYP EIS service page had 1,101 visits and the post diagnostic service page had 644 visits.
Western Trust Children & Young People's Autism Service purchased diagnostic assessments from external provider on contract.	January to March 2025	An additional 20 children/young people had their assessment completed after waiting for a significant length of time.	Number of assessments.	£24,000	WHSCCT	Commenced in January 2025.	20 additional diagnostic assessments were completed up to 31 March 2025.
In South Eastern Trust, Children and Young People's Autism Service has established 2 new posts in line with EHWBF 1 x Social Worker and 1 x Youth Worker.	Planning took place 2024/2025	Both these posts have been designed in order to provide responsive community based support to families of children both pre and post diagnosis. They will make links with relevant community partners and aim to increase the provision of community based supports	Not yet measured	Allocation from Children's Disability Funding.		Commenced during 24/25.	Recruitment planned for June 2025.