

# National Autism Policy: Lessons for Neurodiversity

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**AUTISTICA**  
Building brighter futures through autism research

**Together we can help autistic people and their families have long, happy, healthy lives.**



# How Autistica works

We're led entirely by what matters most to autistic people and their loved ones:

- Mental health and suicide
- Physical health, especially epilepsy
- Language and communication
- Early intervention
- Under-served groups

We invest in the best science, the brightest scientists and the most crucial research tools so we can have maximum impact for the people we serve



# Autism Policies in England

- Autism Act 2009 – the only disability-specific law
- National Autism Strategy 2010 (adults)
- NICE – Autism Recognition, Referral, Diagnosis and Management Guidelines 2012
- Think Autism 2014
- NHS Long Term Plan 2018
- Refresh of the National Autism Strategy due in late 2019 (adults & children)
- National Research Strategy for Autism and Learning Disability due in 2020

# How did we get here?

- Tireless advocates: autistic people, parents, professionals, charities
- Champions in Parliament, the NHS and civil service
- Shift in public awareness and understanding
- Better evidence from research and new solutions
- Data laying bare the inequalities, human impact and costs
- Media attention on high profile failures of care



# Could we improve policy and outcomes for all neurodevelopmental conditions?

Traditionally viewed as a hugely varied set of discrete conditions: autism, ADHD, learning disability, Tourette's, OCD, epilepsy, dyslexia, dyspraxia, speech and language disorders, genetic syndromes...

But having more than one NDC is the norm, not the exception

Research shows overlapping biomarkers from genetics and neuroimaging through to behaviour across NDCs but biomarkers within disorders lack sensitivity and specificity

All NDCs are under-funded, under-resourced, under-researched and all have poor outcomes across health, education, QoL etc

**What if we started to embrace this complexity?**





# Embracing Complexity

- Charities and organisations spanning neurodevelopmental conditions
- Collaboration, not competition
- Led by the views of the people we serve
- Starting a new dialogue about how we diagnose, support and improve outcomes for everyone with NDCs across the lifespan
  - Multi-diagnostic pathways
  - Better training, reasonable adjustments and proactive support
  - Research to understand the true overlap between NDCs and find new ways to deliver more joined-up diagnosis and services





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