



Coventry and Warwickshire Neurodiversity and Autism Stakeholder Newsletter

Welcome to the Coventry and Warwickshire Neurodiversity and Autism Stakeholder Newsletter. Neurodiversity and Autism remains a top priority and through working with partner organisations from across Coventry and Warwickshire, we aim to improve the lives of neurodiverse and autistic children and adults and help them feel part of their communities.



New Community Autism Support Service launched



The new Community Autism Support Service has launched to support people across Coventry

and Warwickshire. Residents in Coventry and Warwickshire who may self-identify as autistic, those awaiting an autism assessment and those with an autism diagnosis will have more choice in the emotional and practical support available.

Building on the familiar existing CASS (Community Autism Support Service), this service will see new elements introduced as a result of feedback from families and coproduced with local residents.

The service will also be easier to access using a single 'front door' approach. This will mean that residents can access this all-age service through a single phone number and dedicated website, available now.

The service draws on the collective strengths of local organisations Coventry and Warwickshire Mind and Act for Autism, working in a collaborative partnership with Autism West Midlands.

The main aim of the new CASS service is to be responsive to local need, providing better targeted support in the community. CASS aims to improve autism understanding and contribute to greater lived experience; helping to support self-esteem, confidence, relationships and helping to improve emotional wellbeing and mental health

First contact with CASS will be with the Navigation Service, a single phone number and email with a dedicated support team, available Monday to Friday, 8am to 8pm. Based on individual needs, the team will help with emotional support and signpost, provide information and, if required, identify further personalised support, as follows:

1. **Community Outreach service** – an experienced Coventry and Warwickshire-based team, working with individuals to identify goals and provide group, one-to-one and themed support for children, young people and adults.
2. **Peer mentoring service** – this new element of CASS aims to connect autistic individuals with trained peer mentors, with their own lived-experience, helping to support with daily routines, confidence building, and wellbeing support, exploring opportunities to engage in local activities and social and community groups.
3. **Training and education** – a hugely valuable programme of courses and webinars to suit all needs. Workshops, toolbox sessions and recorded materials help build confidence and improve autism understanding. Drawing on lived experience, all sessions and courses provide effective and practical support for day-to-day living, in the community, in school, and in the workplace.

CASS is available by:

- Calling the dedicated local-dial telephone support line 024 7601 2333 – five days a week (Monday–Friday), 8am–8pm
- Browsing the dedicated website www.casspartnership.org.uk – hosting information, guidance and signposting links and online referral.
- Emailing navigation@casspartnership.org.uk
- Updates and service news will be posted on facebook, twitter and LinkedIn – search for @casspartnership



Transforming support for children and young people with SEND in Warwickshire



Graduated Approach for Neurodivergent Children and Young People



A co-produced resource on the Graduated Approach for Neurodivergent Children and Young People, has launched in schools across Warwickshire.

The Graduated Approach is an innovative resource that aims to provide a comprehensive guide to support the education and development of neurodivergent students. It has been developed through a collaborative effort between Warwickshire County Council, health partners, local schools, parents, carers, and young people and has been designed to provide a stepped approach to identifying and addressing the needs of neurodivergent children and young people.

The new document includes guidance for schools on how to identify and assess neurodivergent needs, as well as practical advice on how to implement interventions and support strategies. It also emphasises the importance of involving parents, carers and young people in decision making and ensuring that their voices are heard. The guidance is work in progress and, whilst autism is featured more prominently, as we move forward the scope will broaden to include a wider range of information to include other aspects of neurodiversity, to support the graduated response in schools.

The new resource has been developed in response to growing recognition of the unique challenges faced by neurodivergent children and young people and aims to ensure that all children and young people receive the support they need to thrive, regardless of their individual needs.

Since its launch, parent carers have fed back the need for the guide to recognise other aspects of neurodiversity. In response to this feedback there is a plan to expand the guidance to reflect wider aspects of neurodiversity with an initial focus on ADHD.

Download the full [Graduated Approach for Neurodivergent Children and Young People](#)

Graduated Approach

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Schools and settings will identify possible social communication and interaction needs. Staff will understand 'masking' and listen to home experiences when parents are concerned. Training will be implemented so curriculum delivery, environment and curriculum content are adapted and accessible to all. Staff will make reasonable adjustments in all four areas of need: Communication and Interaction; Cognition and Learning; Social, Emotional and Mental Health Difficulties; Physical and Sensory Needs SEND Inclusion Guidance will be used' www.warwickshire.gov.uk/send-inclusion-guidance The school/setting will have a behaviour policy based on the CPS model or restorative practice. <p>People involved - children/young people, parent carers, senior leaders, SENCo, all teaching staff, external trainers</p> <p>STEP ONE</p> <p>Child is displaying communication and interaction needs</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Staff identify further difficulties with specific aspects e.g. sensory needs, building relationships, environment, accessing learning through using tools such as individual sensory audits, Communications and Interaction (C and I) toolkit, Conversations with parents/carers and one-page profiles established Further training needs for staff identified by SENCo, Autism lead or external services through resources such as AET competency framework SENCo may make referrals to other services in consultation with parents. Progress monitored and assess, plan, do, review cycle robustly in place <p>People involved - children/young people, parent carers, senior leaders, SENCo, all teaching staff, external specialists in education and health</p> <p>STEP TWO</p> <p>Specific challenges with aspects of school life</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Referrals to be made to external professionals, such as Specialist Teaching Service (STS), to use a coaching method to ensure implementation of recommendations. Significant Adult or Inclusion Mentor involvement to be sought. Further referrals to be made where appropriate to SALT, Occupational Therapy (OT) etc, in line with communication and interaction differences and any co-occurring conditions <p>People involved - children/young people, parent carers, senior leaders, SENCo, all teaching staff, external specialists</p> <p>STEP THREE</p> <p>Difficulties continue even with thorough embedding of level two</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Individual assessment of the child/young person to establish further personalised provision Pupil Centred Education Plans to be put into place for the child/young person <p>People involved - children/young people, parent carers, senior leaders, SENCo, all teaching staff, specialist teaching support</p> <p>STEP FOUR</p> <p>Continuing challenges which require further support</p> |
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Autism Assessments – Have you been asked for more information after a referral?

ALERT: If you are contacted by the Neurodevelopmental Service regarding you or your child's Autism Assessment, please respond as soon as you can.

If you are struggling to contact us by email or phone, please ask someone to contact us on your behalf. The team want to be able to offer you an assessment, but they are missing some up-to-date information to do this.

We are continuing to work hard with our partners to see as many people on our waiting list as we can in order to reduce the time you have to wait for assessment.

We also wanted to highlight that the majority of our assessments are conducted virtually (online), as many people have fed back that it helps to have the appointment in a familiar environment without the stress of having to go somewhere new. If you don't have the facility for a virtual appointment (a tablet or laptop work best), please do let the team know and we will facilitate a face-to-face appointment, although there may be a slightly longer wait for these.

Schools and education professionals: In the build up to the summer months, we are sending out a lot of pre-assessment packs so that we can continue to see people during school holidays. We are aware that this can put a lot of pressure on schools to complete the packs, but if this can be done, it allows us to see the children and young people as soon as we can.

The team are always happy to help you. If you have been contacted you will find their email address and phone number on the letter; please provide as much information as possible if contacting the team.

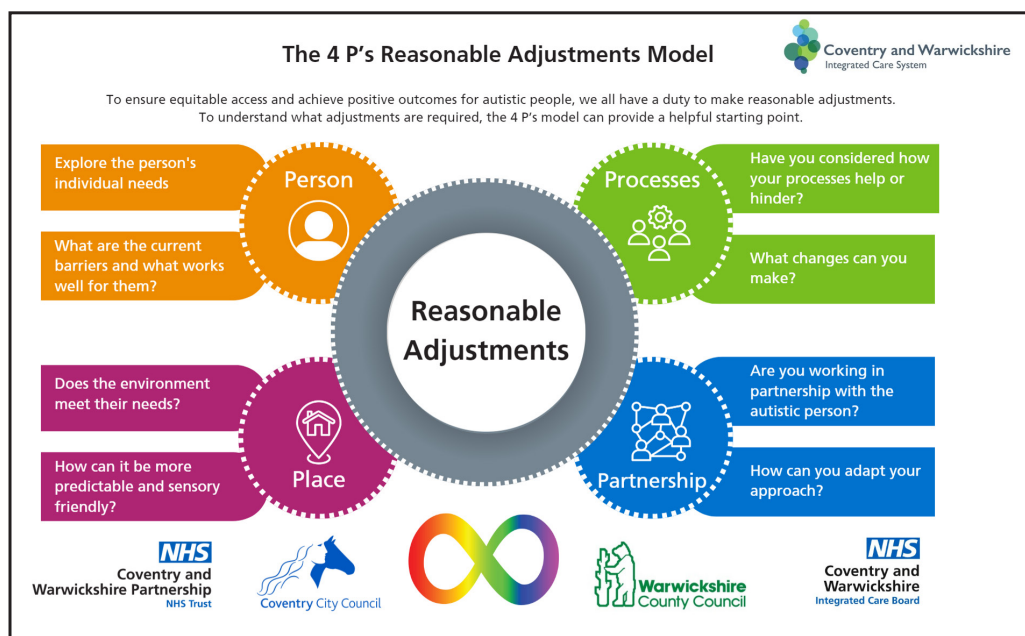
New poster to promote Reasonable Adjustments

The Neurodevelopmental Liaison Team has been providing training and consultations to mental health clinicians as part of a three-year pilot.

As part of this work, a reasonable adjustments guide has been developed to support mental health clinicians to identify and implement reasonable adjustments to ensure that autistic people have equitable access and adapted support (see page 8).

We were keen to provide an infographic that could be displayed in clinical areas and used as a quick reference for busy clinicians. This work has been co-produced with Kat Stapleton and Ben Begg (Experts by Experience) alongside Karen Scorer (Clinical Lead Occupational Therapist) and Sarah Leddy (Clinical Lead Speech and Language Therapist). We hope that this can be shared and used across all services within the Coventry and Warwickshire Integrated Care System.

[Download your own printable version of the poster here](#)



Update on a successful Neurodiversity Celebration Week and Autism Acceptance Week 2023



From the 13th to 19th March (Neurodiversity Celebration Week) and the 27th March to 2nd April (Autism Acceptance Week), health and care partners across Coventry and Warwickshire marked these weeks with special online events for families and professionals interested in finding out more about autism.

During Neurodiversity Celebration Week, **21,000** impressions / reach across various social media platforms were achieved following information in the Spring newsletter.

During Autism Acceptance week **24,000** impressions / reach were achieved across various social media platforms.

The number of views of the [Information and Advice Booklet](#) on the Dimensions of Health and Wellbeing website increased in March and April during Autism Awareness Week to **458** views. Overall, since its launch in July 2022 there have been an impressive **17,000** views which is a huge achievement!

World Autism Acceptance Week was an opportunity to highlight the importance of understanding more about autism and to inspire others to take steps to build kinder, more inclusive communities.

Individuals, families, professionals and businesses were encouraged to take part in the week by signing up to the free events on offer and taking the opportunity to discover more about autism, and the information and support available for autistic people and those who work or live alongside them. There were three online webinars with 659 people registering an interest and **94** attendees present. The online events included: Nurturing a Positive Autistic Identity Webinar - for professionals; Self-awareness and Self-identity Question & Answer - for those living with or working to support autistic children and young people; and Nurturing a Positive Autistic Identity Webinar - for families and carers.

A special thanks to all those who got involved and made the week such a huge success.

Coventry and Warwickshire Children and Young People's Specialist Neurodevelopmental Team Achievements

Coventry and Warwickshire Partnership NHS Trust's Specialist Neurodevelopmental Service for Children and Young People would like to share a few of their achievements following investment to address the waiting times for Autism assessments locally. The investment came to the Trust at the end of 2021 - early 2022.

Assessments

We are pleased to tell you that **4,619 assessments** have now been completed against a **target of 3,712**, since December 2021. In addition, we have started to contact people who have been waiting **48 weeks** to arrange an appointment for an assessment, against a target of **142 weeks**.

Staffing

And we've recruited 30 new staff, out of 31 advertised! What our families say...

Feedback from families

I liked the fact there was a balance of things she does well and there wasn't a focus on her deficits. I liked that the wording was about things she struggles with now rather than difficulties forever. Massive thanks to both of the clinicians we spoke to, they were really friendly and gentle so thank you.

I could not have foreseen a better outcome for my son. We knew the diagnosis really as we understand our child, so we just had to hear it from a specialist.

Thanks so much, it really makes a difference to be able to talk through family life and ways to improve my son's social side of things.

The staff treated us all with great care and understanding, all information was given with great understanding and was very helpful for any given future care for my son.

Introducing Fleur Greening, Coventry and Warwickshire's All-Age Autism Strategy Programme Manager

Fleur Greening is the new Coventry and Warwickshire All-Age Autism Strategy Programme Manager. Here's what she had to say...



"I started my career as a nurse and now work for Coventry and Warwickshire Partnership NHS Trust (CWPT) whose organisational values resonate deeply within me. I believe in compassion, respect, diversity, integrity, and collaboration; I feel we need to strive to achieve excellence for all people and their carers within our communities.

During my varied career I have gained extensive specialist senior management experience in Local Government, the NHS, education and within service provision in the voluntary sector. I have gained expertise across key areas including planning, performance, commissioning, and quality improvement.

I completed a BSc in Human Psychology, a post graduate diploma in Professional Development and a Post Graduate certificate in Public Service Commissioning (currently completing Masters). My passion is in making a difference by working collaboratively and inclusively across partner organisations and with our people and communities.

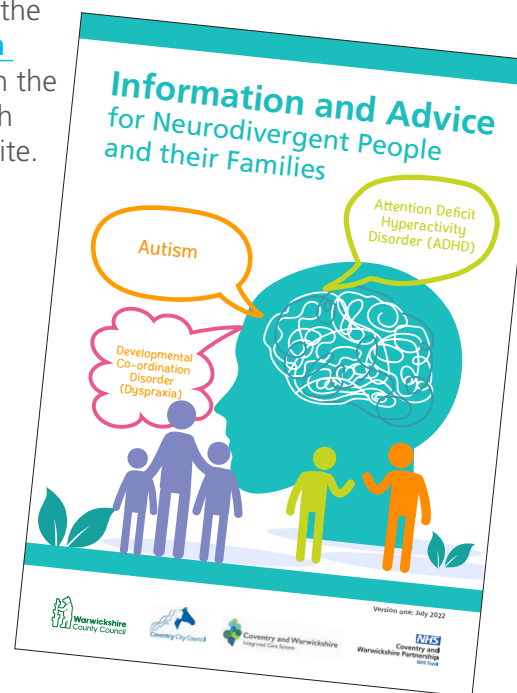
As the Coventry and Warwickshire All-Age Autism Programme Manager, I am privileged to will work across the Integrated Care System supporting partners with the development of a range of transformational and improvement programmes and projects, and work streams. This work is vital to ensure the successful delivery of the All-Age Autism strategy and the five priority areas that underpin it. I look forward to meeting you and working together to continue this fantastic progress.

The five-year strategy was informed by a range of co-production and mapping activity undertaken to build a shared understanding of the experience of autistic people of all ages and their families and carers in accessing support appropriate to their needs and getting a formal diagnosis of autism. There has been excellent progress and a collaborative and co-produced approach to achieving the vision and priorities set out in the [Coventry and Warwickshire All-Age Autism Strategy 2021-26](#) during the first 18 months.

I will take a lead on co-ordination of strategic delivery, assurance, monitoring, and reporting on the five priority areas progress, alongside Autism Strategy Priority Leads who will continue to progress activity against defined deliverables for years 2/3 of the Coventry and Warwickshire Autism Strategy. Our Autism Partnership Board will continue to ensure that Coventry and Warwickshire achieve the shared vision in the Coventry and Warwickshire Joint Strategy for Autistic people 2021-2026 and is co-chaired by an Expert by Experience.

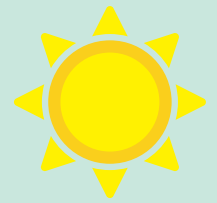
Please don't hesitate to contact me to link up and find out more: fleur.minet@covwarkpt.nhs.uk."

Remember you can also find out about local and national information for neurodivergent people and their families in the [online information booklet](#) available on the Dimensions of Health and Wellbeing website.



Experts by Experience Area

Focus on... Employment Support



During April, Grapevine's Expert by Experience (EbE) Co-production Service gathered feedback from EbEs about their experiences of employment.

A number of EbEs came forward to share their experiences and valuable insights. These included; barriers to getting a job and keeping it, experiences of employment services and support, reasonable adjustments, careers advice and information for young people, difficulties navigating the benefit system, and employer attitudes and understanding.

Listening to these experiences is helping to build a current understanding of challenges autistic people in Coventry and Warwickshire are facing around employment. An EbE representative will soon be sharing feedback themes with members of the Autism Partnership Board and employment providers. This will help partners to work together to see how EbE feedback can influence current, and future, services and support for autistic people.

We will provide an update about this area of work in the Autumn issue of this newsletter. In the meantime, if you have lived experiences related to employment that you would like to share to help build this understanding, please contact Remie (EbE & Grapevine Project Worker) via email

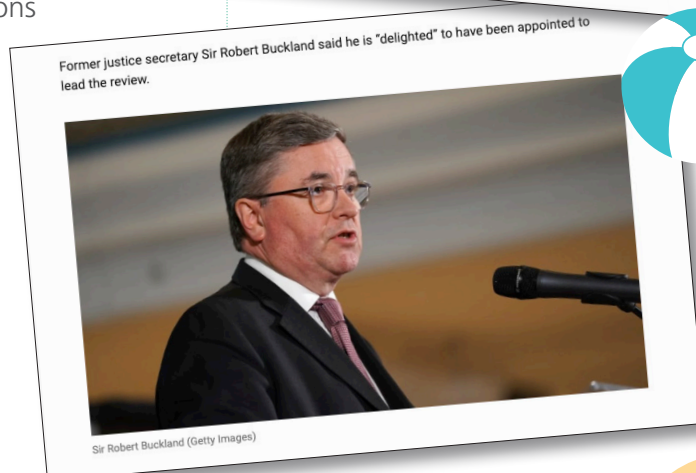
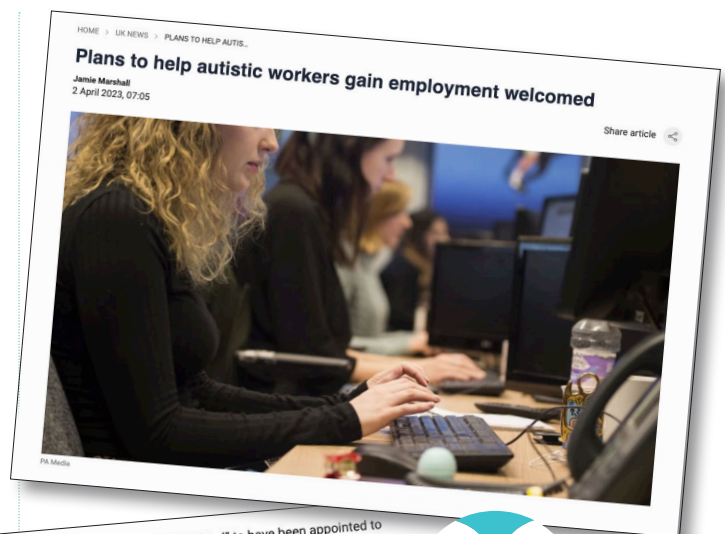
ebe@grapevinecoventryandwarwickshire.co.uk

Helping autistic people gain employment

Charities have welcomed the launch of a review aimed at sparking a rethink into access to work for autistic people. Employment rates for autistic people are particularly low with fewer than three in 10 in work, the Government said.

The Buckland Review of Autism Employment will consider issues including how employers identify and better support autistic staff in their workforce, what more can be done to prepare autistic people for starting or returning to a career, and working practices or initiatives to reduce stigma and improve the productivity of autistic employees.

The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) said the review will ask businesses, employment organisations, specialist support groups and autistic people to help identify barriers to work.



Warwickshire Supported Employment Service: "Changing Lives, Creating Futures"



Their ambition is to inspire those they work with to gain and sustain employment, striving towards independence and develop essential skills along the way.

For each individual who enters the service, they will receive 1-1 support from their journey guide who will work with them throughout their journey into work.

Together the individual and the journey guide will co-design a progressive support plan which will shape a series of engaging activities and link to a programme of workshops which meet individual needs.

"Changing Lives, Creating Futures"

WARWICKSHIRE
SUPPORTED
EMPLOYMENT
SERVICE

OUR PRINCIPLES OF SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT

- Self Determination**
 - Supporting people with learning disabilities and/or autism to be proactive in making choices about all aspects of their life.
- Person Centred Planning**
 - A process of self discovery and support from a Journey Guide to achieve their goals.
- Social and Economic Inclusion**
 - Supporting individuals to gain/maintain employment that will build life experiences and strive towards independence.
- Choice and Independence**
 - Having the support, advice and information to make real choices and the support to be able to make those choices a reality.
- Everyone is Employable**
 - All individuals who want to work, can work in a job that matches their skills and needs.
- Develop New Skills in Work**
 - People learn by having life experiences and developing skills in real life situations.

Our service

- 1 to 1 support shaped individual needs
- Working in Warwick workshops

02476 796462

Service Support

- 1-1 Journey Guide Support
- Working in Warwickshire Job Clubs
- Preparation for Employment Workshops
- Access to Warwickshire Inclusive Employment Opportunities
- Employer Tours
- Travel Training
- Support into work and Job Coaching
- Access to Training and Qualifications
- Ongoing Careers Development Support

Eligibility of the Service

- Have a primary need of a Learning Disability /Autism
- 18 years and upwards
- Live in Warwickshire with a fixed address
- Want to gain paid employment
- Have the right to work in the UK

To make a referral to the service, [click here](#)

To contact the Warwickshire Supported Employment Service:

Warwickshire Supported Employment Service
Warwickshire Skills Hub
Eliot Park Innovation Centre
Nuneaton
CV10 7RH

Email: supportedemployment@warwickshire.gov.uk

Call: 024 7679 6462

Other useful links around employment for people with autism.

- [Levelling the employment playing field](#) – a webinar by Autistica

In this webinar, UCL-based researcher Mel Romualdez discusses disclosure and recruitment for autistic job seekers, and the barriers that make it difficult for autistic people seeking employment to succeed. She also discusses ways in which recruitment processes, and workplaces in general, can be made more inclusive.

- [Entrust Care Partnership Pathway to Employment](#)
- [Mencap Traineeships](#)

Professionals Corner

NEW: Reasonable Adjustments for Autistic Adults: A Mental Health Professionals' Guide

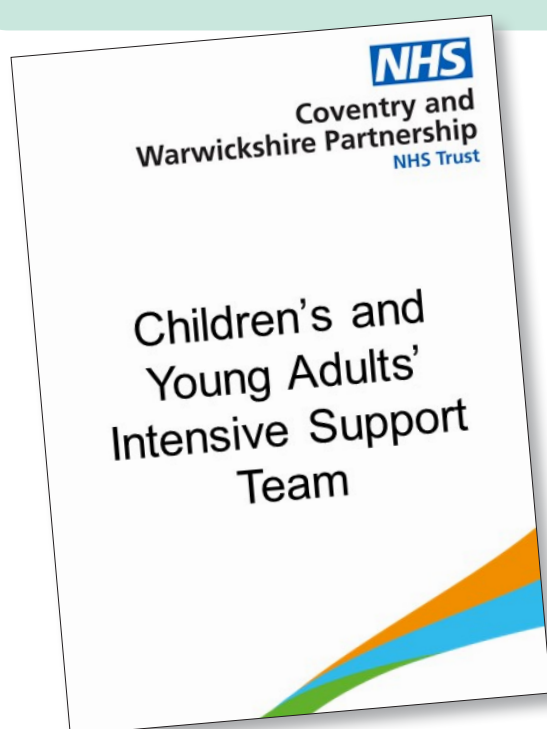
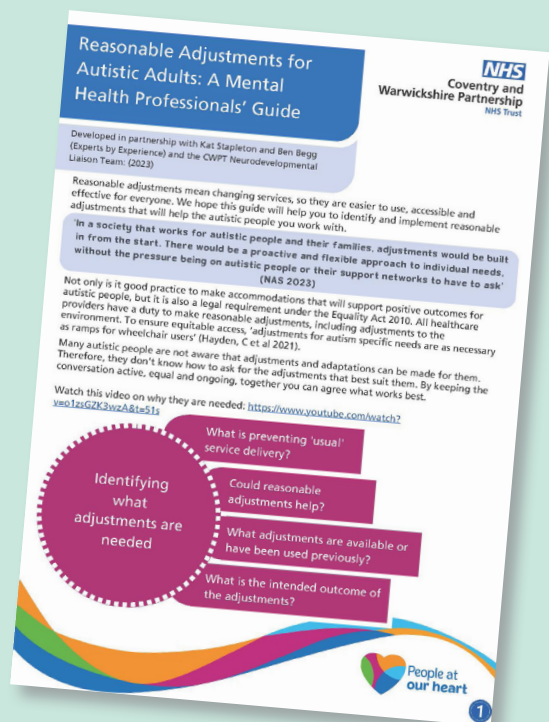
Reasonable adjustments mean changing services, so they are easier to use, accessible and effective for everyone. This new guide will help mental health professionals to identify and implement reasonable adjustments that will help the autistic people they work with.

Not only is it good practice to make accommodations that will support positive outcomes for autistic people, but it is also a legal requirement under the Equality Act 2010. All healthcare providers have a duty to make reasonable adjustments, including adjustments to the environment. Many autistic people are not aware that adjustments and adaptations can be made for them. Therefore, they don't know how to ask for the adjustments that best suit them. By keeping the conversation active, equal and ongoing, together it's possible to agree what works best.

Download the full [Reasonable Adjustments for Autistic Adults: A Mental Health Professionals' Guide](#).

Also see details of the poster about reasonable adjustments in this newsletter on page 3.

[Download The 4 P's Reasonable Adjustment Model poster.](#)



New Children's and Young Adults' Intensive Support Service leaflet for professionals

A new leaflet for professionals which outlines what the Intensive Support Team (IST) is and isn't, is now available.

[Download a copy of the IST leaflet for professionals](#)

