

# Autism Network Scotland Activity Overview

---

## **Sharing and Learning**

It has been a busy period for the Network as we continue to support knowledge exchange and the sharing of good practice throughout Scotland. Alongside our day-to-day business, this quarter has seen the culmination of two ongoing projects, relating to employability and transition, and further partnership working with NES to support the roll out of the Autism Training Framework, linking with our own Education Network with a focus on Early Years. Central to all of these projects has been a real push for meaningful consultation, coproduction and wider engagement.

### Employment

This month saw the launch of a new resource, the 'Autism & Employment' website, facilitated by our Employment Network. The resource was created through consultation with people on the autistic spectrum and their families and highlights the experiences of autistic people in relation to employment. The resource aims to be a hub of information about autism and employment and provides links to resources and initiatives across Scotland. In addition to the website, a range of additional resources have been created, aimed at improving understanding and awareness amongst employers, these include a number of case study videos which will be available online and leaflets to be disseminated nationally.

The website was launched at our third annual Employment Network event, at the University of Strathclyde. The event was attended by a range of stakeholders including people on the spectrum and their families, employers, supported employment providers and Human Resources personnel. Afternoon workshops enabled practitioners to work in partnership with people on the spectrum and their families, to identify the types of supports that should be available to them throughout the employment process. This information will be made into an additional resource and disseminated.

### Exploring Transitions: Digging Deeper Roadshow Report

Autism Network Scotland and the Association for Real Change carried out a series of roadshows in 2014 and 2015 which explored the Principles of Good Transition 2 document and its application to autism-specific transitions. The experiences of families in more remote and rural areas were of particular interest and events were held in Angus, Argyll and Bute, pan-Ayrshire, Dumfries and Galloway, Highlands and Islands (Inverness and Wick), Perth and Kinross, Scottish Borders, and Stirling and Clackmananshire.

The Digging Deeper Roadshow Report provides a summary of the information collated throughout the consultation and highlights suggestions made by families about what changes could be made to improve their lives and help create positive outcomes for people. The report was recently launched at the recent Lead Officers Event at the University of Strathclyde and will be disseminated throughout our networks, including our national Education Network and regional networks throughout Scotland. The report will also link closely to the workstreams identified by Working Group 2.

### NHS Education Scotland

Autism Network Scotland continues to work closely with NES to share good practice and help build capacity within mainstream services. We are currently in the process of collating examples of good practice as we build up to our Good Practice Guide Event and are working hard to ensure that we continue to disseminate information through our practitioner networks. Autism Network Scotland runs an established Early Years Network which includes a virtual forum online to share information and discuss ideas. The Network has also developed an Early Years newsletter which presents a range of useful articles, resources and links and we run a range of learning events hosted at the University of Strathclyde. Following our successful workshops at the Strathclyde Early Years Educational Research Conference in September, we are working with NHS Education for Scotland on the development of resources for early years practitioners. These will build upon delegate feedback from the conference.

In summary, the impact and outcomes overall in recent months are:

- Increased knowledge and understanding of the needs of people with autism in relation to employment and the development of a tangible resource for individuals, families and service providers.
- Increased knowledge and understanding of the needs of people with autism in relation to transition and the development of a tangible resource for a range of agencies across Scotland.
- Building confidence and appreciation that things are moving forwards and improving and that views/experiences will be taken into account, and that people on the autism spectrum and families and carers are included and contributions valued.
- Opportunities for individuals on the spectrum and their families to directly shape practice and to network with a range of agencies.
- The sharing of good practice in relation to Early Years to a range of practitioners across Scotland.
- Opportunities to discuss priorities and share ideas for how to improve collaborative working and channels for communication.
- Gaining knowledge and understanding of how and where people on the autism spectrum and their families and carers would like to engage with strategy work.
- Greater understanding of priorities for people with autism and their families and carers.