

# Autism Network Scotland Activity Overview

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Whilst the Network continues to support the national priorities of Health, Choice, Citizenship and Independence, three key themes have been central our recent activity, namely: Good Autism Practice, Health and Wellbeing; and Wider Engagement.

Good Autism Practice is acknowledged to be paramount to the delivery of the Scottish Strategy for Autism and no longer the focus of Working Group 3, needs to be supported through a range of activities and work streams. The theme was the focus for the 4<sup>th</sup> anniversary conference for the Scottish Strategy for Autism, which the Network hosted at the University of Strathclyde's Technology and Innovation Centre in December. The event focused on good autism practice across local authorities, transitions and employment. Throughout the day, delegates were invited to engage with each of the topics and supported to problem solve around issues impacting on service delivery at both strategic and practitioner level. Delegates were also given time to network and to visit the Marketplace, where several organisations who had successful Autism Development Fund projects were on hand to discuss their examples of good autism practice. Also in the Marketplace, a set of posters displayed how organisations had innovated since last year's conference. In addition to showcasing national and local initiatives, the event supported further connectivity between a wide range of stakeholders and regional providers.

The theme of Good Autism Practice also underpinned our most recent collaboration with NHS Education for Scotland - the delivery of a Good Practice Symposium focusing on support and intervention for autism. The symposium comprised a range of healthcare practitioners from a variety of disciplines who explored notions of good practice and underpinning principles and theories. The Network specifically promoted wider engagement through a variety of presentations which highlighted the importance of listening to and respecting autistic people in healthcare settings, and ways in which events could be made more accessible. Findings from the day will be developed into a good autism practice guide to build understanding and capacity within the health and social care workforce, supporting the ongoing work of Working Group 4.

Health and Wellbeing are prioritised throughout our network activity, particularly in relation to our education and early years networks. In addition, we have focused the health and wellbeing of women with autism, through our continued collaboration with the Scottish Women's Autism Network. Findings from our most recent event, the second in a series focusing on good autism practice for women, are being developed in partnership with SWAN, and will be fed back to the relevant working groups and NHS for Education Scotland.

Wider engagement and collaboration are central to the work that we, as the Network undertake and we continue to place people with autism and their families and carers at the heart of what we do. Engagement with the strategy continues to be supported by facilitating consultation events and smaller group discussions. Engagement with the autistic community at local level continues to grow and we recognise the need for varied, innovative approaches to ensure that we continue to extend this reach. We have developed a number of pilot sites which support a range of local area autism networks and we continue to work with Wider Engagement Team to understand the varied needs of the autistic community and to develop a multi-faceted approach to communication.

