

# Local Implementation

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Agreement was reached at October 2016's Governance Group meeting to review the future priorities for the Scottish Strategy for Autism, with the current strategic outcomes concluding on 31 March 2017. Since then, the Coordination team has met with each of the chairs of the Working Groups to review each group's current priorities and scope for expansion of those. Overall, existing focus will continue in areas such as transitions and diagnosis, with potential increased concentration on areas such as employment and public awareness of autism. The chairs' summary of existing output ranged from significant group progress to a review function for external activity.

The Fifth Annual Conference for the Strategy, in January 2017, provided a national focus on existing, continuing and new priorities for the remaining five years of the Strategy's lifespan, with all delegates participating in an exercise identifying these priorities. Consideration given to what had been successfully achieved through the Strategy to date highlighted the establishment and impact of the Autism Lead Officers' Collaborative, increased awareness of autism in services and elements such as the Toolbox, Menu of Interventions, The NES training framework and the Transitions guides. Transitions was also an area identified as requiring continuing priority. In this regard, this priority continues to gain momentum, the Principles of Good Transitions Three guide being launched at the conference, prior to its parliamentary launch, this time with a specific autism supplement, written by Lynsey Stewart of Autism Network Scotland. Other identified continuing priorities were diagnosis, employability and public awareness of autism.

Areas identified as important but not given focus in the existing strategy outcomes match the findings of the Coordination Team in their local implementation work. These will be considered by the Governance Group in terms of what can be prioritised for the remaining five years of the strategy, in addition to continuing priorities. The list was extensive but topics which featured across the workshops included early years, education, general health and mental health, aging, criminal justice, housing and homelessness. The new priorities, once agreed will inform the development of the performance outcome measurement tool which will enable more systematic analysis and monitoring of local planning and implementation.

Autism Network Scotland has been addressing some of these topics, as the necessity to address them has become apparent through our local findings. In terms of education, ANS is working with the Scottish Transitions forum to deliver a pilot day's training on autism and transitions to college staff across four colleges in Scotland. As aging and autism becomes increasingly apparent, ANS is collaborating with NES on autism and change across the lifespan, to develop an online training resource. In refreshing the Strategy's priorities in conjunction with local leads and others delivering policy at a local level, the disconnect between national and local policy diminishes. Our work with HSCPs has shown an increasing awareness of the need to address autism despite competing local priorities. The slight increase in autism coordination posts, or extensions of existing posts, across the country is illustrative of this.

As always, the focus on wider engagement continues. The first of a series of roadshows concentrating on capacity building in local communities commences next month in an area where significant input has been given to revitalise the existing local strategy. This will involve a member of the Wider Engagement Group and will attempt to furnish people locally with the means to engage with their HSCPs and local strategies, through an understanding of the policy landscape. Another



aspect of wider engagement is an emerging focus on “autism friendly” localities, as we start to support engagement with other Local Authority departments, such as Development and Regeneration Services with the aim of improving the lives of autistic people within their home towns and cities.

