



# Department of Health & Social Care



To: Directors of Adult Social Services

Copied to: Directors of Public Health  
Directors of Children's Services  
Clinical Commissioning Group Leads and Accountable Officers

19 September 2018

Dear Colleague

## The 2018 Autism Self-Assessment Framework

We are writing to advise you of the fifth autism self-assessment exercise on the implementation of the 2010 Adult Autism Strategy (as amended by Think Autism in 2014).

There has been exceptional support in the undertaking of the autism self-assessment since its commencement in 2012, and we are asking for your support in the completion of the 2018 autism self-assessment for your authority.

Local authorities continue to have an essential role in the implementation of the recommendations of the Autism Strategy and the statutory guidance that supports it, working with partners from the health, employment, criminal justice and other sectors. They are key in having broader responsibilities and opportunities within communities that can influence and raise the awareness and equality of autistic people that goes beyond the provision of social care. Equally it is important that adult social care works in partnership with children's services to build opportunities for young autistic people as they prepare for adulthood.

We are asking for your local authority to complete the autism self-assessment exercise **by Monday 10<sup>th</sup> December**, to allow for adequate consultation locally. To support this we would be grateful if you could disseminate the attached information to your authority's Autism Lead. Background on the exercise is attached at **Annex A** and information on how to submit information to Public Health England at **Annex B**.

Thank you again for your ongoing support and leadership in the delivery of this important work.

Yours sincerely

JONATHAN MARRON  
Director General  
Community and Social Care  
Department of Health  
and Social Care

GLEN GARROD  
President  
Association of Directors  
of Adult Social Services

### **Background**

#### **Purpose of the Autism Self-Assessment**

The purpose of the self-assessment is to enable local strategy groups to review their current progress in the implementation of the Autism Statutory guidance and Autism Strategy locally and to identify future priorities and plan in partnership with health partners, other key organisations and local autistic people and their families.

The self assessment process also enables the Government to meet its duty in monitoring the Strategy and identifying progress made in its implementation around the country.

The findings from this self-assessment will be included within the process of the upcoming Review of the Autism Strategy expected to happen in 2019, which also marks ten years since the Autism Act 2009. As in previous years the information submitted will be collated and analysed by Public Health England, before being shared widely.

The local authority, as the lead body locally, is tasked with the consolidation and submission of responses to the self-assessment. However it is important for the credibility of the exercise that local partner agencies are involved and reinforce the important role health commissioning play in the implementation of the Autism Strategy, in particular the diagnostic pathway and access to health care. We are also particularly keen to hear about the links with the criminal justice and wider community engagement including how autistic people and their family carers are fully involved in agreeing a shared view of local progress in implementing the Strategy.

#### **The Adult Autism Strategy**

The Cross-Government Adult Autism Strategy is an essential step towards realising the Government's long term vision for transforming the lives of, and outcomes for, adults with autism. The Strategy is not just about putting in place autism services but about enabling access to mainstream services, support and opportunities through reasonable adjustments, training and awareness raising.

The Department of Health and Social Care has refreshed the governance arrangements for implementation of the Autism Strategy by setting up five Task and Finish groups. They are working to ensure that autistic people are supported to live healthy, independent lives and to participate in their local communities - which will also inform the review of the Autism Strategy due in 2019.

The 19 objectives of the Think Autism strategy have been grouped under the following headings:

- Measuring, understanding and reporting needs of autistic people;
- Workforce development;
- Health, care and wellbeing;
- Specific support;
- Participation in local community.

An Executive Group is overseeing the progress of the Task and Finish groups and reports to an annual accountability meeting, chaired by Caroline Dinenage MP, Minister of State for Care. More information about the governance refresh of the autism strategy is available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/think-autism-strategy-governance-refresh-2018>

### **This current autism self-assessment exercise**

This exercise builds on the fourth self-assessment exercise that asked about progress during the 2nd Quarter of 2016 or as recorded in the then most recently published national statistical data (relating to 2014/15). Some questions have changed since last time or been updated in light of known progress and feedback from areas, but will still enable a comparison with previous results. If a question is scored Red or Amber, respondents are asked to say what is impeding progress. For questions rated Green there will be the opportunity to say what actions or circumstances have enabled progress. Examples of local innovative approaches and actions that have made a positive impact on individuals are also being sought.

Public Health England published full results including the main reports, individual area responses and a spreadsheet version of the data of the fourth SAF exercise at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/autism-self-assessment-framework-exercise>

This self-assessment exercise does not include a section for accounts of personal experiences of autistic people. We anticipate that this will be included in the next exercise (the SAF takes place bi-annually).

All local responses will be published online and in full.

## **Annex B**

### **Supporting information for Local Authority Autism Leads: How to Complete**

The Autism Lead responsible for adult autism within the local authority should lead the co-ordination of the return. The timescale for completion is Monday 10<sup>th</sup> December 2018. The response for the local authority area should be agreed by the Autism Partnership Board (and this letter shared with them) or equivalent group, and the ratings validated by local autistic people.

A link to the self-assessment survey questions, along with technical instructions on how to access the online survey will all be posted on, and downloadable from, the project web page at: <https://khub.net/group/autism-self-assessment-framework/group-home>

If you have a query about completing the exercise that is not answered on the web page, please email: [autsaf@phe.gov.uk](mailto:autsaf@phe.gov.uk)

You will need to be registered on the local authorities' Knowledge Hub system at [www.khub.net](http://www.khub.net). This is free of charge. Having registered you will need to apply to join the autism self-assessment framework group.

When you open the link to start the survey for the first time, please make sure you take a note of the anonymous login code you are issued with as without this you will be unable to re-enter the survey at a later date. We would also advise you to complete section one at this stage (name, email address and local authority). Once this is done, a short message should be sent to the [autsaf@phe.gov.uk](mailto:autsaf@phe.gov.uk) email address indicating this process has started and the local authority involved. This message allows the staff at Public Health England to check your survey has opened correctly.

Local authorities are asked to submit completed responses via the online survey link. Public Health England is not able to process responses sent in any other form.

Non-technical queries on the self-assessment exercise can be sent to: [Emma.Hartley@dh.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:Emma.Hartley@dh.gsi.gov.uk)