

Autism Champion Information Pack



Do you work or volunteer with autistic people?

Are you passionate about promoting Autism Awareness?

Would you like to be an Autism Champion?

To find out more please contact the Autism Partnership

Email: autism.partnership@lincolnshire.gov.uk

Web: www.lincolnshire.gov.uk/lapb



What is Autism?

Autism

Autism is a life-long developmental condition. It is a spectrum condition; everyone who has autism experiences it differently and is affected in different ways. There are some things that all autistic people will have difficulties with. These include; social communication, social interaction, and social imagination.

Autistic people often experience sensory difficulties, such as over or under sensitivity to sounds, touch, tastes, smells, lights or colours. It is also more likely that autistic people will experience higher levels of stress than someone who is not autistic, making mental health problems more likely. As it is a lifelong condition, autistic people and their families are often adversely impacted in a number of ways, such as with their health and well-being, social integration and their quality of life.

Some autistic people find social situations overwhelming which can cause them anxiety. For example, understanding and relating to other people and taking part in family, social, work and social life.

National and Local Strategies

A study cited by the National Autistic Society suggests there are over 700,000 autistic people in the UK – more than 1 in 100 individuals. Taking into account their family members, it is predicted that autism touches 2.8 million people in this country every day. On a local level, it is estimated that there are 7,500 autistic people in Lincolnshire and it is believed that the number of autistic adults will increase by 3.4% by 2020.

In light of the inequalities faced by autistic people, the Autism Act 2009 was introduced to ensure that autistic people are appropriately supported. A National Autism Strategy (Fulfilling and Rewarding Lives) was introduced for Adults in England in 2010, and a refreshed strategy 'Think Autism' was released in 2014. Think Autism advises Local Authorities and NHS bodies of their requirements to meet the needs of autistic people.

Within Lincolnshire, the All-Age Autism Strategy 2015-2018 was written in response to national policy.

Councillor Patricia Bradwell – Executive Councillor for Adult Care, Health Services and Children's Services stated at the launch of Lincolnshire's All Age Autism Strategy in 2015 that:

'We have an ambitious vision for Lincolnshire, which includes expanding on the national vision, to help autistic people fulfil their potential and lead fulfilling and rewarding lives. We want to build on our understanding of our communities and services to deliver the best possible experience for autistic people.'

The Lincolnshire Autism Partnership Board is responsible for the implementation and delivery of the action plan contained in this strategy. As part of this action plan, it was agreed to introduce Autism Champions across statutory health and social care services, schools, business sector and community services/settings in order to fill the gap of support needed for autistic people.

Autism Champions – Frequently Asked Questions

What is an 'Autism Champion'?

An Autism Champion is someone who has a good understanding, acceptance and knowledge of autism that they can share within their organisation/ business/ department/ team. They will have completed an appropriate level of training about autism and be able to offer support and pass on the knowledge they have learnt to the rest of the staff they work with.

An Autism Champion will be able to develop local expertise through their knowledge and understanding and improve practice in supporting autistic people and their families to access services.

Where would an Autism Champion work?

Autistic people are just as likely to want and need to use all manner of services as everyone else does. Therefore, it is important that Autism Champions are available to share their knowledge and understanding across health, social care, education, local shops and businesses and community settings throughout Lincolnshire to make sure they are more accessible. Autism Champions could be introduced across all these different types of services to provide a greater understanding and clarity about how they can make reasonable adjustments and become more 'Autism Friendly'.

Do we need Autism Champions in Lincolnshire?

Yes, we do need Autism Champions in Lincolnshire. An Autism Champion can relate to autistic people and share their knowledge and understanding about how to make services and their communities more accessible. An Autism Champion can be a professional, staff member or voluntary worker – it will depend entirely on the setting or service that they provide. They just need to have an appropriate level of training and knowledge about autism and a passion to help autistic people fulfil their potential and lead fulfilling and rewarding lives.

We have received some feedback about what an Autism Champion should look like:

'I would say that the person should have a sound awareness of autism and should be involved in raising awareness with others, signposting to support groups and the like. I also think they should attend regular meetings or get together with other champions/autistic people/professionals etc. so that there is consistency in support and information given.'

'I would like an Autism Champion to be understanding, patient and caring. To be knowledgeable about autism and to have a good understanding about autism. It may be helpful if the Autism Champion is either on the spectrum themselves or if they have an autistic family member so they can bring that personal touch. The Autism Champion needs to be in touch with other autistic people as it is a spectrum and everyone is different.'

'It could be anyone that 'champions' or spreads awareness through the wider community to drive awareness and acceptance.'

'To me it's some who accepts autistic people as they are, campaigns alongside autistic people and not for them, does not dwell on the negatives but promotes the positives while encouraging adaptations.'

*These comments have been gained via the Lincolnshire Autism Partnership Board Lived Experience Forum.

Lincolnshire Autism Champions

An Autism Champion is someone who has a good understanding, acceptance and knowledge of autism that they can share within their organisation/ business/ department/ team. They will have completed an appropriate level of training about autism and be able to offer support and pass on the knowledge they have learnt to the rest of the staff they work with.

Purpose of an Autism Champion:

- To identify, implement and help embed good autism practice within their team, service area, organisation or business.
- To build on any existing knowledge, understanding, and skills in respect of working effectively with autistic people and their families
- To make reasonable adjustments to local services, as well as adapting practices to support the individual needs of autistic people.
- To promote autism awareness, influence and interest across businesses and statutory agencies such as Health and Social Care, NHS, Job Centre, Police, community settings and Housing Associations.
- Develop local knowledge and understanding of autism in Lincolnshire in order to contribute to good practice.

Roles and responsibilities:

- To have a strong interest in championing the needs of autistic people and understanding and highlighting the difficulties that they face in everyday life.
- To have an awareness and understanding of autism, and to undertake training that is available to them, for example training on how to support autistic people using the SPELL framework – these skills will then eventually be encompassed in their everyday working practice.
- To share knowledge with others who are seeking to gain an understanding of autism, to include cascading their knowledge and skills to their respective teams if required.
- Highlighting good autism practice in Lincolnshire in order to bring about positive change, whilst also identifying areas of potential development.
- To be on hand to other members of staff to provide peer support around autism.
- To be part of an Autism Champions' network in order to share information and good practice with peers from other organisations and services.
- To discuss the role of 'Autism Champion' to any new members of staff as part of their induction.
- To help stakeholders deliver the All Age Autism Strategy at a local level.
- Keep up to date with relevant policies, legislation and developments surrounding autism nationally and locally.

- To be part of setting up and reviewing the levels of need for autism training packages within their own organisations whilst also adhering to in-house policy and procedures around the Equality Act, and Disability and Discrimination Act.
- Keep up to date with available services and support available in Lincolnshire and be able to correctly signpost people to relevant organisations/agencies.
- To have strong listening skills and be able to adapt communication styles accordingly.
- To have a person centred approach when working with autistic individuals.
- Understand the importance of sensory integration, and the varying difficulties and needs and to make reasonable adjustments where necessary.
- To facilitate cross-functional working regarding peer support i.e. schools liaising with other schools to help implement and share problem solving ideas.

Autism Resources

This document aims to provide information and links to the National Autism Strategy and Lincolnshire's local strategy, as well as signposting to other relevant autism websites that may be able to provide important information.

National Autism Strategy

The current national autism strategy 'Think Autism' contains a set of 15 Priority Challenges for Action that has been identified as areas that need to be improved.

This is a link to the 15 Priority Challenges for Action (please scroll down to the bottom of the webpage) - <https://www.lincolnshire.gov.uk/lapb/about-the-strategy/128434.article>

Lincolnshire's Autism Strategy

Lincolnshire's All Age Strategy 2015-2018 was launched on 2nd April 2015, which was the first ever local autism strategy for Lincolnshire.

The Lincolnshire Autism Partnership Board is responsible for overseeing the implementation of the local autism strategy. There is an action plan within the strategy and the Board monitors the progress that is being made against key pieces of work to deliver this.

This is a link to the current Autism Strategy in Lincolnshire (please scroll down to the bottom of the webpage) - <https://www.lincolnshire.gov.uk/lapb/about-the-strategy/128434.article>

As we are currently approaching the end of the 3 year period for the local autism strategy we are in the process of engaging with the Autism Partnership Board and a number of key stakeholders to identify the key areas and priorities that we need to focus on in the coming years. This will enable us to develop new content for a refreshed version of the strategy.

So far, we have agreed to adopt the 15 Priority Challenges for Action and adapt these so they are relevant to Lincolnshire. We are currently working on which issues are most important and therefore the ones we need to concentrate on the most.

We are intending to release the refreshed All-Age Strategy in 2018, which will cover our strategic ambitions through to 2021.

Autism JSNA

A JSNA is a Joint Strategic Needs Assessment and is a shared evidence base that is made up of commentaries and data sources which reports on the key areas of health and wellbeing in Lincolnshire. Lincolnshire JSNA produces 35 different topics, and for the first time, Autism has been chosen to

be one of them. The Autism JSNA therefore assesses the current picture in Lincolnshire, including the existing services available and looks ahead to potential future levels of need and what effective service planning and commissioning is needed to support this.

The Autism JSNA was recently updated in December 2017 and encompasses a picture of need for both adults and children.

For more information about the Autism JSNA please visit the Lincolnshire Research Observatory Website: <http://www.research-lincs.org.uk/jsna-Autism.aspx>

Other relevant autism resources

Lincolnshire Autistic Society has been developed as an information hub for anyone (parents/carers, schools, professionals and autistic people) looking for advice, information or support relating to autism. The link to their website is as follows: <http://www.lincolnshireautisticsociety.org.uk/>

SEND Local Offer is for families with children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) aged 0-25. The local offer includes additional information for young people and families about the services available in Lincolnshire. The Local Offer can be found via the following link - <http://search3.openobjects.com/kb5/lincs/fsd/advice.page?id=q8MXILmT-K0>

National Autism Society is the leading UK charity for autistic people including those with Asperger syndrome. They aim to improve the lives of autistic people in the United Kingdom. This is a link to their website - <http://www.autism.org.uk/>

Ambitious about Autism provides practical information and resources as well as offering other people's experiences and stories about having autism. Ambitious about Autism also delivers training to both parents and professionals and offer a bespoke outreach and consultancy service. This is delivered at a cost however. For more information please visit their website: <https://www.ambitiousaboutautism.org.uk/>

Autism Alliance is the major UK network of specialist autism charities. Together, with the various autism charities, they support thousands of autistic people including adults in residential homes and through their outreach service. For more information please visit their website: <https://www.autism-alliance.org.uk/>

Autism Support (including voluntary)

Peer Support/Groups

- **Lincolnshire Autistic Society – LAS** is dedicated to build awareness and understanding of Autism in order to improve the quality of life and outcomes for children and adults, their parents and carers living with Autism. They have developed a website as an information hub for anyone who is looking for information and support around autism.
Website: <http://www.lincolnshireautisticsociety.org.uk/>
Contact: Contact information on website.
- **CANadda – CANadda** is a Community Adult Network support group for autistic adults, as well as those with dyslexia, dyspraxia and attention-deficit hyperactivity disorders. They are a friendly neurodiversity support group based in Lincoln for people on the autistic spectrum.
Website: <http://www.canadda.org.uk/>
Contact: debbie.canadda@yahoo.co.uk or 01522 716899
- **PAACT (Parents and Autistic Children Together) – PAACT** is a Lincoln based support group for families with children and young people who have an autistic spectrum condition. They are a friendly, informal, non-judgemental group. They aim to help family and friends to access advice, support and activities in the local area.
Website: <http://www.autismlinks.co.uk/support-groups/group-support-east-midlands/paact-parents-and-autistic-children-together?region=>
Contact: paactsupport@hotmail.co.uk or 07935222963
- **GAPS – Gainsborough Autism Parent Support Group – GAPS** provide advice, information, and support to parents who have children with autism or whose children are being assessed for social communication differences. GAPS have now amalgamated with PAACT. Please see website and contact details above.
- **GAIN – Grantham Autistic Information Network – GAIN** supports families with children on the autism spectrum in Grantham and beyond.
Website: <http://www.gain-grantham.co.uk/>
Contact: mailus@gain-grantham.co.uk or 01476 855070
- **LAAFS (Louth Area Autism Family Support) – LAAFS** is a support group dedicated to offer help, information, care and support to parents and carers of children and young people who have been diagnosed with autism. LAAFS is a support group formed by parents but welcomes professional contributions and pre-diagnosed families.
Website: <http://laafs.org/>
Contact: contact@laafs.org
- **Family Focus – Family Focus** is an independent, family and community organisation. They offer therapeutic family support which runs through all of the work they offer.
Website: <http://familyfocuslincolnshire.org.uk/>
Contact: 07930194175

- **Spalding Special Schools Federation** – They cater for pupils between 2-19 years old with wide ranging special educational needs.
Website: <http://www.spaldingspecialschools.co.uk/>
Priory School Contact: enquiries@priory.lincs.sch.uk or 01775 724080
Garth School Contact: enquiries@garth.lincs.sch.uk or 01775 725566
- **Sharing Minds** – They are a support group for parents of children with an additional, special and complex need including learning disabilities.
Website: <http://www.autismlinks.co.uk/support-groups/group-support-east-midlands/SharingMinds?region=East%20Midlands>
Contact: emmaslack22@yahoo.co.uk

Autism Services

- **Working Together Team (WTT)** – WTT are a National Autistic Society Accredited Service. They offer a comprehensive package of support to Lincolnshire schools and Academies to empower them to meet the needs of children and young people with autism or social communication difficulties. WTT also provide support to schools/Academies that are going through the Aim4Lincs Accreditation.
Website: <https://lincolnshire.fsd.org.uk/kb5/lincs/fsd/service.page?id=wnZwEZLbQj4>
Contact: outreach@gosberton-house.lincs.sch.uk
- **The Educational Psychology Team** – Educational Psychologists are part of the Special Educational Needs and Disability Service within Children's Services. They have three offices within Lincolnshire – Main office in Lincoln, as well as Louth and Sleaford. They strive to make positive change for children and young people.
Website: <https://www.lincolnshire.gov.uk/parents/family-support/the-educational-psychology-team/>
Contact: EP_Admin_LincolnBase@lincolnshire.gov.uk or 01522 554673
- **TAC (Team Around the Child)** – Children and families may experience a range of needs at different times in their lives. Some children may require targeted support from a range of different agencies as a result. A 'Team Around the Child' is therefore a group of professionals who can provide different services to meet any identified needs.
Website: <http://microsites.lincolnshire.gov.uk/children/practitioners/team-around-the-child/>
Contact: tacadmin@lincolnshire.gcsx.gov.uk
- **ESCO (Early Support and Care Co-Ordination)** – This team works alongside children and young people with a disability and their families, providing timely support and care co-ordination that places families at the heart of decision making about their child.
Website: <https://www.lincolnshire.gov.uk/parents/disability-and-sensory-impairment/early-support-care-coordination/>
Contact: customer_services@lincolnshire.gov.uk
- **IAPT (Improving Access to Psychological Therapies)** – Offers therapies for people with a wide range of psychological problems, from the mild to the

complex and severe. Therapies provided include: individual, group, assisted self-help, and computerised therapies which follow a Cognitive Behavioural approach.

Website:

<https://www.nhs.uk/Services/clinics/Services/Service/DefaultView.aspx?id=258301>

Contact: 01522 340160

- **Every-one** – Every-one is a Lincolnshire based social enterprise and a registered charity that aims to work inclusively with everyone. They develop and deliver a range of person-centred services and projects that works towards 'Making Well-being Personal.'
Website: <http://www.every-one.org.uk/>
Contact: hello@every-one.org.uk or 01522 811582
- **Healthwatch** – Healthwatch Lincolnshire works to help Lincolnshire people to get the best out of local health and social care services. Healthwatch aims to influence the delivery and design of local services, by gathering and representing the views of both health and social care for children and adults living in Lincolnshire.
Website: <http://www.healthwatchlincolnshire.co.uk/>
Contact: info@healthwatchlincolnshire.co.uk or 01205 820892
- **Lincolnshire Police Pegasus Scheme** – Pegasus is a database that helps people with disabilities make contact with Lincolnshire Police. Once registered, a Pegasus card will issued and a unique number will be written on it. You can then use this pin number when ringing Lincolnshire Police, or show a Police Officer the card.
Website: <https://www.lincs.police.uk/contact/contacting-us-if-you-have-access-needs/>
Contact for further information and support: Community Safety Department
Lincolnshire Police Headquarters
PO Box 999
Lincoln
LN5 7PH

Autism Providers

- **Linkage Community Trust** – Linkage are a Lincolnshire based charity who support people with learning disabilities who deliver high quality specialist education, care, employment and support services.
Website: <https://www.linkage.org.uk/>
Contact: info@linkage.org.uk or 01790 752499
- **National Autistic Society** – UK's leading charity for autistic people and their families.
Website: <http://www.autism.org.uk/>
Contact: nas@nas.org.uk
- **Action for Children Lincolnshire** – Disability Lincolnshire is an Action for Children Project which delivers services to disabled children, young people and their families in Lincolnshire since 1988. They also provide a short breaks service.

Website: <https://services.actionforchildren.org.uk/disability-lincolnshire/about-us/about-our-service/>

Contact: 01522 546516

- **Adult ADHD Lincolnshire (ADHD and Autism)** – Adult ADHD Lincolnshire is part of the SHINE network. They support individuals living with ADHD, Asperger's, and all co-morbid associated conditions. They provide psychoeducational sessions, coaching and support in a non-judgemental safe and understanding atmosphere.
Website: <http://lincsshine.co.uk/component/sobipro/?pid=80&sid=347:Adult-ADHD-Lincolnshire&Itemid=0>
Contact: adultadhdlincolnshire@live.co.uk or 07551391000
- **Dimensions** – Dimensions support people with learning disabilities, autism and complex needs out of institutions and help them to lead ordinary lives in their local communities.
Website: <https://www.dimensions-uk.org/>
Contact: 0300 303 9001 (Referrals and enquiries)
- **Heritage Care** – Heritage Care manage supported living services across South Lincolnshire with 24hr support. Their services include care at home, short breaks and domiciliary services.
Website: <http://www.heritagecare.co.uk/>
Contact: general.enquiries@heritagecare.co.uk
- **Home from Home Care** – Care Home for special needs, learning disabilities, autism, epilepsy, cerebral palsy, PMLD and complex health and mental health.
Website: <http://www.homefromhomecare.com/>
Contact: 0800 5870 372
- **Kismul School** – Residential Care and education for children and young people with autism, learning disabilities and challenging behaviour.
Website: <http://www.kisimul.co.uk/>
Contact: enquiries@kisimul.co.uk or 01522 868279
- **Thera Trust** – Thera is a charitable group of companies which support people with learning disabilities with a diverse range of needs. Thera can support people in their own home and in the community and offers a wide range of specialist support including helping people to manage their own finances, finding the right place to live and quality checks.
Website: <https://www.thera.co.uk/>
Contact: info@thera.co.uk 0300 303 1280
- **Voyage Care** – Residential Accommodation in Market Deeping, Sleaford. They support residents who have severe learning disabilities, autism, epilepsy, cerebral palsy and other complex needs.
Website: <http://www.voyagecare.com/in-your-area/20-towngate-east/4f8e20d5-2824-e711-8101-e0071b6e4901>
Contact: info@voyagecare.com or 0800 328 6091

Autism Training Resources

This document aims to provide signposting to individuals to different training resources that can be easily accessed online.

As everyone has different levels of need in terms of their knowledge and understanding of autism depending on their particular circumstances (based on your job role, relationship with an autistic person, etc.), it is worth checking the information carefully to determine what is best for your personal needs.

E-Learning Training Packages

These e-learning training packages have been reviewed by LAPB members and all e-learning resources provide a level of awareness and understanding in order to meet different needs and training budgets:

- **An Introduction to the Autism Spectrum – Lincolnshire Safeguarding Children Board**

This course is available free of charge to all staff working for organisations who are partners of the Lincolnshire Safeguarding Children's Board (excluding schools) and to parents/carers.

Link -

<https://www.lincolnshire.gov.uk/lscb/professionals/support/training/124632.article>

- **Introduction to Autism – Southampton, Hampshire, Isle of Wight, and Portsmouth Autism Workforce Group**

This is a basic autism awareness course that neighbouring local authorities in the South of England have worked together to produce. They have confirmed that it is available for anyone to complete free of charge.

Link - <https://www.forms.portsmouth.gov.uk/autismawareness/>

- **Ask Autism Online Training – National Autistic Society**

This course consists of a series of training modules (purchased individually) covering a range of aspects about autism such as communication, anxiety, supporting families etc. There is a cost element to this training package but it is much more comprehensive than other e-learning options.

Local face-to-face training and talks

- **Supporting People on the Autism Spectrum – Lincolnshire Autism Partnership Board**

Members of the LAPB have co-produced an intermediate level autism training presentation for parents and professionals. This is facilitated by professionals in a multi-agency approach, providing a local insight and a lower cost training alternative.

Link – <https://www.lincolnshire.gov.uk/lapb/training/131809.article>

- Autism, Education and Me – Sian Speaks about Autism

This is a talk given by Sian Hutchings, a member of the LAPB, providing her own experiences and perspective of having autism and offering an insight into the positive impacts of autism and the challenges she faced moving through school and college.

Downloadable leaflet available via Lincolnshire Autism Partnership webpage -

<https://www.lincolnshire.gov.uk/lapb/training/131809.article>

Sian is also contactable via email – sian.speaks@outlook.com

- Barnado's Autism Training Programmes – provided by Family Focus Lincolnshire

Family Focus offers a couple of training programmes, including:

- Parent/carer support programme – this is free to parent/carers but is also open to adults with a diagnosis.
- Puberty, Sexual Well-being and Relationship – this is a parent/carer course.
- Practitioner Programmer – available to the business and community sector.

For further information on all Family Focus training programmes please visit:

<http://familyfocuslincolnshire.org.uk/>

Key Resources for Professionals

- Royal College of General Practitioners – Autism Spectrum Disorders Toolkit.

Link - <http://www.rcgp.org.uk/clinical-and-research/toolkits/asd-toolkit.aspx>

- Autism Education Trust – courses run locally in Lincolnshire by the Working Together Team.

Link - <http://www.autismeducationtrust.org.uk/> or <http://website.twtt.org.uk>

- LinCA Workforce Development – training opportunities for care providers in Lincolnshire.

Link - <http://www.lincscareassociation.org.uk/Cms/LincaWorkforceHomePage>

Please note – this is not an exhaustive list and there may be other options that are more suitable for your specific professional or personal needs.