




**Ambitious
about Autism**

A man with dark skin and short hair is sitting at a desk, wearing large black headphones and looking intently at a silver HP laptop. He is wearing a dark grey sweater. In the background, there is a whiteboard with handwritten notes, including 'Friday', 'Email', 'In Report', 'Lunch', and 'Review'. The scene is lit with soft, indoor lighting.

The power of autism inclusion in the workplace

**The impact and future
of Employ Autism**

The autism employment challenge

Only 29% of autistic people are in full or part-time employment, compared with 53.5% of disabled people, and 81.6% of non-disabled people.

According to Ambitious about Autism research, 71% of autistic young people who are unemployed say they would like to be in work, but less than a third said they are confident they will be able to find work in the next year.



“

I've been rejected for countless jobs that I am capable and qualified of doing. I have never been accepted for a job where I was being 'myself' in the interview.”

Autistic young person



Employ Autism

Employ Autism is a national programme that grew out of an idea suggested by our Ambitious Youth Network to address these very poor employment outcomes for autistic young people.

Employ Autism aims to change workforce systems so that autistic young people are given opportunities by employers, and their abilities and strengths are supported.

The programme enables young people to gain employability skills and paid work experience by providing autism resources, training, mentoring and paid internships.

Ambitious about Autism has also developed an Autism Covenant for Employers with the Department for Work and Pensions. Employers join Employ Autism by signing that commitment to create opportunities to support autistic people to enter, re-enter or remain in the workplace.

Our impact so far

We have a successful track record supporting autistic young people to access paid internships.

Our independent evaluation has shown that Employ Autism is working effectively to give autistic young people a better chance of securing work, and also increases the awareness, attitudes and confidence of employers to benefit from a neurodiverse workforce.



Highlights so far:

- 1,200 autistic young people given tailored careers support.
- 500 autistic young people have accessed paid work experience.
- Over 500 careers and employability professionals have received autism training.
- 83% of autistic interns participating in Employ Autism have been offered a contract extension or permanent role.
- More than 80% of the autistic participants in Employ Autism said they had never experienced stigma in their workplace, and almost 90% agreed that if a new person was to disclose they were autistic that they would be well supported by their employer.
- 82% of autistic interns felt able to express themselves freely to their employer and within their teams.
- The Employ Autism pilot evaluation also reports that our autism training for employers significantly improved autism knowledge and commitment to inclusion in the workplace.

Low or no cost reasonable adjustments

The most common adjustments made by employers for autistic employees are low or no cost. For example, adjustments to working hours or communication methods.

The preliminary results from our Employ Autism evaluation reveal the most helpful adjustments for autistic employees*:



Changes to working hours



Changes to communication



Changes to support



Changes to logistics



Changes to the physical environment



Changes to equipment



Changes to the role



Changes to clothing or appearance



Reduced social obligation



Flexible working location

*(up to Aug 22)

In their own words...

“

I didn't feel comfortable at all about entering the world of work, it was something that was really daunting to me. Interviews always felt like a test of how neurotypical you can act. It was great to see a company who was actively looking for autistic interns and employees. My confidence talking to people has improved quite a bit. The environment was so nice, and I feel a lot more prepared for going into the workplace properly.”

Neo, an intern at Marsh McLennan

“

I just think it's an absolutely awesome programme. I think sometimes there does need to be like a conduit or a third party to be able to assist bridging that gap.... having an programme like the Employ Autism network able to assist... is great.”

Parent

“

This placement has completely surpassed my expectations in a very positive way. The colleagues I have met, the atmosphere, culture and ethos is brilliant and I feel that I fit into TalkTalk's values well. I feel very supported by my managers, my other work colleagues and my buddy. They have helped me to settle in and explained what we are working on and enabled me to get stuck in. I have developed a lot of new skills.”

Ian, an intern at Talk Talk

“

There aren't a huge amount of changes that need to be made... just some really small changes that will actually benefit your communication style more generally.”

Employ Autism employer

“

Now I have got concrete evidence that I can do a decent job, and I have praise from the line managers...which was very flattering to hear.”

Autistic young person

The future of Employ Autism

Employ Autism is a model of employability support that works. It is transforming the employment prospects of autistic young people across the country.

We now plan to offer a service to more employers and businesses, to help them harness the power of autism inclusion at work, while continuing our free employability services to autistic young people.

A new Employ Autism online platform and a customer support team will provide an accessible, single point of entry for autistic young people, as well as a range of expert resources and support for employers.

Over the next three years, Employ Autism will:

- Support 5,000 autistic young people to gain the knowledge, skills and experience to transition from education to work.
- Empower employers with the knowledge, skills, and confidence to recruit and support autistic employees.
- Empower education professionals with the knowledge, skills and tools to support autistic young people to be work-ready.



What you can do to help

Ambitious about Autism wants all autistic young people to be in education, employment or training. We want a future where there are no autistic NEETs (Not in Education, Employment or Training). All autistic young people should be given the chance to experience work.

We need government and opposition, parliamentarians and employers to work with us to make sure all autistic young people can access work and fulfil their potential. This will benefit employers, society and the economy.

Action for Government and opposition party manifestos:

- Commit to ensuring all autistic young people are in education, employment or training, so that there are no autistic NEETs by the end of the next parliamentary term.
- Set a target to double the employment rate for young autistic people by 2030.
- Create a cross government autism employment strategy that joins up DfE, DWP and DHSC provision. For example, by piloting Employment, Health and Care plans.



Action for parliamentarians

- Support our Employ Autism pledge to increase employment opportunities for autistic young people by promoting it in constituencies, and through your work in parliament.
- Invite the employers and trade bodies you work with at constituency level and nationally to join Employ Autism.

For more information and for resource pack, email policyteam@ambitiousaboutautism.org.uk.

Action for employers

- Join the Employ Autism programme and provide young people with internship opportunities and benefit from training. Promote the programme through your supply chains, other partners and trade bodies.
- Ambitious about Autism has also developed an Autism Covenant for Employers with the Department for Work and Pensions. Sign up to create opportunities for autistic people to enter, re-enter or remain in the workplace.

For more information on joining Employ Autism network, email ean@ambitiousaboutautism.org.uk.



We are Ambitious about Autism

Ambitious about Autism is the national charity standing with autistic children and young people.

We believe every autistic child and young person has the right to be themselves and realise their ambitions.

We started as one school and have become a movement for change. We champion rights, campaign for change and create opportunities.

Contact us

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🌐 ambitiousaboutautism.org.uk/what-we-do/employment

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