

Ambitious about Autism Strategy 2020-21

Autistic children and young people
at the heart of all we do

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Our story

We are proud of our pioneering approach, which started in 1997 when a group of parents set up the TreeHouse Trust to provide the best possible education for autistic children and young people. Since then, we have increased our reach and impact across the UK.

Despite our many successes, the sad fact is that children and young people with autism still face a lack of understanding of their needs and the right support. Since Coronavirus emerged, this is the case now more than ever.

Our priority over the next 12 months is to support children and young people with autism to manage the impact of this pandemic.

We want to enable even more children and young people with autism to secure a fulfilling and rewarding future.



Our mission, vision and values

Our vision is a world where the ordinary is the everyday experience of children and young people with autism.

Our mission is to make the ordinary possible for children and young people with autism.

Our values Children and young people with autism are at the centre of all that we do.

Investing in our staff to make sure our work has the biggest impact on children and young people with autism.

We are ambitious

We value difference

We value difference: given how unique every experience of autism really is, we work hard to develop personalised solutions for the children and young people we work with.

We believe in the talent of our staff and bring this expertise together as an organisation to challenge the status quo for children and young people with autism.

We are experts

We are team players

We are team players: in how we work within the organisation, with children and young people, with parents and carers, and with our partners.

We are open

We are open: to new ideas, in how we work and how we make decisions.



How we developed our strategy

In 2019 we started developing our new five-year strategy. We engaged with young autistic people, parents and carers, partners and our staff to help shape our plans.

Thanks to their input, we were well on our way to developing a new strategy to achieve our vision for a world where the ordinary is the everyday experience of children and young people with autism.

A year on so much has changed. For most of 2020, our focus was supporting children and young people with autism, and their families during the coronavirus pandemic. Given the current emergency, we decided to produce a one-year strategy for September 2020 – August 2021. This year's strategy is based on the same principles as we plan for the next five years; the key being that autistic children and young people are at the heart of all we do.

In addition to building on our expertise across education, employment and youth participation, our new strategic plan is responding to the increased need for support in health and wellbeing, families and relationships and local communities, particularly in these unique times.



Children and young people with autism need us more than ever.

We're proud of our many successes, but the sad reality is autistic children and young people face enormous challenges due to a lack of understanding of their needs.

On average, families are waiting
18 months for an autism diagnosis.



Formal exclusions from school of those with an autism diagnosis have risen by
60% in five years.



56%



of children with autism have been sent home illegally or denied a full education.

Fewer than
one in four
young people with autism access education beyond school.



Only
16%
of adults with autism are currently in full-time paid employment.



Cost per year

£32bn



The cost to society as a result of the lack of support for autistic people and their families. This is more than the cost of stroke, cancer and heart disease combined.

four in five
autistic young people have a mental health condition.



The average life expectancy for an autistic person is
54 years,
compared to 70 in the overall population.



Only

11%



of local areas have mental health crisis services that support autistic people without learning disabilities.

Looking to the future

Our objectives at a glance

Our strategic plan for 2020-21 describes what we plan to do as we focus on supporting autistic children and young people during the Coronavirus pandemic and beyond. Although the world is changing, our vision for a world where the ordinary is the everyday experience of children and young people with autism remains the same.

Children and young people will continue to be at the heart of all that we do. Our new strategic plan sets out five objectives on which we will focus our efforts.



This work will be underpinned by strong foundations.





Excellent education

- 1** We will speak out to stop autistic children and young people being left out and left behind as they return to full-time education during the Coronavirus outbreak. We will amplify the voices of autistic children and young people and their parents and carers drawing on our experience as an education provider and a national charity.
- 2** We will continue to provide high-quality and safe education services, as we use and embed our Ambitious Approach. We will continue to adapt and continuously improve our Approach in light of the Coronavirus pandemic.
- 3** We will develop ways of enhancing learning and careers education through the innovative use of digital technology.
- 4** We will put the necessary steps in place to expand our direct education services in the South of England. We will do this by pursuing opportunities to develop new free schools or providing sponsorship for school transfers and considering other partnership opportunities.





Employment and enterprise

- 1 We will establish Employ Autism as the umbrella programme, under which all our employability activities are consolidated. The Employ Autism programme will be adapted and offered across three regions over the next year.
- 2 We will continue to offer our current supported internship programme.
- 3 We will continue to develop the careers education we offer pupils and learners in our education settings. We will also work to improve careers education for all autistic children and young people by providing online information and support, and our training programme for careers professionals nationally.





Family and relationships

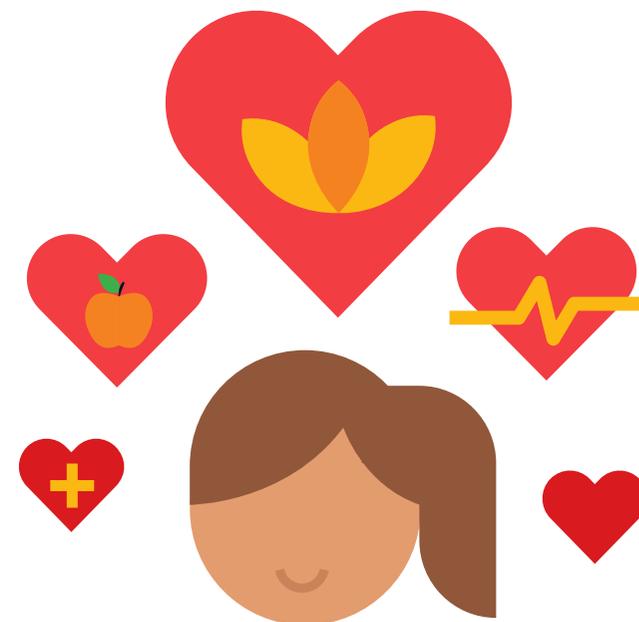
- 1 We will expand our Learner and Family support service for autistic children and young people, and their families within our education settings. This service will provide support in responding to the challenges of Coronavirus and beyond.
- 2 We will develop information and support to empower parents and carers, and other family members of autistic children and young people across the UK. This information will be available through existing and new digital services.
- 3 We will continue to support pupils and learners within our schools and college to make a successful transition to work and adult life, as part of their communities. We will develop our model for use as an exemplar to others.





Health and wellbeing

- 1** We will improve access to physical and mental health support and services in our education settings for pupils and learners, as well as their parents and carers.
- 2** Working with strategic partners, we want to improve the experience of autistic children and young people in accessing health services. We will develop best practice guidance and influence decision-makers within the health system.
- 3** We will develop the information and guidance we produce, as well as partnerships to promote the mental health of children and young people with autism, and their parents or carers.





Active citizenship in the community

- 1** We want to develop our services so that we can integrate them within local communities. In light of the challenges of the Coronavirus pandemic, we will adapt our approach to ensure our services are accessible and relevant to the communities they aim to serve.
- 2** We will develop a youth participation strategy and, subject to funding, expand our Ambitious Youth Network. We want to create a safe and trusted space for peer support, to access information and empower autistic young people to campaign for more inclusive communities.



Strong foundations

Achieving our objectives would not be possible without the strong foundations that underpin our strategic plan.

- Co-production and taking a user-centred approach will be central to the way we work. We will take the views of autistic children and young people, their parents and carers and our partners into account in planning, governance, external influencing and development of services and activities.
- We will continue to respond to the Coronavirus pandemic through our crisis management systems, financial planning, wellbeing, health and safety, and across our support services.
- We will continue to carefully manage our financial position, including treasury management, to ensure our organisation's sustainability.
- We will continue our work with existing partners, while also building our supporter base. We will diversify our fundraising activities, working closely with our supporters and partners.

- We will further develop our approach to learning, development and talent management for our staff and act as an exemplar of good practice in equality, diversity and inclusion.
- We will continue to strengthen our marketing and communications to provide trusted information supported by a robust content and digital marketing strategy.
- We will continue to implement our IT strategy, support remote and mobile learning and working, and make better use of technology currently in place.
- We will further improve how we store and manage our data, and communicate with supporters while continuing to maintain high standards of data protection compliance.



Funding our work

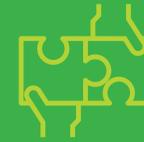
Our vision is a world where the ordinary is the everyday experience of children and young people with autism. But we can't achieve this alone. We need your continued support and help to make our ambitious plans for 2020-21 a reality.

The impact of the Coronavirus crisis on children and young people with autism was almost immediate. Soon after lockdown in March 2020, we launched our emergency coronavirus appeal. We set an ambitious target to raise much-needed funds to help us address the crisis that autistic young people and their families were facing.

Thanks to you - our supporters, partners and donors - we were able to get direct help to vulnerable autistic children, young people and their families in 2020.

But the challenge and need are still very much present. Here's how you can get involved.

Partner with us



Nothing we do would be possible without our partners. A lot of people will have a connection to someone with autism or be impacted by autism. There are many ways you can support us. You might want to fund one of our projects, join our employability programme or support employees who want to volunteer for us.

Donate online



Donate online via our secure website page and make a lasting difference to the lives and futures of children with autism, today.

Fundraising



Despite the limitations we're currently experiencing as a result of Coronavirus, there are still plenty of ways that you can be part of Team Ambitious. You can raise money and make memories along the way, by joining a virtual challenge event or organising your own fundraising activity.

Leave us a gift in your will



By leaving a legacy, you can support the next generation of autistic children and young people.

Volunteering



Showing your support for our work doesn't have to be financial; donating your time and talents are equally valuable. Volunteering is an incredible way to show your support, from helping our youth network refine their CV writing and interview skills, to tending our school gardens, or joining our network of business ambassadors. There are many opportunities available - we can find the right one for you!

Join Team Ambitious today and help us to enable children and young people to learn, thrive and achieve.

We are Ambitious about Autism

Ambitious about Autism is the national charity for children and young people with autism.

We provide services, raise awareness and understanding, and campaign for social and policy change. Through TreeHouse School, The Rise School and Ambitious College, we offer specialist education and support.

Our ambition is to make the ordinary possible for more children and young people with autism.

Ambitious about Autism is a registered charity in England and Wales: 1063184 and a registered company: 3375255.

Ambitious about Autism Schools Trust is an exempt charity in England and Wales and a registered company: 08335297.



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