Access Employment Autism:
Tackling barriers to employment for autistic adults

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About Research Autism

• An independent charity founded in 2004
• Founded in direct response to the demands of people with autism and their families: their priorities directly drive our research and information programmes
• Our vision is of a world where people with autism are no longer excluded, able to fulfil their potential and enjoy a good quality of life
• Exclusive focus on research into quality of life issues; projects on early intervention, bullying, sleep problems, challenging behaviour and employment
• Working with, and supported, by world experts in autism
What we do

• **Research Centre**: We carry out research into social, educational, behavioural and other non-biomedical interventions. Working with a range of partners to deliver our research agenda.

• **Information Centre**: Ensure that information about interventions reaches a wide audience. This incorporates our web-based Information Service, the first and only autism website to have achieved NHS Information Standard accreditation.

• **Development Centre**: Puts research into practice where the need is demonstrated to be great and where no support is already available. First priority is employment, an issue that is consistently highlighted as an area of particular concern.
Employment Research

- In a study carried out by Research Autism in 2008 for the National Autistic Society (NAS), 70% employers questioned had had a very positive experience of employing people with autism
- Access to expert, specialist support had been a key factor in the success of these employment arrangements
- Availability of this type of support is very limited in the UK
- Research Autism formed a partnership with the NAS, employers and autistic adults to identify the best way of meeting this need
- Development of the Access Employment Autism website – an interactive, online portal set up to ensure that employers work colleagues, jobseekers and employees with autism have ready access to the resources they need
Employment Autism: key issues to be addressed

- The absence of clear guidance for employers on how to recruit, manage, motivate and retain those with autism.
- The lack of understanding on the part of employers of how to make reasonable adjustments for employees with autism, in order to make their employment a successful experience for all parties.
- An improvement in the understanding of those with autism on all aspects of the employment process (from CV preparation and recruitment through to day-to-day working practices) and on employer expectations.
Employment Autism: project outline

• Develop an initial ‘proof of concept’ website to be tested with employers and people with autism

• Using feedback, develop the full site to provide advice, guidance, resources and signposting on all issues concerning the recruitment and employment of people with autism

• Provide information to employers and others on best practice in the employment of people with autism as well as information to people with autism, their family and carers, on how to obtain and stay in paid employment

• Ensure that the site meets the needs of its stakeholders, is customer-orientated, and meets high standards of accessibility and clarity

• Ensure that the site becomes the industry-standard portal for recruitment and employment advice and information
Outcomes and Impact

For Autistic Job Seekers and Employees

• Improvements to their experience of work, relationships with colleagues, and ability to keep jobs through: guidance on how to apply for jobs, write a CV, and approach job interviews; resources giving insight into employers’ and colleagues’ perspectives on day-to-day working practices; information on the types of support that are available for employees with autism once they are in a job; and online forums in which they can discuss issues that may arise with peers and professionals with experience in supporting people with autism in the workplace.

• An increase in employment and job retention among adults with autism, as well as economic benefits for those individuals, their families and society.
Outcomes and Impact

For Employers

• Improved experiences of employing, working with and retaining employees with autism

• Practical information and guidance on the employment of people with autism spectrum disorders, including guidance on best practice and relevant legislation

• Resources designed to help managers and colleagues gain a better understanding of the kinds of difficulties and problems that employees with autism may face in the workplace

• Online forums in which they can share best practice and discuss issues that may arise with other employers
Next Steps

• Current focus is on content development
• Have been talking to employers’ organisations and Department for Work and Pensions
• We have launched a questionnaire survey to gather feedback from employers about the key issues with which they need support
• Questionnaire can be found at www.researchautism.net
• Launch of the site later in the year
Final thoughts

“Autism doesn't hold me back because I have had the correct support from a young age. It's key to have that support, both in education and in the workplace, but I don't require anything complicated: people just have to understand that I'm different.”

Jonathan Young, autistic adult