

PE2141/A: Support the neurodiverse community by providing funding for psychoeducation

Scottish Government written submission, 17 April 2025

In this response, we have explained how organisations funded through the Scottish Government's Autistic Adult Support Fund (AASF) provide support that achieves similar aims to those of psychoeducation, and explained how existing providers of psychoeducation and sensory aids can apply for funding.

We have also outlined how psychoeducation providers might fit within wider Scottish Government ambitions to implement Adult Neurodevelopmental Pathways across Scotland.

Background on Psychoeducation

Psychoeducation provides service users and their family, carers or friends with the information they need to understand their condition, and empower them to manage any challenges they face.¹

Psychoeducation interventions are typically structured, fixed-term, condition-specific sessions, delivered by a qualified professional. The sessions offer information, education, and simple therapeutic work.²

In the context of neurodiversity, psychoeducation can help people diagnosed with conditions such as autism and attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) to understand their diagnosis and find effective self-management strategies. Psychoeducation can also help parents and other family, carers and friends of neurodiverse people to access information about their condition.

Psychoeducation is an emergent field, and the evidence base is therefore relatively small. However, research conducted to date suggests that psychoeducation can play a positive role in supporting neurodiverse groups post-diagnosis, particularly if the resources shared are co-produced by neurodiverse people³.

Autistic Adult Support Fund (AASF)

The AASF aims to help adults with an autism diagnosis, self-identified autistic adults, and their families and carers understand what neurodivergence means for them and improve their wellbeing.

The fund has supported and will support organisations across Scotland to deliver a range of projects to meet these aims. Facilitated by Inspiring Scotland and funded by the Scottish Government, the AASF builds on the work of a pilot which ran between 2020 and 2021 to provide post diagnostic support to autistic people.

¹ <https://www.lancaster.ac.uk/reacttoolkit/toolkit/treatment-options/psychoeducation/>

² [Incorporating Psychoeducational Care in the Autism Diagnosis Pathway](#)

³ [Co-production of a Neurodiversity-Affirmative Anxiety Intervention for Autistic Children](#)

Psychoeducation seeks to help people understand their diagnoses and find effective self-management strategies, through both group and one-to-one sessions provided by projects.

Feedback from organisations who received funding during the October 2023 – September 2025 funding period confirms that they have achieved many of the same objectives which psychoeducation strives to deliver. The feedback has identified that the support provided led to autistic people having a greater understanding of what autism means to them, feeling more able to advocate for themselves, experiencing improved quality of life, and reporting that they were better at coping with day-to-day challenges. We have commissioned an external evaluation which will be published later this year.

The AASF has now opened to new applications, with a deadline of 21 May 2025. We would encourage providers of psychoeducation and sensory aids who fulfil the application criteria to apply for support from the Fund. They can do so here: [Apply to the Autistic Adult Support Fund - Inspiring Scotland](#)

Adult Neurodevelopmental Pathways

The National Autism Implementation Team (NAIT) is currently supporting NHS Boards to develop, enhance and redesign existing local neurodevelopmental services.

The Scottish Government piloted Adult Neurodevelopmental Pathways in four Health Boards to support a single diagnostic pathway for ADHD and Autism. The results of this work, including a final report, have been published. The Scottish Government has accepted all 10 of the report's recommendations, and we are taking work forward to implement these.

The aim of this work is to implement stepped care approaches to neurodevelopmental diagnosis and support across Scotland. This means that multidisciplinary teams within each Health Board will be able to provide care and support tailored to the individual needs of each neurodivergent person who approaches them. Health Boards are responsible for deciding what support is provided locally but this may include professionals trained in psychoeducational methods within such teams.

Educational Resources for Healthcare Providers

I also wish to draw your attention to broader work that the Scottish Government has funded to ensure that the pre- and post-diagnostic work that healthcare providers undertake with neurodivergent people is able to meet their needs and empower them. Whilst this is not equivalent to psychoeducation or the provision of sensory aids, our view is that it achieves some of the same aims.

We are funding NHS Education for Scotland (NES) to deliver the Enhanced Psychological Practice (EPP) programme, a post-graduate certificate level education programme, which enables staff to deliver high-quality, evidence-based psychological interventions for mild to moderate difficulties in a way that can be efficiently brought to scale.

NES deliver education and training to upskill staff in assessment and diagnosis, consistent with the NES "Autism Training Framework" to improve the equity of access to Autism diagnoses and promote good practice. Since the publication of the training framework in 2014 there has been an increasing understanding that autism forms part of a range of potential neuro-diversities, such as ADHD and Learning Disabilities. The current NES training plans and developing plans aim to reflect this view and support workforce development for neuro-developmental services across the lifespan. We recognise that it is important that Boards prioritise this as part of their workforce training plans.

NES has developed a knowledge hub available via TURAS Learn, for all staff, to ensure they have the appropriate knowledge to help them to meet the needs of Autistic people, relevant to their role. This hub is under continual development based on new resources which become available. NES also delivers a range of skilled, enhanced and specialist mental health intervention training packages, for delivery to autistic and neuro-diverse individuals across the lifespan.

In 2022-23, funding provided to NES enabled training across mental health, including for those who have neurodiversity including Autism and ADHD across the lifespan. This included training to administer the Autism Diagnostic Observation Schedule, training to upskill multidisciplinary staff in neuro-developmental assessments, and delivery of adapted Cognitive Behavioural Therapy for co-occurring mental health conditions in autistic children and young people and adults. NES has liaised with a range of stakeholders including local boards, neurodevelopmental networks and NAIT and has identified key priorities for training and educational developments to meet the needs of staff working in Learning Disabilities services across health and social care.

In 2024, a NES Assessing ADHD webinar was attended by 321 staff and 78 have accessed the recording. In the same year, a NES Understanding ADHD in Girls and Women Webinar covered a range of issues and was attended by 922 staff, the recording has been viewed an additional 2111 times.

We are aware that current data suggests that up to 50-70% of autistic people also have ADHD and we have current developments and future plans to continue to upskill the workforce with regards to knowledge about ADHD. This has included a webinar on Understanding ADHD in girls and women which contained a focus on hormone changes in adolescence and menopause which can exacerbate ADHD symptoms. This webinar has been viewed almost 3000 times by staff across Scotland via Turas Learn. Future developments also include additional events to support staff working in a wide range of settings to understand the impact of hormones on mental health for women and girls with ADHD, with specific focus on integrating this information as part of a formulation-based approach.

Conclusion

Our initial view is that psychoeducation interventions can be one of a variety of approaches to supporting neurodivergent people. As outlined, various Scottish Government-supported initiatives achieve many of the aims articulated by psychoeducation and provided by sensory aids.

However, we are open to exploring the possibility of integrating psychoeducational approaches, and the use of sensory aids, into these existing frameworks, and will continue to engage with relevant bodies such as NAIT to understand how this might be achieved.

Yours sincerely,

Neurodivergence and Learning Disabilities Unit