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Neuro-affirming Information and Support for Parents and Carers

March 2026



Scottish Government
Riaghaltas na h-Alba



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Intellectual property statement

The following presentation was developed by the National Autism Implementation Team (NAIT) in partnership with neurodivergent people, their families and a multi-disciplinary professional group.

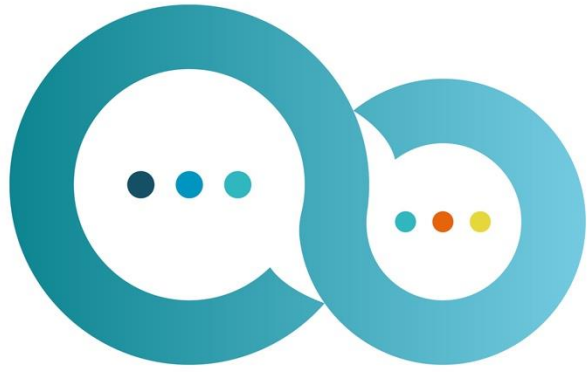
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A note on terminology

- Recent research suggests that the majority of autistic adults prefer identity first language. This means using terms like 'autistic person' rather than 'person with autism'.
- Neurodiversity refers to a group or society, which includes a range of neurotypes, some of which might be considered typical and some divergent.
- An individual cannot be neurodiverse.
- In Scotland we talk about Additional Support Needs and Additional Support for Learning Services





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Key Messages for Parent & Carers



Getting it right

- Rights based
- Equal partners in child planning
- An individualised approach
- No support is diagnosis dependent
- NAIT Guide to the Equality Act
- Remember indirect discrimination



A neuro-affirming mindset

- Learning from neurodivergent people
- Difference not deficit
- Language matters
- Compassionate mindset
- Avoid comparisons to neurotypical norms
- Supporting individuals to be their authentic self
- Being mindful of autistic masking
- Keep learning and evolving



Never respond with 'I'm sorry'

Outwith the family, even from other healthcare professionals the frequent response to his diagnosis was 'I'm sorry,' followed by a silence...

...Never respond with 'I'm sorry.' Ask about the child by name, how they are getting on, interest etc-as you would ask about any other neurotypical individual. In our case, autism is part of our son and we love all of him.

Neuro-affirming reports



Our lens makes a difference

“XXX wrote the most child centred report I have read by any other professional involved in his care.

She had clearly listened to what he said and understood from observing him what he needs to help him feel safe and included.

XXX’s report and profile of my son reduced me to tears as it felt, for the first time, someone could see the wonderful wee boy we saw and not the problem child he was painted as in school.

I can't thank XXX enough, she has had such a positive impact after such a short period of time. Thank you."

Listen and believe

- Equal partners in child planning
- Neurodivergent families
- Predictable child planning meetings
- Plan for home school communication
- Believe them
- A non-judgemental approach
- Remember indirect discrimination



The 24 hour child

- A lack of predictability at school impacts on home
- Make things predictable and desirable
- Consider life at home, school and community (listen and believe)
- Support planning for school holidays



Plan for home school communication

- Mutually agreed mode, frequency, content
- Non judgmental
- Not just when there is a problem
- Offer two way
- Confidentiality
- Two key people



What is this?

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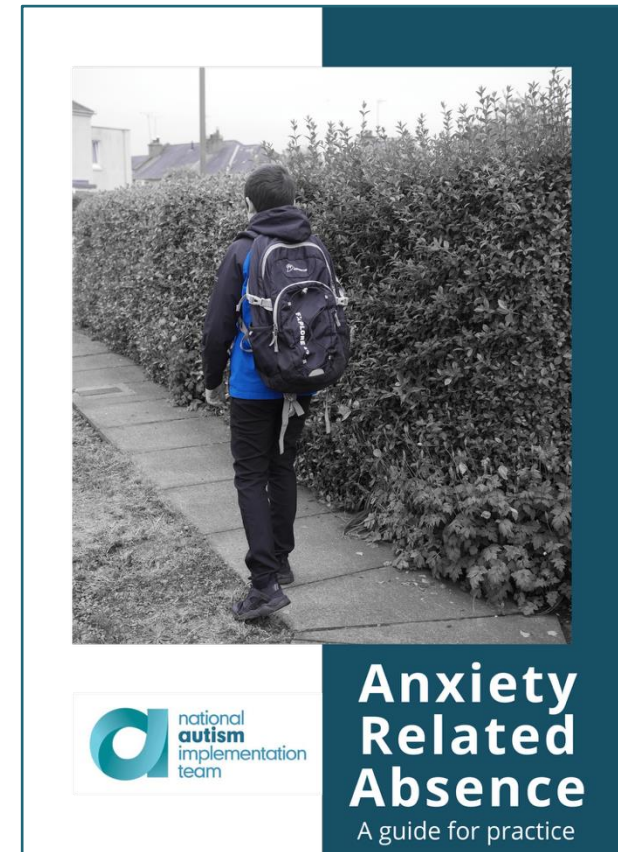
The right information at the right time

- Clear and accessible
- Up to date
- Timely
- Relevant to current need
- Has the authority approved the information?
- Opportunity to talk through the information

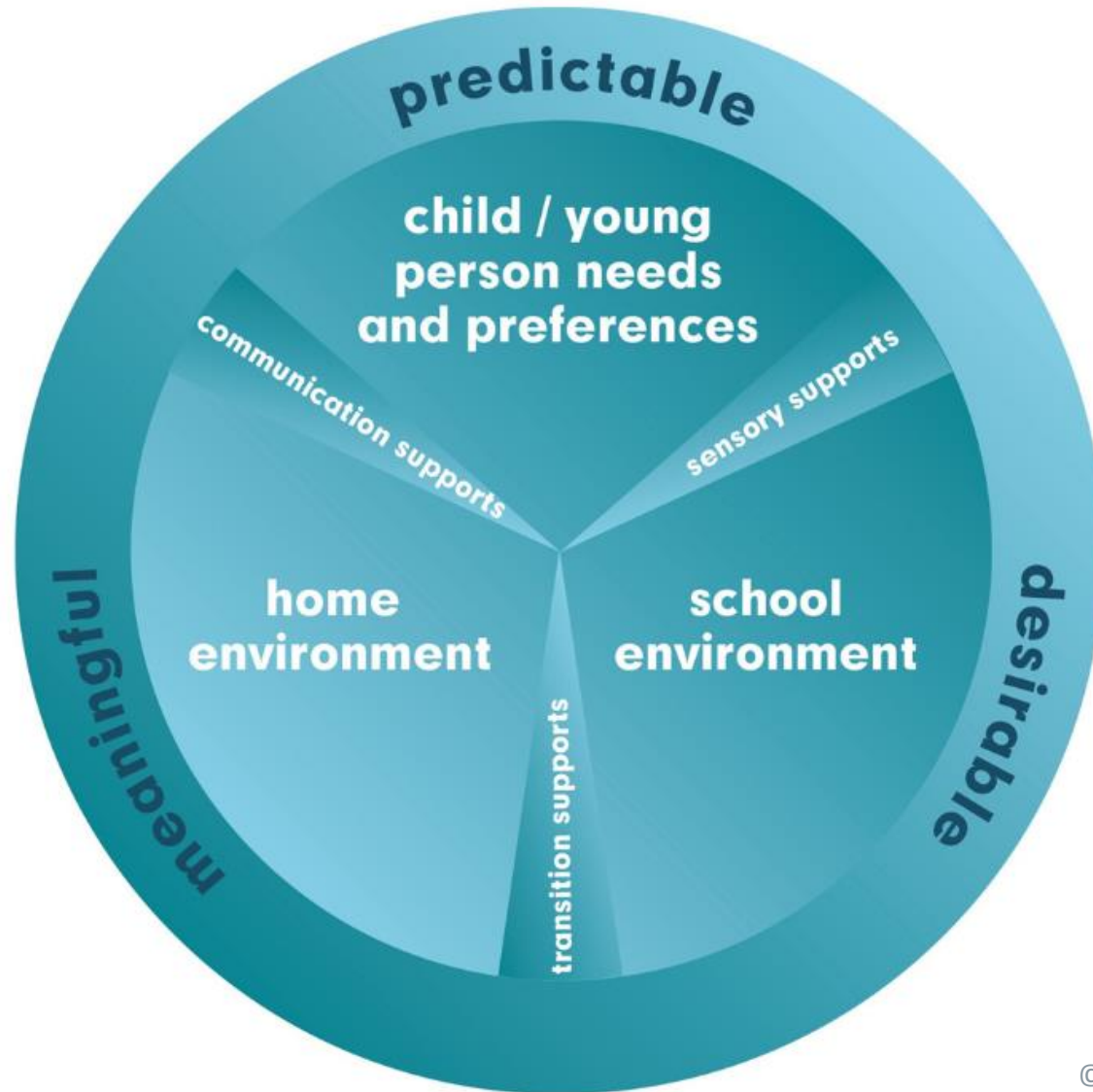


Anxiety Related Absence

- Respond to early signs – at school or home
- Provide practical help
- Change support and expectations, don't try to change the child
- Listen to and believe parents
- Avoid judgement



Anxiety Related Absence



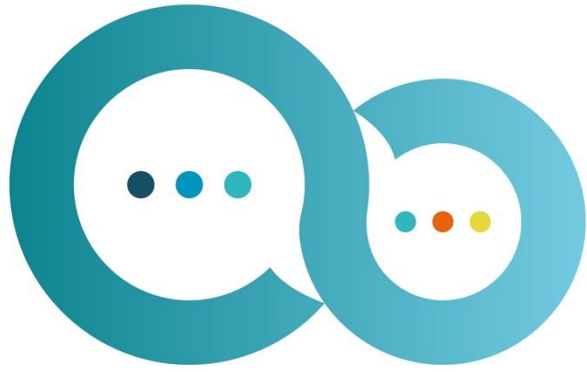
Good things should just happen!



Neurodivergent parents

- The neurodivergent family
- The value of peer support
- Menu of supports to meet different needs
- Support over time
- Intersectionality
- Home language and literacy – don't assume
- Parent representation





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