

Autism:

The Invisible Disability

Autism is a lifelong disability which affects the way an individual relates to people, situations and the immediate environment. Many individuals with Autism have difficulty processing everyday sensory information like sight, smells, touch, tastes and sounds. Individuals with Autism may face barriers in relation to equal access to a range of services including health and education.

- Over the past five years the rate of Autism has increased by 69% in school aged children (4 - 15 year olds). *
- In 2018 there were 1 in 34 pupils attending school with a diagnosis of Autism. *
- Statistics show that 4 males are diagnosed with Autism for every 1 female. *
- The rate in girls diagnosed has been increasing at a higher rate, on average by 14% each year from 2008/09. *
- Around 2,079 children in Northern Ireland are waiting for an Autism Diagnosis this can typically take up to 20 months before a child is assessed and diagnosed. **
- The prevalence rate for Autism is higher in urban areas than in rural areas, with the Belfast Trust consistently higher than the NI average 1.5 higher. *
- More than 8,440 school aged children in Northern Ireland have been diagnosed with Autism (4-15year olds). *

* ((The Prevalence of Autism [including Aspergers Syndrome] in School age Children in Northern Ireland. DHSSPS NI, 2018)

** (www.autismni.org/broken-promises-report.html)



*‘Thank you
for being very
helpful and
understanding,
we were lost’.*

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Formed in 1990, Autism NI works to provide life changing services for 30, 000 people affected by Autism throughout Northern Ireland and campaigns to raise awareness of Autism within the wider society.

Autism NI's core activities include:

- **Family Support:** This is the main activity of the Charity which includes a Helpline, ARO service, PLO and a regional support group network.
- **RAFT:** (Reaching Autism Families Together) Project: aims to build and strengthen relationships for families of children with Autism aged 12 and under. RAFT supports families in the Carrickfergus and Newtownabbey areas engage in a home-based early intervention programme.
- **GAP:** (Girls & Autism Project) works with girls (aged 11 -18 years) and their families within the Belfast area. GAP supports achievement, enjoyment and full participation.
- **Research:** Autism NI has a 20-year partnership with Ulster University in commissioned action research which underpins the Charity's training, ASD Interventions and service models.
- **Training:** Autism NI is Northern Ireland's longest established Autism training provider, training 2,500 parents and professionals annually. We are the only Autism specific accredited agency in NI,

providing nationally recognised AQA accreditations to 440 people per year. We pride ourselves on providing training that is evidence based, accurate and practical to ensure it is effective in supporting individuals with Autism and their family.

- **Lobbying:** Autism NI's ongoing lobbying efforts are based upon a general campaign of Autism Awareness. Working alongside the All-Party Group on Autism, we celebrated the passage of the equality based Autism Act (NI) in 2011 after a 6 year long political lobby. Currently Autism NI concentrate its focus on ensuring the full implementation of the Autism Strategy and better Autism services to families throughout Northern Ireland.
- **Fundraising:** Autism NI receives limited funding from the Statutory Sector and therefore relies heavily on public donations and fundraising activities.

If you would like further information on Autism Spectrum Disorder please log onto our website at www.autismni.org

Autism NI is a trading name of Autism NI (PAPA) which is a company limited by guarantee (Company Number NI 058548) and an Inland Revenue approved charity (reference number XR 22944).

