

Time to Deliver: The Autism Act 2009 and the New Autism Strategy

Summary

Document Overview

The House of Lords Select Committee report examines the effectiveness of the Autism Act 2009 and proposes comprehensive reforms for the new autism strategy launching in July 2026. The Committee gathered extensive evidence from Autistic people, their supporters, and professionals to assess sixteen years of autism policy in England.

Key Findings

Area	Finding
Progress Since 2009	Whilst awareness has increased, outcomes for Autistic people have not improved. Services cannot cope with demand, and Autistic people face persistent inequalities.
Current Strategy	The 2021–26 strategy lacks implementation plans and funding. After year one, successive governments produced no delivery framework.
Assessment Crisis	Over 172,000 people await autism assessment. Waiting times exceed two years in many areas. Post-diagnostic support is largely absent.
Public Understanding	Despite increased awareness, public spaces remain inaccessible. Stigma persists, and public discourse often contains damaging misconceptions.
Service Gaps	Autistic people experience cliff edges at life transitions. Support is crisis-driven rather than preventative, costing money and lives.

Priority Recommendations

- New Strategy Framework:** Government must produce a costed, deliverable plan with clear accountability and meaningful involvement of Autistic people.

- **Public Understanding Campaign:** Launch a national initiative to improve understanding and acceptance, with mandatory training for public-facing staff.
- **Assessment Reform:** Move from diagnosis-dependent to needs-based support. Integrate assessment into mainstream services with guaranteed post-diagnostic support.
- **Education Access:** End off-rolling and school exclusions of Autistic children. Implement whole-school approaches and strengthen accountability measures.
- **Employment Support:** Create specialist jobs service, expand supported employment schemes, and incentivise employers to make reasonable adjustments.
- **Healthcare Improvements:** Implement digital flags, hospital passports, and mandatory Oliver McGowan training. Address 20-year life expectancy gap.
- **Criminal Justice Reform:** Develop coordinated strategy with systematic screening, specialist training, and appropriate support throughout the system.
- **Community Support:** Build preventative, stepped support models. End inappropriate hospital admissions and protect from harmful treatments.

Critical Statistics

Measure	Data
Employment Rate	Only 3 in 10 Autistic people in employment
Education Exclusions	5 times more likely to be excluded from school
Life Expectancy	20 years shorter than non-autistic people
Mental Health	8 in 10 Autistic people experience mental health issues

Implementation Requirements

The new strategy requires cross-government coordination, ring-fenced funding, and robust accountability mechanisms. Local delivery must be monitored through strengthened statutory guidance and regular reporting. The Government must prioritise early intervention, accessibility, and the meaningful involvement of Autistic people at every stage.

Reference

Select Committee on the Autism Act 2009. (2025). *Time to deliver: The Autism Act 2009 and the new autism strategy* (HL Paper 205). House of Lords.