



Autism
Education
Trust

Post-16

Standards Framework

This framework can be used by leaders in Post-16 settings as a tool that enables them to enhance and embed Good Autism Practice across a whole organisation



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Introduction to the AET Post-16 Standards Framework

The Autism Education Trust (AET) vision is to support leaders to create culture change, to enable staff to embrace neurodiversity, and to promote awareness and acceptance of autism. This includes viewing autism as a different way of being rather than as a ‘disorder’.

The AET Post-16 Standards embody this vision and are a framework for leaders to enhance and embed inclusive practice across a whole organisation, and to improve outcomes for autistic learners. The Standards support leaders to meet special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) policy and legal requirements and equality duties whilst complying with the Ofsted Education Inspection Framework (2021) and the Education and Training Foundation Professional Standards for Teachers and Trainers in Further Education (FE) (2014).

The AET Post-16 Standards have been written for all Post-16 educational settings. Here, the generic term ‘college’ to refer to the Post-16 providers that these Standards are created for, and the generic term ‘autistic learners’ for the autistic young people who study in these settings.

By using the AET Standards, organisations can implement the Standards via Learning Support and cascade them to the various departments to achieve a whole-college approach. Through this work, they can:

- Capture the voice of the autistic learner
- Identify priority areas of improvement to work on
- Create an action plan to improve practices in their organisation
- Ensure that reasonable adjustments are implemented for autistic learners
- Improve the engagement, wellbeing, retention, and academic achievement of autistic learners
- Monitor practice and provide evidence of embedding Good Autism Practice
- Provide evidence for Ofsted inspections and any other quality assurance inspections and reviews



Why is it important to have specific standards for autistic learners?

Autistic learners often face significant barriers to learning and the three key areas of difference need to be taken into account:

- Social understanding and communication
- Flexibility, information processing, and understanding
- Sensory processing and integration

Knowledge of these areas of difference and how they impact on autistic learners is crucial to understanding the individual.

Autistic learners often have uneven or ‘spiky’ development, and each young person will have their own unique needs. For example, an autistic learner can have relative strengths and needs in areas such as verbal or visual processing. They can also have relative strengths and challenges in academic subject areas or study skills.

Autistic learners often have additional co-occurring differences alongside a diagnosis of autism. As with all autistic learners, co-occurring differences need to be considered in educational planning.

To support autistic learners, we need to create supportive, enabling environments that are structured, consistent, and respectful of differences.

Eight Principles of Good Autism Practice

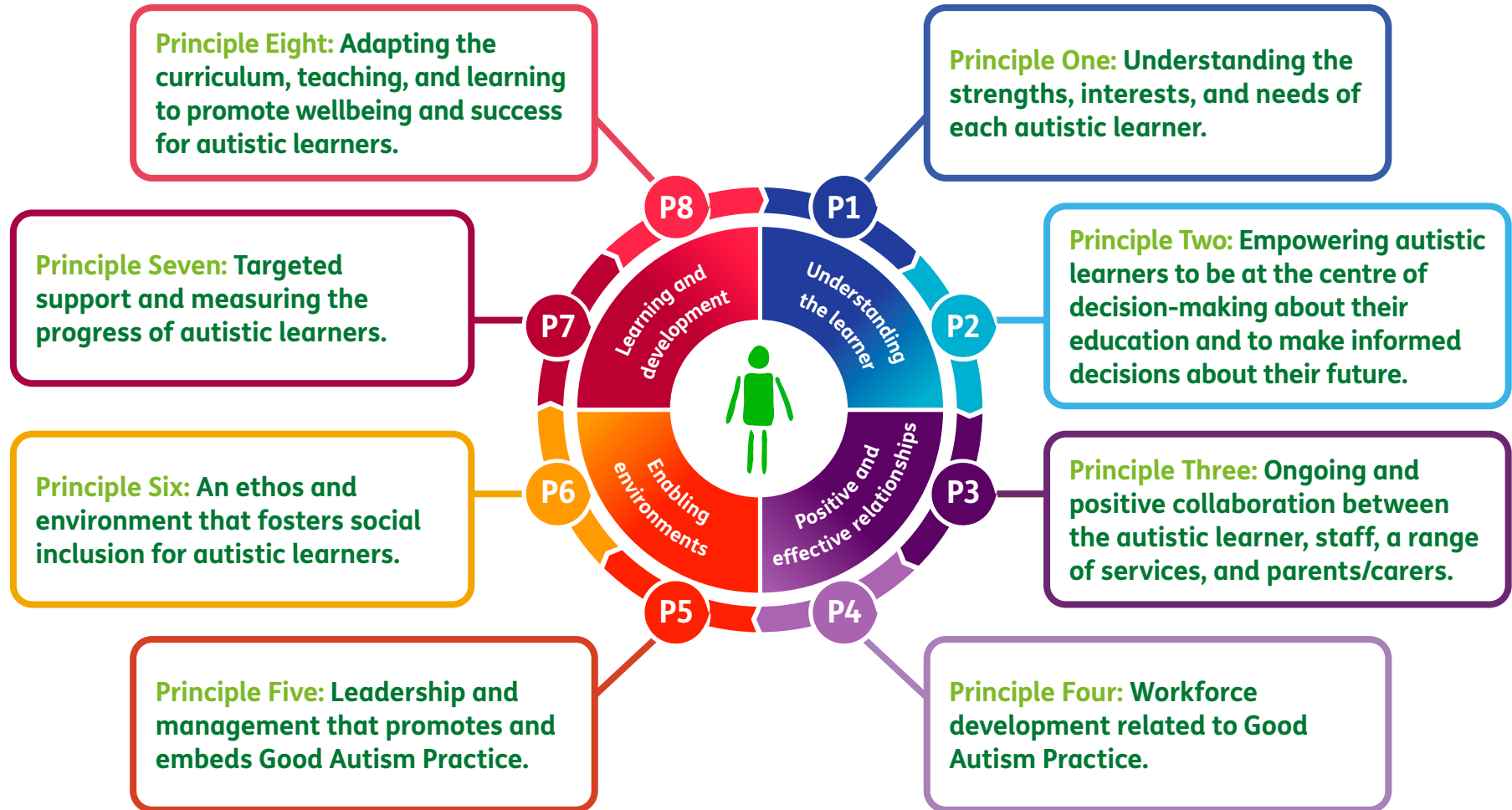
The AET Post-16 Standards are structured around eight principles of Good Autism Practice that provide the framework for the development of approaches that can enhance provision for autistic learners and their families.

These principles are embedded within the AET’s themes of ‘Understanding the learner’, ‘Positive and effective relationships’, ‘Enabling environments’, and ‘Learning and development’. The eight principles have emerged from an examination of the current evidence from research and practice, as well as policies and the perspectives and insights of autistic individuals (Guldberg et al., 2019). The reports outlining this work are available for free on the [Autism Education Trust](#) website. They consist of two reports, the ‘Good Autism Practice: Full Report,’ and a ‘Practitioner Guide to Good Autism Practice in Education’.

There are also a set of 8 case studies that serve to illustrate how the 8 principles of GAP have been embedded into a number of different education settings across the three phases.

The AET Eight Good Autism Practice Principles

This is how the Eight Principles of Good Autism Practice are embedded in the four themes.



The AET Inclusion Promises

The eight GAP principles are also distilled into eight Inclusion Promises created by the Autistic Young Experts panel.

We aim to:

1 Understand what you are good at, what you like doing, and when you might need help.

2 Enable you to be at the centre of decision-making about your future.

3 Listen to and work with the people who know you best and who you trust.

4 Make sure we are always progressing towards your goals and aspirations.

5 Make sure staff know how to best support you.

6 Help you to get involved and be included in the activities you wish to participate in.

7 Work together to set achievable goals that are important to you, and that help you see how well you are doing.

8 Help you to feel safe, secure, empowered, and able to learn.

The AET Post-16 Professional Development Programme

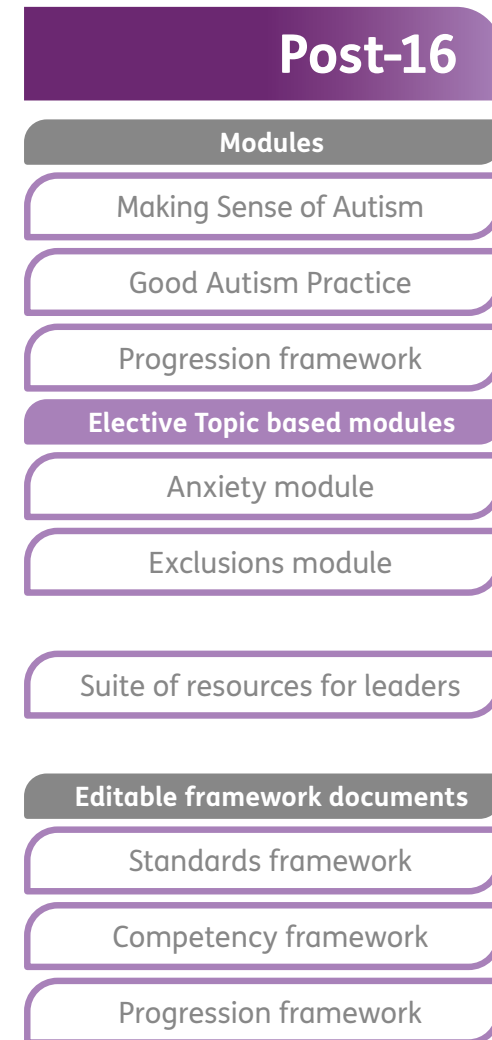
The AET Post-16 Standards are part of the AET Post-16 Professional Development Programme. This Programme contains a set of modules and materials for staff working with autistic learners in Post-16 provisions.

In addition to the Standards, the AET Post-16 Professional Development Programme consists of:

- A Post-16 Competency Framework that enables practitioners to evaluate and reflect upon their own practice when working with autistic learners.
- A Progression Framework that serves as a comprehensive interactive assessment tool that supports practitioners to identify learning priorities, set key learning intentions, and track progress for autistic learners in both mainstream and specialist educational provisions.

The Post-16 Professional Development Programme also has a range of training modules for those working in Post-16 settings.

For further information, please visit the AET website: www.autismeducationtrust.org.uk/training



How to use the AET Post-16 Standards




The Post-16 Standards can be completed by an individual manager, by a small group of staff, and/or by an external professional. They can also be analysed by a group of autistic young people, by parents/carers, or governors, and their responses fed back to senior management in a college.

Every standard has a set of resources that you can access in the accompanying 'Additional resources' document [here](#).

For each standard, you should aim to collect:

- Documentary evidence (e.g. records of training events, 'Assess, Plan, Do, Review' documentation, accounts from autistic learners and autistic learner outcomes, observation schedules, and policy documents)
- Photographs or video clips of relevant practice, staying mindful of GDPR legislation

1. Give each standard, and each example under that standard, a RAG (red, amber, green) rating:

-  **Room for improvement:** Work needs to be done to develop practice in this area.
-  **Developing:** Work has started on this area of practice.
-  **We do this really well:** This standard is well developed.

2. Use this information to decide which standards are most important to focus on in your provision.
3. Create a **Next Steps Action Plan** for the standards you are focusing on by documenting your actions for the standards that need improvement.
4. Include specified time frames and nominated team members for implementation of this.
5. Collect data before and after so you can document the progress of implementing the standard.

At a Glance:

The four themes, Eight Principles of Good Autism Practice, the AET Post-16 Standards, and the AET Post-16 Competencies.



The following tables outline how the four themes, the Eight Principles of Good Autism Practice, the AET Post-16 Standards, and the AET Post-16 Competencies are interlinked.



Understanding the learner

Principle One: Understanding the strengths, interests, and needs of each autistic learner.

STANDARDS

S1. We support the autistic learner to self-advocate and share information that is important to them, and we work with them to identify the right tools to do so.

S2. We take account of how each autistic learner's co-occurring differences, including anxiety and stress, can affect behaviour and can cause barriers to learning. We work closely with the autistic learner to understand their needs, and to find strategies for regulating feelings and emotions.

COMPETENCIES

C1. I work in partnership with the autistic learner to identify and share the key strengths and challenges that they face in the areas of social understanding and communication; flexibility, information processing and understanding, and sensory processing and integration.

C2. I recognise that many autistic learners have co-occurring differences. They can experience high levels of anxiety and stress, and these can create barriers to learning. I know that autistic learners may display behaviour based on a combination of factors and I work hard to understand the causes and functions of the behaviour.

Principle Two: Empowering autistic learners to be at the centre of decision-making about their education and to make informed decisions about their future .

STANDARDS

S3. The person-centred approaches we use are co-created with the autistic learner and enable the autistic learner to self-advocate and communicate their future aspirations in terms of community, housing, work, and relationships.

S4. We actively involve autistic learners as part of the 'Assess, Plan, Do, Review' cycle so the autistic learner is at the centre of educational planning. The voice of the autistic learner informs all policy-making, planning, engagement, and equal opportunities.

COMPETENCIES

C3. I understand the importance of listening to the autistic learner and regularly consult, involve, and arrive at joint decisions with the autistic learner.

C4. I see the autistic learner as a partner in their learning and actively involve them as part of the 'Assess, Plan, Do, Review' cycle so that the autistic learner is at the centre of educational planning.



Positive and effective relationships

Principle Three: Ongoing and positive collaboration between the autistic learner, staff, a range of services, and parents/carers.

STANDARDS

S5. We support the autistic learner to share information with a range of professionals and their family about what is important to them at key transition points in their life.

S6. We work collaboratively with the autistic learner, and with health, social care, mental health services, parents/carers (if appropriate), and other professionals to help the autistic learner to consider future pathways, and to ensure that the autistic learner is supported by a range of professionals to have as much control as possible of their lives.

COMPETENCIES

C5. I work closely with the autistic learner, other staff in my provision, parents/carers (when appropriate), and with a range of services to support the autistic learner to self-advocate what is important to them at key transition points in their life.

C6. I collaborate with the autistic learner, and with health, social care, parents/carers, and other professionals to improve educational experiences and outcomes for the autistic learner.

Principle Four: Workforce development related to Good Autism Practice.

STANDARDS

S7. We are committed to continuing professional development on autism across our workforce. We ensure staff receive ongoing training that is appropriate to their role, and we involve autistic learners in providing workforce development.

S8. We use the AET Competencies framework to audit staff confidence levels, understanding and knowledge of autism, and the changes staff make to their practice as a result of undertaking professional development.

COMPETENCIES

C7. I engage in professional development that enables me to address the needs of autistic learners and to enhance and embed inclusive practice. I take onboard the perspectives of autistic young people and adults.

C8. I utilise the competency framework as a working document to gather data, reflect on, and note down the implications of my learning and development for my own practice, and ultimately for the autistic learner(s) I work with.



Enabling environments

Principle Five: Leadership and management that promotes and embeds Good Autism Practice.

STANDARDS

S9. We promote a supportive, enabling environment in which all staff are knowledgeable about autism and we empower staff to approach senior staff when their input is required.

S10. We embed Good Autism Practice in the organisation and work with all staff to ensure this is consistent across the setting. We address the risk of social exclusion for autistic learners, enable autistic learners to access college and community activities, and develop pathways to employment.

COMPETENCIES

C9. I proactively work with my line manager and/or Learning Support Manager to identify, share, and embed Good Autism Practice.

C10. I support the autistic learner to engage in opportunities to participate in college and community activities, and I enable autistic learners to develop skills to support independence and pathways to employment.

Principle Six: An ethos and environment that fosters social inclusion for autistic learners.

STANDARDS

S11. Our enabling approaches foster a calm, low-arousal learning environment and we promote a sense of wellbeing, security, and belonging for all our autistic learners.

S12. We create structured, predictable, and calm environments. We are constantly mindful of adapting to the needs of individual autistic learners.

COMPETENCIES

C11. I create positive, supportive, and caring relationships between autistic learners and staff, between autistic learners and their autistic and non-autistic peers, and between staff and parents/carers.

C12. I create structured, predictable, and calm environments. I am mindful of adapting to the needs of individual autistic learners and I make reasonable adjustments accordingly.



Learning and development

Principle Seven: Targeted support and measuring the progress of autistic learners.

STANDARDS

S13. We work with autistic learners to recognise and celebrate their achievements, and we have rigorous procedures for recording autistic learners' progress and achievement, including employability skills, to support them towards their future goals.

S14. We work with autistic learners to complete a person-centred learner profile and specialist learner support plan in partnership with key staff members, and we ensure that these are regularly reviewed to monitor progress.

COMPETENCIES

C13. When assessing progress towards learning goals, I have a holistic approach that builds on strengths and interests, whilst addressing skills and understanding that autistic learners may find difficult.

C14. I am involved in or contribute to the development and implementation of person-centred learner profiles in partnership with autistic learners, parents/carers, and other staff. These include details of how staff can support the autistic learner.

Principle Eight: Adapting the curriculum, teaching, and learning to promote wellbeing and success for autistic learners.

STANDARDS

S15. We provide a broad, flexible, and balanced curriculum that addresses the learning needs of autistic learners and their social and emotional wellbeing, communication needs, and life skills.

S16. We use assistive technology to enable autistic learners to take control of their learning journey and to gain independence.

COMPETENCIES

C15. I differentiate support and/or teaching to embed a dual academic and social, emotional curriculum.

C16. I use assistive technology to enable autistic learners to take control of their learning journey and to gain independence.

Theme one: Understanding the learner





Understanding the learner

Principle One: Understanding the strengths, interests, and needs of each autistic learner.

Standard One: We support the autistic learner to self-advocate and share information that is important to them, and we work with them to identify the right tools to do so.

ROOM FOR IMPROVEMENT

DEVELOPING

WE DO THIS REALLY WELL

Examples of how we do this:

We work in partnership with the autistic learner and their circles of support to identify how they learn most effectively. The voice of the autistic learner is central to this.

ROOM FOR IMPROVEMENT

DEVELOPING

WE DO THIS REALLY WELL

We use person-centred approaches to gather information on the strengths, and differences of each individual autistic learner in the areas of social understanding and communication; flexibility, information processing, and understanding; and sensory processing and integration.

ROOM FOR IMPROVEMENT

DEVELOPING

WE DO THIS REALLY WELL

We are aware that autism has traditionally been viewed as a male condition, but that many autistic girls and women are being diagnosed later in life, are misdiagnosed, or their differences are missed. We also recognise that some boys and men, gay, trans and non-binary people often do not have their needs recognised. We are attuned to this and provide appropriate support.

ROOM FOR IMPROVEMENT

DEVELOPING

WE DO THIS REALLY WELL

Link to statutory framework

Where a learner is identified as having SEN and needing SEN support, colleges should bring together all the relevant information from the school, from the learner, from those working with the learner and from any screening test or assessment the college has carried out. This information should be discussed with the learner (SEND Code of Practice, 2015:115).



Understanding the learner

How do we document evidence of working on this standard?

We document evidence of working on this standard through assessment results, the production of resources, case studies, learner profiles, and the goals we co-create with autistic learners and parents/carers (where appropriate/possible), and by documenting our reasonable adjustments and the impact of those.

Evidence to show how we meet this standard:

What has been the impact of implementing this standard?

On autistic learners:

On parents/carers:

On staff:



Understanding the learner

Principle One: Understanding the strengths, interests, and needs of each autistic learner.

Standard Two: We take account of how each autistic learner’s co-occurring differences, including anxiety and stress, can affect behaviour and can cause barriers to learning. We work closely with the autistic learner to understand their needs, and to find strategies for regulating feelings and emotions.

ROOM FOR IMPROVEMENT

DEVELOPING

WE DO THIS REALLY WELL

Examples of how we do this:

We understand that autistic learners often have additional needs arising from co-occurring differences. We signpost the autistic learner to services and specialist teams that can help them understand any co-occurring differences they have, to ensure needs arising from these differences are met.

ROOM FOR IMPROVEMENT

DEVELOPING

WE DO THIS REALLY WELL

We recognise that autistic learners may have sensory processing differences. We conduct environmental audits in partnership with the autistic learner when possible, and we consider transport, the workplace, and community facilities.

ROOM FOR IMPROVEMENT

DEVELOPING

WE DO THIS REALLY WELL

We take account of the effect of external environmental factors when analysing why autistic learners might show behaviours that indicate distress. We engage with the autistic learner to find ways of making reasonable adjustments and regulating behaviour.

ROOM FOR IMPROVEMENT

DEVELOPING

WE DO THIS REALLY WELL

Link to statutory framework

A detailed assessment of need should ensure that the full range of an individual’s needs is identified, not simply the primary need. The support provided to an individual should always be based on a full understanding of their particular strengths and needs and seek to address them all (SEND Code of Practice, 2015:96).



Understanding the learner

How do we document evidence of working on this standard?

We document evidence of working on this standard through assessment results, the production of resources, case studies, learner profiles, and the goals we co-create with autistic learners and parents/carers (where appropriate/possible), and by documenting our reasonable adjustments and the impact of those.

Evidence to show how we meet this standard:

What has been the impact of implementing this standard?

On autistic learners:

On parents/carers:

On staff:



Understanding the learner

Principle Two: Empowering autistic learners to be at the centre of decision-making about their education and to make informed decisions about their future.

Standard Three: The person-centred approaches we use are co-created with the autistic learner and enable the autistic learner to self-advocate and communicate their future aspirations in terms of community, housing, work, and relationships.

ROOM FOR IMPROVEMENT

DEVELOPING

WE DO THIS REALLY WELL

Examples of how we do this:

We enable autistic learners to identify and celebrate their strengths, hopes, dreams, and aspirations. We work with them to record this information in their learner profile.

ROOM FOR IMPROVEMENT

DEVELOPING

WE DO THIS REALLY WELL

We support young people to develop and use effective communication systems that reflect their level of understanding, and we use a range of tools to capture their voice (e.g., digital technology, written information, symbols, pictures, objects of reference).

ROOM FOR IMPROVEMENT

DEVELOPING

WE DO THIS REALLY WELL

We take on board the perspective of the autistic learner across the activities in which they engage and we consider their preferences for how they can be supported in their day-to-day activities and tasks, as well as their social preferences.

ROOM FOR IMPROVEMENT

DEVELOPING

WE DO THIS REALLY WELL

Link to statutory framework

Where an autistic learner has a learning difficulty or disability that calls for special educational provision, the college must use its best endeavours to put appropriate support in place. Young people should be supported to participate in discussions about their aspirations, their needs, and the support that they think will help them best (SEND Code of Practice, 2015:114).

As young people develop [...] they should be involved more and more closely in decisions about their own future (SEND Code of Practice, 2015:126).



Understanding the learner

How do we document evidence of working on this standard?

We document evidence of working on this standard through assessment results, the production of resources, case studies, learner profiles, and the goals we co-create with autistic learners and parents/carers (where appropriate/possible), and by documenting our reasonable adjustments and the impact of those.

Evidence to show how we meet this standard:

What has been the impact of implementing this standard?

On autistic learners:

On parents/carers:

On staff:



Understanding the learner

Principle Two: Empowering autistic learners to be at the centre of decision-making about their education and to make informed decisions about their future.

Standard Four: We actively involve autistic learners as part of the ‘Assess, Plan, Do, Review’ cycle so the autistic learner is at the centre of educational planning. The voice of the autistic learner informs all policy-making, planning, engagement, and equal opportunities.

ROOM FOR IMPROVEMENT

DEVELOPING

WE DO THIS REALLY WELL

Examples of how we do this:

We follow the tiered approach in the SEND Code of Practice and are confident in collecting ‘Assess, Plan, Do, Review’ evidence for our own records and submitting to external professionals.

ROOM FOR IMPROVEMENT

DEVELOPING

WE DO THIS REALLY WELL

Autistic learners have regular opportunities to discuss their needs and wishes, to give feedback and participate in decision-making. We arrange for autistic learners to discuss the suitability of the support they are receiving with a trusted key person. We review learner profiles and the specialist learner support plans regularly and enable self-advocacy by encouraging autistic learners to communicate when they need reviews.

ROOM FOR IMPROVEMENT

DEVELOPING

WE DO THIS REALLY WELL

We establish strong relationships between staff and autistic learners, promoting active listening and the exchange of information and ideas, using person-centred approaches to ensure young people are involved in decision-making. The autistic learner’s perspective is central in review meetings and transition planning.

ROOM FOR IMPROVEMENT

DEVELOPING

WE DO THIS REALLY WELL

Guidance

Support should be evidence based. This means that colleges should be aware of effective practice in the sector and elsewhere and personalise it for the individual. They should keep the needs of learners with SEN or disabilities under regular review. Colleges should take a cyclical approach to assessing need, planning and providing support, and reviewing and evaluating that support so that it can be adjusted where necessary. They should involve the learner and, particularly for those aged 16 to 18, their parents, closely at all stages of the cycle, planning around the individual, and they should ensure that staff have the skills to do this effectively (SEND Code of Practice, 2015:115).



Understanding the learner

How do we document evidence of working on this standard?

We document evidence of working on this standard through assessment results, the production of resources, case studies, learner profiles, and the goals we co-create with autistic learners and parents/carers (where appropriate/possible), and by documenting our reasonable adjustments and the impact of those.

Evidence to show how we meet this standard:

What has been the impact of implementing this standard?

On autistic learners:

On parents/carers:

On staff:

Theme two: Positive and effective relationships





Positive and effective relationships

Principle Three: Ongoing and positive collaboration between the autistic learner, staff, a range of services, and parents/carers.

Standard Five: We support the autistic learner to share information with a range of professionals and their family about what is important to them at key transition points in their life.

ROOM FOR IMPROVEMENT

DEVELOPING

WE DO THIS REALLY WELL

Examples of how we do this:

The autistic learner is at the heart of the transition process, and we work with autistic learners to explore the pathways open to them so that they can make informed decisions about next steps.

ROOM FOR IMPROVEMENT

DEVELOPING

WE DO THIS REALLY WELL

We engage with autistic learners to support transition in and out of college, and we ensure that we support the autistic learners in the choice of pathways from college, into Further and Higher Education, apprenticeship, and employment. This can include creating visual maps of the setting, or of services or professionals involved in their education, for example.

ROOM FOR IMPROVEMENT

DEVELOPING

WE DO THIS REALLY WELL

We effectively share and communicate key transitional information with all relevant agencies, including parents/carers, support workers and employers, so that we can support a timely and successful transition in and out of college. Transition information is given in the most appropriate way, at the right time and with the consent of the young person.

ROOM FOR IMPROVEMENT

DEVELOPING

WE DO THIS REALLY WELL

Link to statutory framework

Colleges should be involved in transition planning between school and college so that they can prepare to meet the learner's needs and ensure a successful transition into college life (SEND Code of Practice, 2015:116).

Schools and colleges should work in partnership to provide opportunities such as taster courses, link programmes and mentoring which enable young people with SEN to familiarise themselves with the college environment and gain some experience of college life and study (SEND Code of Practice, 2015:129).



Positive and effective relationships

How do we document evidence of working on this standard?

We document evidence of working on this standard through assessment results, the production of resources, case studies, learner profiles, and the goals we co-create with autistic learners and parents/carers (where appropriate/possible), and by documenting our reasonable adjustments and the impact of those.

Evidence to show how we meet this standard:

What has been the impact of implementing this standard?

On autistic learners:

On parents/carers:

On staff:



Positive and effective relationships

Principle Three: Ongoing and positive collaboration between the autistic learner, staff, a range of services, and parents/ carers.

Standard Six: We work collaboratively with the autistic learner, and with health, social care, mental health services, parents/ carers (if appropriate), and other professionals to help the autistic learner to consider future pathways, and to ensure that the autistic learner is supported by a range of professionals to have as much control as possible of their lives.

ROOM FOR IMPROVEMENT

DEVELOPING

WE DO THIS REALLY WELL

Examples of how we do this:

We develop links with professionals across services and contexts according to the needs of autistic learners. This includes occupational therapy, speech and language therapy, Children and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) and adult mental health services, for example.

ROOM FOR IMPROVEMENT

DEVELOPING

WE DO THIS REALLY WELL

We bring together professionals within and beyond the setting in a multi-disciplinary approach and all staff are aware of the Team Around the Learner.

ROOM FOR IMPROVEMENT

DEVELOPING

WE DO THIS REALLY WELL

We involve other professionals in providing guidance and support for the preparation of Education, Health, and Care (EHC) plans, social care packages or DSA support, as well as employment advice and how to access support and benefits, according to the needs of the autistic learner.

ROOM FOR IMPROVEMENT

DEVELOPING

WE DO THIS REALLY WELL

Link to statutory framework

Colleges should ensure they have access to external specialist services and expertise. These can include, for example, educational psychologists, Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS), specialist teachers and support services, supported employment services and therapists. They can be involved at any point for help or advice on the best way to support a learner with SEN or a disability. Specialist help should be involved where the learner's needs are not being met by the strong, evidence-based support provided by the college (SEND Code of Practice, 2015:117).



Positive and effective relationships

How do we document evidence of working on this standard?

We document evidence of working on this standard through assessment results, the production of resources, case studies, learner profiles, and the goals we co-create with autistic learners and parents/carers (where appropriate/possible), and by documenting our reasonable adjustments and the impact of those.

Evidence to show how we meet this standard:

What has been the impact of implementing this standard?

On autistic learners:

On parents/carers:

On staff:



Positive and effective relationships

Principle Four: Workforce development related to Good Autism Practice.

Standard Seven: We are committed to continuing professional development on autism across our workforce. We ensure staff receive ongoing training that is appropriate to their role, and we involve autistic learners in providing workforce development.

ROOM FOR IMPROVEMENT

DEVELOPING

WE DO THIS REALLY WELL

Examples of how we do this:

We recognise the importance of high-quality professional development in the education of autistic learners. As knowledge is continuously developing, there is a need to regularly update the knowledge, skills, and practice of the workforce.

ROOM FOR IMPROVEMENT

DEVELOPING

WE DO THIS REALLY WELL

Our setting empowers and supports staff to share, learn, and enhance knowledge and skills to develop greater understanding of autism and common co-occurring differences. Ongoing continuous professional development and learning (CPD) includes self-directed learning, mentoring, coaching, and discussion and collaboration with colleagues.

ROOM FOR IMPROVEMENT

DEVELOPING

WE DO THIS REALLY WELL

We use the AET Post-16 Competencies to identify the professional development needs of staff who work with autistic learners.

ROOM FOR IMPROVEMENT

DEVELOPING

WE DO THIS REALLY WELL

Link to statutory framework

The governing bodies of colleges should ensure that all staff interact appropriately and inclusively with learners who have SEN or a disability and should ensure that they have appropriate expertise within their workforce. They should also ensure that curriculum staff are able to develop their skills, are aware of effective practice and keep their knowledge up to date. Colleges should make sure they have access to specialist skills and expertise to support the learning of learners with SEN [...] They should ensure that there is a named person in the college with oversight of SEND provision to ensure coordination of support (SEND Code of Practice, 2015:116).



Positive and effective relationships

How do we document evidence of working on this standard?

We document evidence of working on this standard through assessment results, the production of resources, case studies, learner profiles, and the goals we co-create with autistic learners and parents/carers (where appropriate/possible), and by documenting our reasonable adjustments and the impact of those.

Evidence to show how we meet this standard:

What has been the impact of implementing this standard?

On autistic learners:

On parents/carers:

On staff:



Positive and effective relationships

Principle Four: Workforce development related to Good Autism Practice.

Standard Eight: We use the AET Competencies framework to audit staff confidence levels, understanding and knowledge of autism, and the changes staff make to their practice as a result of undertaking professional development.

ROOM FOR IMPROVEMENT

DEVELOPING

WE DO THIS REALLY WELL

Examples of how we do this:

All staff attend ongoing training appropriate to their role, and understand how autism can impact on individual learners. This includes safeguarding autistic learners.

ROOM FOR IMPROVEMENT

DEVELOPING

WE DO THIS REALLY WELL

We ensure our staff have the confidence to support autistic learners, and we support them to be as independent as possible and to work towards outcomes that are important to the autistic learner. Staff complete self-evaluation forms about their knowledge, confidence, and practice related to autism before and after undertaking continuous professional development (CPD).

ROOM FOR IMPROVEMENT

DEVELOPING

WE DO THIS REALLY WELL

We gather information from staff about the changes they make to their practice as a result of professional development and for performance management purposes through the AET Competencies working document.

ROOM FOR IMPROVEMENT

DEVELOPING

WE DO THIS REALLY WELL

Link to statutory framework

Teachers and trainers are reflective and enquiring practitioners who think critically about their own educational assumptions, values, and practice in the context of a changing contemporary and educational world [...] They draw on relevant research as part of evidence-based practice. They act with honesty and integrity to maintain high standards of ethics and professional behaviour in support of learners and their expectations (Education and Training Foundation, Professional Standards for Teachers and Trainers in Further Education, 2014:1).



Positive and effective relationships

How do we document evidence of working on this standard?

We document evidence of working on this standard through assessment results, the production of resources, case studies, learner profiles, and the goals we co-create with autistic learners and parents/carers (where appropriate/possible), and by documenting our reasonable adjustments and the impact of those.

Evidence to show how we meet this standard:

What has been the impact of implementing this standard?

On autistic learners:

On parents/carers:

On staff:

Theme three: Enabling environments





Enabling environments

Principle Five: Leadership and management that promotes and embeds Good Autism Practice.

Standard Nine: We promote a supportive, enabling environment in which all staff are knowledgeable about autism and we empower staff to approach senior staff when their input is required.

ROOM FOR IMPROVEMENT

DEVELOPING

WE DO THIS REALLY WELL

Examples of how we do this:

We encourage reflective management of staff and resources. We keep up to date with and promote initiatives in good practice for teaching autistic young people. This includes technological advances, changes in policy and ways of supporting good outcomes for autistic learners, such as accessing work experience, for example. We facilitate time for staff to consider and evaluate their practice.

ROOM FOR IMPROVEMENT

DEVELOPING

WE DO THIS REALLY WELL

Information about how we support autistic learners is referenced in our quality improvement plan, in policies (particularly the SEND policy and the behaviour policy) and in our Equality Duty objectives.

ROOM FOR IMPROVEMENT

DEVELOPING

WE DO THIS REALLY WELL

We have a named and experienced member of staff (for example, an autism champion or lead/advanced practitioner) to take the lead on developing effective autism practice. They provide general information on autism, specific information about individuals and advice on strategies and approaches to all other members of staff.

ROOM FOR IMPROVEMENT

DEVELOPING

WE DO THIS REALLY WELL

Link to statutory framework

The leaders of Early Years settings, Schools and Colleges should establish and maintain a culture of high expectations that expects those working with children and young people with SEND to include them in all the opportunities available to other children.

There is a significant overlap between children and young people with SEN and those with disabilities and [many] are covered by both SEN and equality legislation

(SEND Code of Practice, 2015:27).



Enabling environments

How do we document evidence of working on this standard?

We document evidence of working on this standard through assessment results, the production of resources, case studies, learner profiles, and the goals we co-create with autistic learners and parents/carers (where appropriate/possible), and by documenting our reasonable adjustments and the impact of those.

Evidence to show how we meet this standard:

What has been the impact of implementing this standard?

On autistic learners:

On parents/carers:

On staff:



Enabling environments

Principle Five: Leadership and management that promotes and embeds Good Autism Practice.

Standard Ten: We embed Good Autism Practice in the organisation and work with all staff to ensure this is consistent across the setting. We address the risk of social exclusion for autistic learners, enable autistic learners to access college and community activities, and develop pathways to employment.

ROOM FOR IMPROVEMENT

DEVELOPING

WE DO THIS REALLY WELL

Examples of how we do this:

We create an inclusive learning environment through promoting positive attitudes and behaviours toward autistic learners. Our staff build effective relationships by actively listening, talking to and observing autistic learners, and by communicating regularly and positively with parents/carers and relevant professionals.

ROOM FOR IMPROVEMENT

DEVELOPING

WE DO THIS REALLY WELL

Our systems and structures are proactively adjusted to promote social inclusion and to reduce exclusions.

ROOM FOR IMPROVEMENT

DEVELOPING

WE DO THIS REALLY WELL

Our provision implements approaches to develop the mutual understanding, communication, and support between autistic learners, their autistic and non-autistic peers, staff and employers. For example, we set up buddy systems and peer mentoring schemes, with both autistic and non-autistic peers.

ROOM FOR IMPROVEMENT

DEVELOPING

WE DO THIS REALLY WELL

Link to statutory framework

Being supported towards greater independence and employability can be life transforming for children and young people with SEN. This support needs to start early, and should centre around the child or young person's own aspirations, interests and needs. All professionals working with them should share high aspirations and have a good understanding of what support is effective in enabling children and young people to achieve their ambitions (SEND Code of Practice, 2015:122).



Enabling environments

How do we document evidence of working on this standard?

We document evidence of working on this standard through assessment results, the production of resources, case studies, learner profiles, and the goals we co-create with autistic learners and parents/carers (where appropriate/possible), and by documenting our reasonable adjustments and the impact of those.

Evidence to show how we meet this standard:

What has been the impact of implementing this standard?

On autistic learners:

On parents/carers:

On staff:



Enabling environments

Principle Six: An ethos and environment that fosters social inclusion for autistic learners.

Standard Eleven: Our enabling approaches foster a calm, low-arousal learning environment and we promote a sense of wellbeing, security, and belonging for all our autistic learners.

ROOM FOR IMPROVEMENT

DEVELOPING

WE DO THIS REALLY WELL

Examples of how we do this:

We pay attention to the mental and emotional wellbeing of autistic learners and involve autistic learners in communicating how they view their ideal learning environment. We employ autistic staff as role models, and foster inclusive, enabling environments.

ROOM FOR IMPROVEMENT

DEVELOPING

WE DO THIS REALLY WELL

We talk to young people about what they want to do in their free time (i.e. all unstructured times). We facilitate support for this, for example by the provision of quiet space, a range of activities, and opportunities for interactions with others as appropriate. Low-arousal spaces are identified on the college campus so that autistic learners can access these if and when they feel they need to do so.

ROOM FOR IMPROVEMENT

DEVELOPING

WE DO THIS REALLY WELL

Autistic learners have an identified key person with whom they can arrange 1:1 meetings.

ROOM FOR IMPROVEMENT

DEVELOPING

WE DO THIS REALLY WELL

Link to statutory framework

Colleges should offer an inclusive approach to learning and teaching, with high quality teaching which is differentiated for individuals. This approach should be embedded in their provision in all subject areas and at all levels, and support the teaching of all autistic learners, including those with SEN (SEND Code of Practice, 2015:113).



Enabling environments

How do we document evidence of working on this standard?

We document evidence of working on this standard through assessment results, the production of resources, case studies, learner profiles, and the goals we co-create with autistic learners and parents/carers (where appropriate/possible), and by documenting our reasonable adjustments and the impact of those.

Evidence to show how we meet this standard:

What has been the impact of implementing this standard?

On autistic learners:

On parents/carers:

On staff:



Enabling environments

Principle Six: An ethos and environment that fosters social inclusion for autistic learners.

Standard Twelve: We create structured, predictable, and calm environments. We are constantly mindful of adapting to the needs of individual autistic learners.

ROOM FOR IMPROVEMENT

DEVELOPING

WE DO THIS REALLY WELL

Examples of how we do this:

We recognise that some autistic learners experience difficulties with change, ranging from changes in everyday routine to changing between settings. We ensure that activities are well organised and structured, and we plan ahead for transitions.

ROOM FOR IMPROVEMENT

DEVELOPING

WE DO THIS REALLY WELL

Learning Support Staff find out what adjustments to activities, lessons, timetables, assessment, exams and delivery they need to make for autistic learners. This supports autistic learners with completing assignments and accessing exams and work placements.

ROOM FOR IMPROVEMENT

DEVELOPING

WE DO THIS REALLY WELL

We have a good understanding of access arrangements for exams and reasonable adjustments that could be made to deliver best results for autistic young people under the SEND Code of Practice (2015) and the Equality Act 2010. We share this information with autistic learners and their parents/carers (when appropriate).

ROOM FOR IMPROVEMENT

DEVELOPING

WE DO THIS REALLY WELL

Link to statutory framework

The vast majority of young people with SEN are capable of sustainable paid employment with the right preparation and support. All professionals working with them should share that presumption. Colleges that offer courses which are designed to provide pathways to employment should have a clear focus on preparing learners with SEN for work. This includes identifying the skills that employers value, and helping young people to develop them (SEND Code of Practice, 2015:131).



Enabling environments

How do we document evidence of working on this standard?

We document evidence of working on this standard through assessment results, the production of resources, case studies, learner profiles, and the goals we co-create with autistic learners and parents/carers (where appropriate/possible), and by documenting our reasonable adjustments and the impact of those.

Evidence to show how we meet this standard:

What has been the impact of implementing this standard?

On autistic learners:

On parents/carers:

On staff:

Theme four: Learning and development





Learning and development

Principle Seven: Targeted support and measuring the progress of autistic learners.

Standard Thirteen: We work with autistic learners to recognise and celebrate their achievements, and we have rigorous procedures for recording autistic learners' progress and achievement, including employability skills, to support them towards their future goals.

ROOM FOR IMPROVEMENT

DEVELOPING

WE DO THIS REALLY WELL

Examples of how we do this:

The assessment approaches we use are adapted for the individual and include tools developed for autistic learners. We use a variety of approaches to build a profile of the autistic learner's performance of key skills in a range of environments.

ROOM FOR IMPROVEMENT

DEVELOPING

WE DO THIS REALLY WELL

Autistic learners can work with Learning Support Staff and external professionals (if they wish) to record strengths and needs, share learning objectives, and assess progress. We work with the curriculum areas and other stakeholders to ensure differentiation, scaffolding and responsive teaching to ensure full access to the curriculum.

ROOM FOR IMPROVEMENT

DEVELOPING

WE DO THIS REALLY WELL

Our curriculum makes use of work-based learning, such as work experience placements and apprenticeships, to prepare autistic learners for employment. The use and choice of accreditation supports progression. We review outcome and destination data to evaluate the effectiveness of study programmes.

ROOM FOR IMPROVEMENT

DEVELOPING

WE DO THIS REALLY WELL

Link to statutory framework

Where the college decides a learner needs SEN support, the college should discuss with the learner their ambitions, the nature of the support to be put in place, the expected impact on progress and a date for reviewing the support. Plans should be developed with the learner. The support and intervention provided should be selected to meet the learner's aspirations, and should be based on reliable evidence of effectiveness and provided by practitioners with the relevant skills and knowledge (SEND Code of Practice, 2015:115).



Learning and development

How do we document evidence of working on this standard?

We document evidence of working on this standard through assessment results, the production of resources, case studies, learner profiles, and the goals we co-create with autistic learners and parents/carers (where appropriate/possible), and by documenting our reasonable adjustments and the impact of those.

Evidence to show how we meet this standard:

What has been the impact of implementing this standard?

On autistic learners:

On parents/carers:

On staff:



Learning and development

Principle Seven: Targeted support and measuring the progress of autistic learners.

Standard Fourteen: We work with all autistic learners to complete a person-centred learner profile and specialist learner support plan in partnership with key staff members, and we ensure that these are regularly reviewed to monitor progress.

ROOM FOR IMPROVEMENT

DEVELOPING

WE DO THIS REALLY WELL

Examples of how we do this:

We provide a meaningful and relevant curriculum/study programme that addresses the aspirations of autistic young people and accounts for different styles of learning and ‘spiky’ profiles of ability. This encompasses aspects of their social and emotional wellbeing.

ROOM FOR IMPROVEMENT

DEVELOPING

WE DO THIS REALLY WELL

We co-create learner profiles and specialist learner support plans with autistic learners. These are tailored to the learner’s strengths and needs. They have clear learning targets and strategies. They enable the autistic learner and staff to monitor progress, and they are reviewed regularly.

ROOM FOR IMPROVEMENT

DEVELOPING

WE DO THIS REALLY WELL

Learner profiles and specialist learner support plans are initiated promptly, focus on the academic and social, emotional curriculum, and include opportunities for autistic and non-autistic peer collaborations.

ROOM FOR IMPROVEMENT

DEVELOPING

WE DO THIS REALLY WELL

Link to statutory framework

All learners aged 16 to 19 (and, where they will have an EHC plan, up to the age of 25) should follow a coherent study programme which provides stretch and progression and enables them to achieve the best possible outcomes in adult life. Schools and colleges are expected to design study programmes which enable learners to progress to a higher level of study than their prior attainment, take rigorous, substantial qualifications, study English and maths, participate in meaningful work experience and non-qualification activity (SEND Code of Practice, 2015:130).



Learning and development

How do we document evidence of working on this standard?

We document evidence of working on this standard through assessment results, the production of resources, case studies, learner profiles, and the goals we co-create with autistic learners and parents/carers (where appropriate/possible), and by documenting our reasonable adjustments and the impact of those.

Evidence to show how we meet this standard:

What has been the impact of implementing this standard?

On autistic learners:

On parents/carers:

On staff:



Learning and development

Principle Eight: Adapting the curriculum, teaching, and learning to promote wellbeing and success for autistic learners.

Standard Fifteen: We provide a broad, flexible, and balanced curriculum that addresses needs in the areas of learning for autistic learners, as well as social and emotional wellbeing, communication needs, and life skills.

ROOM FOR IMPROVEMENT

DEVELOPING

WE DO THIS REALLY WELL

Examples of how we do this:

We work closely with the autistic learner to prioritise the development of their social communication and wellbeing. Self-advocacy is a central element of our work and we monitor wellbeing through regular tutorials and mentoring sessions.

ROOM FOR IMPROVEMENT

DEVELOPING

WE DO THIS REALLY WELL

We develop and promote social and emotional skills through relationships and sex education (RSE), personal, social, health, and economic (PSHE) education, as well as in the wider curriculum. Autistic learners have access to enhanced, differentiated and scaffolded learning and teaching in these areas. This is reflected in our specialist learner support plans.

ROOM FOR IMPROVEMENT

DEVELOPING

WE DO THIS REALLY WELL

We are committed to preparing autistic learners for adulthood through the holistic development of daily living skills and we embed Preparing for Adulthood Outcomes (community, independence, life skills) in all specialist education plans.

ROOM FOR IMPROVEMENT

DEVELOPING

WE DO THIS REALLY WELL

Link to statutory framework

Early years providers, schools and colleges should know precisely where children and young people with SEN are in their learning and development. They should ensure decisions are informed by the insights of parents and those of children and young people themselves; have high ambitions and set stretching targets for them; track their progress towards these goals; keep under review the additional or different provision that is made for them; promote positive outcomes in the wider areas of personal and social development, and ensure that the approaches used are based on the best possible evidence and are having the required impact on progress (SEND Code of Practice, 2015:25).



Learning and development

How do we document evidence of working on this standard?

We document evidence of working on this standard through assessment results, the production of resources, case studies, learner profiles, and the goals we co-create with autistic learners and parents/carers (where appropriate/possible), and by documenting our reasonable adjustments and the impact of those.

Evidence to show how we meet this standard:

What has been the impact of implementing this standard?

On autistic learners

On parents/carers:

On staff:



Learning and development

Principle Eight: Adapting the curriculum, teaching, and learning to promote wellbeing and success for autistic learners.

Standard Sixteen: We use assistive technology to enable autistic learners to take control of their learning journey and to gain independence.

ROOM FOR IMPROVEMENT

DEVELOPING

WE DO THIS REALLY WELL

Examples of how we do this:

We work with the autistic learner to identify assistive technology and mobile applications that can be used by the individual autistic learner to enable accessibility and independence.

ROOM FOR IMPROVEMENT

DEVELOPING

WE DO THIS REALLY WELL

We place importance on the development of digital literacy, from the use of assistive devices to internet safety. This focuses on giving autistic learners the skills they need in a technology-driven society.

ROOM FOR IMPROVEMENT

DEVELOPING

WE DO THIS REALLY WELL

We use a number of digital literacy programmes, devices and applications that have been specifically developed with autistic learners in mind.

ROOM FOR IMPROVEMENT

DEVELOPING

WE DO THIS REALLY WELL

Link to statutory framework

Colleges should be ambitious for young people with SEN, whatever their needs and whatever their level of study. They should focus on supporting young people so they can progress and reach positive destinations in adult life. These destinations include higher education or further training or employment, independent living (which means having choice and control over the support received), good health and participating in the community (SEND Code of Practice, 2015:113).



Learning and development

How do we document evidence of working on this standard?

We document evidence of working on this standard through assessment results, the production of resources, case studies, learner profiles, and the goals we co-create with autistic learners and parents/carers (where appropriate/possible), and by documenting our reasonable adjustments and the impact of those.

Evidence to show how we meet this standard:

What has been the impact of implementing this standard?

On autistic learners:

On parents/carers:

On staff:

Additional resources

Please click [here](#) to access:

- AET resources and templates
- External resources
- Useful websites
- Legislation and guidance
- Videos



Author and acknowledgements

A note on authorship:

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Lead author:

Professor Karen Guldberg is Director of ACER at the University of Birmingham. She runs Masters programmes in autism and undertakes research related to autism education. She has been working in the field of autism education for 25 years.

Co-authors:

Vivienne Berkeley is Director of Education at Ambitious about Autism. She has over 22 years of experience working in FE. This has included working as a volunteer, lecturer, co-ordinator, and Head of Department across the sector.

Michelle Collard is Training & Consultancy Manager at Ambitious about Autism. She has over 12 years of experience working as a senior leader, researcher, and trainer in education and residential settings specialising in supporting autistic children, young people and adults.

Catherine Leggett, Training Consultant at Ambitious about Autism is an experienced autism and employment consultant and trainer who has worked with employers and employees nationwide as a specialist optimising autistic people's strengths at work since 2014. Cath was diagnosed autistic in 2015 and has an adult autistic child.

Leila Morne is an Advanced Autism Practitioner and a Lecturer in Autism Practice at Weston College, University Centre Weston. Leila has over 13 years of experience supporting young adults with autism in Further and Higher Education.

Emma Murray is a specialist teacher with Bristol Autism Team. She is an experienced Autism Practitioner in Further and Higher Education and is skilled in coaching, lesson planning, differentiated instruction, and curriculum development in Post-16 settings.

The reference group:

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Explore our free, downloadable, editable resources:

- **The Progression Framework**

An interactive assessment tool that helps staff/practitioners identify learning priorities, set key learning intentions, and track progress for Post-16 autistic learners in both mainstream and specialist settings.

- **The Post-16 Competency Framework**

A set of descriptors and examples that can be used by leaders/leadership teams to support the implementation of Good Autism Practice across a whole organisation.

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