

GM Autism Training Standards

Introduction

As part of the delivery of the GM autism strategy 2019-2022, there has been an action to develop some GM autism training standards. The aim of these standards is to help the 10 localities identify training priorities in relation to autism and to guide them on what training should be covering. The GM autism Training group have updated the standards below, following the publication of the “Core Capabilities Framework for Supporting Autistic people”, published by Department of Health and Social Care in November 2019. The standards also cross-reference the NICE guidelines 142, the Autism Education Trust Post 16 standards and the discussion with the GM autism training group.

The GM autism training group has identified that there are many additional points that the frameworks suggests should be added to the core competency framework and that this might make delivery of all those points in one day awareness sessions very difficult.

The group therefore recommend that shorter bolt- on modules be developed to cover some of those areas of work that would be in addition to the basic autism awareness.

A note about COVID

The final version of this report has been produced during the COVID 19 pandemic. During this time, there have been many cancellations of training sessions and the future of face to face training remains in doubt for the foreseeable future. The GM Training group is therefore going to focus on the development shorter, online courses to cover the competency framework requirements.

GM Core principle

- ❖ Training must be person centred at all times.
- ❖ We will not to make assumptions about people and their situation.
- ❖ If you have met one person with autism, you have met one person with autism.

Terminology

Throughout this framework, we use Identity-First terminology (“autistic people” rather than “people with autism”) when referring to autistic people - children, young people and adults. This reflects research published in the Autism journal in 2015, which looked at the preferences of UK autistic community members – autistic people, their families, friends and professionals around the language used to describe autism. The National Autistic Society, the Royal College of GPs and the UCL Institute of Education conducted the research.

The research findings confirmed that there is no single term that everyone prefers. However, it suggests a shift towards more positive and assertive language, particularly

among autistic communities where autism is seen as integral to the person. We recognise that some people prefer other terms and all workers should wherever possible find out the term(s) preferred by the person(s) they are working with and respect this.

Unless otherwise stated, reference to 'autistic people' or 'an autistic person' includes children, young people and adults of all ages across the autism spectrum at all levels of intellectual ability.

Who is the Framework for?

The Core capabilities framework is to provide skills, knowledge and behaviours expected for the delivery of **all services** used by autistic people. It is aimed at:

- Workers and teams
- Managers in organisations and individual employers
- Service commissioners
- Subject matter trainers
- Education providers
- Regional and national implementation
- Autistic people and their family, friends and carers

Therefore, the GM autism training standards are also aimed at all the above groups.

Underpinning Values and behaviours

The person or practitioner will:

- a) Demonstrate positivity, recognising the strengths and abilities of autistic people.
- b) Gain an understanding of each autistic person's perspective and personal preferences.
- c) Be patient and really listen to what is being communicated by an autistic person.
- d) Recognise the presentation, behaviour and identity of autistic people – and respond with respect and compassion, without judging them or labelling their behaviour in unhelpful ways.
- e) Value and acknowledge the experience and expertise of autistic people, their families and support networks, enabling choice and autonomy and protecting people's human rights.
- f) Act with integrity, honesty and openness, seeking to develop mutual trust in all interactions with autistic people, their families, carers and communities.
- g) Be committed to integrated current and future care and support through working in partnership with autistic people, teams, communities and organisations.

h) Value collaborative involvement and co-production with autistic people to improve person-centred design and quality of services.

i) Recognise, respect and value autistic people's differences and challenge negative stereotyping.

j) Take responsibility for one's own learning and continuing professional development and contributing to the learning of others.

The GM autism training will also,

- Ensure that training is co-designed and co-delivered by people with lived experience
- Discuss and consider payment (or an agreement about how the person will benefit) for experts by experience
- Discuss autism with reference to the social model of disability highlighting the difficulties associated adopting only a medical model which may identify the person as the problem.
- Discuss autism with reference to the Reasonable Adjustments that autistic people should expect from those offering support.
- Adopt a strengths based model, which emphasises the talents and wisdom of autistic people.
- Provide training that reflects the range of lives lived by autistic people. Training may use a variety of sources for example: personal presentations, written contributions, and video clips from people who have given permission to share their story. The voice of autistic people should be a feature throughout the whole session.

Tier 1 Autism awareness

Tier 1 is for people who require a general understanding of autism and the support autistic people may need. This is relevant to those in working in any sector who may occasionally interact with autistic people, but who do not have responsibility for providing direct care or making decisions about autism-specific care or support. For example, this may include those working in public services, commercial or charitable organisations providing health, social care, education, policing, custodial care, housing, transport, careers, employment or benefit services. It would include front-of-house and reception staff.

Understanding Autism at Tier 1 would be relevant to introductory autism training. Tiers 2 and 3 provide coverage of capabilities in greater breadth and depth.

Sessions should be a minimum of 2-4 hours long (can be shorter only if group have completed an e-learning first). Awareness sessions over 1 hour or so would not meet the criteria for Tier 1 unless in conjunction with some other training. If the sessions are not being delivered face to face at all then the online training needs to cover the elements below in smaller chunks.

The Tier 1 training must include:

- The notion of autism as a spectrum, including the fact that it is neurodevelopmental and life-long.
- A brief synopsis of the theoretical models developed by Kanner and Asperger in identifying autism.
- Understand the statutory duties towards autistic people, especially Autism Act 2009, Equality Act 2010, Mental Health Act 1993, Mental Capacity Act 2005, Human Rights Act 1998 and Care Act 2014.
- Key characteristics – understanding the main differences found in people with autism (often referred to as the ‘triad of impairments’ in the past), include the concept of “masking”.
- Common sensory differences experienced by autistic people who have autism.
- Basic understanding of the complexity surrounding diagnosis, which includes:
 - Getting a formal diagnosis and why that is important
 - Different diagnoses within the ‘autistic spectrum’
 - Reasons for avoiding, or barriers to, diagnosis.
- Prevalence of autism in the general population.
- A brief sensory overview
- Tips and basic strategies. Include commonly used communication tools, such as communication passports. It would be useful to have “toolbox” available to demonstrate these tools.
- Tips to consider in the environment and to plan changes.
- Recognise the importance of “passionate interests” and hobbies.
- Behaviour as communication including the importance of viewing “challenging behaviour” in this way. Includes understanding that behaviour may be demonstrating distress and anxiety and could also be serving a sensory need
- The role of trauma in the life of many autistic people. Trauma can lead to mental health problems, and the session needs to cover the importance of building trust and making choices for recovery. This trauma may include bullying and other mental distress from childhood. Trauma may also be linked to late diagnosis, a history of misunderstanding and unmet needs
- Emphasis on listening and checking understanding. Include tools and practical strategies for this
- Women’s under identification (include under prevalence) to be discussed
- Links with online resources that includes Personal stories/blogs/ videos
- Recognition of common coexisting conditions, including mental health problems (such as anxiety and depression), physical health problems (such as epilepsy), sleep problems and other neurodevelopmental conditions (such as attention deficit hyperactivity disorder [ADHD])

- The person's experience of autism and its impact in everyday situations
- The impact of the social and physical environment on the autistic person
- Importance of stress and the impact of stress on managing transitions large or small.
- The common problems autistic people have with, sleep and diet and how those can affect stress mood and functioning.
- Understand how reasonable adjustments can be made for autistic people in different settings and the legal basis for these to be made.
- Be able to consistently put key adaptations into practice, for example:
 - i. Do not spring surprises!
 - ii. Don't touch without consent
 - iii. Slow down and pause
 - iv. Create or find a calm, quiet environment
 - v. Explain FIRST, AND THEN do.

Below are the issues that should be included if relevant to the audience

- The importance of key transition points, such as changing schools or health or social care services.
- Recognising everyday transition points e.g. supermarkets changing layout for Easter/Christmas, moving from one activity to another
- The impact of autism on the family (including siblings) carers and partners
- Changing needs that arise with puberty (including the child or young person's understanding of intimate relationships and related problems that may occur, for example, misunderstanding the behaviour of others)

Tier 2- Autism Training

Tier 2 training is for people with responsibility for providing care and support for an autistic person or people, but who could seek support from others for complex management or complex decision-making. For example, Tier 2 will be relevant to health and social care workers, including frontline care staff who are not autism specialists. It will also be suitable for those in other roles such as education and housing services that are providing care and support for autistic people.

Tiers 1 and 2 may also be helpful to autistic people and the family, friends and carers of autistic people, to ensure they are making the most of the support on offer and can plan effectively for their current and future needs.

The sessions should be a whole day (or add up to a whole day even if delivered in chunks). If face to face delivery is not possible the Tier 2 training should consist of all of the elements below delivered in a variety of shorter sessions via online delivery.

Tier 2 should include:

- Understanding that the spectrum is wide and autistic people have a range of abilities and disabilities many of which might not be obvious.
- Understanding the importance of timely access to autism diagnosis and some barriers
- Understand how support must be tailored to the individual.
- The ability to demonstrate the use of appropriate communication skills when supporting an autistic person and to be able to demonstrate good communication during training.
- Support the person, families and friends and make best use of their expert knowledge of the person.
- Recognise when an autistic person is experiencing stress and anxiety, including the impact on the body, and identify ways to support them with this and to support them to manage this.
- Understand the impact of physical health problems, emotional problems, distress or sensory overload on the autistic person, and how that might affect behaviour.
- Recognise the sensory needs and differences of an autistic person and to be able to offer appropriate support.
- Understand stimming, self- soothing and self- regulation
- Understand how to support the development of social interaction skills.
- Provide support with transitions and significant life events.
- Understand the issues, which arise from co-occurrence of mental ill health and autism and the role of trauma and stigma in this.
- Understand how to support the improvement of well- being for autistic people
- Support autistic people to gain and maintain employment (where appropriate).
- Sign posting to autism friendly local services.
- Understand what support there is locally. This might include colleges and what is available pre and post diagnosis
- Top tips and practical steps including how to execute practical strategies such as preparation and providing clear information
- Understand how to assess risk (including self-harm, harm to others, self-neglect, breakdown of family or residential support, exploitation or abuse by others) and develop a risk management plan. Include references to harm that a poor assessment of risk can cause. As well as looking at the present, but also consider futures risks to the person.
- Understand how health inequality affects autistic people, signpost to Health Passports local and NAS.
- Understand how to provide individualised care and support

- Understand the importance of not making assumptions
- Understand that autistic people have a right to be supported to make their own decisions and must be given all practicable help before any one concludes they cannot make that decision (MCA) – Where available it may be appropriate to refer to tier 3 Autism and MCA course.
- Understand the role of Reasonable adjustments and their legal requirements
- Be aware of the impact of bullying, social isolation and social misunderstanding
- Be aware of the types of abuse relevant to autistic people including examples of miscarriages of justice/hate crime
- Understand how to raise safeguarding concerns (national and local policy) and who to contact for advice on MCA or Equality issues
- Be aware of their responsibilities under the Equality Act, Human Rights Act and the Mental Capacity Act and how they apply in practice
- Understand how to assess for social care needs – And if available locally refer to tier 3 care assessors course.
- Understand how to apply autism training and strategies to specific settings such as drug and alcohol services, IAPT services, CMHT settings, colleges, employment settings, higher education, DWP services, criminal justice settings, housing, primary, and acute health settings. (more details on how to make Tier 2 adaptations for all these areas can be found in <https://www.skillsforhealth.org.uk/images/services/cstf/Autism%20Capabilities%20Framework%20Oct%202019.pdf>)
- Understand the role of health action plans and health passports.

Tier 3

This Tier is for people working in health, social care and other professionals with a high degree of autonomy, able to provide care and support in complex situations and/or may also lead services for autistic people. This is relevant to staff working intensively with autistic people, including those who take a lead in decision- making, practice management, commissioning and developing or disseminating good practice. Some indicative roles may include specialist healthcare professionals such as psychologists, psychiatrists, GPs with special interest, learning disability nurses, counsellors, psychotherapists, allied health professionals, social workers, educators etc. It will also include registered managers and other social care leaders including operational managers who have responsibility for services for autistic people. Tier 3 would also be appropriate for autistic people and carers/families of autistic people who are involved in designing and delivering training on autism and/or are working as a self-advocate or expert by experience at a strategic level

The Framework states that the practitioner needs to consider all the outcomes of Tier 1 and 2 and in addition:

- Understand historical and current understanding of autism including cognitive, bio-social-psychological and neurodiversity theories.

- Appraise and Critique social model and medical model
- Evaluate the impact of historical and current understandings of autism on current service provision
- Understand the evidence base relating to specific adjustments and approaches that can support autistic people
- Understand legislation, policy and guidance under Autism Act 2009, MCA 2005, MCA 9 (Amendment) Act 2019 (including LPS), Equality Act 2010, Care Act 2014, and Human Rights Act 1998. Accessible Information Standards and relevant legislation or regulation.
- Understand how to enhance the capabilities of the workforce in relation to the needs of autistic people and assume responsibility to implement these.

In Greater Manchester, we want to develop modules on the following areas of work at a Tier 3 level. For some of these areas extra guidance is available in <https://www.skillsforhealth.org.uk/images/services/cstf/Autism%20Capabilities%20Framework%20Oct%202019.pdf>). The group suggests small cross GM workshops or action learning sets would be a useful way to learn more about these areas. A version of those action learning sets could also be delivered virtually. The group also suggest sharing training resources across GM and running joint sessions.

- Diagnosis and differential diagnoses
- Assessment skills
- Sensory profiling
- Strategic planning of services
- Self-neglect and Hoarding in relation to autism
- Mental Capacity and Autism
- Safeguarding and Autism
- Training for Mental Health inpatient settings
- Sensory profiling and assessments- include lists of providers of sensory assessments
- Strategies- a practical tool box for teams around a person
- More in depth communication training
- Specific training on Women and Girls and in particular on the diagnosis
- Anxiety and Stress
- Ageing and autism
- Autism and suicide prevention
- Autism and Perinatal issues

Greater Manchester Autism Training Group

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