



Ark Autism Strategy

We're dedicated to supporting
people to live a good life

2025

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www.arkha.org.uk



About Ark

Vision

Inclusive communities where quality of housing and care enable people to thrive and live a good life

Mission

Create the best possible customer outcomes through our highly skilled people, the provision of high quality affordable homes and excellent care.

At Ark we strive to ensure that equalities, inclusion and human rights are at the centre of everything we do enabling us to deliver positive outcomes for our people, customers and stakeholders. We support people to exercise choice and control and advocate the right to be heard



Our Autism Strategy

- Our support for autistic people is aligned to best practice and developments in the sector.
- We have adopted and implemented nationally recognised training to support staff development.
- We have implemented a standardised approach to supporting people, tailoring this to the individuals particular needs.
- We have developed and embedded a set of standards for service delivery.
- We ensure that autistic people (and their families') have opportunities to shape the development of Ark's support.
- We apply a continuous improvement approach to our support for autistic people.

Values



Understanding



Integrity



Equality



Trust



Respect

Did You Know?*

44,000

There are 44,000 people living with autism in Scotland



16,045

Number of hours of support Ark delivers every week

31%



of people Ark support have autism

12



Ark delivers support in 12 Local Authorities

29%

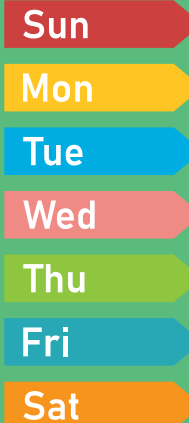


Employment rates in Scotland for autistic people

125



Number of people Ark supports with autism



6017

hours of support each week is provided by Ark to autistic people

The Independent Traveller - Hamish's Story

Hamish is a young man on the autistic spectrum. He has a keen interest in photography and computers, and to further his development in these areas, he wanted to go to college. The nearest college was in a neighbouring city which required travelling by bus. Hamish was concerned about this as he had bad experiences with young adults at school and was very wary of getting on a bus with kids who had bullied him previously.

Devising a Plan

Hamish, determined to overcome the challenges, collaborated with his support team to devise an independent traveller outcome. Their plan aimed to ensure Hamish's safety during his bus journeys and college hours. As a starting point, a team member would accompany Hamish on bus rides and remain present in his college class to provide continuous support and reassurance.

Tackling Challenges

Hamish learned strategies to manage anxiety and confrontations, including utilising a designated safe space in the college garden. Hamish also downloaded an app on his tablet to navigate timetables, mitigating challenges related to reading and utilising his

"I felt it was a real achievement, I feel like with Arks help I have come a long way"

-Hamish McNally

technical skillset. Additionally, accommodations such as sitting at the front of the bus and using his tablet with earphones helped alleviate sensory sensitivities. On his return from college, Hamish would go for a calming walk in the countryside with staff to allow for a reduction in sensory stimuli after constant exposure to it.



Seeing Change

As Hamish became more comfortable, the staff gradually withdrew from accompanying him into the classroom. Hamish built up his confidence, and eventually embraced opportunities to eat lunch with friends rather than staff. Over time, staff began to sit further back on the bus, allowing Hamish to essentially travel alone but with the reassurance of their presence. Within a few months, staff began to reduce the number of days they were present on the bus until a day came where Hamish had managed a whole week going to college without any support at all! This was an accomplishment we all proudly celebrated. Due to the unwavering support from his team, Hamish now attends college unsupported, regularly taking bus journeys without the support of staff.

Training Framework

We use communication tools and best practice person-centred approaches to empower our staff in better supporting individuals. We provide a variety of Autism training to develop staff skills and deepen their understanding of individual behaviours.

The Training Framework levels:

- Informed.
- Skilled.
- Enhanced.

Informed

We are committed that all Ark employees are trained and have Autism awareness. All departments within the organisation, from housing to finance, ensure that every employee is assigned and has completed the Informed level of Autism training. This commitment guarantees a consistent and informed response to individuals with Autism, effectively addressing their needs across all interactions with our organisation.

Skilled

All staff supporting autistic people complete e-learning and evidence their learning in a reflective account document in the following areas:

- Sensory Processing
- Social Communication and Interaction
- Flexible thinking and imagination
- Neuro Diversity and Theories

Enhanced

Managers and Practice Leaders observe, mentor, and coach staff to ensure the support they deliver reflects best practice, is truly person-centred, and meets individual's outcomes.

Managers undertake additional training to support their understanding of autism.

Person Centred Learning

Practice leaders and managers support teams working with people with Autism to embed their learning in practice, reflect on theory and explore how to relate this to the specific individuals they support.

We create digital care plans called 'Good Life Support Plans' with everyone that we support to ensure we help people achieve outcomes that are important to them in the following areas:

- Feeling safe and secure
- Keeping well and staying healthy
- Doing as much as possible for themselves
- Having interesting things to do
- Being connected with family and friends
- Feeling good about life



Ark encourages and supports independence among supported people to ensure happy and fulfilling lives.



"Levi is very happy moving into her own flat. She is loving her own independence and has grown into a more confident young lady. [She is] doing more cooking for herself and volunteers twice a week at a local charity shop. [Levi is] loving life."

LEVI'S MUM



"I'm never finished painting.... I really like living in my own home and being supported by Ark. The staff are friendly and very helpful. Nothing is too much trouble. I have a nice flat and have made friends with a wee dog called Troy. I love taking him out for a walk when I'm not painting."

STUART, SUPPORTED PERSON



Practice Lead Pilot

Ark conducted a one-year pilot of Autism Practice Leadership to explore its implementation. Various data sources, including observation reports and feedback, were utilised and analysed to assess effectiveness. Findings highlighted improved support for individuals with Autism, targeted learning, and enhanced staff morale. Practice leadership was instrumental in shaping best practices and increasing positive outcomes for both supported individuals and staff within the pilot area. This has informed Ark's approach to Practice Leadership within the wider organisation in support of Ark's Care & Support Strategy.

Standards of Practice

Autism Practice in all services complies with Ark's Standards of Practice:

- Research & External Environment
- Training
- Practice
- Tools
- Transitions
- Quality & Continuous Improvement
- Participation

Ark Autism Forum

Established in 2017, the Autism Forum serves to consolidate internal expertise and advocate for a cohesive organisational approach towards autism. It aims to underscore the importance of a focused strategy and nurture the enthusiasm to implement it. The forum ensures representation from all sectors of the organisation, including staff, supported individuals and their families, fostering a comprehensive and inclusive decision-making process.

Ark Autism Audit

Ark have devised and implemented an Autism Audit to review the systems and processes in place around supporting people with Autism to ensure these are appropriate, effective, and meet the standards of practice and strategy.

National Environment Timeline

2011

2014

2015

2018

2018

2021

2024

The Scottish Government published a report on the progress made by the autism strategy during its first two years entitled - The Foundation Phase

An updated set of priorities was published outlining 4 strategic outcomes including A Healthy Life, Choice and Control, Independence, and Active Citizenship

The Scottish Strategy for Autism report highlights the need for a wider reach and called for a true partnership with autistic people across services and sectors.

The Scottish Strategy for Autism, published by the Scottish Government, states that "Autism is a national priority."

Scottish Government and COSLA refreshed the autism strategy and reframed it into an outcomes approach for the period 2015 to 2017.

The Government's Coming Home Report critically gave clarity to the direction of a model of support called Positive Behaviour Support in Scotland.

The Scottish Government sought consultation on the proposed Learning Disabilities, Autism and Neurodivergence (LDAN) Bill.

Recent Activity

In 2024, the Scottish Government launched a consultation for the Learning Disabilities, Autism and Neurodivergence Bill. Ark encouraged our supported people and staff to be involved in this consultation. We ensured supported people understood the information conveyed. We gathered feedback to respond to the consultation and submitted this. It's important to us that everyone has the opportunity to have their voice heard to help shape the future in Scotland.



Moving Forward

- Ark implemented a Care & Support Strategy in 2024, placing at its heart Human Rights and Quality of Support.
- This Strategy is underpinned by our Positive Behaviour Support and Autism Strategies which are being delivered through a Practice Leadership approach.

Our Commitments

- All people we support with Autism will experience an individualised approach including personalised induction, Digital Good Life Support Plan, identified outcomes, and a staff team who have received appropriate training.
- All practice will abide by Ark's Autism Standards of Practice
- All Ark staff will access appropriate Autism training dependent on their role – skilled, informed or enhanced
- The continuation and development of Ark's Autism forum
- The implementation of a practice leadership team to embed and develop our Autism Practice
- Consultation and collaboration with the people we support and other relevant parties and organisations
- Listening and Learning