

GIRLS ON THE AUTISM SPECTRUM: THE BIG SHOUT!

CALL TO ACTION

This call to action was originally developed as part of the NAHT's national conference on autism in girls, held 27 January 2017 in London, UK.

DIAGNOSIS

- Training for professionals and families to recognise and refer girls with suspected autism or related conditions
- Revision of existing diagnostic tools to include girls with autism
- Addressing diagnostic delays for girls with autism
- A more joined up approach to screening, diagnosis and post-diagnostic pathways for girls

EDUCATION AND TRAINING

- Autism and girls-specific training for all educators and families
- More joined up working between all services and families
- Understanding and addressing the complete needs of girls (holistic vs academic achievement)

RESEARCH

- In depth research on exclusion and/or school refusal and its impact for girls with autism
- An emphasis on personalised good outcomes for autistic girls
- Investigating links between autism and secondary mental health issues (e.g. eating disorders, self-harm)
- Linking neuroscience with school-based research to learn from the reality of autistic girls' educational experience

MENTAL HEALTH

- Addressing the vulnerability of autistic girls (e.g. personalised Sex and Relationship Education, offending/radicalisation issues, pressure to 'fit in' with peers, pregnancy in autistic girls/teenage mothers)
- Training on autistic girls' mental health issues and strategies for professionals and families
- Seeing beyond the presentation of mental health to the autism that may underlie it (and vice versa)

PARENTS AND CARERS

- High quality post-diagnostic guidance and support for parents/guardians and young people
- Support for parents/guardians in parenting autistic girls
- Valuing parents'/guardians' and young people's expertise

POST-SCHOOL TRANSITION AND EMPLOYMENT

- Transition from children's to adult services
- Awareness raising among employers about the strengths of autistic girls
- Greater opportunities for supported employment and job coaching