



The National
Autistic Society
Scotland

DON'T WRITE ME OFF

MAKE THE SYSTEM FAIR
FOR PEOPLE WITH AUTISM



ADULTS WITH AUTISM NEED

- > a JOB WHEN THEY CAN WORK
- > BENEFITS WHEN THEY CAN'T
- > AND A GOVERNMENT THAT LEADS THE WAY

Campaign guide for Scotland

About the campaign

We surveyed a group of adults with autism for *Don't Write Me Off* and found that:

- > one third are currently without a job or access to benefits
- > over half have spent time with neither a job nor benefits, some for over ten years
- > just 15% have a full-time job
- > 79% of those on Incapacity Benefit want to work
- > 82% who have applied for benefits say that they needed support to apply.

Paula



"I don't think that applying normally for jobs works because on all of their adverts that they put up it says 'you must have strong communication skills'"

There are hundreds of thousands of adults with autism in the UK, all of whom have the right to lead a dignified and fulfilling life. For some this means work, for others not able to work this is the financial support to lead an independent life. Sadly, the majority of people with autism are not getting the support they need to find a job, and many more cannot access the benefits they need to live on.

It doesn't have to be like this. There are simple solutions to the problems many people with autism face.

Adults with autism need:

- > **the UK Government to make Employment and Support Allowance work for them.**

The process of applying for Employment and Support Allowance (the new benefit for people who may find it harder to get a job because of their disability) is confusing and inappropriate for people with autism. This doesn't need to be the case: there are small, practical steps that can be taken to make the system fairer and more accessible.

- > **Jobcentre Plus staff to understand and meet their needs.**

People with autism rely on Jobcentre Plus staff for the support they need to get a job or access benefits, so these staff must understand autism. There is limited training available to some staff but this doesn't currently meet the needs of adults with autism. It is vital that staff knowledge, understanding and capacity are increased.

- > **a Scottish strategy to transform access to employment.**

National leadership is needed to make these vital changes happen. The Scottish Government can make this happen by updating their *Working for a Change?* employment strategy so that it works for people with autism.

How you can get involved

We need as many people as possible to ask their MP to help us change things for adults with autism. MPs can help us to persuade the UK Government to make the changes we are asking for. We will also be working with MSPs, who can ask the Scottish Government to deliver a Scottish strategy on employment.

To send your MP an email, go to www.autism.org.uk/dontwritemeoff and follow the links to 'Take Action'. Once you are there, you will just need to fill in your name and address details and write your own message telling your MP why the campaign is important to you.

The more people who write to their MPs, the more likely we are to succeed in changing things for the better so please take a few minutes to email your MP, and ask your friends and family to do the same. With your help, we really can make a difference!

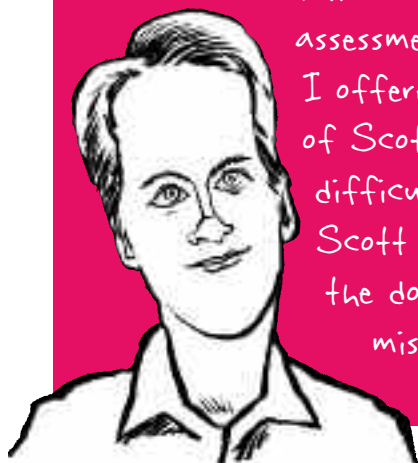
Chris & Carole

"When we established that Chris was claiming ESA, they didn't actually ask you what your illness or disability was."



Scott & Lesley

"At Scott's medical assessment in Glasgow, I offered an overview of Scott's specific difficulties but Scott felt that the doctor really misunderstood him."



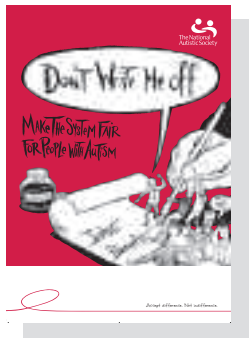
"All they're talking about is somebody being sick and being ill and if you have autism you're not ill, you've just got a condition."



Bob & Janet

Useful resources

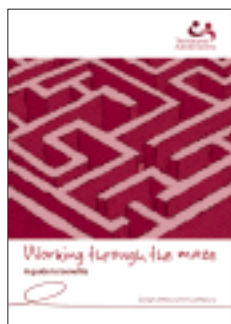
Find out more about the campaign by requesting copies of the following materials using the contact details listed below.



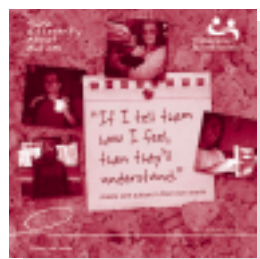
Don't Write Me Off campaign report



Don't Write Me Off campaign DVD



For more information about the benefits available to people with autism, you can request a copy of our new welfare rights information supplement



You can read more from adults with autism in our publication: *"If I tell them how I feel, then they'll understand": the message from adults with autism*

National Autistic Society services

General information about benefits available to people affected by autism can be found at www.autism.org.uk/dontwritemeoff.

The National Autistic Society's Autism Helpline can provide further advice and support about any of the issues raised by the campaign. You can call the Helpline on 0845 070 4004 (Monday to Friday, 10am – 4pm). They can also arrange a telephone appointment for you with our Welfare Rights Service, which can provide advice on and support with all aspects of benefit entitlement. This includes advice on which benefits you may be entitled to, general advice on completing claim forms, what to do if you think a decision is wrong, and how to appeal to a tribunal.

The National Autistic Society also runs employment services for people with autism, in some parts of the UK. For more information, please visit www.autism.org.uk/employment, or call the Autism Helpline on 0845 070 4004.

Campaign information

If you would like further information about our campaign, or to order any of the campaign materials above, please contact the Campaigns Team by post at NAS Scotland, Central Chambers, 1st Floor, 109 Hope Street, Glasgow G2 6LL; by email at campaignscotland@nas.org.uk; or by phone on 0141 221 8090.