



**Autism:**

**recognition, referral, diagnosis and management of adults on the autism spectrum**

**NICE guideline; draft for consultation, December 2011**

The Prison Reform Trust is an independent UK charity working to create a just, humane and effective prison system. We do this by inquiring into the workings of the system; informing prisoners, staff and the wider public; and by influencing parliament, government and officials towards reform.

The Prison Reform Trust welcomes this NICE guideline and is pleased to note the inclusion of criminal justice and, in particular, of offenders. Significant numbers of children and adults who come into contact with criminal justice are made vulnerable by a system that is poor at recognising and meeting their particular support needs. Difficulties with communication and in understanding and complying with the requirements and expectations of the criminal justice process can be especially challenging for certain individuals, including many people on the autism spectrum. This NICE guideline provides a unique opportunity to ensure support for children and adults on the autism spectrum who get caught up in the criminal justice system and the criminal justice staff who work with them.

Comments from the Prison Reform Trust are dealt with page by page, as per the NICE comments proforma.

Page 5	Person-centred care should include appropriate arrangements for individuals in contact with criminal justice services, and especially for those sentenced to prison and remanded into custody. Good communication will be necessary between the healthcare professionals working with an individual with autism and criminal justice staff, for example, during initial contact with the police, including with criminal justice liaison and diversion and Appropriate Adult services; in court, to help ensure effective participation and to inform pre-sentence reports; and, following sentence, with probation and prison services.
Page 7	<p>Key priorities for implementation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• General principles of care: ‘All staff working with adults with autism should work in partnership with adults with autism and their families or carers’, suggest adding: <i>and other services the individual with autism is in contact with, for example, criminal justice services.</i></li> <li>• Identification and assessment: add to ‘one or more of the following’: <i>at risk of anti-social and offending behaviour.</i></li> </ul>

Page 8	Challenging behaviours: add to list, <i>at risk of anti-social and offending behaviour.</i>
Page 9	Organisation and delivery of care: the development of national criminal justice liaison and diversion services by 2014 means there is a better chance that people who come into contact with criminal justice services will have their support needs recognised and met, including people on the autism spectrum. It would be helpful, therefore, to include ' <i>criminal justice, including liaison and diversion and Appropriate Adult services</i> ' in the 3 <sup>rd</sup> bullet point, to read: 'making sure the relevant professionals (health and social care, housing, employment, <i>criminal justice, including liaison and diversion and Appropriate Adult services</i> and the third sector) are aware...'
Page 10 1.1.1	The 'general principles of care' should include staff working within criminal justice services and within the prison service, in particular.
Page 11 1.1.4	Final bullet point: access to a trained advocate will be especially important for individuals within the criminal justice system. For example to respond to any safeguarding concerns and to ensure that the rights of the individual are upheld.
Page 12 1.1.8	It is pleasing to note that a representative from the criminal justice system should be included in local autism multi-agency strategy groups. Representation from local criminal justice liaison and diversion services would be especially pertinent given their role in helping criminal justice staff to identify the particular support needs of individuals during their initial contact with the police.
Page 13 1.1.10	Final bullet point: 'training, support and consultation for staff who care for adults with autism in residential and community settings', add: <i>including staff working in prison.</i>
Page 15 1.2.2	Identification and initial assessment of possible autism: add to, 'one or more of the following': <i>at risk of anti-social and offending behaviour.</i>
Page 19 1.2.11	During a comprehensive assessment, assess the following risks: add: <i>at risk of anti-social and offending behaviour.</i>
Page 23 1.4	Psychosocial interventions for autism should be routinely available for prisoners and offenders on the autism spectrum. These should include restorative justice interventions and interventions to develop skills to reduce/stop anti-social and offending behaviour.
Page 33 1.9.1	Developing local care pathways: pathways should be flexible, such that they can continue during an individual's contact with criminal justice services, including for individuals remanded into, or sentenced to, prison.
Page 34 1.9.2	Organisation and delivery of care: the development of national criminal justice liaison and diversion services by 2014 means there is a better chance that people who come into contact with criminal justice services will have their support needs recognised and met, including people on the autism spectrum. It would be helpful, therefore, to include ' <i>criminal justice, including liaison and diversion and Appropriate Adult services</i> ' in the 3 <sup>rd</sup> bullet point, to read: 'making sure the relevant professionals (health and social care, housing, employment, <i>criminal justice, including liaison and diversion and Appropriate Adult services</i> and the third sector) are aware...'

Should you wish to discuss the Prison Reform Trust's consultation response, please contact:

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