Neurodivergent News

FROM NeuroHub Connect

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FRONT PAGE · FAMILIES

SEND reforms pushed back to ‘very early in the new year’, Education Secretary tells MPs

Lucy Powell told MPs the SEND reform bill, the consultation response and new national inclusion standards will come ‘very early in the new year’. For families in England, the wait for answers goes on.

Neurodivergent News desk, edited by David Gray · AI-written · AI fact-checked

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Families waiting to find out what will happen to special educational needs support in England will have to wait a little longer.

In her first accountability hearing as Education Secretary, in front of the Commons Education Select Committee, Lucy Powell told MPs the government would publish three things "very early in the new year", Tes reports:

- the SEND reform bill
- the Department for Education's full policy response to its consultation
- new national inclusion standards

Edexec, citing reporting by i news and Whitehall sources, says ministers had been expected to publish the consultation response this month. It reports that the delay could make it more difficult to pass the proposed Education for All Bill in the current Parliament and to have the new system in place by September 2029. The Department for Education has not confirmed a revised timetable, according to Edexec.

What was proposed

The reforms aim to increase support in mainstream schools and reduce reliance on Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs). According to Edexec, the government wants EHCPs focused on children with

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the most complex needs by 2035.

Tes also reports that Powell wants alternative provision (AP) to work differently. In her words, the current use of AP "will evolve and change to an outreach service coming into schools", offering short-term extra support rather than long-term placements.

Why this matters

For many neurodivergent children, an EHCP is what turns a promise of support into a legal duty. Any plan to have fewer of them will worry families unless the support in mainstream schools is real, funded and in place first. Every month of uncertainty is another month in which parents decide whether to apply, appeal or wait.

Better support in mainstream schools is a good goal. Many Autistic and ADHD young people would thrive in a mainstream school designed with them in mind. But the order matters: build the support, show that it works, and only then change the legal safety net.

This piece summarises reporting by Tes and Edexec. Read the original articles for the full story.

SOURCES

Powell: Ofsted inspection consequences 'need to change' (Tes)
tes.com/magazine/news/general/lucy-powell-consequences-ofsted-inspections-need-change

SEND reform bill unlikely to be published until new year (Tes)
tes.com/magazine/news/general/send-reform-bill-unlikely-be-published-until-new-year

SEND Reforms Face Further Delays (Edexec)
edexec.co.uk/news-send-reforms-face-further-delays

This article online

WORK

DWP names four schemes it says support neurodivergent workers

Answering an MP's question, the DWP listed Disability Confident, Access to Work, Keep Britain Working and an employer advice service. It did not say how well they work for neurodivergent people.

Neurodivergent News desk, edited by David Gray · AI-written · AI fact-checked

The Department for Work and Pensions has set out the schemes it says support people with mental health conditions, Autistic people, ADHDers and other neurodivergent people at work. Brit Brief reports that DWP minister Sir Stephen Timms gave the list in response to a parliamentary question from Chris Evans, the Labour MP for Caerphilly.

Here is what was named, in plain terms.

The four schemes

- Disability Confident. A UK-wide scheme for employers who commit to recruiting, keeping and developing disabled people and people with long-term health conditions. The list of signed-up employers is published monthly on GOV.UK.
- Access to Work. A grant many neurodivergent workers already rely on. It can fund support workers, workplace assessments, travel to work and specialist equipment. Its Mental Health Support Service offers up to nine months of non-clinical support.
- Keep Britain Working. A programme working with employers to help people with long-term mental health conditions stay in work. It is developing a standard for employers with the British Standards Institution.
- Support with Employee Health and Disability. A service giving employers guidance on disclosure, their legal duties and reasonable adjustments.

What's missing

The answer lists schemes, but it does not say how many neurodivergent people use them or how well they work. That matters, because the gap is large. Brit Brief reports a government figure that only 31% of disabled Autistic people were in work, against 54.7%

of all disabled people. Workplace Wellbeing Professional gives slightly different figures for 2024/25: 34% against 55%. Either way, Autistic disabled people are far less likely to be in work.

Workplace Wellbeing Professional also reports that the government's own list of measures includes nearly 500 extra staff to clear the backlog in Access to Work.

It follows the report of the government's independent Expert Academic Panel on Neurodiversity, set up in January 2025. Workplace Wellbeing Professional reports that the panel said support should be based on what a person needs, not on whether they have a diagnosis. Work and Pensions Secretary Pat McFadden said: "When we get the right support in place, neurodivergent people thrive at work."

We agree with that sentence. The test is whether the support actually reaches people, quickly, without making them prove themselves over and over again. Schemes on paper don't change working lives. Getting through the door, getting the adjustment and keeping the job do.

This piece summarises reporting by Brit Brief and Workplace Wellbeing Professional. Read the original articles for the full detail.

SOURCES

DWP confirms four schemes to support neurodiverse and mentally ill workers (Brit Brief)
britbrief.co.uk/business/employment/dwp-confirms-four-schemes-supporting-neurodiverse-workers.html

Neurodivergent Staff 'Need Support Based on Need Rather Than Diagnosis' (Workplace Wellbeing Professional)
workplacewellbeing.pro/news/neurodivergent-staff-need-support-based-on-need-rather-than-diagnosis-government-panel-finds

This article online

POLICY

Autistic and ADHD readers set out the real extra costs of their lives, as PIP reviews near

A benefits advice website has gathered evidence of the extra costs Autistic people and people with ADHD, anxiety or depression face, from travel and food to sensory needs, ahead of two government reviews due this month.

Neurodivergent News desk, edited by David Gray · AI-written · AI fact-checked

A familiar claim keeps coming back in debates about disability benefits: that some conditions, including autism and ADHD, don't really cost anything extra. A benefits advice website has now gathered evidence from the people who actually live with them.

Disability News Service reports that Benefits and Work, which has advised benefit claimants for more than 20 years, asked its Autistic readers and readers with ADHD, anxiety or depression last month to describe the extra costs they face. It published the results this week, and says it received a huge number of responses.

What people described

According to Disability News Service, the responses included:

- extra spending on travel, food and clothing
- replacing items that get damaged or lost
- managing sensory needs, including specialist clothing and equipment for emotional and sensory regulation
- specialist cleaning products, or paying for a cleaner
- paying for a private diagnosis, and the costs of home education
- higher fuel bills from spending more time at home

Benefits and Work said its readers expressed anger, disbelief and fear at claims that these conditions carry no additional costs. Disability News Service notes that the findings echo research published last year by the user-led mental health group Recovery in the Bin.

Why now

Two government reviews are due to report later this month, including the Timms review of Personal Independence Payment (PIP). Disability News Service reports that ministers have hinted both could recommend cutting cash payments for some people with invisible impairments, and that Autistic people, people with mental distress and especially people with ADHD could be offered services instead of disability benefits.

In July, disability minister Sir Stephen Timms told MPs there was a question about whether the PIP process could also point people towards help, alongside or instead of a cash payment. Disability News Service reports that he later promised that no PIP claimant would be forced to accept products or services instead of cash.

Our view

Neurodivergent people know these costs well, because they are the price of living in a world not built for neurodivergent people: the taxi when the bus is too much, the food that can be eaten on a bad day, the noise-cancelling headphones, the thing lost again and replaced again. Evidence like this matters because it comes from the people affected, not from assumptions about them. Any review of disability benefits should start there.

This piece summarises reporting by Disability News Service. Read the original article for the full story.

SOURCES

Website offers evidence to counter untrue claims that ADHD and mental distress do not lead to extra costs (Disability News Service)
disabilitynewsservice.com/website-offers-evidence-to-counter-untrue-claims-that-adhd-and-mental-distress-do-not-lead-to-extra-costs

This article online

IDENTITY

Who gets an autism diagnosis as an adult has changed a lot since 2010, UK and Swedish study finds

A large study in BMJ Mental Health finds far more people aged 16 and over are being diagnosed as Autistic than in 2010, especially young people and females. The researchers say their data can't explain why.

Neurodivergent News desk, edited by David Gray · AI-written · AI fact-checked

If you were diagnosed as an adult in the last few years, a new study suggests you are part of a very big shift.

The research, published in BMJ Mental Health, used population-based health records from the UK and Sweden. It found that the number of people aged 16 and over being newly diagnosed as Autistic has risen sharply, and that the people being diagnosed now look quite different, medically, from those diagnosed in 2010.

What the study found

According to the BMJ's summary of the paper:

- In the UK, first recorded diagnoses rose from 6 per 100,000 people in 2010 to 64 per 100,000 in 2023. In Sweden, they rose from 43 to 65 per 100,000 between 2010 and 2021.
- Diagnoses rose fastest among 16 to 20 year olds and among females in both countries. They also rose fastest among white people in the UK, and among people with Swedish-born parents in Sweden.
- Fewer newly diagnosed adults had epilepsy, psychosis or intellectual disability on their records. In the UK, a history of epilepsy fell from 10% to 4%.

- More had ADHD, anxiety, depression or other mental health diagnoses first. In the UK, a history of anxiety rose from 29% to just over 58%.

The researchers put it plainly: "The characteristics of individuals diagnosed as autistic have changed dramatically since 2010 in both the U.K. and Sweden."

What it doesn't tell us

This is an observational study, so it cannot explain why things changed. The researchers say their data cannot tell apart two possibilities: clinicians getting better at recognising forms of autism that look less like the old stereotype, or other mental health presentations being diagnosed as autism.

In our view, the first reading deserves serious weight. Headlines about "too many diagnoses" have a habit of following studies like this one. The data fit a story that many Autistic people already know from the inside: for years, women and girls, people who masked, and people who could speak and did well at school were missed. Many of them got an anxiety or depression label long before anyone said the word autism.

That would explain exactly the pattern this study describes: more young people and females diagnosed, and more people arriving at diagnosis with years of anxiety and depression behind them.

The real question

The researchers say that, whatever the reason, the needs of the people being diagnosed must be recognised and met with appropriate support. That's the part that matters most. A rising number of diagnoses tells us how many people have been left without understanding. It doesn't tell us that services are ready to meet them. Being diagnosed should be the start of support, not the end of the conversation.

This piece summarises the British Medical Journal's summary of the study, as published by Medical Xpress. Read the original paper for the full findings and methods.

SOURCES

Major changes discovered in medical profiles of adults diagnosed with autism since 2010 (Medical Xpress (provided by the British Medical Journal))
medicalxpress.com/news/2026-11-major-medical-profiles-adults-autism.html

Changes in the profile of adults diagnosed as autistic since 2010: population-based studies in the UK and Sweden (BMJ Mental Health)
dx.doi.org/10.1136/bmjment-2026-302983

This article online

WORK

Employers and neurodivergent workers in Revelstoke talk about what actually helps at work

A WorkBC roundtable in British Columbia brought employers and neurodivergent employees together. Their advice was practical: be flexible in interviews, plan for sensory needs, and communicate directly.

Neurodivergent News desk, edited by David Gray · AI-written · AI fact-checked

Most conversations about neurodivergent people and work start in the wrong place. They ask what is wrong with the worker. A small event in Revelstoke, British Columbia, asked a better question: what could the workplace do differently?

The Revelstoke Review reports that the local WorkBC Centre held a roundtable on 15 October that brought employers and neurodivergent employees into the same room. The aim, in the organisers' words, was to talk about "how neurodiversity can be a competitive advantage in today's workforce", and the advice was refreshingly concrete.

Start with the interview

An inclusive employment specialist from the Canucks Autism Network asked employers to be understanding

in interviews: some applicants may not make much eye contact, or may need a question rephrased. He suggested writing more open job criteria, and said Autistic job seekers are sometimes stronger communicators and more honest than other applicants. He also pointed out that many neurodivergent people never apply at all: "There's so many times they don't apply for it because there's that one skill they don't have."

If you have ever talked yourself out of a job because you could not tick one box out of twelve, that line will land.

Plan for the environment, not just the person

The suggestions on sensory and communication needs were practical: noise-cancelling headphones, LED lighting, and more or longer breaks. One employer said open, honest and direct communication had been key to supporting neurodivergent staff. A local community organisation stressed flexible schedules, especially for young people and others who need part-time hours or struggle with sleep.

Neurodivergent employees spoke too. One described burning out in jobs that were too intense. Another urged employers to interview people for who they are, not only for their skills, and said a disability should never be a blanket reason to hire or not hire someone.

Why this matters here

None of this is new to Autistic and ADHD people. What is encouraging is hearing it from employers themselves. Adjustments like these are often cheap. Clearer questions, calmer spaces and honest communication cost far less than losing good people to burnout.

The Revelstoke Review also notes that WorkBC offers employers a wage subsidy that helps cover a new employee's first 800 hours. That is Canada, but many people in the UK will recognise the same need: help that is easy to find and easy to use.

The point is the one the neurodiversity movement keeps making: change the environment and people can thrive.

This piece summarises reporting by the Revelstoke Review. Read the original article for the full story.

SOURCES

Foster inviting workplaces for neurodivergent staff, Revelstoke employers encourage (Revelstoke Review)
revelstokereview.com/2026/11/05/create-inviting-workplaces-for-neurodivergent-staff-revelstoke-employers-say

This article online

IDENTITY

World Autism Organisation Congress opens in Namibia with a call to put Autistic people at the centre

Namibia is hosting the 6th World Autism Organisation Congress for the first time. Opening it, the country's Vice President said Autistic people must be at the centre of decisions about their lives.

Neurodivergent News desk, edited by David Gray · AI-written · AI fact-checked

The 6th World Autism Organisation Congress is under way in Windhoek, the first time Namibia has hosted it. The theme is "Transforming the Narrative about Autism".

The Namibian has published the keynote address given at the official opening on 4 November by Namibia's Vice President, Lucia Witbooi, whose office coordinates disability affairs in the country.

What was said

In her address, the Vice President called for inclusive education, accessible healthcare, specialised support services and fair access to employment. "Most importantly," she said, "autistic persons must be at the centre of decisions affecting their lives."

"Autism must never diminish an individual's worth, dignity or potential," she said. She also said that changing the narrative "requires far more than words", calling for policy, investment and measurable action that continue after the Congress ends.

Why it matters

It is good to hear a national leader say that Autistic people belong at the centre of decisions about them. That principle, "nothing about us without us", is still too often missing in practice, in the UK as much as anywhere.

The real test of a congress like this is what changes afterwards, and whether Autistic people themselves, not only professionals and officials, are shaping it. We'll watch for what comes next.

This piece summarises the keynote address published by The Namibian. Read the original for the full speech.

SOURCES

Witbooi calls for greater inclusion and acceptance of autistic persons (The Namibian)
namibian.com.na/witbooi-calls-for-greater-inclusion-and-acceptance-of-autistic-persons

This article online

FROM NEUROHUB · OUR OWN CONTENT

From NeuroHub: ‘What does autism feel like?’ An Autistic answer

In an essay on the NeuroHub Connect blog, David Gray-Hammond asks whether he can feel Autistic at all, and concludes that being Autistic feels like being himself.

This is NeuroHub’s own blog post, from the NeuroHub Connect blog. We wrote this summary; the original is linked in the Sources box.

"What does autism feel like?" is one of the most common questions Autistic people get asked. In an essay on the NeuroHub Connect blog, David Gray-Hammond takes it seriously, and shows why it's harder to answer than it sounds.

You can't compare with what you've never felt

The essay's starting point is simple. To say what autism feels like, you'd need something non-Autistic to compare it with. An Autistic person has never had that. As David writes: "I was born Autistic, I am Autistic, and I will die Autistic."

He links this to the double empathy problem. When two people's experiences of the world are very different, each can only offer the other a guess at what it's like to be them, and understanding breaks down in both directions.

Autism as culture and ecology

Rather than looking for autism as a thing inside a person, the essay argues that Autistic people come to know themselves through each other: through shared reference points and recognition within Autistic culture. Autistic experience, in this view, is cultural and ecological as well as personal.

The essay also anticipates an objection: that Autistic people with high support needs can't be part of that culture. David's answer is that human cultures have always included people with very different support needs. The real question is whether Autistic culture is accessible to everyone, and why Autistic people are so often sorted by how much support they need instead of having their quality of life improved.

The answer

His conclusion is short: "being Autistic feels like being me." To be Autistic is to feel human. What is different, he writes, is society's constant need to make him feel non-human.

It's a short read and a good one to share with anyone who has ever asked you the question.
This is a From NeuroHub piece: an AI-written summary of our own content. Read the original: scan the QR code in the Sources box.

SOURCES

What Does Autism Feel Like? (NeuroHub Connect)
neurohubcommunity.org/2026/09/02/what-does-autism-feel-like-2

Read the original

This article online

FROM NEUROHUB · OUR OWN CONTENT

From NeuroHub: The Wider Existence Podcast launches, asking what's wrong with the world, not the person

A new podcast from David Gray-Hammond and Helen Edgar sets out a ten-episode first season on distress, joy, burnout and the connected mind, looked at through an ecological lens.

This is NeuroHub's own podcast episode, from The Wider Existence Podcast. We wrote this summary; the original is linked in the Sources box.

There's a new podcast in the NeuroHub family. The Wider Existence Podcast released its Season 1 trailer on 3 November, with David Gray-Hammond and Helen Edgar introducing themselves and the season ahead.

The show is built around one question. As the episode description puts it: "When a person is struggling, there are two questions available. The first is always asked: what is wrong with this person?" The podcast sets out to ask the second one, which the description says hardly ever gets asked: what is wrong with the world around them?

What Season 1 covers

According to the trailer's description, the ten episodes will explore:

- the ecosystemic model of distress and joy, and the idea that all experience is ecological
- where distress really lives, how it builds, and what happens when the web frays into burnout and crisis
- experiences the neurodiversity movement has largely declined to touch, including madness, psychosis and other heavily stigmatised experiences
- who gets to decide what counts as real, and "symphrenia", the hosts' proposed word for the connected mind
- other animals, the spaces in between, and the star stuff and soil we're all made of

Two things every episode does

According to the description, each episode includes a section called How sure are we?, which sorts what is established from what the hosts are proposing but nobody has tested yet. It's an honest habit, and not a common one. Each episode also ends with One thread: one small thing to sit with through the week.

The episodes that discuss psychosis, burnout or crisis each start with a content note.

How to listen

Every episode has a free edition with the opening of the conversation and the closing thread. Paid subscribers get the full episodes, and the description says that subscriptions keep the work Autistic-led and independent.

This is a From NeuroHub piece: an AI-written summary of our own content, written only from the episode's public description. Listen to the original: scan the QR code in the Sources box.

SOURCES

Trailer | Season 1 (The Wider Existence Podcast)
thewiderexistence.co.uk/p/trailer-season-1

Listen to the original

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How we make this

Written and fact-checked with AI from named, linked sources. Stories on sensitive topics are approved by David before publishing.

Edited by David Gray. Every article lists its sources, so you can check them for yourself. Corrections and complaints: neurodivergentnews.co.uk/editorial-policy

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