Participant Information Leaflet for Lived Experience Advisory Group

# To inform guidance for public sector workers interacting with autistic/disabled people who are non-speaking or minimally speaking

## Background

The National Disability Authority (NDA) is supporting the government’s work as part of the Autism Innovation Strategy.

Staff at the NDA are responsible for completing several actions under the strategy, including number 82:

“To provide a robust evidence base for neuro-affirmative practice in supporting non-speaking and minimally speaking autistic people to access public services, we will commission research to examine best practice in providing public services to non-speaking or minimally speaking autistic people. This research will be co-designed with autistic people.”

The term “public services” refers to everyday activities funded by the government and provided in ordinary places within the local community. For example, a:

* Post Office
* Library
* County Council Office
* Garda Station
* Health Centre
* Further Education and Training Facility
* Publicly-Funded Arts Centre
* Publicly-Funded Leisure Centre

## Purpose

We plan to develop a best practice guidance document which will help public providers to meet the needs of autistic people and disabled people who are non-speaking or minimally speaking and use Augmentative and Alternative Communication. AAC includes any tools or strategies that can be used to solve communication challenges. Unaided AAC involves no tools or materials, while aided AAC can be high or low tech, symbol, or text based.

The guidance will also be useful for businesses and those providing private or not for profit services.

To inform this work, we are setting up two advisory groups.

* The first is a **lived experience advisory group** made up of autistic people and disabled people who use AAC.
* The second group is a **supporters advisory group** of individuals and organisation who support non-speaking autistic people and other AAC users in a personal or professional capacity.

# Expression of interest

## Is this the right fit for me?

We would like to receive expressions of interest to join the advisory group from people who meet the following criteria:

* Aged 18 years and over, have some experience of using public services
* Identify as autistic or as a disabled person
* Do not use speech as their primary mode of communication.
* Be happy to meet and discuss issues with autistic and disabled people who use AAC in a small group setting.

## Important things to know

The following information may help you to decide if you would be willing or able to take part:

* Our preference is to meet as a group. However, we understand that this may not be possible for everyone. If you require reasonable accommodation to participate in a different format, please let us know.
* The meetings will be facilitated by a speech and language therapist who is expert in supporting people who use AAC or have other ways of communicating.
* This is not a paid position. However, travel expenses or other relevant costs will be covered by the NDA in line with Public Sector rules.
* Two meetings are planned over the course of this project; one in August and one in November.
* The meetings will be held in-person in Dublin or elsewhere.
* If you like you can choose to review and provide feedback on the draft guidance paper.

## What’s Next?

If you are interested in taking part, please fill out the [AAC Advisory Group Expression of Interest online form](https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/C36C9FG).

We will review the expressions of interest received and will select a variety of people for the advisory group that ensures a good representation across different contexts.

If you need help or would like to know more about this work you can contact us via email at [research@NDA.ie](mailto:research@NDA.ie) You can also text 087 6712376 or if you have a supporter, they can call 01 608 0424.

The deadline for applications is **Monday 7 July**.