



**Autism specific accreditation programmes  
and accredited services in Europe**

EPR secretariat  
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## Introduction

This survey has been undertaken on the request of members of the EPR network, in the light of the diversification of their services and their continuous research for higher quality in service delivery. In a more and more competitive European market, services providers have to offer cutting-edge expertise and specialisation to answer the needs of diverse clients. For some years, a few members of the EPR have developed specific services for people with Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD). The EPR is a chance for taking a step back and gaining a wide picture of good services offered in Europe, and potentially building up and fostering expertise through international exchanges.

This survey intends to give an overview of accreditation opportunities specific to services to people with an ASD. Accreditation is a mean to gain objective recognition of quality, to distinguish the organisation on the market and benchmark at national or international level (most of accreditations have an international scope, which is an added-value for benchmarking). It also offers a frame and a direction for quality improvement within the organisation. Indeed, most of the accrediting bodies do not simply inspect services and deliver certification, but offer long-term consultancy and cooperation on the path towards highest quality. In the field of health, social and vocational services, a myriad of accrediting bodies, accreditation programmes and labels exist. Yet, and consequently to the relatively recent diagnosis of ASD as disability per se, autism-specific accreditation is still a new and growing phenomenon. This generalisation of the efforts for quality improvement gives hope in the ostracism of bad practices that worsen the quality of life and lead to increased isolation of persons with ASD.

This survey also intends to highlight best practices among services to people with autism in the EPR network, in the Autism Europe network, and more generally in Europe. Most of these best practices have been accredited by one of the programmes presented in this report, but other, non-accredited services may be mentioned because of their originality, because of other certifications or of professional mutual recognition of quality. The organisations or programmes presented here cover different types of services. The information selected in this survey results mostly from direct research on the internet and exchanges with organisations providing specific services, members of EPR and of Autism Europe

In a few words, autism spectrum disorders (ASD) are life long developmental alterations that can be diagnosed at infancy. ASD is outlined in the classification created by the World Health Organisation in ICD 10. It affects the processing of social information and is characterised by a triad of main symptoms varying in terms of intensity and forms:

- Impairments in social interactions
- Impairment in communication (verbal and non-verbal)
- Restricted interests and repetitive behaviours.

“Autistic Spectrum Disorder” is the expression that is progressively substituted to terms such as “autism” or “pervasive developmental disorders” to underline the heterogeneity of ASD cases. Indeed, the ASD encompasses Autistic Disorder, Asperger’s syndrome, among other

disorders<sup>1</sup>. Whereas autism as such (Autistic Disorder) is characterised by significant verbal impairment or even silence, and more frequently coupled with intellectual disability, Asperger's syndrome differs by normal IQ and the acquisition of language at a normal age. However, both are close in many points and individuals with Asperger's syndrome often show difficulties using language in a social context. No real attention has been paid to Asperger's syndrome until the 1990's, and as a consequence, many adults have not benefited from appropriate care. According to most of the autism federations and professional organisations, the incidence of ASD stands around one child in 150, while Asperger's syndrome affects one child in 250.

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<sup>1</sup> Such as Childhood Disintegrative Disorder and Pervasive Developmental Disorder Not Otherwise Specified

## Autism accreditation programmes

### The National Autistic Society, UK

#### Scope of the accreditation

The British National Autistic Society is the most advanced and most recognised organisation running an autism-specific accreditation programme of service provision. The NAS accreditation programme operates all over the world, and has accredited around 130 organisations throughout the UK and a few overseas. Taking into consideration all organisations that are currently part in the accreditation process (not necessarily accredited yet), this number reaches 340. The participation in the accreditation process includes membership of the NAS.

The accreditation programme has been designed in order to cover all types of services for people with an autistic spectrum disorder. It applies to service providers, schools and agencies. The international recognition of the NAS is illustrated by the accreditation of NAS standards by the International Society for Quality in Health Care; with less than 30 set of standards around the world in the whole health care sector.

The accreditation programme provides the applying institution with standards of excellence in policy and practical fields; and with guidance in the interpretation of these standards and in their implementation. The NAS also designs together with the institution a framework for continuous self-examination and quality services development.

The accreditation is based on the understanding and knowledge of the autistic spectrum disorder at management level, in the way the service is organised, in the individual assessment and planning procedures, as well as in all aspects of the practice. It encompasses two types of standards: core standards that apply to all organisations, and specialist standards; among which every organisation has to choose a specialty.

Overview of core standards:

- Consistent Understanding of Autism
- Staff Recruitment and Induction
- Professional Development & Staff Information Resources
- Operation Policies and Records
- Planning for Development and Improvement
- Assessments, Reporting, Recording and Evaluation
- Individual Plans
- Continuity and Consistency
- Flexibility of Thought

- Communication
- Social Understanding and Ability
- Behaviour Support – Policy & Practice and Staff Support
- Family and Support Links
- Transition
- Sensory Issues

The specialist standards cover the following services, all specifically related to autism:

- Playscheme
- Childrens' home
- Day schools
- Residential schools
- Colleges and continuing education services
- Adult day services
- Adult residential services
- Secure residential
- NHS and independent hospitals
- Community outreach
- Educational outreach support services
- Fostering agencies
- Employment
- Short break and respite
- Supported living

For each item in the list, a set of 7 to 15 standards apply.

### **Steps to accreditation**

The accreditation process is split into two phases:

- A self examination on the basis of the set of standards established by NAS. These entail core standards that apply to every organisation, and specialist standards amongst which the candidate organisation has to choose one or several depending on its services<sup>2</sup>. The NAS appoints an appropriate accreditation advisor and provides training and consultancy services as constant accompaniment towards achieving the standards. To this aim, internal quality groups are set up and trained to carry out the internal evaluation.
- A formal review as a flowing step. The audit is carried out through peer-review, by a team of professionals observing practices over three days, interviewing service users and professionals. The same core and specialist standards apply.

The accreditation has to be renewed every three years. The accreditation advisors constantly work with the service to ensure the maintenance of the standards between all accreditation reviews. Moreover, whenever the service offered in the institution is submitted to structural changes, it must go through the accreditation process again.

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<sup>2</sup>An overview of the standards is available on <http://www.nas.org.uk/nas/jsp/polopoly.jsp?d=1820>, and the complete list of standards can be asked via the enquiry link.

**Further Information:**

The NAS will hold on October 7<sup>th</sup> 2009 an information day on its accreditation programme. More information on this is available under <http://www.nas.org.uk/nas/jsp/polopoly.jsp?d=147>  
<http://www.nas.org.uk/nas/jsp/polopoly.jsp?d=593>

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Paradigm Limited is a British consultancy which supports institutions in developing person-centred approaches in care and rehabilitation services. Paradigm does not offer any accreditation programme, although it has designed a guide which defines steps towards person-centred management of services for people with learning disabilities. This guide addresses care managers willing to assess the person-centeredness of their services to people with learning disabilities; and so follows the aim of empowering and helping the latter achieve their full place in society, including through the organisation of training events involving people with learning disabilities, families, service providers and Care Managers and working strategically to improve the access of people with learning disabilities to community resources and services.

This guide, which can serve as a basis for self-evaluation, can be downloaded from the following link:

[http://www.paradigm-uk.org/articles/Person\\_Centred\\_Approaches\\_Care\\_Managers\\_Checklist/226/86.aspx](http://www.paradigm-uk.org/articles/Person_Centred_Approaches_Care_Managers_Checklist/226/86.aspx)



## Scottish Society for Autism, UK

The Autism Training Accreditation Project proposed by the Scottish Society for Autism is an accreditation of professional training in autism. The added-value of such a programme appears while considering the service provider as a training purchaser, emphasising the importance of qualified staff for quality delivery. This accreditation system for training in autism has itself been accredited by the National Autistic Society, and has been developed with the involvement of training providers and purchasers, individuals with an ASD, their families and carers. It is the result of a project funded by the Scottish Executive and carried out jointly by the Scottish Society for Autism and the National Centre for Autism Studies

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<http://www.strath.ac.uk/autism-ncas/news/>

▪ ***Standards for Support for Persons with ASD***

**Background**

CARF stands for Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities, and is an international, independent and not-for-profit accrediting body based in the United States. CARF has been promoting quality in service delivery since 1966 in the USA, Canada and Europe, through a broad and adaptable consultative accreditation process. The field of expertise of the organisation covers aging services, behavioral health, child and youth services, employment and community services, medical rehabilitation, etc.

The organisation has developed for a few months *Standards for Supports for Persons with Autism Spectrum Disorder*, to help service providers deliver quality services to teenagers and adults with ASD and their families. The standards were published in the *2008 Employment and Community Services Standards Manual*, which can be ordered on the CARF website. The standards have been developed on the requests of the Autism Society of America and several government ministries in Canada. Therefore, CARF can be considered as the most recognised accrediting body for Autism service delivery across the Atlantic. Their work is the result of field-based inputs from parents, schools, funding sources, adult service providers and professionals. CARF aims at providing guidelines for developing quality organisations, community supports and networks, and enhancing success for school curricula and quality of life.

**Scope of the accreditation**

These standards for adults with ASD cover:

- enhancing quality of life by creating community supports and awareness.
- building service capacity.
- recognising and sharing research-based treatments and interventions.
- building early links for transition from school.
- sharing outcomes information with schools to enhance curricula.
- continuous life planning based on the preferences and needs of the persons served.

▪ ***CARF standards for support for children with ASD***

This more recent accreditation programme has been specifically designed for services to children with an ASD, in order to complement the previous programme focusing on teenagers and adults.

**Scope of the accreditation**

The standards developed in the framework of this accreditation programme focus on early diagnosis and early intervention, to allow the families and carers to tackle children's development challenges, access to education and community resources. They also entail treatment planning, results-oriented therapies, and advocacy practices.

Early recognition of the condition allows families to adjust to the child's learning and development challenges. It also allows families to mobilise resources to provide the best early intervention services for the child.

CARF's standards for support for children with ASD cover:

- Obtaining early intervention screening.
- Obtaining early intervention services.
- Obtaining an interdisciplinary evaluation by a team experienced in evaluating children with ASD to improve treatment and outcomes.
- Navigating the multiple and complex systems families need to coordinate, including medical, educational, mental health, disability, and community services.
- Connecting to resources to identify and treat medical or other conditions associated with ASD, as they are needed, to improve independence, family well-being, and adaptive behaviour.
- Gaining understanding of the core features of ASD and associated conditions.
- Adjusting and adapting to the challenges of raising a child with ASD.
- Understanding the future opportunities, services, and challenges that lay before them as they raise their child to adult transition from school to life planning.
- Connecting with mentors and parent-to-parent support groups or contacts.
- Connecting with community organisations and support groups dedicated to people with ASD.
- Becoming an advocate for policy changes, as desired.

These standards are available on CARF's website [www.carf.org/pdf/SupportsforChildrenwithASD.pdf](http://www.carf.org/pdf/SupportsforChildrenwithASD.pdf), and have been published in the CARF Employment and Community Services standards manual in January 2009.

The Easter Seals Autism Therapeutic Schools in Chicago and Tinley Park, Illinois, have earned CARF accreditation in this area.

### **Procedure to accreditation**

The steps towards accreditation of autism services are as follows:

1. Consultation with a designated CARF consultant to provide guidance and assistance
2. Self-evaluation. The service provider must apply the standards for a minimum of six months before a CARF survey may lead to accreditation for ASD services.
3. Survey by a specialist CARF team with the appropriate expertise. This survey must be planned at least three months before the survey, and is done through observation of services, interviews with clients and other stakeholders, and review of documentation. The survey results in oral feedback on the spot.
4. Then CARF decides to award accreditation or not, around one or two months after the survey. The organisation receives a written report. Most of the time the accreditation is given for a three-year period, but a one-year accreditation term is also possible. Depending on the fulfilment of annual requirements, the accreditation may be extended to five years.

5. At a maximum 90 days after notification of an accreditation, the service provider has to submit a Quality Improvement Plan based on the recommendations made in the report.

CARF offers seminars to support the efforts towards accreditation. It may be useful to send key staff members to training event from CARF, which are also held in Europe, and of which the calendar is available on CARF's website under the item Events, Educational opportunities.

**For more information:**

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<http://www.carf.org>

Two French national federations of parents of children with autism have recently engaged in a process of defining criteria for quality in autism service delivery, with the goal to set up accreditation systems. These federations own and run many specialised centres throughout the country. They distinguish their quality approaches from the governmental initiative, which gives a label taking into account financial management and hygiene aspects of care institutions, without considering the professionalism and field-specific quality practices.

### **Scope of the accreditation**

Autisme-France promotes a brand-new quality label for service providers based on 5 evaluation grids covering all services, all available on the internet<sup>3</sup>:

- children residential services
- adults residential services
- children non residential services
- adults non residential services
- early intervention and partial care for children. This is more particularly adapted to children with Asperger's Syndrome, who attend mainstream classes, but may need partial support at home.

The accreditation programme of Autisme-France is very much focused on quality of the services delivered to the clients, on individuals' needs, on professional care and expertise specific to autism. This contrasts with the national mandatory evaluation, which only delivers an authorisation and is focused on financial management, respect of basic rules such as hygiene, etc and not specific to autism.

Within Autisme Europe, several centres are gathering together to form a so-called "Groupement de coopération sociale et médico-sociale", to offer mutual support on the management issues. These centres would then have as a prerequisite to be accredited by Autisme France. At this stage, the accreditation programme of Autisme-France does not offer the possibility for a back-up support and guidance in the process towards accreditation, yet this initiative of a "Groupement" may take over this role.

Three centres have already achieved accreditation<sup>4</sup>, and the organisation is expanding the geographical scope of its accreditation program, since 2 centres from Canada (Québec) are undertaking an evaluation in the field of early intervention. The association is thus open to accredit services and centres outside the national territory.

### **Accreditation procedure**

1. The candidate centre has first to carry out an auto-evaluation on the basis of (one of) the grids already mentioned.

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<sup>3</sup> Grille d'Evaluation de la Qualité des Services pour les Personnes Autistes, <http://www.autismequalite.com/>

<sup>4</sup> Information on these centres and their « best practices » will be published on the website of Autisme France mid-September.

2. While drawing the conclusions of this auto-evaluation, it has to elaborate an improvement plan for 18 months.
3. After this time, the evaluation by Autisme France takes place on site. A team of around 3 experts from Autisme France inspects the practices of the centre during 3 to 4 days, and makes an oral and written report based on its observations.
4. Autisme France takes then a decision to award the “Label Autisme-France”. Two types of labels can be distinguished: the first level of quality, which is recognised as satisfying, but not excellent, which is given for 18 months to foster progress of the organisation, and the excellence level, which is given for a 5 year period.

**For more information**

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Sésame-Autisme is the other main federation proposing an autism-specific evaluation process, and setting up a procedure for accreditation of quality in service delivery. Yet, the process is not as advanced as in Autisme-France, since Sésame-Autisme has not yet developed its procedure for external evaluation. For this reason, we will here talk about an “evaluation” instead of accreditation programme.

### **Scope of the evaluation**

A guide for internal evaluation was elaborated in 2007 and is now being reviewed by Directors of member centres of the federation. The current “guide of specific internal evaluation” is available on request<sup>5</sup>. A few comments can be made on the future internal evaluation process. The evaluation bases on grids for observation of standards in the chosen services, which have been elaborated by managers and professionals from member centres of the federation.

The assessment can be divided into three areas:

The evaluation focuses on practices related to three main objectives of accompaniment according to the federation:

- Education
- Health care
- Social interaction

The project and values of the centre are also central in the evaluation, especially:

- The mission of the service and its update
- Respect of the client
- Case management
- Partnership with significant others
- Research and innovation

The environment of the centre is also assessed via the following items:

- Training and multidisciplinary competence
- Institutional functioning
- Networking
- Relations between the centre and the federation
- Financial and technical means
- Geographical and architectural situation of the services.

Each of the items mentioned in these three areas are defined into a set of detailed standards and measurable criteria.

### **Evaluation procedure**

As for the internal evaluation procedure described above, the centre has first to identify a few areas of improvement. Then an evaluation plan in these areas and in concordance with the set of standards is set-up in cooperation with the federation. The internal evaluation is seen as a

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<sup>5</sup> This “guide d’évaluation interne spécifique” can be ordered from Fédération Sésame (+33 1 44 24 50 00).

long term, continuous and participative process, where the professionals of the centres as well as clients or their representatives are closely involved in the improvement process of quality delivery, and guided by recommendations proposed by the federation, which follows up the process.

The results of the future evaluations will be available on the website<sup>6</sup> of the federation.

The next step will be the establishment of an external evaluation procedure specific to autism-services and the award of an accreditation. Thus, the modalities of the external evaluation and the steps towards this accreditation have not been fixed yet.

### **For more information**

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## **Scope of the evaluation**

The quality of life for persons with autism in educational and social residential centres has been evaluated in Switzerland via a tool developed by researchers and practitioners. This tool is called *Inventaire de Qualité de Vie en Milieu Résidentiel* (I.Q.V.M.R.)<sup>7</sup>, and aims at evaluating the quality of service delivery for people “who need an intensive support or with heavy and severe intellectual deficiencies”, and “persons, who, in addition to their intellectual deficiencies, have sensorial, motor or also emotional deficiencies”. This tool has been used a lot to assess quality of residential care for persons with an ASD in the country, by the government in Geneva, and has been promoted by the national association Autism Switzerland.<sup>8</sup>

The evaluation focuses on the organisation of the environment of the client, the way the environment supports the decision capacity and development of the client. It is suitable for services to children as well as adults with an ASD in residential care services. The advantage of this inventory is that it has been devised for people who are often set apart from research and evaluation because of communicational difficulties.

The main components of this evaluation are:

- Individuality
- Self-control
- Environment
- Health and security
- Social integration
- Free time and hobbies
- Special needs
- Supervision and further education of staff

Each of the 8 categories mentioned above entails 10 questions.

## **Evaluation procedure**

This tool has been used by the government, and is promoted by the national federation for the use of the centres themselves. Therefore it does not lead to accreditation, but is a useful The evaluation is carried out via a one-hour interview between an assessor and the client, accompanied by a staff member with whom he/she is most familiar. The 80 questions are answered during the session. Applied to a high certain number of the clients, this tool allows identifying structural weaknesses in the service delivery from the client’s viewpoint.

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<sup>7</sup> I.Q.V.M.R. Les Editions de la Collectivité, Institut québécois de la déficience intellectuelle, 1997, Québec ; Gaëtan Tremblay, Henri Martin-Laval. [http://www.autismesuisse.ch/files/bevbaud dt.pdf](http://www.autismesuisse.ch/files/bevbaud_dt.pdf), p4.

<sup>8</sup> [www.autismusschweiz.ch](http://www.autismusschweiz.ch)

**For more information**

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## FEAPS Quality evaluation system, Spain

FEAPS is the Spanish Confederation of Organisations in favour of Persons with Intellectual Disability. The organisation accredits services to persons with ASD taking into consideration the specificities of such services and clients, such as the Gautena centre presented in the second part of this survey. This accreditation system is then suitable for services to persons with classical autism, Asperger's syndrome excluded.

FEAPS is an associative movement gathering several Spanish federations, nearly 3 500 not-for-profit entities and over 2600 centres or services, totalling over 16 000 professionals. As such, FEAPS runs services for children and adults, education and occupational centres, special employment centres, residential and leisure services, day care, respite centres, family support, etc. It also proposes a consulting service composed of professionals to provide assistance to service providers to enhance organisational development, as well as training programmes for managers. Essential values FEAPS strives for are the active participation in the development of ones environment, and community inclusion.

Since 1997 the organisation has engaged itself in a movement towards quality, with the view to drag its members towards the same focus. Good practices manuals have been established by expert professionals from the FEAPS network. These, addressing practitioners, focus on the identification of good practices in an organisation and how to develop them, through innovation investments, alliances, transferability, etc. The latest guide is freely available on FEAPS website [www.feaps.org](http://www.feaps.org).

### Scope of the accreditation

FEAPS has built up an accreditation system around three pillars of quality: quality of life (self-determination, well-being, etc), quality of management (customer focus, results orientation, etc), and ethical obligations. The level of quality in the three pillars must be balanced, and the organisation must engage in a constant improvement process while being ready to benchmark with other organisations. A few examples of the criteria are listed below:

#### Quality of life

- person centred planning
- management of all dimensions of quality of life
- impact of the services on the quality of life

#### Quality of management

- fulfilment of the legislation (data protection law, prevention of work related risks, etc) in the policy and practice
- involvement of the management of the services in quality
- way the organisation handles its resources and alliances?
- Motivation and training of staff

#### Ethics

- Development of a catalogue of values compliant with the ethical code of FEAPS

### Evaluation procedure

1. The organisation has first to decide the level of quality accreditation it engages for. There are indeed three levels: basic quality level, level of engagement, and advanced FEAPS quality.
2. It should fulfil the prerequisites corresponding to the targeted level of quality. Examples of these prerequisites are: formal adherence to the ethical code of FEAPS; establishment of a Charter of rights and duties for each service; evaluation of the quality of life of minimum 33% of all clients; etc.
3. A self examination has to be conducted on the basis of guidelines and material provided by FEAPS, by a multidisciplinary team of professionals, and with the participation of clients, their representatives and other stakeholders.
4. The self evaluation results in a radar-type diagram describing the degree of quality development achieved.
5. On the basis of the observations, the self-evaluation team has to submit an improvement plan and a time frame to fulfil it.
6. The accreditation is then granted with the following conditions:
  - for the basic level of quality, the FEAPS gives accreditation on the basis of the documentation provided by the organisation after the self-evaluation process.
  - for the level of engagement, the organisation should, in addition, undergo an external evaluation aiming at search for evidence.
  - for the advanced level, the organisation should first carry out a deeper, exhaustive self-evaluation, examining each principle of the quality of life pillar, each principle composing quality of management, and each value of the FEAPS ethical code. Then, the improvement plan is based on this detailed self-evaluation. The organisation also has to undergo an external evaluation by FEAPS auditors in order to get the FEAPS advanced accreditation.
7. The accreditation is valid for three years. Every year, the organisation has to submit a report on the advancement of the improvement plan.

The development of this evaluation system is financially supported by EPR member ONCE.

### **For more information**

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### **Scope of the accreditation**

Accreditation Canada International is a department of Accreditation Canada. It has proposed for 50 years a recognised accreditation programme for both large multi-site and single-site organizations in health care worldwide. Like the British National Autistic Society, the accreditation programme of ACI has been accredited by the International Society for Quality in Health Care (ISQua). The accreditation programme is customised to meet the specificities of the organisation, which ensures a better adaptation to the context. The programme entails three services: accreditation, education and consultation.

Accreditation International gives overseas rehabilitation centres the opportunity to benchmark against a high level of excellence based on common standard values and criteria, which should, according to ACI, be measurable in any health care service of institution. These are transversal components of quality according to ACI: competence, acceptability, effectiveness, appropriateness, efficiency, accessibility, continuity, and safety. Another horizontal standard that is paid attention to is the integration and continuum of the services, to ensure that the needs of the patients are answered in the best way.

Moreover, the practices are assessed against vertical standards, specific to the services concerned. Among those, the set of standards for Mental Health care and Specialised Intensive Health care are the most relevant for services to people with an ASD, as well as the so-called "Other Patient Care group". All allow a customisation of the accreditation programme according to the specificity of the centre.

### **Procedure for accreditation**

The service provider has to fulfil prerequisites before engaging in the accreditation process. This ensures a greater success in the accreditation and effectiveness in the improvement of the services delivery. The prerequisites are so-called "Required organisational practices". There are 9 items in the following areas: communication (information to client at transition points, etc.), medication use, Worklife (training on patient safety, etc), Infection prevention and Control.

Objectives are identified in collaboration with the services provider, which have to be achieved internally in the organisation; before ACI visitors inspect the services on the basis on documentation and observation.

The accreditation programme lasts three years, from the selection and customisation of standards, self-assessment, training of auditors, establishment of peer-review procedure, to the implementation of the evaluation process.

## **Other services**

Via its consultation services Accreditation Canada has also worked since 1990 with national governments and agencies abroad to support them in implementing accreditation systems or bodies.

Accreditation Canada *International* has assisted France and Ireland in establishing accreditation bodies, working in collaboration with the Irish Health Information and Quality authority. This process in Ireland, which has not been accomplished yet, aims at setting national standards for the provision of health and social care services, though not including mental health services. These standards will integrate standards for quality and safety for given services and guidelines and services to accompany institutions towards excellence. National standards have already been set up for services such as residential care settings for older people for instance. This is a start, and the establishment of national standards will be extended to many other services.

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### **Scope of the accreditation**

The Montessori school has developed a specific accreditation programme for educational services for children with an ASD that implement or are willing to implement a combined approach of the Montessori methods and the applied behaviour analysis. This accreditation is a way for the school to guarantee that the practices actually correspond to what is claimed or pretended by the institutions, and that the Montessori and applied behavioural methods are implemented in a quality manner. It is based on the good implementation of the Montessori manual.

This accreditation programme is recent, and the Montessori school is currently working in Canada to give a college certification for this programme. More details will be posted on the Montessori website.

### **Procedure for accreditation**

In order to get accreditation for an autism educational service, the service staff has to attend the “Autism – A Montessori Approach” training. After the training, a review consisting of a three, six and nine month follow up is conducted through data collection. Moreover, a precondition for accreditation is that all staff working with the children must have a minimum of two years experience with children with autism. A consultancy service is proposed to support the centre reaching the quality level needed for accreditation.

Accreditation is the highest level of quality recognition in Montessori and applied behavioural practices. This gradual improvement ensures a long-term involvement of the centre into the programme and a flexible accompaniment. The first levels of recognition are:

1. Teacher member
2. Affiliated member

For both first levels, it is necessary that staff have completed the training Autism- a Montessori Approach 32 hours course. To be a teacher member it is compulsory for the staff to have a minimal 2 years experience in working with children with autism. To be an affiliated member; the staff must have completed in addition the training “Autism- Montessori Approaches in the home” 32 hours course.

3. Associate member

The conditions for this level of recognition are: to be licensed under education, daycare, non-profit organisation or charitable organisation. The institution has to use a range of Montessori material adapted to the needs of each child in the service. At least one staff member has to be certified Montessori teacher in each class or group, and at least one staff member has to have completed the training Autism- a Montessori Approach. These conditions are in addition to the conditions required for the lower levels.

Every student has to receive its personal Montessori programme, benefit from one-to-one service and have a programme of 15 hours or of 5 days a week

#### 4. Accredited member

In addition to the prerequisites mentioned above, the institution or the programme must offer a service to children with autism for at least 5 days a week for a minimum of three hours a day. The staff have to submit monthly graphs of the children's progress for one year prior to accreditation.

The accreditation fee is based on the number of children in the services accredited (300 US\$ per year for 1 to 4 children, and an additional fee of 25 US\$ per child and per year when more than 4 children).

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## **Autismus Deutschland, Germany**

The country-wide German Organisation for Autism Autismus Deutschland is currently elaborating an autism-specific quality accreditation system. However, no information is officially available yet.

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**Existing (accredited) practices specific to autism in and outside EPR network**

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**Types of services**

Extra-school support, home-based services and day services.

**Target groups**

Children and youngsters with an ASD, including those with Asperger’s syndrome.

**Activities**

The former Eden Foundation, recently re-named Inspire, has developed outstanding services and has achieved NAS accreditation for its services. The acronyms of the services are following:

STEP: Structured Training and Education Programme

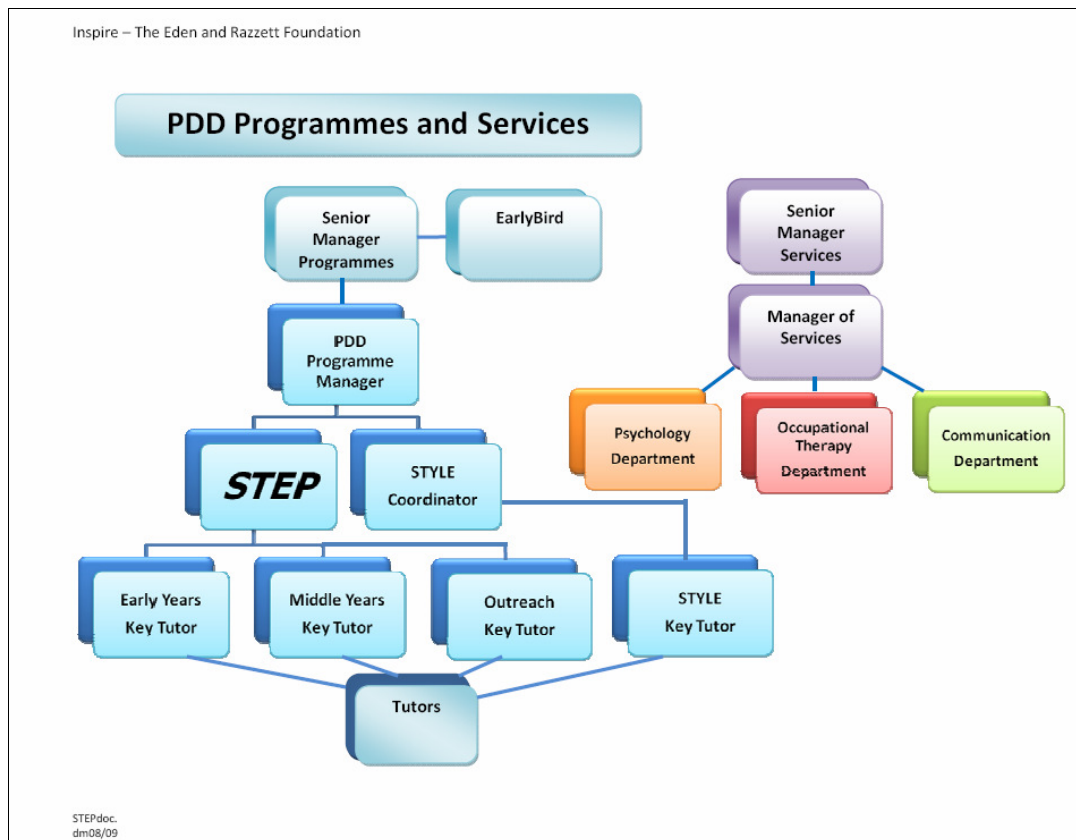
ITEC: Information Technology, Education and Communication Support

Early Bird Programme

PACES: Parent and Client Educational Services

STYLE: Specialised Training for Lifestyle Enhancement

The organisation of the main autism services in Inspire is presented in this chart:



The STEP and the Early Bird Programmes are both accredited by the National Accreditation Society (UK). Through accreditation by the NAS, STEP has also achieved accreditation by the International Society for Quality in Health Care (ISQua)<sup>9</sup>.

#### ▪ STEP service

Inspire's Structured Training and Education Programme makes use of the NAS's SPELL framework<sup>10</sup> and the TEACCH approach. The attention paid to environment and its structure is essential. STEP makes use of individual and collective sessions to offer a larger choice and more opportunities in coping with problem solving.

Another feature of STEP programme is the close collaboration with teachers and learning support assistants from the mainstream schools. These are involved in discussions about the child's programme and in the observation and participation of STEP activities, which allows the specialised instructional techniques to be adapted to and carried out during the regular classes. Parents are also strongly empowered through observation exercises and discussion with the child's tutor, and through training courses for parents.

#### *STEP: added-value of the accreditation*

STEP has established contact with the NAS since 1995, which has closely supported the development of the service. The STEP Early Years programme achieved accreditation in 2002 as the first autism-specific service outside of the UK, whereas the STEP Middle Years and Outreach have obtained accreditation status as new services in 2007.

STEP has benefited from advice in the identification of areas of further development and from international exchange visits. Moreover, an annual consultation is carried out by the NAS via interviews with professionals, school staff and parents, and via documentation and observation of the practices, to ensure that standards are maintained in the programme. This constant collaboration guarantees that high quality standards are met in policy as well as in practice.

Thanks to the recognition of the quality ensured by the accreditation, the STEP service is sought after for training and consultation purposes by the Maltese government, by social institutions and schools. Internally, the benefits from the accreditation observed in Inspire are, according to the service manager, a greater motivation of the staff thanks to the provision of an international framework for quality work, internal trainings as well as international exchanges.

In 2007, the Early Years section of the STEP programme was selected by the NAS as a pilot in a testing process of new standards. The National Autistic Society and the Inspire foundation are currently discussing the possibility of hosting the 2010 international conference on Autism in Malta.

#### **For more information**

STEP Programme manager

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<sup>9</sup> The International Society for Quality in Health Care (ISQua) launched its International Accreditation Programme (IAP) in 1999. This is the only international programme that 'Accredits the Accreditors' in health care sector.

<http://www.isqua.org/Accreditations.aspx?men=29>

<sup>10</sup> <http://www.nas.org.uk/nas/jsp/polopoly.jsp?d=528&a=3362>

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#### ▪ **Early Birds**

This programme is addressed to parents of children with an autistic spectrum disorder under five years of age. It is a three-month programme bringing together parents for group sessions, where they can understand their child's behaviour and learn how to adapt strategies to manage it and develop their communication. The parents have a commitment to attend weekly training sessions that last 2½ hours or a home visit. Above all, they must continue to practice ongoing work with their child at home. EarlyBird groups are kept small and work with a maximum of six families at a time.

The Early Bird Programme also holds the accreditation by the National Autistic Society. It is managed by speech and language pathologists.

#### **For more information**

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#### ▪ **PACES**

This service has been tailored to meet the needs of persons with learning difficulties from birth and throughout their school years. The service addresses the client, his/her immediate family and carers, and covers all areas of development, aiming at the family setting as well as community and school inclusion.

Since the needs of the individuals evolves as he/she passes through the different ages of life, the PACES services have been divided into two main sections, and sub-divided based on the age of the client:

##### PACES – 1:

Early Intervention: basic infant stimulation during the first years of life, delivered at home and ensuring that the child is supported holistically.

Kinder Group: the support is extended to playgroups.

First Primary Years: in the primary years, support is offered to teachers, facilitators and peers in the mainstream school, while weekly home service is kept.

##### PACES – 2:

Last Primary Years

Secondary Years: the challenges encountered by all children of that age are tackled. Skills development aims at ensuring independence in life, including introduction to participation in leisure, social and cultural activities within the community.

The core services within the PACES programme include psychology, speech therapy, occupational therapy, physiotherapy, home tutoring. In addition to these core services, parallel services are offered such as a specialised Mother and Baby Club, Computer classes, Social Club, etc. This latest is a multi-sensory resource that supports the teaching of maths for all

children - those in mainstream classes as well as children with specific educational needs. Inspire has the only accredited Maltese trainer, and also offers courses to support teaching staff, learning support assistants and parents.

▪ **ITEC**

This programme addresses children for whom learning in mainstream school is not fully adapted and who need to be accompanied by an extra-school support in literacy and communication skills. It focuses on knowledge building through stimulation of imagination, rather than on traditional knowledge acquisition.

▪ **STYLE**

The STYLE programme aims at enhancing the lifestyle of youngsters in becoming more functional. The specific nature of this programme is to monitor students at school, carrying out peer preparation programme in order to educate the classmates about autism.

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## NAS accredited services in UK

Below are a few examples of services that have been accredited by the NAS with specialisation in adult day care, residential and respite services, outreach education, and supported living. The full list of organisations accredited by NAS is available under the link <http://www.nas.org.uk/nas/jsp/polopoly.jsp?d=1510>.

### ▪ *St Mark's*

#### **Types of services**

Day care services, social education, outreach services.

#### **Target groups**

Persons with ASD and learning difficulties who are experiencing emotional and behavioural difficulties.

#### **Activities**

This day service provides day care and social education to about 30 people. A safe environment with appropriate boundaries is created around individuals' needs to empower every person and foster independence. Individual abilities, social and independent living skills are developed through therapeutic activities and social education with a multi-cultural approach. The centre obtained accreditation in 2000 with the specialist standards adult day services.

The services entail the following approaches: applied behaviour analysis, aromatherapy, art therapy, behavioural techniques, counselling, crisis and aggression limitation management (CALM), dance movement therapy, drama therapy, makaton, music therapy, occupational therapy, picture exchange communication system (PECS), special times, speech and language therapy, strategies for crisis intervention and prevention, TEACCH, social skills groups and dietary interventions.

The staff ratio is of 1:2 or 1:1, and the team benefits from a comprehensive in-house training programme. Furthermore, St Mark's offers a specialist outreach service for people with autistic spectrum disorders, including assessment of the persons' ability to make positive choices. It provides flexible and positive support to help people with independence and life skills, as well as emotional support.

#### **For more information**

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### ▪ *Ardcora*

#### **Types of services**

Residential care, respite.

**Target groups**

Adults

**Activities**

This centre proposes residential services and short breaks and respite to persons with an autistic spectrum disorder. It achieved accreditation in 1995 with the specialist standard adult residential. Its services include music therapy, picture exchange communication system (PECS), sign language and TEACCH. Ardcora cares for 38 clients, 16 of them in residential services and 22 in short break and respite.

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**▪ *Thirsk Support service*****Type of services**

Supported living schemes.

**Target groups**

Adults from 18 years of age.

**Activities**

This service, provided directly by the NAS, offers supported living services. It proposes a supported living scheme and a range of other services to help adults on the autism spectrum access social and leisure activities and make the most of their education and employment opportunities. Thirsk Support services helps people who are living independently in their own homes, with their family, or in a local housing association property. The service is tailored to meet the individual needs of each person, and provides ongoing support for up to 24 hours a day. It is a rather small service, counting only 11 clients, but it is one of the rare accredited services with the specialist standard supported living schemes.

**For more information**

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**▪ *Leicestershire Grovebrook House*****Types of services**

House day services and outreach services.

**Target groups**

Adults with autism and Asperger's syndrome.



## **Activities**

The day service at Grovebrook House provides a low-arousal environment where people take part in a wide range of classes and activities. Emphasis is put on social skills, both at the centre level and in the community, and on the development of personal interests. Activities offered are also artistic and there are art rooms. The facilities include a paved sensory garden, a sensory room, kitchen and dining rooms, a communication room, an ICT room, an office and a workroom. Grovebrook House is located in a rural area, yet with excellent local amenities in the village. Moreover, the bus service to Leicester itself offers more opportunities for leisure. The users of the day service have their own programme of activities. Grovebrook House itself includes art and craft activities, music and art, cookery and baking, information and communication technology, vocational development and office work, gardening and sport activities. The community-based services offer education services, shopping, visiting pubs and cafes, bowling, swimming and sports, visiting museums and galleries. The professional team supports peoples' communication and learning needs strategies such as TEACCH, SPELL, PECS, Signalong and Makaton. The team closely works with Leicester College, who provide curriculum support, and with the specialist teaching service Autism Outreach, who provide specialist educational support. The house also has partnerships with the local employment agency and the hospital.

The outreach service gives maximum flexibility of support to people with autism and Asperger's syndrome of any age. The professionals offer support in the person's own home, in the family, in the community, or in the workplace. This service is highly individualised, including the setting up of the programme. Possible activities include goal setting, safety strategies, maintaining relationships with family and friends, participating in the community, attending college or university, accessing health care and leisure facilities, learning household management skills and developing social skills.

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### **Types of services**

Employment services and community-based services.

### **Target groups**

The organisation addresses the needs of all types of clients with an ASD, yet it has developed specific employment and community-based services for people with Asperger's syndrome.

### **Activities**

Autism.West Midlands is a service provider for people with ASD and a member of Autism Europe. These services are rare in the region, which means that the organisation experiences difficulties in coping with high demand.

#### **▪ *ASpire employment programme***

This service aims at breaking barriers to employment for adults with Asperger's Syndrome, to enable them access jobs and integrate them into the labour market. In a work preparation phase, clients follow learning modules which include disability awareness, job finding behaviours, CV writing, communication and anxiety, depression and anger management. Individuals get support on a one to one basis and meet others in small group sessions. The programme last 12 weeks and is part time. The first steps aim to enable individuals to gain some real experience of work through traineeships. During the work placement the individual can receive support in the workplace to ensure they gain the most from the experience. The centre faces a strong demand of places for such traineeships. To help in orientating clients, they must be referred by a disability employment advisor from a job centre. Once per week, the job club offers those who have completed a traineeship the chance to search for jobs, with a professional team member for providing advice. The job club offers all necessary materials such as computer and internet access, job magazines, etc. The last step addresses the clients that have found a job, and include training for managers and colleagues, follow-up by an employment supporter and support with learning new tasks and developing an understanding of the workplace.

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#### **▪ *ASSET...***

ASSET stands for "Asperger's Syndrome Support and Enablement Team", an outreach service for adults with Asperger's syndrome which aims to enable individuals to live independently within the community. The services offered include support to individuals to live in their own properties (mediation with owner), independent living skills, social groups where

people with Asperger's syndrome meet and choose common activities, discussion groups that take place once a month and offer the opportunity to talk about Asperger's syndrome and other topics in a friendly atmosphere followed by a dinner. There are also student support services for students with Asperger's syndrome at the University of Birmingham. Part of the services is financed via public funding.

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### **Types of services**

Employment services, community outreach.

### **Target groups**

Adults and young adults (from 17 years of age) with autism and Asperger's syndrome.

### **Activities**

Astangu proposes support groups whose goal is to support out-clients with autism in their active participation in open labour market and in society, as well as in their daily life, specifically:

- to achieve and maintain participation
  - to find possibilities to acquire some new working skills if needed
  - to keep motivation and interests level for social events (sports, museums, cinemas etc.)
  - to help them to gather peers problems in group and encourage them to help each other, listening and sharing experiences
  - to teach some valuable practical everyday skills

These group meetings take place once per week and last 2 hours. The activities are divided into three areas:

1. Autism supportive – autism and other challenges in people; my autism- sensory problems, my way of thinking, learning, working, strength, etc.
2. Communication – using drama elements and different games for the purpose of conversation, playing through different everyday problem situations.
3. Free time group – open group 1 X 4 hours per month, with a free choice of group members and of the activities they would like to undertake. These groups are important places to make common agreements and arrangements.
4. Family support – planned as to give specific information about pervasive development disorder and from a PDD point of view, but in this year included a Centre general family programme, giving family members the chance to be in contact and to consult on different arising problems from their point of view.

The whole programme lasts 10 months, but the free time group is open for a longer period. The new clients come through the autism supportive service and the communication groups. The support group does not stand alone in Astangu, since all possible services in Astangu Vocational Rehabilitation centre are used together as well as those offered by other places.

### **For more information**

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**Types of services**

Spoken plain language interaction.

**Target groups**

People with an ASD.

**Activities**

The Plain Language Centre at the Finnish Association on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities launched in spring 2007 a three-year project titled "Plain Language and Interaction".

The goal of this project is to analyse information on the use of plain language in situations of interaction, and develop operating model for interactive communication in plain language.

The target group of this project is people with communication problems and intellectual disabilities, mainly people with autism, but also people with dysphasia. The project is based on the involvement of client groups, reading plain-language material and discussing the content. The participants are given tools to express their thoughts and feelings about the use of plain-language material. The aim is to define the best use of plain-language so that as many people as possible could develop interactions. The interactions are analysed in groups and in one-to-one situations. The innovation of this project is to focus on spoken plain language, contrarily to most of the precedent researches, which centred on written plain-language. Young people with different forms of autism are involved in the development of the project.

Fours partners collaborate on this project. The results of the project will be published as a practical handbook in autumn 2009, and will be implemented in the Plain Language Centre as well as in other members of the Finnish Association.

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## (Accredited) services in France

### ▪ *Health and education institute “Les Bouviers »*

#### **Types of services**

Employment services

#### **Target groups**

Children with an ASD

#### **Activities**

The medical-educational centre in the North of France “Les Bouviers” welcomes autistic children from their youngest age. An internat is available for the children throughout the week, and allows weekends in their family. During the day in the internat, the children benefit from classes to develop their social and communicational competencies, as well as their residential autonomy. The centre also provides the children with various leisure activities.

The particularity of this centre is the experimental programme of inclusion of young adults in the mainstream labour market. Under the condition that they have achieved a minimal autonomy, the teenagers start with an apprenticeship in a mainstream work place. One session of the apprenticeship lasts half a day, and happens one to two times a week. Depending on the person, several activities can be combined, for instance, secretarial work one day, and work in a laundry another day. The traineeship are seen as a testing phase and preparation for the labour market. It also represents for the trainee the opportunity to diversify his/her experience and to put to good use the things learnt in the internat.

The colleagues are prepared to welcome the trainee in the best conditions, through information sessions on autism, exercises on the behaviour to adopt in front of an autistic person, the habits to take in order to ensure a good collaboration at work (notably through visual marks and written communication, etc.).

To maintain the motivation of the trainee, a system of reward has been put in place. Indeed, for each day worked, the trainee receives one mark, and after 4 marks, he/ she is allowed to choose a gift. After a while, the mark system is replaced by money.

Little by little, the professional supporting the autistic person withdraws from the working environment, while the trainee gains autonomy at work and the colleagues learn to monitor the situation. This is why the professional does not only play a role in supporting the autistic person, but also works in close and intense collaboration with the colleagues. The most welcoming and appropriate work institutions for these trainees are the municipality services and the local associations.

#### **For more information**

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### ▪ *La Ferme au bois*

**Types of services**

Day care and residential services, holidays.

**Target group**

Adults with an ASD.

**Activities**

This centre is one of the very first organisations to be accredited by the new label of the federation Autisme-France. This farm hosts 31 patients in residential services, has 2 places for short breaks, and welcomes 5 on day basis. There are 35 staff members on site, which means a 1-1 relation to carers.

The farm covers two sites, a first one of 18.000 m<sup>2</sup>, the other one of 3.000 m<sup>2</sup> in two different villages. These two sites possess three houses, and are located very near the villages' centres.

The most appreciated practice of this centre by the experts from the federation is the "leisure weeks" organised every 7 weeks between September and July. These leisure weeks propose an enlarged and more diversified agenda. Participants can enjoy a change from the daily life in the house, and discover new activities, while maintaining the foreseeable nature of the schedule.

The costs are split over the regional and departmental services.

**For more information:**

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Or

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**▪ Le Centre pour Adultes avec Autisme en Poitou (C.A.A.P.)****Types of services**

Medical desensibilisation

**Target groups**

Adults with an ASD and Asperger's syndrome.

**Activities**

This centre has been created and is managed by Autisme-France, and has been awarded the recent quality certification of the federation. At the opening of the centre in 2005, many of the 24 adults had been committed. It is a residential centre fostering the autonomy of people with autism, counting about 30 professionals and as many clients. The best practice identified by the federation in this centre is the innovation of regular "care-workshops". These offer the possibility for clients to take the heat out of the medical care residents have to face. Participants become familiarised with tensiometer, other medical supplies and common

gestures, so that a confident relationship is created with the medical professionals, and visits to the doctor or dentist produce less anxiety.

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ASPIRE is the Asperger Syndrome Association of Ireland. Two best practices can be identified in the network:

▪ ***Tuiscint Training Centre***

**Types of services**

Vocational services

**Target groups**

Adults with Asperger's syndrome

**Activities**

Tuiscint is a Dublin based vocational rehabilitation centre welcoming about 20 adults with Asperger's Syndrome. Tuiscint offers a three-year training programme to facilitate students to make the transition from dependency to managing their own lives, and it also offers work placement support. The clients are over 16 years of age. The course consists of the following modules: social skills, personal development, independent living skills, workplace skills, job search skills, catering skills, IT skills, work experience. The service has been established and is managed by ASPIRE.

**For more information**

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01 491 1473

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▪ ***Drama classes***

**Types of services**

Social rehabilitation

**Target groups**

Children and adolescents (6 to 18 years) with Asperger's Syndrome.

**Activities**

These drama classes represent an original approach to the treatment of Asperger's Syndrome. They have shown to be fruitful, teaching social skills to achieve better communication and encourage social inclusion, above all in the context of children victims of bullying at school because of their "eccentricity". They have been established and are run by a professor of the Education Department from Trinity College.

Drama creates a safe environment to train and test social skills. A distinction is made between simulation, which is a commonly used method for the teaching of social skills, and drama in education, as used in this project. Here drama as part of education enables personal, social and emotional growth, whilst providing the opportunity of enhanced understanding and decision making. Students of the drama classes meet once a week. The classes present

engaging characters in order to engage the participant in an exploration of another persons' life. The characters are presented in various dilemmas, in order to stimulate the participants to work collaboratively towards resolving the problematic situations of the characters. The drama classes enable the participants to focus on developing imagination, taking turns, maintaining contact, listening and responding to others, collaborating, visual literacy, interpreting body language and vocal expression, making presentations, sharing space, etc. Also, the classes allow for an objective distancing from the participants' own realities, but at the same time carefully resonate with the individual through periods of planned reflection in each session. The results of this practice show improvements in self-confidence, verbal and non-verbal language skills and social interaction of the participants.

**For more information**

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**Types of services**

Educational services, day care, housing, respite, leisure and family support.

**Target groups**

Children, youngsters, adults with an ASD and Asperger's syndrome.

**Activities**

Gautena is the Basque Organisation for Autism, a strong network of services that encompass diagnosis and treatment, education, day care, housing, respite, leisure and family support for more than 430 families in the province of Gipuzkoa, employing 180 professionals. The organisation, a member of Autism Europe, works in close collaboration with the regional authorities to deliver its services. The emphasis is put on the community dimension of all services delivered. Gautena offers diagnosis and treatment services in early childhood and develops customised plans with the family.

**▪ Educational services**

Gautena runs special schools with between 3 and 6 pupils in classes according to their age. In each classroom there is a team comprising a teacher, an 'educator' and two carers, as well as support from a medico-psychosocial team. These so-called "stable classrooms" are addressed to pupils for whom the ordinary curriculum cannot be adapted, or who can only share a small part of it. The special curriculum encompasses standards teaching, plus training in communication and social skills, self-management and self-care, as well as accompaniment in the different ages of life, in their passage to autonomy, emotional relations, housework, etc. They are all located in ordinary schools, ensuring that children with ASD receive their education in the least restrictive environment. Children and youngsters up to 20 are welcomed in these classrooms, but a special emphasis has been put on the early years which have a significant influence on future development, and on the age of transition to jobs and days centres, sheltered employment centres or supported employment. Besides this special education service, Gautena also supports children in mainstream education, by mean of extra-school support for the child, and guidance and support for the mainstream teachers.

The education services of Gautena are co-ordinated with the Basque Government Department of Education.

**▪ Day care**

This service addresses people with ASD who have completed their education and strive to be incorporated into adult life. The day-care service of Gautena is co-ordinated with the regional social services, so that if a family member goes to the local public work centre, he/she will be directed to Gautena. The aim is to integrate people into adult life and make their life as interesting as possible, providing them with experiences and satisfaction. Activities proposed in Gautena day centres are only activities that cannot be implemented in the community. The day care services comprise support towards finding a job, but also personal development, community and social skills training. Gautena considers the continuation of training after the completion of formal education to be essential. Each personalised day care plan is designed on a yearly basis.

**▪ Housing**

Here again, the importance of the community is underlined, since Gautena runs community housing services only with the ability to answer a variety of needs. Living facilities are provided in city centres but also in quieter areas. In all housing facilities the persons go out in the

morning to his/her daily activity and return in the evening. They are supported by Gautena staff in their engagement in all aspects of life: shopping, cooking, hobbies, and so on.

▪ **Leisure**

Leisure services are offered by Gautena in collaboration with the regional public social services and the youth and sports services. The organisation encourages the maximum participation by its clients in the community by offering leisure services as much as possible through mainstream organisations, for example youth clubs, religious institutions and local councils. For these activities, a small participation fee is required and adequate support from Gautena is provided to the organisers to ensure a good level of integration by the person in the group. This ranges from simple counselling to training people responsible for providing individualised support to the person in the group. Besides this, Gautena also offers a range of activities internally specifically designed for people with an ASD. This complements the general services and answers to the needs of people with ASD at as great a level as possible.

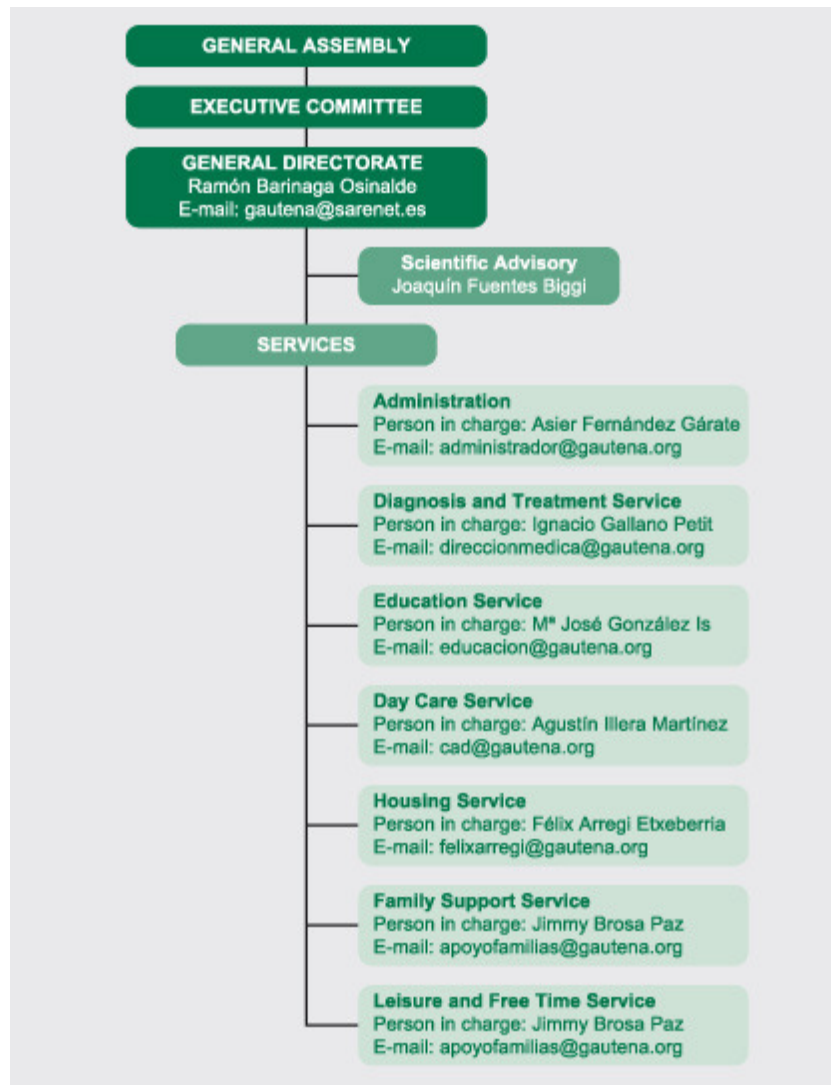
▪ **Family support**

This services provides families with information and training programmes, mutual support programmes, short break respite, the intervention of a professional in the family home itself to help the family members be better able to handle autistic behaviour, and a support programme for special family crisis situations.

*Gautena's accreditations:*

- Gautena was the first ASD organisation to obtain the ISO 9001 quality certification in 1998.
- In February 2000, GAUTENA received the British National Autistic Society Accreditation.
- In 2002, GAUTENA received a special award for the Quality of its services under the Provincial Council Award for Quality.
- In 2008, the organisation received an award from the Basque Foundation for Excellence.
- In the recent years, Gautena has been applying the EFQM Excellence model.
- Gautena is implementing a pilot application of the FEAPS Quality Model. It has also been awarded a mention for its 2nd Excellent Good Practice at the IV FEAPS Good Quality Practices Meeting, entitled "Pharmautisme: Protocolisation of Psycopharmacological Treatment in a population with intellectual and/or developmental disabilities", in 2008.

*Gautena's organisational chart :*



**For more information**

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**Types of services**

Vocational and schooling services

**Target groups**

Children and youngsters with Autistic Spectrum Disorder

**Activities**

Heliomare supports about 100 children and youngsters.

The schooling service comprises special education from 4 years of age, in primary and secondary level. The classes total up to 10 children of the same age. Rooms are available for those who want to have short respite and breaks to refresh themselves. The pupils also have access to computing lessons, for which teachers are trained.

In addition, Heliomare runs a special vocational centre for autistic pupils between 17 and 23 years of age. Young autistic people are supported in their pursuit to find a job, using special employment coaches and a case-management approach, placing people in special jobs or in activity centres owned by Heliomare.

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**Types of services**

Assessment, vocational and social rehabilitation, educational services.

**Target groups**

Children, youngsters and adults with Asperger's syndrome.

**Activities**

Two programmes of NLN focus on clients with Asperger's syndrome: Prospects and Assessment, although the latter also addresses more generally clients with processing or learning difficulties.

▪ **Prospects**

NLN runs a programme titled Prospects, which includes centre-based and community-based services for people over the age of 16 with Asperger's syndrome, in the fields of educational and vocational training, employment access and social integration.

The programme is based in the NLN Training centre in the Tallaght area of West Dublin. The participants are required to be able to manage their own social behaviour and have the level of independence necessary to participate in centre-based as well as in community-based training activities. The programme aims to provide participants with training to address social behaviours which inhibit full integration into society. The programme also aims to enable participants to improve their quality of life by developing personal and social skills, and to achieve their desired occupation.

Different modules are delivered in a community based setting and include:

- Disability Awareness
- Social Skills Training
- Stress Management
- Boundary Management
- Self-Advocacy
- Personal & Interpersonal Skills
- Supervised Leisure
- Art/Drama
- Community Activities
- Healthy Lifestyles
- Independent living
- Vocational Exploration
- Relaxation Techniques
- Skills sampling

Training is tailored to meet individual needs, and the facilitators liaise with parents to promote a holistic approach. Moreover, the focus on local community participation and the use of local services and facilities are crucial to achieve social and community integration. Throughout the course, participants may be withdrawn from group training to work on individual and specific issues and behaviours. Following such sessions the trainee is then re-integrated into the group. The *Prospects* service has led to the employment of around 150 persons with autism.

The programme is staffed by one full time instructor experienced in autism and related social skills training and behaviour management techniques, plus training facilitators from the Adult Autism Team. Funding comes by means of a flat fee per course participant.

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- **Assessment Service** The assessment service of NLN provides assessment, support and functional strategies for children (aged 5 and upwards), adolescents and adults with specific processing/learning difficulties, such as dyslexia or dyspraxia, as well as associated difficulties such as Asperger's Syndrome. The service promotes inclusive education together with comprehensive educational, vocational and functional activity support services for third level students and adult learners. The team is made up of a project co-ordinator; psychologists, a consultant clinical director, dyslexia tutors/educational support officers, senior occupational therapists, language therapists, consultant neurologists, and assistive technology support officers.

The assessment service has been involved in the development of a unique screening tool, the Adult Profiling Tool (APT), covering the full spectrum of specific learning difficulties, which identifies areas where further investigation and support is required. Following this screening process, the support is individualised depending on the functional, educational or vocational difficulties which may have been identified. Ongoing support may include organisational and time management strategies, study skills and specialist exam training.

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**Types of services**

Respite services, residential services, day care, after-school support, outreach services.

**Target groups**

Children (3-18 years of age) and adults with an ASD and Asperger's syndrome.

**Activities**

▪ ***Respite services***

RehabCare offers respite services for adults and children with autism and Asperger's syndrome.

The respite periods allow the clients to spend time in a homely environment that has been designed to meet their needs and in consultation with them, since the clients of the respite service also benefit from RehabCare person-centred planning process. It offers various opportunities for leisure activities and socialising. At the same time, it allows the family to have a break from full time caring. This service is residential-based and includes regular or one-off weekly breaks, longer breaks, but also day and evening respite. The flexibility of the service allows emergency respite and summer camps.

▪ ***Residential services***

RehabCare offers residential services for children and adults with autism and Asperger's syndrome. Residential care provides a supportive and person-centred environment, where individuals can reside while at the same time participating in their local community. It offers high support service in healthcare and other specialist care on a full time basis. The housing services offer a safe, non-institutional, responsive and therapeutic environment, optimising the clients' quality of life and allowing them to exercise choice in their daily life. RehabCare runs several residential units for individuals with autism, in different locations. Each residential service is autism-specific and welcomes a very limited number of persons. The service is considered as a transition towards more independent living arrangements in the future, but others might need this full-time support throughout their life.

**Further information**

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