



# *Making AHP Services Inclusive for Autistic Adults: Translating National Resources into Local Practice through Co-Creation with NHS Staff*



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AHP Careers  
Fellowship



Scotland, United Kingdom

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*(Adults Mental Health - Community & In-Patient)*
- AHP Careers Fellowship 2024-25
- Founder - BounceOT





***Project Website***



[Project Website](#)

Implementing neuroaffirming practices can significantly enhance inclusivity without additional costs

# "On a journey to being more inclusive and able to meet the needs of autistic people"

A co-creation project with NHS Fife's Mental Health OT Service














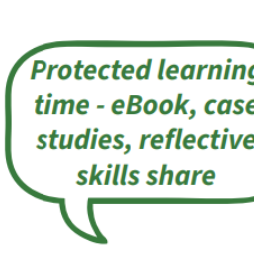



## What is co-creation?

Co-creation is not just about gathering data or generating ideas; it's about fostering collaboration at every stage—whether in recruitment, data analysis, or dissemination (Agnello, 2025\*; Longworth et al., 2024\*\*). This flexibility ensures that co-creators can influence the project, ensuring that their perspectives and insights are integrated meaningfully into the final outcomes. Adopting this approach within this project highlighted the importance of continual adaptation and responsiveness, reinforcing that co-creation is as much about the process as it is about the end result.



**Project:**  
**Making AHP services more inclusive for autistic adults**  
*'Exploring how to translate a national resource into local practice by adopting co-creation methods with NHS staff'*

- The 'Autism Informed Services' eBook, launched in 2024, was co-created with autistic adults and serves as a resource for professionals working in adult services.
- The aim of this project was to understand the barriers and opportunities at a local level that need to be considered when adopting the national e-book into local practice.
- Focus groups were conducted in both NHS Fife and NHS Lothian\* areas, with creative tools such as 'Envision Cards' used to gather insights. \*with project partner, Ursula Duff (Speech & Language Therapist)
- Data from the focus groups was analysed to identify key themes, which were reviewed collaboratively with co-creators to shape the project's outcomes.
- In Fife, key areas of focus included **assets, barriers, and opportunities**, with 22 co-creators identifying **top 5 reflections in each**.

 <p>Shared email inbox</p>	 <p>Environmental changes</p>	 <p>Run online groups</p>	 <p>1-way text system</p>	 <p>Flexible appt times &amp; location</p>
 <p>Time to read, absorb and apply learning</p>	 <p>Ward environment</p>	 <p>Possible governance issues</p>	 <p>How to measure success &amp; share in NHS</p>	 <p>Not enough lived experience input</p>
 <p>2-way text messaging system with patients</p>	 <p>Protected learning time - eBook, case studies, reflective skills share</p>	 <p>Lead people within local teams to attend special interest groups/ national events &amp; feedback to teams</p>	 <p>More accessible letters &amp; clear information/ expectations communicated about appointments</p>	 <p>Coproduce with experts by experience at a local level</p>

## Acknowledgments - Thank you to:

- 22 co-creators within the Mental Health Occupational Therapy Service, NHS Fife, for participating in 3 focus groups across December 2024 - January 2025.
- NHS Education for Scotland for funding the project as part of the AHP Careers Fellowship 2024-25.
- Ursula Duff (Speech & Language Therapist) for being a project partner in NHS Lothian area.
- Inspiring Scotland for supporting and encouraging this project, and for printing this poster.
- Scottish Government for funding and supporting the development of the 'Autism Informed Services' eBook.

# Autism Informed Services

This ebook is intended to be an informed level professional learning resource for all NHS professionals working in adult services or with adults. This includes mental health services.

Features the lived experiences of autistic people



Accessible

Informative

Engaging

Inspiring

Positive

Knowledgeable

Interesting

Interactive

Distracting

Needed

Surprising

Valuable

Good

Easy read

Essential

Easily navigated

Encouraging

Thoughtful

Well designed

Helpful

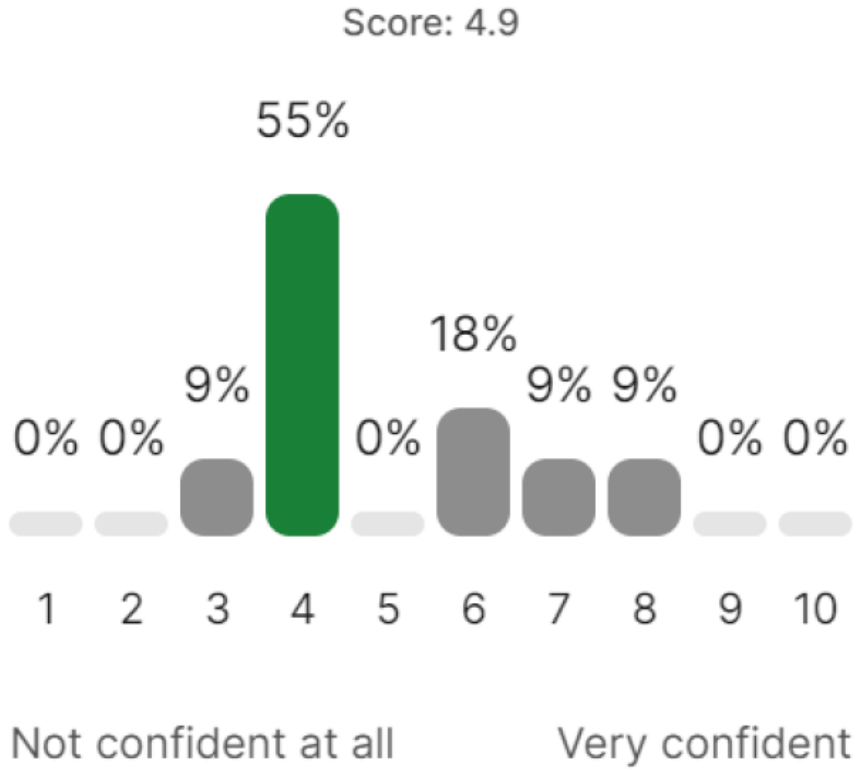
Informed

Clear

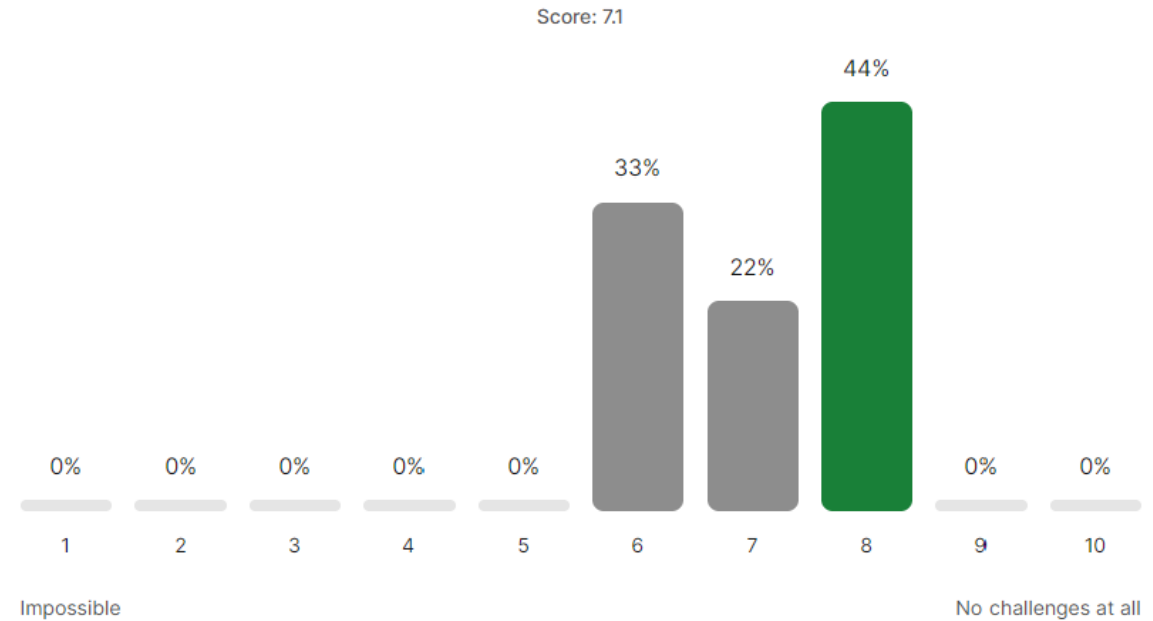
User friendly

Important

Evidence based



How easy will it be to follow this guidance in your practice?



# What is Co-Creation?



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"the inconsistent use of key terms like co-creation, co-design, and co-production, have created a fragmented or disconnected evidence base."

*Co-creators designed all aspects of focus groups, poster design & feedback on the project website & these slides*

Co-creation

Co-production

Collaboration

Co-design

Engagement

Participatory

# Creative Methods



*Lightbulb moment - other 4 unlit bulbs show the learning I need to build on*



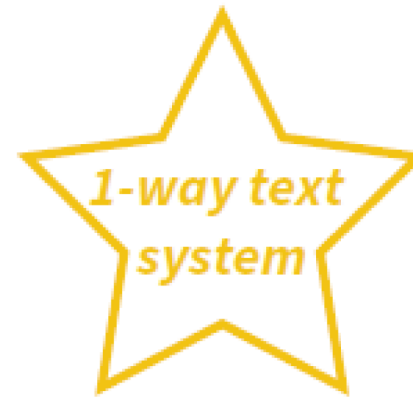
*On a journey to being more inclusive and able to meet the needs of autistic people*



*Gives direction to info that I need*

*It's like being given the guide to help you move forward*





Key Insight

***Implementing neuroaffirming practices can significantly enhance inclusivity without additional costs***

*Time to read,  
absorb and  
apply  
learning*

*Ward  
environment*

*Possible  
governance  
issues*

*How to  
measure  
success &  
share in  
NHS*

*Not enough  
lived  
experience  
input*

*2-way text  
messaging system  
with patients*

*Protected learning  
time - eBook, case  
studies, reflective  
skills share*

*Lead people within local  
teams to attend special  
interest groups/ national  
events & feedback to  
teams*

*More accessible letters  
& clear information/  
expectations  
communicated about  
appointments*

*Coproduce with  
experts by  
experience at a  
local level*



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