

Annual Professionals' Conference

Exploring the principles of
neuroaffirmative practice

13 March 2025

Conference programme

9am

Welcome by the chairs

Dr Carly Danesh-Jones, British Autism Consultant and Advocate
Tim Nicholls, Head of Influencing and Research, National Autistic Society

9.10am

Welcome address

Carrie and David Grant, NAS Ambassadors, Vocal coaches and broadcasters

9.20am

Plenary session – What is neuroaffirmative practice – Panel discussion and Q&A

Andy Smith, Founder of Spectrum Gaming;
Davida Hartman, Adjunct Professor, Clinical Director, Psychologist, Author
Holly E.A. Sutherland, Postdoctoral Research Associate, University of Edinburgh

10.10am

Short break

10.20am

Plenary session – Autism in the Black Community: Intersectionality and access barriers

Marsha Martin, Founder Black SEN Mamas

11.10am

Morning break

11.30am

Education and young people – Stream A

Chairs: Dr Carly Danesh- Jones
& Tim Nicholls

Topic TBC
Speaker TBC,

Mental health and clinical services – Stream B

Chair: Peter Watt

Eating disorders
Rachel Loomes, Principal
Clinical Psychologist, South
West London & St. George's
Mental Health NHS Trust

Supportive approaches – Stream C

Chair: Fenella Cannings-Jurd

**'By us, for us': How autistic-
led support transforms self-
understanding**
Andy Smith, Founder of
Spectrum Gaming

12.15pm

Lunch break



1.15pm

Stream A

Neuro-affirming research into practice – monotropism in the classroom and beyond
Tanya Adkin, autistic education consultant & **Helen Edgar**, teacher and consultant

Stream B

The landscape of autism diagnosis
Claire Dowling & Tom Cahill, NHS England; **Dr Mohammad Mohit**, **Dr Manjari Tanwar & Dr Hilary Toulmin**, North East London NHS Foundation Trust

Stream C

Autism, ADHD and neurodivergence
Speaker TBC

2.00pm Short break

2.10pm

Stream A

The NEurodivergent peer Support Toolkit (NEST): co-designed and research-informed materials for mainstream secondary schools
Dr Catherine Crompton, University of Edinburgh

Stream B

Identification and treatment of PTSD in autistic people: navigating the unknown in the absence of robust evidence
Dr Freya Rumball, Principal Clinical Psychologist & Researcher, Queen Mary's Hospital

Stream C

Autism and Allyship: Moving from Awareness to Action
Lee Chambers, Business Psychologist, male allyship specialist and speaker

2.55pm Afternoon break

3.10pm

Stream A

Designing for Neuro-inclusive Education: The risks and benefits of using technology to support diverse minds
Dr Sarah Broadhurst, CEO, Autism Education Trust

Stream B

Supporting autistic people with sensory needs
Holly Sprake-Hill, Autistic Specialist OT and parent

Stream C

Hopeful Optimism in the University – supports and specialist mentoring in HE
Dr Brian Irvine, Research Fellow and Comms and Engagement Officer, CRAE

3.55pm Short break

4.05pm **Plenary session – Creating Restriction-Free Lives: Applying Low Arousal Approaches'**
Professor Andrew McDonnell, Consultant Clinical Psychologist and Director of Studio III Clinical Services

4.50pm **Closing remarks from the chairs**

5.00pm **Conference ends**



Additional on-demand sessions

- 1 Autism and chronic illness**
Charli Clement, Autistic author
- 2 Health and healthcare support needs in older autistic people**
Liz O’Nions, Epidemiologist at Bradford Institute for Health Research
Professor Joshua Stott, Clinical Psychologist and Professor of ageing and clinical psychology at UCL
- 3 Interoception, the 8th Sense: The Science of How We Each Uniquely Feel**
Kelly Mahler, Occupational Therapist
- 4 Self-advocacy and Inclusivity: A Nonspeaker’s Perspective**
Tim Chan, Adult autistic non-speaker
- 5 Successful Transitions: Transdisciplinary working to support children and young people and their families**
Dr Irina Roncaglia, Corinna Laurie & Joanne Neill Smith, National Autistic Society Clinical Leads
- 6 Understanding how autistic people experience trauma**
Caroline van Diest, CBT and EMDR therapist