# Template letter to write to your MP

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Subject: **The law is being broken every day in England**

Dear [name]

I am writing to draw your attention to an unacceptable situation where some of the most disadvantaged people in our society are being let down, prevented from thriving and from contributing to our society, and where the law is being broken every day.

The Autism Alliance’s new report, [Breaking Point,](https://lychee-crocodile-2cwr.squarespace.com/s/Breaking-Point-Campaign-Report-Autism-Alliance-November-2023.pdf) exposes the profound implications of the social care crisis for autistic people and their families, and the double disadvantage autistic people face in the social care system.

It includes [new research](https://static1.squarespace.com/static/63776e015de0f42168d2a2a6/t/655a942e6255b43b781b5205/1700434991011/Mapping+supply+and+demand+for+care+services+for+autistic+adults+in+England+%28Autism+Alliance%2C+November+2023%29.pdf) as well as testimony from autistic adults and their parents and carers. This includes **Beckii Davis** (aged 30), who spent more than four years campaigning for her autistic brother **Elliot Dodds**, (aged 28), to be released from long-term segregation in hospital after he suffered a mental health crisis. Elliot also has epilepsy and a moderate learning disability.

**“We thought he’d be in and out…but it was more than four years until he came home,”** she said.

**“Mum repeatedly said she would be happy for him to come and live back at home, with support, but the request was continuously blocked.”**

The report also shows that there is **strong consensus on the reforms required** to increase access to specialist care and support for autistic people, amongst local authorities, care providers, and autistic adults and their families.

### What do you really know about autistic people?

In the UK, around **1 million people are autistic**. Contrary to popular perception, the majority are adults; and 4 in 10 autistic people have a learning disability.

**Autistic people have significant strengths**, including:

* attention to detail,
* focus and information processing,
* and can be active participants in their community and in employment.

However, they still **face some of the greatest inequalities of any group in society**.

Compared to the rest of the population:

* their **life expectancy is 16 years lower**;
* and autistic adults without a learning disability are **9 times more likely to die from suicide**.

### What helps autistic people live happier, healthier, more fulfilled lives?

Adult social care plays an essential role in helping autistic people live happier, healthier, more fulfilled lives.

Specialist care providers that understand autism and use person-centred approaches can help autistic adults live well and actively in their communities, enter employment, and prevent the escalation of need that too frequently leads to crisis.

This can range from specialist care in the home or supported living to peer-led support groups and local advocacy services.

### Why are autistic people at breaking point?

Across England, autistic adults face a double disadvantage.

They are being failed by the social care system which, starved of investment, cannot meet demand for specialist social care. The implications for autistic people and their families are profound. Already faced with stark inequalities, which are magnified because of a lack of care and support, too many face a deterioration in mental health which can lead to crisis.

New research from the Autism Alliance shows that:

* **Over three quarters (77%) of autistic adults reach crisis point** while waiting for care, leading to family breakdown and for some, confinement in mental health hospitals, where they face restraint, medication and trauma.
* **Over 10,000 autistic adults** with a moderate learning disability are not getting the social care they need (such as care in the home or supported living), leaving them unable to live well and actively in their communities and unable to take up employment.
* **44% of autistic adults wait more than 2 years for any** action to be taken to provide care, and almost half (48%) say that even where care is provided, **it does not meet their needs**.

**This is in direct contravention of the Care Act 2014,** which is clear that people with eligible needs for care should receive care, and that local authorities should promote wellbeing and reduce or prevent the escalation of need. **The law is being broken daily across the country, because there is not enough money in the system to meet demand.**

### How do we fix this?

The cost of closing the gap in social care provision for autistic adults, while significant, is a fraction of what is spent each year through the adult social care budget: it is likely to be between £70 million and £140 million, plus the cost of specialist workforce recruitment and retention. **This is achievable as part of meaningful reform of social care, and through addressing inefficiencies in spending across health and care.**

Investment needs to be accompanied by reform, and based on evidence from local commissioners, care providers, and autistic adults and their families, the Autism Alliance is calling for:

* Better sharing of data on autism assessment/diagnosis to support the planning of services.
* A collaborative model of commissioning and service design, based on partnership between commissioners and care providers.
* A stronger focus on the sustainability of specialist care and support provision, including a stronger role for the Care Quality Commission in working with providers under pressure.
* Greater clarity around the quality of specialist care and support, potentially through stronger accreditation of providers.
* A stronger use of co-production for planning, inspection and service delivery for autistic adults and their families.
* A concerted push on training to increase acceptance and understanding of autism, amongst commissioners, social workers and care providers, as part of wider workforce investment and reform.

### What is the cost of doing nothing?

The amount spent on confining autistic people in mental health hospitals **could pay to close this gap between 2 and 4 times over.**

But there are other critical reasons to act:

* As well as ending a scandal in human rights, closing the gap in care for autistic adults would drive **economic benefits for the country**. Providing the care that allows autistic adults to live well and actively in their communities would increase productivity through increased employment, drawing on autistic people’s strengths, and reduce the use of costly long-term inpatient mental health facilities.
* The reforms that would improve social care for autistic adults would also **lead to better care for everyone**. The voices of autistic adults and their families should be a guide to wider reform of social care. As the Social Care Future movement has put it: “We all want to live in the place we call home with the people and things that we love, in communities where we look out for one another, doing things that matter to us.”

### What I would like you to do as my MP

This failure of social care for autistic adults is part of the Government’s wider failure to implement the Autism Act 2009, the Transforming Care agenda and its own National Strategy for Autistic Children, Young People and Adults. The commitment, repeated again and again, to build the right support in the community for those who have additional needs, has simply not been realised.

**Enough is enough. The Government cannot afford to let this human rights crisis continue. Not only is the law being broken daily across our country, lives and opportunities are being wasted and additional productivity lost.**

If we believe in social inclusion, opportunity and compassion, we must act to stop this gross injustice.

**I urge you to:**

* Write to the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care and the Prime Minister, enclosing the [Autism Alliance’s report](https://lychee-crocodile-2cwr.squarespace.com/s/Breaking-Point-Campaign-Report-Autism-Alliance-November-2023.pdf) and [new research](https://static1.squarespace.com/static/63776e015de0f42168d2a2a6/t/655a942e6255b43b781b5205/1700434991011/Mapping+supply+and+demand+for+care+services+for+autistic+adults+in+England+%28Autism+Alliance%2C+November+2023%29.pdf), and calling on the Government to close the gap in care and engage with reform that addresses the barriers identified by local authorities and care providers.
* I would be grateful if you could copy your letter to members of the Health and Social Care Committee, and members of the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Autism and the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Learning Disability.
* Show your support for the Autism Alliance’s campaign on social media, using the hashtag #BreakingPointCampaign.

Yours sincerely,

[name]