

APPENDIX A – South Australia Police Autism Strategy Action Plan Commitments 2026-2030



SOUTH AUSTRALIA POLICE
SAFER COMMUNITIES



**Government of
South Australia**

Background

The **SA Autism Strategy 2024–2029** (the Strategy) is a strategic document that supports the inclusion of Autistic people, and their families and carers, in South Australia. As part of the Strategy, the **SA Autism Strategy Action Plan 2025–2029** (the Action Plan) sets out the practical steps the South Australian Government will take to deliver commitments across seven focus areas.

The Strategy recognises autism as a form of neurodivergence and promotes strength-based, person-centred approaches that reduce barriers, improve access, and support meaningful participation across services, systems, and workplaces.

Available research and consultation feedback highlight that Autistic people experience distinct patterns of contact with policing and justice services, commonly as victims, witnesses, or people seeking assistance. The available evidence consistently highlights the impact of communication barriers, accessibility challenges and unmet support needs in shaping these interactions. These insights reinforce the importance of SAPOL reflecting on how systems, practices and environments can influence experiences and outcomes, and on our role in reducing barriers and strengthening accessible, inclusive responses.

The Action Plan should be read in conjunction with the **SA Autism Strategy 2024–2029** on the Inclusive SA website - autismstrategy.sa.gov.au

Our focus and role

SAPOL plays a critical role in community safety, emergency response, workforce employment, and access to the justice system. In carrying out these functions, SAPOL regularly interacts with Autistic and neurodivergent people, including victims of crime, witnesses, community members, and employees.

SAPOL acknowledges that Autistic and neurodivergent people may experience barriers when engaging with policing services, particularly in high-stress or time-critical situations where communication differences, sensory sensitivities, or the impacts of trauma may be present. SAPOL also recognises the unique strengths and perspectives of Autistic individuals and the importance of removing barriers to participation in policing and community safety.

SAPOL further recognises its responsibility to support Autistic and neurodivergent employees through inclusive, accessible, and supportive workplace practices.

Our approach

Our approach focuses on:

- Building awareness and understanding of autism across our workforce.
- Improving accessibility in our services, environments, and communication.
- Embedding inclusive practices in recruitment, training, and community engagement.
- Partnering with Autistic people and advocacy groups to ensure lived experience informs our actions.

This Action Plan reinforces SAPOL's commitment to diversity and inclusion, supports the goals of the **SA Autism Strategy 2024–2029**, and contributes to safer interactions, improved access to services, and a more inclusive policing environment for Autistic and neurodivergent people.

Our Action Plan Commitments are structured around the focus areas identified in the Action Plan. SAPOL has identified Focus Areas 3, 4 and 7 as being in line with the roles and functions of the department. SAPOL will continue to support whole-of-government initiatives across the remaining focus areas, where appropriate.

Focus Area 3: Thriving in the workplace

Objective:

We want a diverse, inclusive and welcoming South Australian workforce where the strengths and skills of Autistic people flourish.

Commitments within Focus Area 3:

1. Improve knowledge, understanding and awareness of autism across the workforce.
2. Create an accessible, inclusive and welcoming public sector where Autistic people can thrive.
3. Increase opportunities for Autistic people to gain meaningful and lasting employment.
4. Consider alternative employment initiatives when transitioning from education to employment.

Commitment 1: Improve knowledge, understanding and awareness of autism across the workforce.

Target: Ensure public sector employees undertake autism awareness and understanding training.

ACTION	TARGET DATE	MEASURE	RESPONSIBILITY
Ensure in-person and online autism awareness and Understanding training is completed across public sector workforce.	Ongoing	The number of staff who undertook autism awareness and understanding Training: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • online • in-person. 	People, Culture and Wellbeing Service

Target: Increase awareness of autism across the public sector workforce and the strengths and benefits of employing Autistic people.

ACTION	TARGET DATE	MEASURE	RESPONSIBILITY
Outline the initiatives completed to promote autism inclusion in the workplace.	Ongoing	The number of initiatives completed to promote autism inclusion in the workplace.	People, Culture and Wellbeing Service
Engage Autistic employees and employees with disability to provide advice and inform inclusion activities, including to assist in promoting days of significance.	Ongoing	The number and proportion of lived experience staff engaged to inform inclusion activities.	People, Culture and Wellbeing Service

Commitment 2: Create an accessible, inclusive and welcoming public sector where Autistic people can thrive.

Target: Embed autism inclusion into workplace policies and practices

ACTION	TARGET DATE	MEASURE	RESPONSIBILITY
Review recruitment policies and processes to ensure they support reasonable adjustments and are responsive to the alternative ways Autistic employees can engage throughout the recruitment and training processes.	Ongoing	The number and proportion of recruitment and training policies and processes that are reviewed to ensure they support Autistic and/or neurodivergent staff.	People, Culture and Wellbeing Service
Review and implement reasonable adjustments procedures and flexible workplace arrangements that support all staff, including Autistic employees and parents and carers of Autistic people.	Ongoing	The number and proportion of reasonable adjustment and flexible workplace arrangement procedures to support staff, including Autistic staff, that are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • reviewed • implemented. 	People, Culture and Wellbeing Service
Review and update, where applicable, new starter forms to include an opportunity to identify as Autistic and/or neurodivergent to enable more accurate reporting and awareness in the public sector workforce.	Ongoing	The number of onboarding forms used to identify Autistic and/or neurodivergent staff that are reviewed and updated.	People, Culture and Wellbeing Service

Commitment 2: Create an accessible, inclusive and welcoming public sector where Autistic people can thrive.

Target: Develop strategies to improve the overall health and wellbeing of Autistic public sector employees.

ACTION	TARGET DATE	MEASURE	RESPONSIBILITY
Identify appropriate mechanisms, including clear confidentiality to ensure Autistic employees feel safe, supported, and confident to disclose that they are Autistic at the commencement of employment and through the employment lifecycle.	Ongoing	The number of support mechanisms available to ensure Autistic and/or neurodivergent staff can disclose confidentially.	People, Culture and Wellbeing Service
Continue to promote and provide EAP services that are inclusive, culturally appropriate, neurodiversity-affirming and in a range of modes and formats to support the diverse communication styles of Autistic employees.	Ongoing	Regular internal communication of the EAP and support services available.	People, Culture and Wellbeing Service

Commitment 3: Increase opportunities for Autistic people to gain meaningful and lasting employment.

Target: Develop programs and resources that support Autistic people to transition into meaningful employment in the public sector.

ACTION	TARGET DATE	MEASURE	RESPONSIBILITY
Deliver programs that target diversity and inclusion for Autistic people to gain practical workplace experience while undertaking higher education to support them into employment long-term.	2029	The number of programs that target diversity and inclusion for Autistic and/or neurodivergent people to gain practical workplace experience while undertaking higher education.	People, Culture and Wellbeing Service
Review and implement opportunities for supported transition into employment programs for Autistic people transitioning into employment in the public sector to receive tailored supports, ensuring that Autistic people are supported initially and ongoing.	2029	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The number of employment transition programs that support Autistic and/or neurodivergent people are reviewed. 2. The number of Autistic and/or neurodivergent people those programs accessed. 	People, Culture and Wellbeing Service

Commitment 3: Increase opportunities for Autistic people to gain meaningful and lasting employment.

Target: Provide alternative workplace training and volunteer options that support Autistic people entering the public sector workforce.

ACTION	TARGET DATE	MEASURE	RESPONSIBILITY
Review and implement alternative and accessible workplace training options to support Autistic employees, including in a range of accessible formats and learning styles.	2029	The number of alternative and accessible workplace training options available to support Autistic and/or neurodivergent staff.	People, Culture and Wellbeing Service
Identify volunteering opportunities for Autistic people across all state government agencies.	Ongoing	The number of volunteering opportunities for Autistic people.	People, Culture and Wellbeing Service
Review existing peer support or mentoring programs to ensure they are inclusive of Autistic employees.	Ongoing	The total number of peer support and/or mentoring programs and, of those, the proportion reviewed to ensure they are inclusive of Autistic staff.	People, Culture and Wellbeing Service

Commitment 4: Consider alternative employment initiatives when transitioning from education to employment.

Target: Develop programs or supported pathways for Autistic students transitioning from education settings to employment across the public sector.

ACTION	TARGET DATE	MEASURE	RESPONSIBILITY
Review existing graduate programs to expand pathways for Autistic graduates from education settings to employment.	Ongoing	The number of graduate programs reviewed, and, of those, the proportion expanded to include Autistic graduates from education into employment.	People, Culture and Wellbeing Service

Focus Area 4: Access to supports and services

Objective:

We want a clearer, more consistent and accessible service system where Autistic people and their families and carers can access the support they need, when they need it.

Commitments within Focus Area 4:

1. Develop a centralised state information system to support access and navigation of available supports and services.
3. Work with organisations to ensure evidence and research on autism can be effectively and efficiently translated into practice.
4. Ensure neurodiversity-affirming and culturally appropriate services and supports are available.

Commitment 1: Develop a centralised state information system to support access and navigation of available supports and services.

Target: Ensure resources and information about supports and services are updated, easily accessible and autism inclusive.

ACTION	TARGET DATE	MEASURE	RESPONSIBILITY
Deliver or review initiatives, platforms, and systems to connect Autistic people with information in various accessible formats across Government of South Australia supports and services.	Ongoing	The number of initiatives, platforms and systems made to connect Autistic people with information in various accessible formats.	People, Culture and Wellbeing Service

Commitment 3: Work with organisations to ensure evidence and research on autism can be effectively and efficiently translated into practice.

Target: Ensure resources and information about supports and services are updated, easily accessible and autism inclusive.

ACTION	TARGET DATE	MEASURE	RESPONSIBILITY
Collaborate with autism-specific organisations, where relevant, when developing and implementing policies, supports and services for Autistic people.	Ongoing	Number of consultations conducted in the development and implementation of policies, supports and services specific to Autistic people.	Organisational wide

Target: Collaborate with the Autistic and autism community throughout the planning, development and implementation phases to ensure services are neurodiversity-affirming and are effectively meeting the needs of Autistic people.

ACTION	TARGET DATE	MEASURE	RESPONSIBILITY
Consult with reference groups and lived experience groups, where relevant, on autism-related matters to provide insights and guidance on identifying and addressing barriers to accessing services provided by the Government of South Australia.	Ongoing	The number of reference and/or lived experience groups engaged to identify and address barriers to accessing services on autism-related matters.	People, Culture and Wellbeing Service

Commitment 4: Ensure neurodiversity-affirming and culturally appropriate services and supports are available.

Target: Improve existing services to ensure they are streamlined, effective and efficient to meet the individual needs of Autistic people.

ACTION	TARGET DATE	MEASURE	RESPONSIBILITY
Review and update, where relevant, the customer service areas and experiences to ensure Autistic people feel supported when accessing services.	Ongoing	The number of customer service areas reviewed and updated to ensure Autistic and/or neurodivergent people are supported when accessing services.	Business Services

Target: Ensure a wide range of neurodiversity-affirming and culturally appropriate services and supports are available, including to Autistic people who do not yet have an autism diagnosis.

ACTION	TARGET DATE	MEASURE	RESPONSIBILITY
In the development of new strategies and initiatives, the State Autism Strategy and/or Autism Charter will be linked and referenced, where appropriate.	Ongoing	The number of references made to the State Autism Strategy and/or the Autism Inclusion Charter in new strategies and initiatives.	People, Culture and Wellbeing Service

Target: Improve data capturing strategies of diverse cohorts of people accessing state government services and supports.

ACTION	TARGET DATE	MEASURE	RESPONSIBILITY
When consulting to inform the development of new strategies and initiatives, personal identifying data will be collected where appropriate, to capture and consider the specific perspectives of the Autistic community.	Ongoing	Are you capturing personal identifying data including Autistic and/ or neurodivergent people during consultation on the development of new strategic and initiatives? Y/N	People, Culture and Wellbeing Service

Focus Area 7: Interactions with the justice system

Objective:

We want to improve the experiences of Autistic people coming into contact with the criminal and youth justice systems.

Commitments within Focus Area 7:

1. Improve the knowledge and understanding of autism across the criminal and youth justice systems.

Commitment 1: Improve the knowledge and understanding of autism across the criminal and youth justice systems.

Target: Provide autism awareness and understanding training to correctional and custodial staff, including first responders to ensure Autistic people are supported when in contact with justice systems.

ACTION	TARGET DATE	MEASURE	RESPONSIBILITY
Deliver mandatory Autism: An Interactive Training module for Australian Police to all police officers and police security officers.	2027	Percentage of police officers and police security officers who have completed the mandatory autism training module.	People, Culture and Wellbeing Service
Continue updated delivery of the mandatory Autism: an interactive training module for Australian Police to all police officers and police security officers.	Ongoing	Conduct review of training content, in line with SAPOL training review guidelines.	People, Culture and Wellbeing Service



Contact details

The **South Australia Police Disability Access and Inclusion Plan 2026-2029** and **APPENDIX A – South Australia Police Autism Strategy Action Plan Commitments 2026-2030** are available on the South Australia Police (SAPOL) website at www.police.sa.gov.au in full and HTML formats.

If you require a copy in an alternative format or you wish to connect with SAPOL for any other reasons regarding this plan, please contact the SAPOL Diversity and Inclusion Branch via sapol.diversityandinclusion@police.sa.gov.au