

## Submission for the National Autism Strategy

I am a 24 year old woman with Autism. The most important issue for me is employment. I struggled for nine months to find a job, despite having a degree, and being intelligent. In interviews I also felt that I had failed because of my inability to behave normally. I felt enormous pressure to make eye contact, small talk and have normal mannerisms. The despair that I would never become financially independent was very hard to handle. I eventually got a job through my employment provider as a receptionist. In the job, my boss told me repeatedly that I was 'not a team player,' 'awkward to talk to,' 'like a square peg in a round hole,' and various other things that amounted to the same thing: I don't belong here. I really wanted to be friendly with my colleagues but I'm just not good at it. I frankly believe it should not be relevant to any job, how good you can be in social interaction. Except in special circumstances where the job needs that characteristic. I would like there to be autism-friendly employers, who I know will give me a chance despite behaving somewhat strangely in job interviews, and won't be angry because I can't socialize it with colleagues amazingly. I would like for all 'unwritten rules' of the workplace to be explicitly stated.