

World Autism Awareness Day 2010 - messages from UK political leaders

Prime Minister Gordon Brown

'Too often people with autism don't reach their full potential because those around them do not understand the condition. On United Nations World Autism Awareness Day, everyone should challenge their perceptions. I don't find it acceptable that many want to work but only 15 per cent of people with autism are in paid employment. Or that many want to live independently but almost 50 per cent. of adults with autism live with their parents. Recognition and awareness in frontline public services is critical to giving those with autism the support they need. That's why our recently published national autism strategy Rewarding and Fulfilling lives, is backed by legislation and sets a clear framework for creating that support.'

David Cameron

"UN World Autism Awareness Day is an important opportunity to raise awareness of the challenges that people with autism and Asperger Syndrome can face - especially during times of economic difficulty.

At present too many people with autism are being held back from fulfilling their potential. We need to break down the barriers which stop them doing so, including the barriers to work.

As a compassionate society we need to provide for those who cannot work, so we support moves towards providing personal budgets for those who require constant care to make sure they get the support they need.

People with autism or Asperger Syndrome who are looking to work, but require support or training to help them into employment, need the right kind of help at the right time. Tapping the expertise of the private and voluntary sectors is one way we can make sure that the assistance we provide is tailored to people's individual needs, helping lift people out of poverty and promoting greater independence.

I am delighted to wish campaigners well as you seek to raise awareness of these issues on this important day"



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Quote from Nick Clegg

It's deeply, deeply alarming that families are more likely to live in poverty if they have a child or adult who suffers from autism or Asperger's Syndrome. More needs to be done to change this. There is a challenge facing politicians of all parties to ensure that these families are not forgotten.

That's why it's so important that on the UN Autism Awareness Day, we highlight the difficulties facing those who live with autism and Asperger's Syndrome and look for a way forward. It is vital that every child and adult with autism – and the parents, carers and family who look after them with such passion and dedication – receive all the support they need.

From targeting extra cash to schools helping the children who need it most to giving carers a full week off every year, Liberal Democrats are fully committed to ensuring that those living with autism or Asperger's Syndrome get a fair deal.

Nick Clegg
Leader of the Liberal Democrats