

**HEALTH AND WELL-BEING BOARD  
23 FEBRUARY 2021****AUTISM STRATEGY UPDATE**

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**Board Sponsor**

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**Authors**

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**Input from**

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Autism Partnership Board

(Please click below  
then on down arrow)

**Priorities**

Mental health & well-being  
Being Active  
Reducing harm from Alcohol  
Other (specify below)

Yes  
No  
No

**Safeguarding**

Impact on Safeguarding Children  
If yes please give details

Yes

Impact on Safeguarding Adults  
If yes please give details

Yes

**Item for Decision, Consideration or Information**

Consideration

**Recommendation**

- 1. The Health and Well-being Board is asked to note the progress made on the Worcestershire's All-Age Autism Strategy and Action Plan 2019-2022 and endorse the work in progress on a 2021 Autism Action Plan.**

**Background**

2. Worcestershire has an Autism Partnership Board co-chaired by a Lead Commissioner for Adult Social Care and an expert by experience of Autism Spectrum Conditions. This board monitors progress on Worcestershire's All-Age Autism Strategy and adherence with the Autism Act.

3. There is currently an Employment and Training Sub Group, as well as two task and finish groups: Adult Pathway Planning and Criminal Justice.
4. The All-Age Autism Strategy (Appendix 1) was re-drafted in 2019 setting out how Worcestershire will fulfil its statutory requirements, the commitments in the NHS Long-Term Plan and achieve its vision.
5. The re-draft was presented and agreed at the Health and Well-being Board on 26<sup>th</sup> February 2019.
6. The key priorities in the strategy are that:
  1. We will have a clear pathway for diagnosis and support for children, young people and adults with Autism Spectrum Conditions.
  2. We will identify how to improve access to support for children, young people and adults with Autism Spectrum Conditions. This will include universal Health and Social Care services, voluntary and third sector services. We will publicise the wider pathway and links to available support.
  3. We will work to increase awareness of Autism and how to support children, young people and adults with Autism Spectrum Conditions. We will ensure that organisations/individuals know how and where to access autism training and information about the needs of people with Autism Spectrum Conditions.
  4. We will publish good practice information and advice for people with Autism Spectrum Conditions and the organisations who work with them to help prepare for big life changes.
  5. We will work with employers to improve employment opportunities and conditions for people with Autism Spectrum Conditions.

### **Self-Assessment Framework (SAF)**

7. Public Health England set out a national requirement for local authorities to complete Autism SAF returns, which monitor the progress that has made against set areas of service development and delivery.
8. The fifth SAF exercise was completed in December 2018 and the results were published in June 2019. The results of this were due to be presented to Health and Well-being Board last year but that meeting was cancelled during the pandemic.
9. Worcestershire's overall result showed a decline in progress from the SAF completed in 2016. However, this was largely due to more specific descriptors of what could be scored red, amber or green and more detail required in the overarching questions.
10. The Framework showed improvement from 2016 in relation to:
  - Autism included in our Joint Strategic Needs Assessment
  - Court Services receive Autism Awareness Training

- Waiting times for diagnosis
- Speech and Language Therapy for people **with** a Learning Disability
- Autism included with housing strategy

11. A decline was shown in relation to:

- Engagement with Health
- Individuals signposted for care assessments
- Autism specific Clinical Psychology available
- Autism specific Occupational Therapy Services available
- Speech and Language Therapy for people **without** a Learning Disability
- Autism specific Mental Health Crisis Services
- Autism trained Advocacy Services
- Employment support in transition
- Promotion of employment
- Engagement with criminal justice
- Appropriate Adult in custody

12. The Autism Partnership Board updated the actions in the Autism Action Plan (Appendix 2) to reflect actions needed to address the above areas.

13. The feedback also enabled us to see how Worcestershire compared to neighbouring authorities. The lists below highlight areas where we are generally stronger than other West Midland Authorities: -

- Engagement with carers and people with Autism Spectrum Conditions
- Autism within the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment
- Awareness training for Health and Care staff
- Waiting times for diagnosis
- Autism included in housing strategy

### **Autism Strategy Action Plan Progress**

14. It should be noted that a number of factors have limited progress on the Worcestershire Autism Strategy Action Plan. The significant work required within Children's Services following the OFSTED inspection, improvement plan and subsequent transfer to Worcestershire Children's First has meant limited input from professionals working in services for children until very recently. The coronavirus pandemic has also delayed actions and disrupted some of the work streams, particularly some of those linked to work with health care settings. Progress is now being made, significantly the investment and development of an All Age Disability Offer and Services for 0-25, Autism will be one of the central pillars of this work.

15. The Action Plan in Appendix 2 provides an update on progress the Autism Partnership Board and Sub-Groups have made against the original 2019 Strategic Action Plan. However, there are some key achievements and successes to highlight.

### **Key achievements/progress**

16. The Sustainability and Transformation Plan (STP) Learning Disabilities and Autism Programme has been refreshed to ensure services across Herefordshire and Worcestershire are fully restored following COVID and deliver both national and local priorities. Currently the programme includes the restoration of Autism Diagnosis Pathways for adults and children across Herefordshire and Worcestershire and delivery of the Transforming Care priorities of admission avoidance and reduction in numbers of people with complex needs that are detained in an inpatient environment.

17. Representatives from Families in Partnership are now regular and active attendees of the Autism Partnership Board, meaning the voice of the family carer is an integral part of the work.

18. Adult Services Commissioners and Children Services representatives are working together to ensure that strategic aims for children and families regarding Autism are incorporated into the All-Age Autism Strategy Action Plan and work streams are completed in partnership where appropriate.

19. The Autism Partnership Board held a bespoke session on 'Autism and Criminal Justice' with criminal justice agencies. The session enabled people to share knowledge and improve working relationships for those dealing with individuals with Autism Spectrum Conditions within the criminal justice system. Links have been made with the Criminal Justice Board to facilitate a mechanism for the Autism Partnership Board to raise any issues and a task and finish group has been established to work on actions identified at the session.

20. An Autism Employment page has been created on the County Council website, sharing information regarding employment both for employers and individuals with Autism Spectrum Conditions seeking employment. Work with Plymouth University ensured that Worcestershire was one of the first authorities to adopt a new employment profile tool. The Autism Partnership Board held an employment event in March 2019 and presented at the Chamber of Commerce HR Leaders event in 2020.

## **Next steps**

21. The Autism Partnership Board are awaiting an updated National Autism Strategy (originally due December 2019) and updated statutory duties. Once this is issued work will commence on a new All-Age Strategy for Worcestershire.

22. The Autism Partnership Board's next meeting will focus on the impact COVID has had on people with Autism. The National Autistic Society in partnership with MIND and Healthwatch Worcestershire have undertaken some research to explore this. The Board will consider the findings from these two reports and the impact COVID has had on mental health and emotional wellbeing to further inform the next phase of the strategy and action plan.

23. Work will continue to deliver the priorities identified in STP Learning Disabilities and Autism Programme.

24. Current priorities in the NHS are focussed on COVID recovery, plans will be developed to deliver the remaining health focussed actions when current service pressures reduce.

25. The ambition in the NHS Long Term Plan is that by 2023/24, a reasonable adjustment 'digital flag' in the patient record will ensure staff know a patient has a learning disability or Autism. The flag is a national record which indicates that reasonable adjustments are required for an individual and optionally include details of their significant impairments and key adjustments that should be considered. There are plans to work with National Test Sites during 2021 to develop further guidance for systems to deliver the Long-Term Plan ambition. The STP will be developing plans to fully implement the Reasonable Adjustment Flag by 2023-24.

26. Worcestershire Children's First have set up a steering group to look at a child-focussed appendix to Worcestershire's All-Age Autism Strategy. This group (and any necessary sub-groups) will work to capture key priorities for children with Autism in relation to the priorities identified in the All-Age Strategy, as well as identifying any new or child-specific priorities. The All-Age Action Plan will be updated as a result of this work.

27. The Health and Well-being Board are asked to endorse a new updated 2021 Action Plan in Appendix 3.

### **Legal, Financial and HR Implications**

28. Not applicable.

### **Privacy Impact Assessment**

29. Not applicable.

### **Equality and Diversity Implications**

30. The Strategy was launched in compliance with the Autism Act 2009. Since the launch there are no further implications or need for screening.

### **Contact Points**

#### County Council Contact Points

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#### Specific Contact Points for this report

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### **Supporting Information**

- Appendix 1 Worcestershire's All-Age Autism Strategy 2019-2022 – (Online)
- Appendix 2 Autism Action Plan 2019 Progress
- Appendix 3 Autism Action Plan 2021

### **Background Papers**

In the opinion of the proper officer (in this case the Director For People) there are no background papers relating to the subject matter of this report: