

## **HEALTH AND WELLBEING BOARD**

### **20 FEBRUARY 2024**

## **HEREFORDSHIRE AND WORCESTERSHIRE ALL AGE AUTISM STRATEGY 2024-2029**

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### **Board Sponsor**

Mark Fitton, Strategic Director, People

### **Author**

Laura Westwood, Lead Commissioner/Autism Partnership Board Co-Chair  
Bernadette Louise, Autism Champion/Autism Partnership Board Co-Chair

### **Priorities**

This report is relevant to the following Joint Local Health and Wellbeing Strategy priorities:

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Prevention & inequalities  | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Homes, Communities & Places |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Mental Health & Wellbeing  | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Jobs & Opportunities        |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Healthy Living at All Ages |   |

### **Safeguarding**

This report does not have a direct impact on safeguarding children or adults.

Although there will be an indirect impact on safeguarding autistic children and adults as the implementation of the strategy aims to tackle health inequalities, improve mental health support/suicide prevention for autistic people, reduce victimisation and radicalisation.

### **Item for Decision, or Information & Assurance**

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Decision | <input type="checkbox"/> Information/assurance |
|--|--|

### **Recommendation**

- 1. The Health and Wellbeing Board is asked to**
  - a) approve the strategy and;**
  - b) commit multi-agency support to taking the actions forward.**

### **Executive Summary**

- 2. This paper and the attached presentation give an introduction and overview of the Herefordshire and Worcestershire All-Age Autism Strategy 2024 – 2029. The paper and presentation set out the background to the strategy, our development process and co-production, the vision in themes, cross-cutting themes, how we will monitor the strategy and the decisions and support required to take the strategy forward.**

## Main content

### Legislative context

3. The Autism Act 2009 [Autism Act 2009 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2009/38/contents) is currently the only disability-specific legislation in England. The Act requires the Government to introduce and keep under review an adult autism strategy. The most recent National Strategy was published in 2021 [National strategy for autistic children, young people and adults: 2021 to 2026 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/95422/national-strategy-for-autistic-children-young-people-and-adults-2021-to-2026-gov.uk). The statutory guidance is aimed at supporting the NHS and local authorities in implementing the strategy in areas such as staff training, identification and diagnosis, transition planning when people move from children to adult services, employment, and criminal justice.
4. The [Special Educational Needs and Disability \(SEND\) Code of Practice](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/484222/special-educational-needs-and-disability-send-code-of-practice-2015) (2015), continues to place duties on local authorities, NHS organisations and schools in respect of autistic children and young people. There is also a duty to provide services to disabled children under section 2 of the Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act 1970.”
5. The Equalities Act 2010 sets out requirements to ensure that all public bodies play their part in making society fairer by tackling discrimination and providing equality of opportunity for all.
6. The Health and Social Care Act 2022 requires all CQC registered providers to undertake Mandatory Autism Training.

### Development of the strategy

7. In September 2022 the Health and Wellbeing Board endorsed a proposal to progress an All-Age Strategy, in line with the National Autism Strategy, for the Integrated Care System in Herefordshire and Worcestershire.
8. Initial co-production work identified seven priorities, the six included in the national strategy and an additional priority of Keeping Safe:-
  - Improving understanding and acceptance of autism within society
  - Improving autistic children and young people’s access into education and support positive transitions into adulthood.
  - Supporting more autistic people into employment
  - Tackling health and care inequalities for autistic people
  - Building the right support in the community
  - Improving support in criminal and youth justice systems
  - Keeping safe
9. A workstream lead was identified for each workstream who led the co-production and collated the information for each priority. Work stream leads were from across the integrated care system including Worcestershire Adult Social Care Commissioners, All-Age Disability Lead for Worcestershire Children’s First, Head of Additional Needs for Herefordshire Council Children and Families, ICB Commissioners, Head of Criminal Justice for West Mercia Police and Herefordshire Social Care Commissioners.

10. The co-production included workshops, facilitated groups and a questionnaire. There were over 400 responses to the questionnaire from a range of different stakeholders. A summary of the responses is attached.
11. This information has been collated into a short summary of “what we know” for each priority, high level aims and key actions.
12. Co-production work will continue through the development of annual implementation plans, working on and monitoring the actions.
13. The text of the strategy is currently with the ICB design team to make into a more attractive, user-friendly document. There will also be an easy read version.

### What the strategy says

14. There is a wealth of key findings and required actions set out in the strategy, too numerous to summarise in this report. The Strategy Development Team is aware that the strategy is ambitious but also that most of the actions relate to duties placed upon us through the legislation set out in points 1-4.
15. The presentation sets out a description of each of the priorities and the cross-cutting themes.
16. At the Learning Disability and Autism Programme Assurance Board in January 2024 it was agreed that these three cross cutting themes were the key points of the strategy to work on first: -
  - **Many Autistic People need support/advocacy to access mainstream services or navigate systems. Carers are worried there will be no support for their autistic child when they can no longer provide it.** The need for support was clearly evidenced through work on all of the priorities and for people of all ages and their carers. We want to continue the multi-agency approach taken with this strategy to plan the best way for people to get the support that they need.
  - **Some Autistic people are not getting the right support for their Mental Health needs.** We have set out aims and actions around this in priority 4 but people talked about this in each priority. Many people talked about feeling suicidal because of their situation. We want to use this strategy to tackle issues facing autistic people in Herefordshire and Worcestershire to improve mental health and wellbeing and to reduce risk of suicide and suicidal thoughts. Autism Partnership Boards are linking closely with Suicide prevention strategies.
  - **Organisations need to make reasonable adjustments.** We want to promote good practice examples of reasonable adjustments to all organisations in Herefordshire and Worcestershire and remind organisations of duties under the Equality Act 2010.

### Monitoring the Strategy

17. Each workstream lead will now co-produce an annual implementation plan for their priority including how success will be monitored.
18. Progress will be monitored at the ICS Developing services for autistic people programme board (name to change) including all workstream leads, people with lived

experience and carers and chaired by the ICS Autism Champion. This will be fed up to the Learning Disability and Autism Programme Assurance Board and annual reports brought to the Health and Wellbeing Boards in both counties.

19. A bi-annual newsletter will be produced for all stakeholders.

### **Decisions, support and commitments**

20. Health and Wellbeing board are asked to sign-off the ICS All-age Autism Strategy.
21. Members of the Health and Wellbeing Board are asked to pledge support to ensure that the organisations represented take forward the actions within the strategy.
22. Members of the Health and Wellbeing Board are asked to consider agreeing the Oliver McGowan Mandatory Training as mandatory for all staff within the organisations represented.

### **Impact on health disparities**

23. There is a priority in the ICS All-age Autism Strategy focusing on health inequalities for Autistic People. The National Autism Strategy identifies that there are known vulnerabilities and health inequalities facing autistic people.
24. The priority within our ICS Strategy aims to reduce the health and care inequalities that autistic people face throughout their lives, and to show that autistic people are living healthier and longer lives, ensuring timely access to needs-led health care. In addition, to have made significant progress on improving early identification, reducing diagnostic waiting times, improving diagnostic pathways and access to mental health support for children and adults, so autistic people can access a timely diagnosis and the support they may need across their lives.
25. A full Equality Impact Assessment has been carried out in respect of the recommendations. This did not identify any negative impacts.

### **Consideration of impact on mental health and wellbeing**

26. See section above.

### **Legal, financial and HR implications**

27. The strategy has been developed to support compliance with the legislative framework set out in sections 1-4 of this report.
28. There is a training implication to ensure that all appropriate staff receive the Oliver McGowan mandatory training.
29. There is a resource implication in that all stakeholders will need to work to achieve successful completion of the actions set out in the strategy. Workstream leads will need to continue to oversee and collate the work for their priority.

30. There is a potential financial implication to deliver some of the actions. These will be taken as business cases to the appropriate decision makers.

**Contact point and partnership working.**

31. Specific contact for this report: Laura Westwood, Lead Commissioner, Adult Social Care ([lwestwood2@worcestershire.gov.uk](mailto:lwestwood2@worcestershire.gov.uk))
32. Consultees include: -  
Bernadette Louise – Autism Champion  
Rebecca Wassell – Assistant Director, Commissioning

**Supporting Documents**

- 33.
- Appendix 1 – Herefordshire and Worcestershire Joint All Age Autism Strategy 2024-2029
  - Appendix 2 – Survey Response data
  - Appendix 3 – PowerPoint presentation
34. In the opinion of the proper officer (Mark Fitton, Strategic Director) there are no background papers relating to the subject matter of this report.