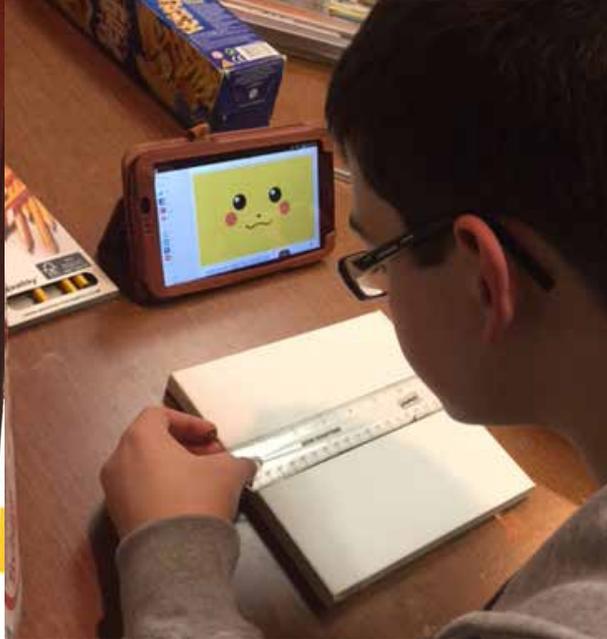


Worcestershire's All-Age Autism Strategy



Find out more online:
www.worcestershire.gov.uk/healthandwellbeingboard



Redditch and Bromsgrove
Clinical Commissioning Group



South Worcestershire
Clinical Commissioning Group



Wyre Forest
Clinical Commissioning Group



worcestershire
county council

Foreword

I am pleased to introduce the Worcestershire Autism Strategy, which sets out the ambitions of partners in Health, Education and Social Care to support children and adults with autism and their carers.

We have an ambitious vision for Worcestershire, which includes expanding on the national vision, to help people with autism fulfil their potential and lead fulfilling and rewarding lives. We want to build on our understanding of our communities and services to deliver the best possible experience for people living with autism. We are also aware that many children and adults and their carers find support in communities and community groups and we intend to support this self help approach to complement professional services.

We recognise that transition into adult services is often a very difficult time for those with an autism spectrum disorder. It is critical that improvements are made to enable a more seamless service, so that children and young people

feel sufficiently supported as they progress through the life journey into adulthood and have continuing opportunities to access support if they need it, depend on mainstream public services to treat them fairly as individuals and help make the most of their talents. With this in mind we took the decision to develop an all-age autism strategy and we welcome as many public services, partner organisations and members of the community as possible to be involved in the delivery of the action plan.

I would like to thank the members of our Autism Strategy Partnership Group, consisting of adults with autism, their carers and professionals in public sector organisations, who have helped develop this strategy. I hope that the implementation of this strategy will be very much driven by this group and routed in our ambitions set out above.



Councillor Marcus Hart
Chair of Worcestershire
Health and Well Being Board

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Our Vision

1.1 Based on the vision within the national autism strategy – Fulfilling and Rewarding Lives - our vision is that:

All children, young people and adults with autism are able to live fulfilling and rewarding lives within a society which accepts and understands them. They can get a diagnosis and access support if they need it, and they can expect mainstream public services to treat them as individuals, helping them make the most of their talents.

- 1.1.1 This Strategy adopts a lifelong approach to supporting people with autism spectrum conditions, linking adult services with services for children and young people and their families.
- 1.1.2 Through its implementation, more people will have the opportunity to be diagnosed and be able to access support if they need it. Newly diagnosed children will be supported by appropriate education, health and social care services with supported transition to appropriate adult services. Effective transition systems will enable a seamless experience for those people with autism spectrum conditions who need support to have fulfilling and rewarding lives.



Section 2

Background

2.1 Definition

For the purpose of this strategy, autism is defined as:

“A lifelong condition that affects how a person communicates with, and relates to, other people. It also affects how a person makes sense of the world around them”

Source: National Autistic Society

2.1.1 Autism is known as a spectrum condition because of the wide range of ways in which Autism presents in different people. There are different terms that individual people and groups prefer to use, including people with autism or on the autism spectrum, autistic spectrum disorder, neuro-diversity and pervasive developmental disorder. For consistency, autism spectrum conditions is a term we will use throughout this strategy.

There is more information about autism and how it affects people’s lives in the Appendices, Section 6.

2.2 Why does Worcestershire need an Autism Strategy?

2.2.1 This Strategy is for children, young people, and adults with autism spectrum conditions, their families and carers.

2.2.2 The National Guidance “Implementing ‘Fulfilling and Rewarding Lives 2010” requires local councils and their partners to have in place plans in relation to the provision of services to people with autism as they move from being children to adults; in addition Local Planning and leadership in relation to the provision of services for adults with Autism. The Worcestershire Autism Strategy therefore outlines the vision to transform services for children, young

people and adults with autism spectrum conditions in Worcestershire to meet these requirements. It describes the key priorities to improve the lives of people with autism spectrum conditions, securing better outcomes through improved services, knowledge and understanding of autism.

2.2.3 The Strategy is based on the commitments in Worcestershire’s Health and Well Being Strategy

- to ensure fair access to health services for people with learning disabilities and communities with poor health outcomes,
- to ensure that people have access to clear and concise information about how to manage common physical and mental health problems and that they are signposted to appropriate services where they require further advice or support
- in order that Worcestershire residents are healthier, live longer and have a better quality of life.

2.2.4 It also responds to the national challenge by government to ensure that people with autism spectrum conditions have access to the right kind of support in mainstream services and in condition specific services.

2.2.5 It takes into account relevant national legislation and guidance, including the Statutory guidance for Local Authorities and NHS organisations to support implementation of the Adult Autism Strategy 2015.

2.2.6 This strategy has been developed with the Autism Strategic Partnership Group (ASPG) during 2014 and consulted on in early 2015. The group consists of adults with autism spectrum conditions, family carers, key professionals in Health and Social Care including clinicians and voluntary sector representatives. The membership of this group will be reviewed to include children’s services and key stakeholders.

2.3 Aims

The Strategy aims to:

- 2.3.1** Set out the objectives and outcomes for autism services and support in Worcestershire in line with the national strategy in response to the requirements set out in legislation, including Fulfilling and Rewarding Lives
- 2.3.2** Provide a framework of how to monitor and evidence quality of service, to ensure it supports the achievement of national and local targets and performance indicators and supports effective commissioning of services.
- 2.3.3** Outline an action plan of how work will be taken forward in the next 3 years in key priority areas. The final action plan will clarify what actions we need to take, what success looks like and the timescale for each action.
- 2.3.4** Illustrate a shared understanding of the needs of people with autism spectrum conditions, the impact it can have on people's lives and how to use available resources in the most efficient way to improve the outcomes for people with autism spectrum conditions
- 2.3.5** Ensure that all staff and agencies working with people with autism spectrum conditions who may be at risk are aware of Worcestershire's safeguarding policies and procedures
- 2.3.6** Provide the strategic direction for education, health and social care organisations that support children, young people and adults with autism spectrum conditions.
- 2.3.7** Based on our vision, National Guidance and requirements of key legislation, identify key priorities which over the lifetime of this strategy will be developed and delivered. These are linked to an action plan to ensure that outcomes are clearly identified to improve access to high quality education, health, social care and housing services and employment opportunities

“ I have personally struggled to access the right level of care and support. There is not any easy route

”

“

It's given me a reason to go outside and interact with human beings. It's been a lifesaver, really. We don't have many friends outside of ASPIE. It has helped with my depression and anxiety. It also offers peace and quiet. I'm very deaf and making friends is even more difficult for me. Coming here helps me and strengthens perception that not everybody is negative

”



Section 3

What we know

Effective planning for services requires good information to inform decision making. It is recognised that this is limited in Worcestershire and improvement in this area is one of the key priorities of this strategy.

3.1 What is known is:

- 3.1.1** The majority of children with autism spectrum conditions in Worcestershire are educated in mainstream settings - some are placed in specialist base provision and 25% are in special schools provision
- 3.1.2** 20% of the total places commissioned by the Council in out of area placements are for children and young people with autism spectrum conditions
- 3.1.3** Approximately 1% of the adult population in Worcestershire live with autism spectrum conditions, or 3,350 adults. This figure is not expected to rise over the coming years.
- 3.1.4** According to data from the National Autistic Society, between 44% and 52% of people with autism spectrum conditions have a learning disability.
- 3.1.5** Only 15% of adults with autism spectrum conditions are in employment. Further research by Autism West Midlands suggests that 79% of people with autism on out-of-work benefits want to work and 26% of graduates with autism are unemployed compared to just 4% of graduates as a whole.
- 3.1.6** At least one in three adults with autism spectrum conditions is experiencing severe mental health difficulties due to a lack of support.

“ Mental Health is a big concern for me due to the co morbidity for any individual on the spectrum ”

Section 4

Priorities

The key priorities will be linked to an action plan to ensure that outcomes are clearly identified

Priority 1: We will have a clear pathway for diagnosis and support for children, young people and adults with autism spectrum conditions.

Priority 2: We will identify gaps in knowledge and understanding and make sure that all organisations can access high quality awareness raising and training.

Priority 3: We will improve transition planning to include a Transition Toolkit with details of access to a range of services and that can offer support for young people and adults in their decision making.

Priority 4: We will work with providers of education, employment and training opportunities to make sure they understand the needs of people with autism spectrum conditions and support them appropriately.

Priority 5: We will make sure that people with autism spectrum conditions are supported to make the most of their talents as they progress to more independent living. We will make sure that children, young people and adults with autism spectrum conditions have access to all universal and health and social care services.

Priority 6: We will improve our data collection which will be used to inform future planning and commissioning of services, including condition specific services.

Priority 7: We will ensure that parents, carers, young people and adults are fully engaged in consultation and service review as part of our commitment to improved outcomes and quality of life for people with autism spectrum conditions. We will make sure that the needs and potential vulnerability of children, young people and adults with autism have been considered by all agencies in the partnership in the planning and delivery of their services.

Priority 8: We will promote the use of support groups in local communities and ensure they can access information about local services that are available.

4.1 Priority 1: The pathway for diagnosis and support

- 4.1.1** Identification of a possible autism spectrum condition is the essential first step to effective support, even before a formal diagnosis. We recognise that diagnosis is not a goal in itself but part of the integrated process which should lead to people with autism spectrum conditions being able to access the services and support they need. This Strategy will ensure there is a clear and consistent pathway in all areas. We aim to support people with autism spectrum conditions to receive a diagnosis at the earliest opportunity.
- 4.1.2** The majority of people who are diagnosed with autism spectrum conditions receive their diagnosis as children. Worcestershire will continue to encourage early identification of potential autism spectrum conditions in childhood and improve the transition from children's to adult services. This should support a reduction in the numbers of people with autism spectrum conditions who reach adulthood without a diagnosis.
- 4.1.3** However it is not unusual for adults to be referred for an assessment of an autism spectrum condition: Currently there are routes for achieving an assessment and diagnosis but these routes are not widely known or consistent across the county, especially for adults. A new pathway for support and assessment is currently being developed and this will also include information and advice available to people with autism spectrum conditions to ensure they understand what is available to them. Onward referrals to other services and signposting for support also need to be widely promoted.
- 4.1.4** It is important that needs are identified as soon as possible so that they can be met in the most appropriate way. The assessment over time may indicate an autism spectrum condition, but early support to meet the individual's identified needs should not be dependent on a diagnosis of autism. However, a diagnosis may signpost to the most appropriate source of information and support. Effective support requires a clear understanding of the individual's needs and strengths. On appearance of need an adult with autism will be entitled to a social care assessment. This is explained in section 4.5.8 to 4.5.13.

- 4.1.5** Services for people with autism spectrum conditions will aim to ensure that support needs are clearly explained and relevant information is given following assessment and, where appropriate, diagnosis. Information is needed for children, young people and adults, their families and carers.
- 4.1.6** Parents and carers of children and young people receiving assessment through the Umbrella Pathway receive an information pack which contains autism awareness and local services information.
- 4.1.7** Early Help supports families with children aged 0 to 19, and up to 25 for those with special educational needs and disability. Services are there to help families with a range of issues and aim to nip problems in the bud before they get worse. They are also there to offer support for families who have just finished working with social care services. The Early Help Hub can be used as a single point of contact for professionals and families to request the support of an early help service.

“
For the diagnostic pathway I want to see
a robust, multidisciplinary approach
”

Comment by practitioner in Autism services

“
Every teacher/care worker
should be aware
”

Comment by carer

4.2 Priority 2: Awareness raising and training

- 4.2.1** We aim to provide training to health, social care and partner organisation staff, including housing and criminal justice, over the next 3 years. This is to ensure that professionals who come into contact with children, young people and adults with autism spectrum conditions have the right skills and expertise to support them.
- 4.2.2** Those who are most likely to have contact with children, young people and adults with autism spectrum conditions will be prioritised, but as a minimum, training to raise awareness of autism spectrum conditions will be implemented across all levels of staff.
- 4.2.3** Feedback from parents, carers, pupils and professionals is clear – all staff working with people with autism spectrum conditions should have access to at least basic information and training and this is a key priority for this strategy.
- 4.2.4** Worcestershire County Council is already working with the Autism Education Trust (AET), a national body funded by the Department for Education, to promote and support effective practice for people with autism spectrum conditions.
- 4.2.5** Worcestershire is the first local area in the country to become an associate member of a Regional Hub. Schools are currently subscribing to Level 1 and Level 2 of the training on offer via AET which is delivered to whole school staff. There are plans to develop a Level 3 offer, a programme for all schools to use the National Autism Standards and Competencies and programmes for Early Years and Post 16 providers. This training can be offered to other providers and organisations to ensure they understand and can meet the needs of people with autism spectrum conditions in a respectful and appropriate way.
- 4.2.6** Fulfilling and Rewarding Lives (December 2010) says that increasing awareness and understanding of autism is fundamental towards improving services for adults with autism spectrum conditions.

“

A huge need, as I see it, is around raising awareness and understanding amongst everyone – professionals and the general public – because potential employers and others are put off by what they believe and by what they don't understand and professionals often don't understand as much as they think they do.

”

Comment by Children's practitioner

- 4.2.7** Health and social care staff in Worcestershire already have access to some training in Worcestershire. Social care staff who are working directly with children and young people with autism spectrum conditions are required to undertake specialist training and other staff may access this training on a needs led basis. However, there are currently no workplace plans or training programmes in place to ensure this is a basic requirement for all who may have direct contact with adults with autism spectrum conditions. This is a key priority for this strategy.
- 4.2.8** The core aims of the awareness training will be that staff groups are able to identify potential signs of autism spectrum conditions and understand how to make the necessary reasonable adjustments in the behaviour, communication and services for people who may have autism spectrum conditions.
- 4.2.9** More specialised training should be undertaken by staff who hold key roles in assessment and support planning and we will make sure this is available for organisations to access.

4.3 Priority 3: Securing successful and seamless transitions

- 4.3.1** Wherever possible, the Autism Strategic Partnership Group (ASPG) will work on influencing other organisations, providers and public services to develop their understanding of autism spectrum conditions, to make reasonable adjustments to better support people, and in particular, to help people experience successful and seamless transitions between services and placements.
- 4.3.2** People with autism spectrum conditions can find change very difficult and are often unable to visualise what life might be like in the future. Transitions can happen at all ages and the transition from children's to adult services can be a particularly traumatic time for young people and their families, often associated with high levels of anxiety. Becoming an adult can be daunting for any young person. The aim of the strategy is to enable support to prepare for adulthood to be accessed through ordinarily available services as well as specialist services where this is needed.
- 4.3.3** Some children will not require the same level of service when they are an adult and some will require more. The level of service will be determined by an assessment of need. We aim to have a clear pathway for those young people who may require more specialist support from social care services as adults.
- 4.3.4** Social workers are linked with schools to identify children as early as possible who may need this additional support and to plan the transition with the young person and their family.
- 4.3.5** A "Transition Toolkit" for children and young people with autism spectrum conditions (both for Early Years and school age) has been produced and used to support successful transitions. Each child and young person going through transition has a plan and providers of early years, schools and post 16 provision have access to the toolkit. This will be reviewed as a priority and include information that would support successful transition for adults with autism spectrum conditions.

4.4 Priority 4: Improving access to education, training and employment

- 4.4.1** 'Fulfilling and Rewarding Lives' (March 2010) says that the ability to get, and keep, a job and then to progress in work is the best route out of poverty and is a central part of social inclusion.
- 4.4.2** Nationally only 15% of adults with a diagnosis of autism spectrum conditions are in employment (Redman, S et al (2009) Don't Write me off: Make the system fair for people with autism. London. NAS) Success in employment starts by ensuring that children and young people have their needs identified and met in school. Work experience opportunities should be matched to a young person's strengths and interests and awareness training for work experience providers will support successful placements.
- 4.4.3** Training should include reasonable adjustments that should be considered as part of placement arrangements and providers need to access awareness raising and training if placements are to be successful. Adults with autism spectrum conditions often need support with building skills and overcoming barriers to work and Worcestershire wants to help people with autism spectrum conditions make the most of their talents by getting the same opportunities to employment as everyone else. This will include working with some employers in order to raise their understanding of autism and what reasonable adjustments they can make.

“ Providing suitable school and college places for all types of autism is necessary. There is a shortage in County. Proper provision is needed, with properly trained staff, whether in mainstream/base/independent or some 'in between' situation.

”

Comment by CARER

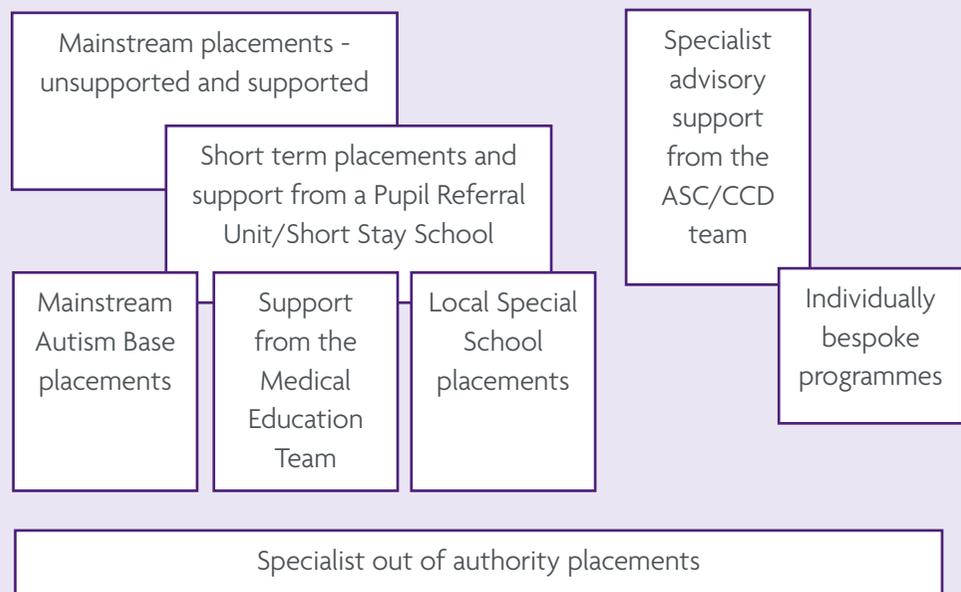
4.4.4 Young people with autism spectrum conditions need to be supported through education in order to maximise their potential and gain the qualifications they are capable of. Educational settings need to make reasonable adjustments to reduce barriers in completing courses, attaining qualifications and the social aspect of college life.

4.4.5 Worcestershire is committed to continuing to develop a continuum of educational provision that recognises different levels of specialism, experience and expertise in provider settings, and enables specialist advice and support to be made available.

4.4.6 Worcestershire’s educational provision for its pupils with autism spectrum conditions is set out in Diagram 1.

Diagram 1: The structure of educational provision for pupils in the autism spectrum in Worcestershire

Mainstream Provision (usually lower level need)



4.4.7 For young people with an Education, Health and Care Plan, transition reviews in school from Year 9 onwards should support planning for further education, employment or training. This will include apprenticeships and supported internships.

4.4.8 Currently there are developments across both mental health and learning disabilities services regarding employment support and the aim is to ensure that adults with autism spectrum conditions are fully included in any developments as this strategy is implemented.

“ Get the various stakeholders together and discuss not only the needs, but also the positives of employing someone with ASC ”

Comment by Autism Practitioner

“ To improve outcomes we need to focus on high quality educational provision, including an attitude shift to a ‘can do’ or ‘can adapt the environment/ differentiate’ approach ”

Comment by Autism practitioner

4.5 Priority 5: Independent Living - Improving access to universal, health, social care and housing services

- 4.5.1 Fulfilling and Rewarding Lives (March 2010) says that adults with autism spectrum conditions should be able to expect public services to treat them fairly as individuals.
- 4.5.2 All people with autism spectrum conditions are entitled to be able to live fulfilling and rewarding lives within a society that accepts and understands them. Autism Strategic Partnership Group (ASPG) and in turn this Strategy, will focus on making it easier for adults with autism spectrum conditions to feel more included.
- 4.5.3 Autism specific services and support have a role to play in helping people cope with everyday situations in the community. We aim to develop partnerships with other agencies to build on the current local support services in Worcestershire, including housing, employment services and the Criminal Justice System.
- 4.5.4 Many people with autism spectrum conditions already support each other through meeting other people in the same situation, often reducing the need for professionally run and organised services. We will ensure that information is available on our website “Your Life Your Choice” about community based, self help support groups to complement professionally run services.

“

Reasonable adjustments were made during the assessment to enable my son to participate: short sessions, with breaks, simplified language and time taken to understand the adjustments my son needed before talking to him

”

User view of service

Accommodation

- 4.5.5 A focus of Fulfilling and Rewarding Lives is to make it easier for adults with autism spectrum conditions to access mainstream housing services and understand the options available to them, including the financial help they may be entitled to. Autism Strategic Partnership Group (ASPG) will work with housing providers and local authorities to provide information on housing need and to ensure a seamless transaction into the appropriate accommodation with the correct advice and support packages in place .
- 4.5.6 Some adults with autism spectrum conditions are reluctant to see a GP or other health professional either because of the lack of understanding amongst staff or the inappropriate facilities and communication methods. Health services need to be able to respond appropriately so that people with autism spectrum conditions are encouraged to seek advice before needing to access support in a crisis or with an acute health problem.
- 4.5.7 Children and young people with diagnosed autism spectrum conditions will be known to Community Pediatricians and usually the Umbrella Pathway. Transition from children’s to adult services can cause anxiety if effective systems for information sharing are not in place.

Social care

- 4.5.8 Not all children and young people with autism spectrum conditions will need a social care service. Some services can be accessed without needing a referral to social care. These are published through the Local Offer. They include services such as community short breaks, play schemes and out-of-school clubs, support groups and advice on benefits.

- 4.5.9** Some children and young people with autism spectrum conditions will access social care services, which may include specialist respite care, and they may have a direct payment to meet care needs. The direct payment may help to fund domiciliary care, support workers or bespoke need.
- 4.5.10** We recognise that for a few children with very special needs they will require care in specialist provision.
- 4.5.11** Families for children and young people may also use a personal budget to develop their own package of support.
- 4.5.12** The criteria to access social care services is set out in Worcestershire Safeguarding Children's Board Thresholds Guidance and the Eligibility/Threshold Criteria for Children with Disabilities and Young Adults Teams
- 4.5.13** The National Guidance 2015 stipulates that all adults with a diagnosis of autism spectrum condition are entitled to a Social Care Assessment. This is underpinned by the Care Act 2014 which states that any adult who appears to have care and support needs has to be offered a social care assessment. However, this will not guarantee an offer of long term social care support. Any offer of social care support will be based on the criteria in the Care Act 2014.
- 4.5.14** For adults who may be Care Act eligible, they will be offered an assessment from adult social care teams and additionally information on carers' assessments will be made available. The assessment will be person centred and holistic resulting in a care plan which clearly identifies the outcomes for the person and the support required to achieve those outcomes.
- 4.5.15** Adults with autism spectrum conditions who are eligible for adult social care support will receive a personal budget and will be enabled to benefit from the use of this personal budget as a Direct Payment should they wish to.
- 4.5.16** Where people are not Care Act eligible, they will be signposted to information about autism spectrum conditions and about sources of support which will be available on the Your Life Your Choice website and other places.
- 4.5.17** These will include local autism support services, voluntary groups, national autism representative groups and the 'Living with Autism' section on the NHS Choices website.

4.6 Priority 6: Local planning

- 4.6.1** Fulfilling and Rewarding Lives (March 2010) is clear that change needs to be driven locally, through strong local leadership. The key to this is local partners coming together in one place to discuss priorities and challenges together and how this might be done will need to be determined locally.
- 4.6.2** For adults, Worcestershire currently has an Autism Strategic Partnership Group (ASPG), which includes a range of stakeholders who are committed to meeting regularly to address the priorities included in the Action Plan that supports this strategy. The aim of the group is to set the direction of improved services for people with autism spectrum conditions and ensure improvements happen. The group has been instrumental in developing the adult's element of this strategy and determining the actions required to deliver the strategy. The membership of this group should be reviewed as a priority to ensure all services, including Children's Services stakeholder groups are represented in the delivery of this all age strategy.
- 4.6.3** The Strategy also aims to develop the partnership between Clinical Commissioning Groups and Worcestershire County Council so that services which are relevant to the needs of the local population can be commissioned.
- 4.6.4** Improved local autism data will better inform future commissioning and support the development of the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment. We will use national research, school and Local Authority produced data together with data from local services and organisations. This will ensure that, for all people with autism spectrum conditions, the right services are delivered in the right way to those who need them and by the best possible provider.



4.7 Priority 7: Listening to children, young people and adults, and their carers

- 4.7.1** Without listening to the views of those with autism spectrum conditions and their carers we will not be able to plan and evaluate services. We will encourage providers to request feedback about the services they are offering from children, young people and adults and will act on this feedback.
- 4.7.2** The Autism Strategic Partnership Group (ASPG) and specific working groups will be key to local engagement and consultation.
- 4.7.3** However, we recognise that we need to go beyond this group of representatives in order to listen to everyone's views. We will therefore develop new and utilise existing approaches to engage with as many children, young people and adults and their carers as possible and will engage with existing community based organisations.
- 4.7.4** We will also engage with schools, including those with specialist base provision and specialist providers to make sure the views of pupils are heard and influence this Strategy. We will ask children and young people to tell us the best way of communicating with them.

“ It is a privilege to have influence over my local area, including the provision of diagnostic and support services as well as fair employment opportunities. It would be great to see even more individuals on the spectrum having their say. ”

4.8 Priority 8: Supporting community based organisations and groups

- 4.8.1** We recognise that many people find support in their everyday lives through friends, families and community organisations and often do so in a very satisfactory way.
- 4.8.2** We will therefore encourage the development of these groups and discuss ways of supporting them in their often informal but highly effective way of offering support. We will ensure that the experiences reported to these groups are shared with our more formal services to ensure that there is ongoing learning about the needs and aspirations of children, young people and adults with autism spectrum conditions.
- 4.8.3** We will ensure that local groups and community based organisations are encouraged to include details of their work in Worcestershire's Local Offer and the Your Life Your Choice websites.

“ Spectrum is for people like me who have got autism and who have struggled in society in the past, but who have amazing potential and who need to know how to exploit our gifts... and fulfil our potential ”

Spectrum Red Club member

Section 5

Outcomes and action planning

The following table outlines what we intend to achieve in Worcestershire over the lifetime of this strategy. An annual action plan will be developed by the Autism Strategic Partnership Group (ASPG), with revised membership that includes children's services and stakeholders, following the approval of the strategy in the early summer of 2015.

| Priority | How we will achieve this | How we will measure progress |
|---|---|---|
| The pathway for diagnosis and support | <p>We will commission high quality assessment, support and diagnostic services for children, young people and adults.</p> <p>We will ensure that all children, young people and adults can have a diagnosis if they need it.</p> | <p>Monitor outcomes for children, young people and adults from data and qualitative feedback from providers, clinicians and users</p> |
| Awareness raising and training | <p>We will build on existing training already available for professionals working with children, young people and adults across all partner organisations.</p> <p>We will develop training provision for carers as part of a carer specific training programme developed as part of the Carers Strategy</p> | <p>Availability of training for all target groups</p> <p>Take up of training for all health, social care, education, employment and other providers such as housing, criminal justice system</p> <p>Feedback from partner organisations</p> <p>Feedback from participants in training courses</p> |
| Securing successful and seamless transitions | <p>We will continue to develop arrangements for young people transitioning into adulthood to ensure that nobody is left without support in this crucial time.</p> <p>We will seek best practice advice from clinicians and other local authorities to ensure that users in Worcestershire have the best possible support.</p> <p>We will work with the Young Adults team in the Council to support developments</p> | <p>Monitor development of arrangements</p> <p>Seek ongoing feedback from young people and their carers about how arrangements work.</p> <p>Monitor the number of young people who are supported through suitable transitions arrangements</p> |
| Improving access to education and employment | <p>Ongoing awareness training for schools, colleges and employers;</p> <p>Schools, colleges and employers are represented on the Autism Strategy Partnership Group to help shape support in their respective host organisations.</p> | <p>Monitor outcomes for children, young people and adults from data and qualitative feedback from providers, clinicians and users, particularly in terms of education, employment and training, as indicators of positive destinations</p> |

| | | |
|--|--|--|
| <p>Independent Living – Improving access to universal, health, social care and housing services</p> | <p>We will work with our partners to ensure that their planning reflects the aims and aspirations of this strategy.</p> <p>We will work with District Councils to further develop the availability of autism friendly housing.</p> <p>We will work with all partners to ensure that all people with autism spectrum conditions have access to services that support their independence.</p> <p>We will require that all commissioned providers of information and advice services are autism aware and can signpost people to the right services.</p> <p>We will work with partners to ensure that their key staff are autism aware.</p> <p>We will work with key partners to ensure that all health and social care staff have access to – where necessary – specialist autism training</p> | <p>Monitor outcomes for young people and adults from data and qualitative feedback from providers, particularly in terms of health indicators and housing.</p> <p>Monitor training outcomes including access and quality</p> |
| <p>Local planning</p> | <p>We will work with all partners to ensure that we gather data about children, young people and adults, which is accurate and available.</p> <p>We will include autism in our Joint Strategic Needs Assessment.</p> <p>We will use all available data to continue to plan local services according to demand</p> | <p>Monitoring data returned to commissioners JSNA adjusted for 2015/16 onwards to reflect available data.</p> <p>Work with other local authorities to ensure that comparable data sets are available.</p> <p>Data is used to project future demand on services.</p> |
| <p>Listening to children, young people and adults, and their carers</p> | <p>We will review the composition of the Autism Strategic Partnership Group (ASPG).</p> <p>We will engage with more community groups and organisations to be able to listen to their views and experiences.</p> <p>We will develop more inclusive approaches to listen to the views of children, young people and adults with autism spectrum conditions.</p> <p>We will work towards better inclusivity, in particular girls and young women and people from minority communities.</p> <p>We will engage with clinicians about the suitability of existing services and how to maximise the potential of existing clinical services.</p> | <p>Ongoing monitoring of composition of Autism Strategic Partnership Group (ASPG).</p> <p>Number of conversations held with other, community based organisations.</p> <p>Views gathered from particular groups and how their views are reflected in the implementation of this strategy.</p> |
| <p>Supporting community based organisations and groups</p> | <p>We will engage with more community groups and organisations to be able to ensure their services are included in the Local Offer and the Your Life, Your Choice websites</p> | <p>Number of groups that are offering services for people with autism spectrum conditions or demonstrating awareness of the needs of people with autism spectrum conditions</p> |

Appendices

6.1 Appendix A Autism and the use of terminology

6.1.1 Autism is known as a spectrum because of the range of difficulties it causes and because children, young people and adults can experience those difficulties along a range from mild to severe. Many people with autism are able to live with minimal specialist support; others need a lifetime of specialist services to maximise independence, control and choice.

6.1.2 Asperger's Syndrome is an autism spectrum condition. People with Asperger Syndrome are often of average or above average intelligence. Such people have fewer difficulties with communication but may still have difficulties with understanding and processing language, and do not usually have the accompanying learning disabilities.

6.1.3 Although some people with autism specific conditions may develop mental health problems, often as a result of lack of support and because of social isolation and exclusion, autism specific conditions are neither a mental health condition nor a learning disability.

6.1.4 The Autism Education Trust's National Autism Standards (2012) describe autism spectrum conditions as 'a neurological difference in brain development that has a marked effect on how a person develops'. It highlights four areas of difference:

- Understanding the social interactive style and emotional expression of other people
- Understanding and using communication and language
- How information is processed
- The way sensory information is processed

6.1.5 Understanding the impact of these differences on how people learn and make sense of their environment is critical for all agencies in planning and developing the right provision and services in the right places.

- The characteristics of autism spectrum conditions vary from one person to another. As a result of interaction between the areas of difference, people with autism spectrum conditions may have:
- Increased anxiety levels
- Need for routines, sometimes having a compulsive nature
- * Difficulty in transitioning to a new activity
- Difficulties generalising skills learnt in one situation to another
- Special interests
- The ability to be highly focused when on a specific task
- Difficulties with self-awareness, understanding and expressing their own needs
- Under or over sensory sensitivity

6.2 Appendix B Legislation and statutory guidance

6.2.1 In recent years there have been a number of national developments relating to people with autism spectrum conditions. This provides context for this strategy and its key priorities.

6.2.2 The strategy will reflect the different statutory duties for services that support children, young people and adults and ensure smooth transition for people who use the services:

- Care Act 2014 and associated guidance and regulations
- Autism Act 2009
- “Fulfilling and Rewarding Lives: the strategy for adults with autism in England”, March 2010 and associated statutory guidance for local authorities and NHS organisations to support implementation of the strategy published in December 2010
- Improving access to social care for autism (2011) guidelines from the Social Care Institute for Excellence (SCIE)
- Equality Act 2010

6.2.3 Legislation and Statutory Frameworks for Children and Young People, including parent carers:

- Children and Families Act 2014;
- Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) Code of Practice (0-25) 2014;
- Aiming High for Disabled Children;
- Children Act 1989 and associated guidance and regulations
- Children Act 2004 and associated guidance and regulations
- Equality Act 2010 and associated guidance and regulations

6.2.4 Fulfilling and Rewarding Lives sets out the duties for Local Authorities and the NHS locally (source: National Autistic Society 2014):

- Provide autism awareness training for all staff
- Must provide specialist autism training for key staff, such as GPs and community care assessors
- Cannot refuse a community care assessment for adults with autism based solely on IQ
- Must appoint an autism lead in their area
- Must develop a clear pathway for diagnosis and assessment for adults with autism
- Need to commission services based on adequate population data.



6.3 Appendix C

Overview of National Context

Children and Young People and their Parent/Carers:

- The SEND Code of Practice (2014) now covers the 0-25 age range and includes guidance relating to disabled children and young people as well as those with SEN. It requires:
- A clearer focus on the participation of children and young people and parents in decision-making at individual and strategic levels.
- A stronger focus on high aspirations and on improving outcomes for children and young people.
- For children and young people with more complex needs, a co-ordinated assessment process and the new 0-25 Education, Health and Care plan (EHC plan) which replace statements and Learning Difficulty Assessments (LDAs).
- A greater focus on support that enables those with SEN to succeed in their education and make a successful transition to adulthood.
- The Children Act 1989 places a duty on the local authority to provide services for all children in need, including children with a disability. A child is in need when their health or welfare may be significantly impaired without additional services.
- The local authority is required to keep a register of children in the county with a disability, although registration is voluntary.
- All children with a disability who may be in need are entitled to assessment.
- The Children Act 2004 places a duty on all statutory agencies to co-operate in the safeguarding of children and in meeting their needs.
- The Aiming High for Disabled Children programme was introduced to transform services for disabled children and local authorities in England were given money to fund new short-break services for disabled children, including children and young people with autism spectrum conditions.
- The Equality Act 2010 - The Equality Act 2010 prohibits discrimination against people with the protected characteristics that are specified in the Act. Disability is one of the specified protected characteristics. Protection

from discrimination for disabled people applies to disabled people in a range of circumstances, covering the provision of goods, facilities and services, the exercise of public functions, premises, work, education, and associations.

Adults and their Carers:

- 6.3.1** The Care Act 2014 includes duties to promote wellbeing when carrying out any of their care and support functions in respect of an individual.
- 6.3.2** Ensure the provision or arrangement of services, facilities or resources to help prevent, delay or reduce the development of needs for care and support and to establish and maintain an information and advice service in their area. The information and advice service must cover the needs of all its population, not just those who are in receipt of care or support which is arranged or funded by the local authority.
- 6.3.3** The Autism Act (2009) placed a duty on the Government to produce a National Strategy. The Act was in response to an identified gap in provision for people with autism spectrum conditions. It specified that a national strategy was to be in place by April 2010.
- 6.3.4** The strategy “Fulfilling and Rewarding Lives: the strategy for adults with autism in England” was published in March 2010, with statutory guidance for local authorities and NHS organisations published in March 2015 to support implementation of the strategy published in December 2010. As a result, a range of national policies, mainly directed at adults with autism spectrum conditions has emerged.
- 6.3.5** The 2014 update by the Government has identified 15 priority challenges for action as follows:

An equal part of my local community

- I want to be accepted as who I am within my local community. I want people and organisations in my community to have opportunities to raise their awareness and acceptance of autism.
- I want my views and aspirations to be taken into account when decisions are made in my local area. I want to know whether my local area is doing as well as others.

- I want to know how to connect with other people. I want to be able to find local autism peer groups, family groups and low level support.
- I want the everyday services that I come into contact with to know how to make reasonable adjustments to include me and accept me as I am. I want the staff who work in them to be aware and accepting of autism.
- I want to be safe in my community and free from the risk of discrimination, hate crime and abuse.
- I want to be seen as me and for my gender, sexual orientation and race to be taken into account.

The right support at the right time during my lifetime

- I want a timely diagnosis from a trained professional. I want relevant information and support throughout the diagnostic process.
- I want autism to be included in local strategic needs assessments so that person centred local health, care and support services, based on good information about local needs, is available for people with autism.



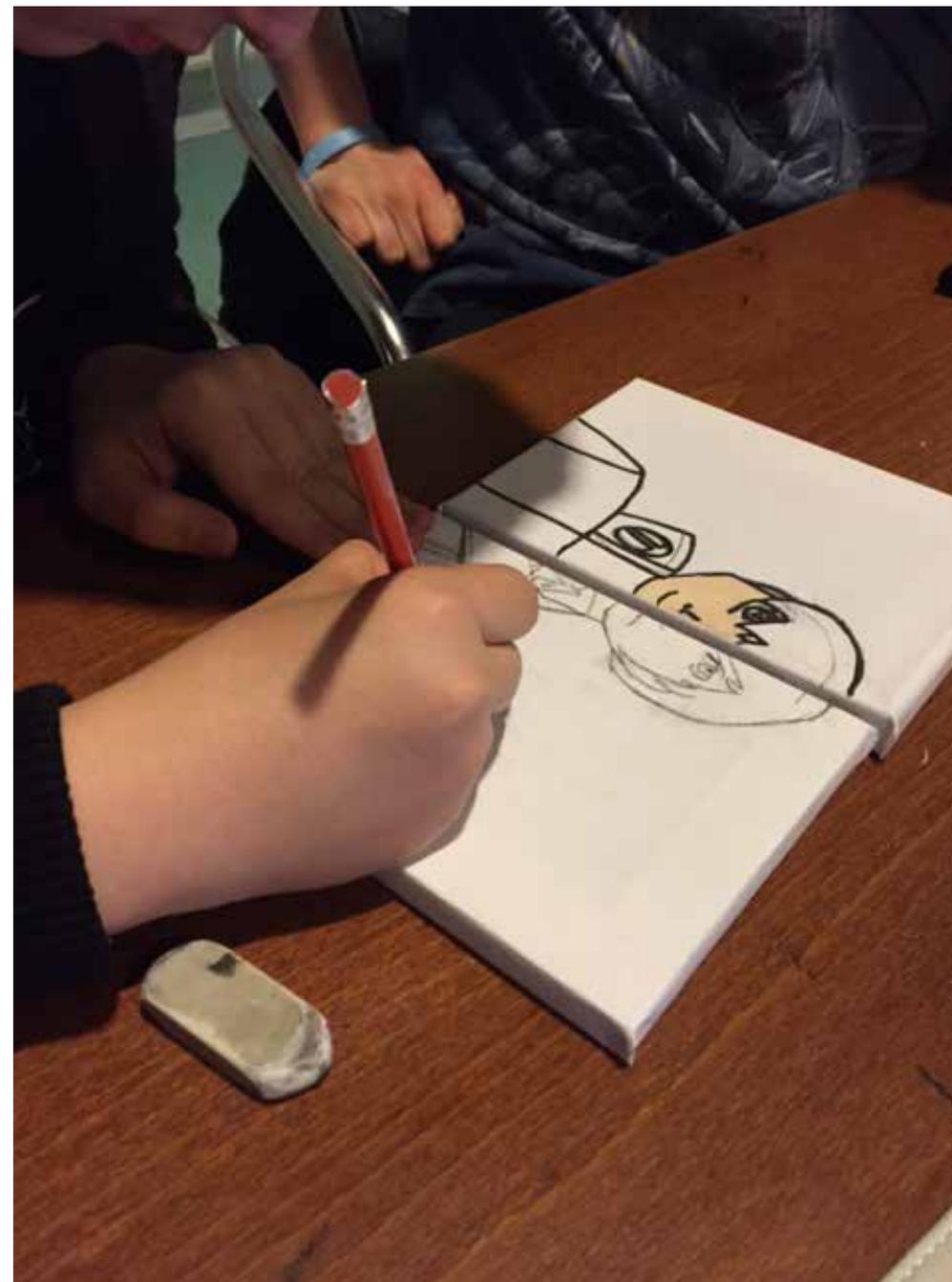
- I want staff in health and social care services to understand that I have autism and how this affects me.
- I want to know that my family can get help and support when they need it.
- I want services and commissioners to understand how my autism affects me differently through my life. I want to be supported through big life changes such as transition from school, getting older or when a person close to me dies.
- I want people to recognise my autism and adapt the support they give me if I have additional needs such as a mental health problem, a learning disability or if I sometimes communicate through behaviours which others may find challenging.
- If I break the law, I want the criminal justice system to think about autism and to know how to work well with other services.
- Developing my skills and independence and working to the best of my ability
- I want the same opportunities as everyone else to enhance my skills, to be empowered by services and to be as independent as possible.
- I want support to get a job and support from my employer to help me keep it.

6.3.6 Supporting people with autism through adulthood (June 2009) is a report which looks at the range of services available for adults with autism spectrum conditions and their carers in England. Their main findings indicate that people with autism spectrum conditions may use a very wide range of public services, but that the data available on the number of people with autism using services is limited. Despite limitations the report states that there are two key areas where the effectiveness of existing services can be improved.

They are:

- Better strategy and planning, based on good information and raising levels of knowledge
- Awareness of the nature of autism and the potential needs of people with autism spectrum conditions

- Improving access to social care for autism (2011) guidelines from the Social Care Institute for Excellence (SCIE) give a number of key recommendations for practice, including:
- Greater understanding of autism among the social care workforce
- Better awareness of autism in the social care sector can help people get a diagnosis of autism and get timely and appropriate support when they are diagnosed
- Staff supporting people with autism spectrum conditions need to make adjustments in how they work, plan and communicate with people on autism spectrum, so that services can be more accessible
- Managers and commissioners of services also need to be flexible, creative and collaborative in how they meet the needs of people with autism spectrum conditions.
- Good support is vital when people with autism spectrum conditions experience significant life changes
- Frontline and senior staff need to work with people with autism spectrum conditions to enable them and their families to make the most of personalisation
- Support with social interaction and practical everyday living tasks can address some of needs people with autism spectrum conditions commonly have at relatively low cost
- Multidisciplinary specialist autism services can provide good outcomes for people with autism spectrum conditions. Professionals should offer carers support in their own right and work in partnership with them to provide the best possible assessment and service provision.



6.4 Appendix D

Current arrangements for the identification and assessment of autism spectrum conditions

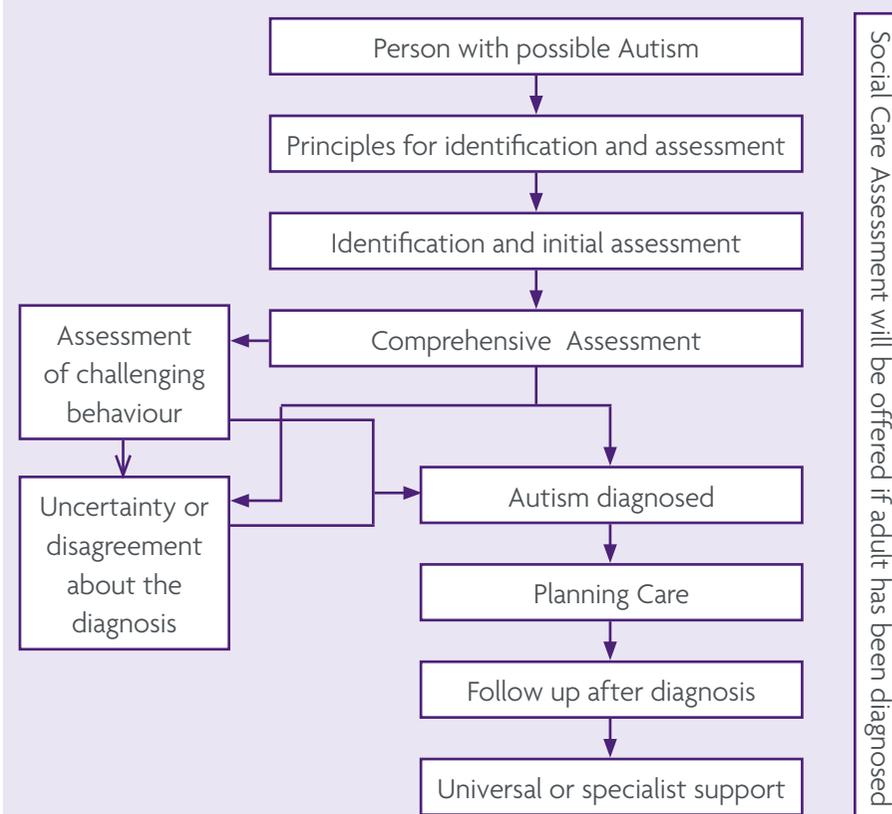
For children and young people:

- A process is in place for the diagnosis of autism spectrum conditions in pre-school and school age children and young people.
- Assessment for potential autism spectrum conditions in Worcestershire, is set within the wider assessment of neuro-developmental difficulties and called the Umbrella Pathway. This has been developed to provide assessment and support process for all children and young people presenting with neuro-developmental difficulties.
- The pathway provides a multi-disciplinary and multi-professional service involving health social care and education services, with a clear entry point, an assessment process, diagnostic pathway and support for children and young people.
- This includes those receiving a diagnosis at the end of the process and those where no specific diagnosis is reached but on-going care and support are signposted.
- When the assessment has been completed, parent or carers are offered a face to face meeting to share and discuss diagnostic outcomes. They are also provided with information on autism spectrum conditions and local services that are available. Information is also available on Worcestershire's Local Offer website which can be accessed at www.worcestershirelocaloffer.org.uk
- The Action Plan associated with this strategy will seek to develop this, and will include the need to review the pathway as a priority within this strategy and reflect the need for an all age pathway, review the assessment process in line with the SEND Code of Practice for children and young people 0-25 years of age, and equality of access to provision to ensure consistency of practice and service available to people with autism wherever they may live in Worcestershire. Effective data sharing will also support the commissioning of appropriate, high quality provision.

For adults:

- 'Fulfilling and Rewarding Lives' states that diagnosis is not compulsory.
- Some adults who exhibit the characteristics of autism will not want to be referred for a formal diagnosis but will still be entitled to a needs assessment under the Care Act 2014.
- A diagnosis however is not a guarantee of support and services; it is a reason for assessment of need.

Flow chart for Identification and assessment of autism in adults



Cross cutting themes

These are issues that all the sub-groups will need to think about (including other strategies). They are:



Autism Strategy Plan on a page

Care Act

Autism Act

NICE guidelines

National Outcome Framework

Autism SAF

Fulfilling and rewarding lives

Worcestershire's All Ages Autism Strategy 2015 to 2018

Priority 1: The pathway for diagnosis and support

Priority 5: Independent Living

Priority 2: Awareness raising and training

Priority 6: Local planning

Priority 3: Securing successful and seamless transitions

Priority 7: Listening to children, young people and adults, and their carers

Priority 4: Improving access to education and employment

Priority 8: Supporting community based organisations and groups

8
Central
Priorities

Cross cutting themes that each aim will need to consider

The Pathway for Diagnosis and Support

Awareness raising and training

Securing successful and seamless transitions

Independent Living

Local Planning

Listening to Children, Young People, Adults and Carers

Supporting Community Based Organisations and groups

Improving access to education and employment

Worcestershire's guiding principles to support the strategy

Principles:

1. Involvement of people of all ages on the autistic spectrum and their carers in the design and delivery of services.
2. People are able to access support to enable them to lead fulfilling and rewarding lives
3. In Worcestershire we will continue to develop and work through partnerships in the private, public and voluntary sector organisations

We will need to ensure we:

1. By working through the Autism Partnership Steering Group, its sub groups and other community based groups and their affiliates.
2. Making available relevant information on various support options and ensuring that community based and professional support is being developed and sustainable.
3. We will encourage representation by all relevant groups and organisations on our Autism Partnership Steering Group and other community based groups.

Challenges & Risks

- A Complex Health and Social Care system
- The pace of change
- Limited resources

The outcomes we want to achieve

People with ASC are able to access universal services as they need them.

There is a range of suitable housing options for people with ASC that meets their needs and allows them to be independent and achieve their potential.

People with ASC have an improved quality of life with the same opportunities for involvement within their communities

The number of people with ASC who go and retain a paid job in the open labour market is increased.

Services that support people with ASC have trained staff that knows what reasonable adjustments to make to enable full participation with their service.

Young people with ASC are able to achieve their potential and are supported throughout their education and into adult life in a seamless manner.

A person with suspected ASC is able to access a diagnosis and/or support through their GP in a timely manner.

Worcestershire Joint Health & Well-being Strategy

Well Connected

Worcestershire County Council Corporate Plan

Future Lives

5 year Health & Care Strategy

Autism Partnership Steering Group

Structure of Autism work



Section 9

Useful information and websites

For specific information about Autism:

www.autism.org.uk

Think Autism - Fulfilling and Rewarding Lives:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/think-autism-an-update-to-the-government-adult-autism-strategy>

Care Act 2014 – Draft Statutory Guidance:

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/315993/Care-Act-Guidance.pdf

Worcestershire's Local Offer website:

<https://worcestershirelocaloffer.org.uk/>

Your Life Your Choice – where to find help and support locally:

<https://ylc.worcestershire.gov.uk/>

Worcestershire County Council Early Help:

www.worcestershire.gov.uk/homepage/104/early_help_hub

Section 10

Acknowledgements

We would like to acknowledge the support for the following individuals and agencies in the development of this strategy.

Their active contribution in a variety of ways to the recent local strategic review of Autism services ensured we were able to identify key strategic priorities for future action that we are confident will address the needs and aspirations of all people on the autism spectrum in the county.

Thank you for your support

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- Dr Anthony Kelly
- Catherine Quekett
- Julia Micklewright
- Healthwatch

The above list is not exhaustive of all those individuals and agencies that have supported the development of this strategy, so for those not mentioned that supported development of this strategy through engagement in focus groups or by hosting visits or otherwise investing your time and energy, a big thank you!

Get in touch...

By post:

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By Email

carers@worcestershire.gov.uk

Online:

<https://ylyc.worcestershire.gov.uk/information-and-advice/carers/>

Find out more online:

www.worcestershire.gov.uk/healthandwellbeingboard



Redditch and Bromsgrove
Clinical Commissioning Group



South Worcestershire
Clinical Commissioning Group



Wyre Forest
Clinical Commissioning Group



worcestershire
county council