



## Adults & Safeguarding Committee 13<sup>th</sup> October 2022

<b>Title</b>	<b>Update on the Barnet all age autism strategy and implementation of the action plan</b>
<b>Report of</b>	Chair of the Adults and Safeguarding Committee
<b>Wards</b>	All
<b>Status</b>	Public
<b>Urgent</b>	No
<b>Key</b>	No
<b>Enclosures</b>	<b>Appendix A. National Autism Strategy and related work through the Barnet Autism Strategy Action Plan Steering Group</b>
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### Summary

This report provides an update on the local Barnet Autism Strategy and progress implementing the action plan.

### Officers Recommendations

**That the Committee note the update on the Barnet All Ages Autism strategy and implementation of the action plan.**

## 1. Why this report is needed

- 1.1 This report is to give an overview of the Barnet Autism Strategy Action Plan (ASAP) and the work of the steering group to support the local priorities and activity and delivery

of the National Strategy for autistic children, young people and adults (2021 to 2026) The steering group has representatives from Family Services, Barnet Education & Learning Services, Adult Social Care and the north central London NHS Integrated Care Board. Other organisations collaborating on implementing the plan include the Leading Edge Autism Group (parents and professionals from education, social care and health who work together to focus on specific additional educational needs), Barnet Mencap and other voluntary sector organisations through Inclusion Barnet's strategic partnership forum.

1.2 The Barnet Autism Strategy Action Plan aligns with the six priorities in the national strategy:



1.3 The national Autism Strategy aims to tackle the inequalities and barriers autistic people face so they can live independent and fulfilled lives. Our priorities in Barnet are well aligned with this vision and our joint plan reflects this. Our focus to date has been on key areas of employment, health and care inequalities, building community support, information and advice and increasing the range of accommodation and support.

1.4 There are many areas of crosscutting activity for example commissioning of employment and day opportunities and this is intentional to continue to build awareness, increase acceptance and understanding of autism. There have been many benefits of joint work including access to respective networks and training collaborations and shared understanding of challenges in delivering the strategy for example how we work jointly to address gaps in data and information.

1.5 The graphic at appendix A shows the key priorities and activities and section 2 of this report highlights achievements and work in progress. The members of these workstreams will continue to review progress, consider new issues and new data and adapt where necessary to deliver change within the 5-year length of the strategy.

## **2. Action Plan and National Priority themes**

### **2.1 Supporting more autistic people into employment**

2.1.1 The Autism Strategy recommendation was to ensure close working and co-production with the autistic community when reviewing and commissioning of employment support and day opportunities. Our plan is to increase the number and variety of opportunities for job roles, supported internships and work experience for autistic people. This links closely to the work on increasing understanding and acceptance of autism within society.

2.1.2 We have consulted and worked with autistic people to identify the types of roles young people would like to access and are now working to identify job roles across Education, Health, Care and the Voluntary Sector and supporting employers with training and advice. We have also worked with autistic adults to identify challenges they may face in entering or staying in employment, they want face to face local holistic support covering employment, welfare rights and housing and we are working with to address some of these challenges through increased awareness of duties under equalities legislation to make reasonable adjustments. This dialogue is ongoing and helping to shape our commissioning plan for employment and day opportunities.

2.1.3 A key deliverable has been the development of an Employment Advisor role within BOOST with the goal of increasing opportunities for autistic people (and others with support needs) and supporting employers to enable more and local sustainable employment. The Advisor will receive referrals and will work closely with other advisors within BOOST and a key part of their role will be working to champion the strengths and the benefits that many organisations have realised through positive employment practices.

2.1.4 The Employment Project Group continue to work with the Council's Welfare, Employment and Skills Programme to deliver a range of employment related workstreams which include supporting LBB to achieve the next level of Disability Confident status.

2.1.5 We are working with the West London Alliance supported internship programme. A grant application bid to fund specialist Employment Advisors working with autistic people has been made to the Department of Work and pensions through the Individual Placement and Support funding programme. The outcome should be known in October 2022.

2.1.6 We fund and work with Barnet Mencap who operate the Bright Futures Employment project which is a specialist programme supporting autistic people into employment. The support provided includes:

- Building pre-employment skills and personal development
- Support to increase confidence and motivation
- One-to-one in-work support via job coaching
- Opportunities, employment and training based on career goals

2.1.7 Bright Futures works alongside the Autism Advisors service funded by NHS North Central London ICB. This service provides a local autism screening (pre-diagnosis) and advice service.

2.1.8 We are modelling the opportunities from technology/digital to support access and sustainability of employment. We are also working with Greenspaces and Leisure to consider opportunities for supported employment.

## **2.2 Building the right support in the community**

2.2.1 In our new accommodation and support commissioned services, we have included an increased focus on the support needs of autistic people to ensure people can live as independently as possible and to offer an alternative to residential or other more restrictive provision. These services are also a core component of the autism action plan theme of information and early support.

2.2.2 Whilst autistic appropriate service provision is a requirement throughout the accommodation and support specification four categories have been consulted on and developed to meet the needs of autistic people:

- **Neighbourhood Networks** support early intervention through peer support networks. Support that focuses on the strengths and assets of people as a group or network, enabling individuals to live as independently as possible.
- **Supported living for young adults** - accommodation, care and support for young people with health and social care needs transitioning to adult services.
- **Supported Living for people with complex disabilities and health needs** - well-coordinated social care and clinical support to maintain good and positive health as well as independence.
- **Crash Pad** – emergency respite to prevent and minimise the risk of crisis by providing either short term emergency accommodation (Crash Pad) or extra support within the person's home.

## **2.3 Training**

2.3.1 Training is another key theme running through the various workstreams in the action plan, where possible the principle of training delivered by autistic trainers and those with lived experience is being adopted. Training opportunities are being shared across agencies to support culture change and team working.

2.3.2 New employee induction training on autism is being implemented across BELS with the aim to extend this across the council and partners. This will increase understanding of Autism. Barnet Mencap Autism Advisors have given training to adult social care services and we intend to build on this by extending the training to NHS staff.

2.3.3 NCL ICB will roll out of Oliver McGowan Mandatory Training in Learning Disability and Autism, where services will be trained in de-escalation approaches, strategies that focus on the reduction of stress, fear and frustration and prevention of aggression and crisis situations. We are also working on targeted training and support for carers of people with autism.

## **2.4 Mentally Healthy Autistic community**

2.4.1 There is increasing demand from autistic people with mental health challenges. We are working with Resources for Autism, Mind (Enfield & Barnet) and Barnet Mencap to develop a project to respond to these needs that combines both intervention and prevention. The aim is to build community support to enable a Mentally Healthy autistic community. This will be achieved by improving mental health outcomes for adults with autism via provision of autism specific therapy, advocacy and advice, and case work. and change via training and capacity building. This has been co-produced with autistic people. Further work on the project is underway; the organisations involved are finalising their partnership model and we will jointly undertake further stakeholder engagement in the Autumn.

## **2.5 Tackling health and care inequalities for autistic people**

2.5.1 Barnet has the largest population of diagnosed autistic people in North Central London. We are supporting the NCL LD and Autism plan and contributing to the development of an NCL-wide all-ages Autism strategy. The NCL plan includes a revised assessment recovery pathway, including local diagnostic services for adults, supporting the reduction of hospital admissions to mental health inpatient settings.

2.5.2 The plan also has a focus on physical and mental health and equality in access to services for patients with a learning disability and/or autism. Jointly, we aim to pilot a programme of Autism-specific Annual Health Checks. The council's joint commissioning team also leads on the Learning Disability Mortality Review (LeDeR) Programme, a national requirement for the NHS to review learning from deaths which now includes deaths of autistic people. The council and NHS working together developed bespoke and accessible vaccination programmes for autistic people and people with learning disabilities. These included carefully selected vaccination sites across the borough where reasonable adjustments were made for patients, mobile vaccination services, pop up clinics, support with needle phobia and vaccinations at home. We worked with Barnet Mencap to deliver a more personalised face to face workshop on Health and the importance of getting vaccinated.

## **2.6 Improving support within the criminal and youth justice systems**

2.6.1 There is increasing information and evidence that autistic people and others with support needs are being failed by the criminal justice system<sup>1</sup>. The local action plan includes design of inclusive training to increase autism awareness, acceptance and understanding; wider stakeholders including the Police and criminal justice system have participated and further analysis of training needs is underway.

2.6.2 Work was undertaken with Barnet Mencap, Adult Social Care and the Community Safety Team to inform the new Domestic Abuse Strategy to consider the reasonable adjustments professionals should adopt when supporting victims and or perpetrators who are autistic (or have Learning Disabilities). The plan includes identifying funding to commission the autistic community in the voluntary sector to produce tools for professionals to use in the Criminal Justice System.

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<sup>1</sup> Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) June 2020.

### **3. Reasons for recommendations**

N/A. This report presents the progress in delivering the autism strategy to the committee.

### **4. Alternative options considered and not recommended**

None in the context of this report.

### **5. Post decision implementation**

5.1 The council and partners will continue to deliver the autism action plan.

#### **5.2 Corporate Priorities and Performance**

5.2.1 The work of the autism action plan supports the achievement of the council's social care priority of keeping people independent.

### **6. Resources (Finance & Value for Money, Procurement, Staffing, IT, Property, Sustainability)**

6.1 The work under the plan is being delivered within existing resources. Any requirement for additional investment to deliver the programme will be considered as detailed proposals are developed and then considered through the council's budget setting process.

### **7. Legal and Constitutional References**

- Adults and Safeguarding Committee has responsibility for all matters relating to vulnerable adults, adult social care and leisure services.
- Work with partners on the Health and Well Being Board to ensure that social care interventions are effectively and seamlessly joined up with public health and healthcare
- To promote the Health and Wellbeing Strategy and its associated sub strategies
- To receive reports on relevant performance information and risk on the services under the remit of the Committee

The National Strategy for Autistic Children, Young People and Adults 2021-2026 followed the introduction of the Autism Act 2009, and updated the national strategy.

### **8. Insight**

8.1 An Autism Needs Assessment was completed by the councils Public Health service in 2019, there are many caveats on the prevalence and modelling used to predict demand. Improving data quality is included in the action plan and awareness raising is helping to increase the inclusion of autism in data collection. The NCL autism strategy will also be extremely important in establishing demand need and gaps.

## **9. Social Value**

- 9.1 Commissioning of any new services or contracts (employment and day opportunities for example) will include how wider social, economic and environmental benefits can be achieved. Social Value was considered as part of the evaluation of accommodation and support bids with a method statement question dedicated to this. Bidders were required to demonstrate how they will deliver social value throughout service delivery including how supported housing should contribute to creation of healthier, safer and more resilient communities.

## **10. Risk Management**

- 10.1 Projects and activity will be managed in accordance with the council's risk management framework and to meet national requirements and legislative requirements.

## **11. Equalities and Diversity**

- 11.1 The aim of the action plan is to centres on reducing inequalities and improve opportunities for autistic people in Barnet. Equality Impact Assessments (EIAs) will be completed to support any new services or contracts (employment and day opportunities for example) or areas of activities where significant changes may be planned. The amount and quality of relevant data to understand the level and type of needs is challenging but improvement of data and understanding the experiences of autistic people through the action plan is a key priority and work across and with NCL will also ameliorate these gaps.
- 11.2 The greater range of accommodation support options and providers described in this report increases the person-centred support available for autistic people and those with disabilities and mental ill health to maximise their independence and achieve their goals. Contracts for the Accommodation and Support Services include explicit requirements fully covering the council's duties under equality legislation and the specification requires that hard to reach groups are to be identified and can access the services.

## **12. Corporate Parenting**

- 12.1 The National Autism strategy is all ages, and the local plan and strategy is for all children including autistic children and their parents and carers. Adult social care services are provided to people who meet Care Act eligibility criteria and who may have been looked after by the council or are care experienced. Understanding of and planning for the needs of young autistic people moving into adults services is a key area of focus in the action plan. The council's leisure provider offers discounted and free access to people who are care experienced or looked after. We are also working with these services to increase employment opportunities for young people.

## **13. Consultation and Engagement**

- 13.1 We undertook engagement through Microsoft Teams with residents with disabilities including autistic adults regarding employment in May. The feedback included wanting holistic support on employment, benefits and welfare rights, having support for these from a face-to-face source, wanting employers to be more aware of disability and disability related adjustments (mainly on the differences on what autistic people may need in terms of reasonable adjustments), being supported into employment of their choice, having 'space' to search for employment beyond Libraries, filling the 'digital inclusion' gaps.
- 13.2 In addition, the engagement team conduct regular engagement and involvement activities with people who draw on care and support and their carers including autistic people. The new engagement strategy and programme of work to engage with residents and people who draw on care also includes autistic people and carers. Adjustments will continue to be made to ensure that barriers to engagement with autistic people are removed and appropriate adjustments made.

## **14. Environmental Impact**

- 14.1 None in the context of this report.

## **15. Background papers**

None.