

Adults and Health Select Committee
23 June 2022
All-Age Autism Strategy



Purpose of report:

To update the Select Committee on progress to deliver the aims and objectives set out in the strategy within the first year of the implementation phase and seek support for continuing the work.

Introduction

1. After an extensive period of consultation and co-design with people with lived experience of autism, their families and carers and our health colleagues and other partners, the Surrey All-Age Autism Strategy document was published in September 2021
2. This report sets out the progress of the whole All-Age Autism Strategy system and therefore includes work achieved by partner organisations and Surrey County Council. The organisations involved in delivering the strategy are set out in Appendix 3. Implementation of the strategy's objectives began in October 2021.

Implementation Phase

3. The implementation phase required a new approach, revised governance arrangements and different personnel. A project team was assembled, and the Implementation Board established to replace the groups that worked together to develop and publish the strategy. The Implementation Board was created to oversee delivery and, membership was designed to ensure that any blocks to progress could be addressed. The board met for the first time on 7th February 2022.
4. The objectives for year one was set out in the strategy document. The project team began by translating the objectives into a working project plan for each workstream. The project plans identified actions and tasks and the resources required to deliver against deadlines.

Our Approach

5. The delivery of the strategy is not confined to the All-Age Autism Strategy project team. The vision and ambitions for autistic people are included in a range of priorities across directorates in the Council, our partners in health, and other organisations. Many organisations and agencies working together with the Council

enables us to pool our knowledge and resources and reach a much wider workforce all of whom have a key role in delivering the strategy. The following are some examples of that joint working and co-operation with partners.

6. Surrey Heartlands are developing an independent living facility called Great Meadows for 6 autistic people who are or have been involved with forensic services. There is no other facility like this in Surrey and the first 6 autistic residents have been identified to live there.
7. The Department of Work and Pensions participate in the Employment Workstream and have trained a number of advisors across the county to support autistic people into employment.
8. Surrey Police are working with us in the Forensic and Criminal Justice Working Group. They are redesigning their autism training for police officers, working with autistic self-advocates to ensure they understand and can respond to the needs of autistic people. They are also working to refresh the successful Pegasus Card Scheme.
9. Surrey Heartlands CCG has secured funding to establish a Key Worker Programme. By 2023/24 children and young people with a learning disability, autism or both with the most complex needs will have a designated keyworker, implementing the recommendation made by Dame Christine Lenehan Review.

Initially, keyworker support will be provided to children and young people who are inpatients or at risk of being admitted to hospital.

Keyworker support will also be extended to the most vulnerable children with a learning disability and/or autism, including those who face multiple vulnerabilities such as looked after and adopted children, and children and young people in transition between services.

The keyworker model is expected to offer additionality, both workforce and activity, to the local system and must not replace or fund existing roles within the system.

10. Surrey Heartlands has sourced funding from NHSE to update the children's and adults' diagnostic pathways, improving support pre and post diagnosis.
11. In addition, the Team Around the School Pilot Programme seeks to support children identified as having additional needs immediately without waiting for a diagnosis or assessment for an Education, Health, and Care Plan. A multi-agency team meets at the school to decide on the best way forward for children with additional needs. Sixteen schools are involved in the pilot. There is a second pilot project in schools run by Mindworks to train staff to identify neurodiverse children. These pilot projects

seek to identify and support children with additional needs including, autistic children, at the earliest time. There are more details on these pilot programmes in Appendix 1.

12. We are working hard to communicate what it means to be autistic and the needs of autistic people. We hosted an online event during National Autism Acceptance Week and changed the title to Autism Appreciation in Surrey at the suggestion of our experts with lived experience. Please see an interview with one of our experts by experience uploaded to the Council's website for the event. [World Autism Acceptance Week 28 March to 3 April 2022 - Surrey County Council](https://www.surreycc.gov.uk/news-events/news/2022/03/28-world-autism-acceptance-week-28-march-to-3-april-2022-surrey-county-council) ([surreycc.gov.uk](https://www.surreycc.gov.uk))

Co-production and Co-design

13. The co-design work of drafting the strategy has moved to co-production in the implementation phase. Issues are addressed immediately by the workstream lead with lived experience of autism or a representative of the National Autistic Society, Surrey Branch, or Family Voice.
14. ATLAS, the young autistic people's reference group produced a piece of work on language, [ATLAS Ableism, Stigma and Discrimination Report](#). This work has influenced the Council to change the language used and we now refer to "specialist schools" instead of special schools and "additional needs" instead of special needs for example. The involvement of autistic people in all aspects of strategy implementation will support services to continue to use the language that autistic people and their families use to describe their own situations and avoid the barriers that "professional language" sometimes raises.
15. The autistic members of the Adults' Reference Group have input into the implementation work in the workstreams and contributed to national pieces of work such as the British Standard's Institute's forthcoming guideline on Neurodiversity and Building Design.
16. In addition, each workstream refers issues and progress reports to either the young people's reference group, ATLAS, the adult reference group, and the Children's and Adults' Partnership Boards.
17. A co-production specialist officer has been appointed to the SEND Transformation team to support this and other SEND transformation projects.

Working Arrangements

18. Five workstreams have been established to mirror the five pillars set out in the strategy document. These are:
- Information, Awareness and Understanding
 - Education and Preparation for Adulthood

- Health and Social Care
 - Assessment and Diagnosis
 - Forensic Support
 - Health and Social Care Teams
 - Health Inequalities
 - Market Management
 - Mental Health Support Group
- Housing and Independent Living
- Employment

19. Each workstream is co-led by a professional and a person with lived experience of autism or a representative of an advocate organisation, such as the National Autistic Society, Surrey Branch, and Family Voice.

20. The strategy agreed in Surrey is ambitious – the task articulated by our autistic community is both complex and wide ranging, involving many partner organisations including self-advocacy and carers’ groups; Surrey County Council; Surrey Heartlands; Surrey and Borders Partnership; Surrey Police; Surrey Chamber of Commerce; DWP; District and Borough Councils; charitable organisations and, private support providers. All partners in strategy delivery are listed in Appendix 3.

21. Workstream members meet regularly to discuss how best to deliver the objectives of the strategy. Each organisation brings expertise and sometimes additional resources as they may be able to bid for funding not available to the Council. They deliver through their own organisation or together with other partners. They also bring an additional reach into the Surrey community to help us spread the messages of the strategy.

22. A great deal has been achieved already and this work is set out in Appendix 1.

Budget

23. Resources to spearhead the delivery of the strategy, including project staff and subject matter experts, were sourced. The Better Care Fund is a national programme supporting integration of health and social care focusing on person-centred care, sustainability and better outcomes for people and carers. A bid was made to the Better Care Fund which resulted in an allocation of £500k. We anticipate this will be a rolling allocation from 2023/24, subject to the usual governance arrangements surrounding the annual allocation of the Better Care Fund.

24. The 2022/23 Better Care Fund allocation will support:

- Communications to ensure that the messages about autism reach a wide audience. We hope to employ a Communications Officer to work exclusively

on the All-Age Autism Strategy. This will ensure that the work being delivered and the opportunities available to autistic people and their families is communicated widely in the community.

- A second “Employment Works for Everyone” programme to support more autistic people into employment. This would repeat a previous programme to support autistic people into employment by working with them for up to one year to build their confidence and develop basic skills.
- Printed information on services for autistic people. The Adult Reference Group advised us that they sometimes prefer to see information in printed form which is accessible to autistic people.
- Support for co-production peer support groups. We would like to be able to assist and support some of the individuals to recognise the time they give to promote the strategy or help us deliver some aspects of the strategy.
- Suicide prevention work. Funding has been applied for from the Better Care Fund to commission and deliver suicide prevention training specifically focused on an autism lens to secondary schools and sixth form provision. This compliments the other training being delivered but currently we are not aware of any established providers offering training in this very specific area, therefore a procurement process will take place. Our ambition is to offer this training to SENCOs, pastoral leads and Surrey staff. Initially we aim to offer 10 courses. Consultation will take place with Family Voice and partners to ensure the content is comprehensive, evidence based and focused on improving practice and outcomes.

25. Surrey Heartlands CCG has successfully bid for NHSE funding for a number of projects, including improving autism diagnostic pathways for adults and children, improving the sensory environment in inpatient mental health services, improving mental health crisis pathways, autism training for NHS mental health staff and a Keyworker scheme for children and young people using mental health inpatient services.

Governance

26. A new governance board was established to oversee the successful delivery of the project called the Implementation Board. This Board guides and supports both the Adults Services Autism Partnership Board and the Children’s Autism Partnership Board.

27. Appendix 2 shows the implementation phase governance structure.

Conclusions

28. This is a 5-year project and much has been achieved already. The detail of that work is set out in Appendix 1 of the report. Some of our ambitions will take longer to come to fruition and will be achieved in later years of the project. The scale of the task is recognized nationally and the ambitions in Surrey Strategy will tackle long standing and important issues, with the goal of achieving our vision for ‘Surrey to be a place that offers opportunities for people to live healthy and fulfilling lives, where people’s contributions to their local communities are welcomed, supported and valued, and no-one is left behind. These opportunities should extend to all autistic children, young people and adults in Surrey.

29. This means that the momentum built in this first half of the first year of implementation must be maintained as we and our partners work hard to make a difference to the lives of autistic people.

Recommendations

30. To continue to support the implementation of the Surrey All-Age Autism Strategy 2021-2026 across Adult Social Care, Children Families Lifelong Learning and Culture, and Health and working with autistic people, family carers and partner agencies across the service system and wider community.

Next steps

31. To continue to meet the objectives set out in year one of the strategy and, with partners and colleagues with lived experience, prepare for year two.

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Sources / background papers:

[National Autism Strategy](#)

[Surrey All Age Autism Strategy](#)

Appendix:

1. Work undertaken to date
2. Implementation phase governance structure
3. List of partner organisations engaged in strategy delivery

4. Glossary of terms used in the report and appendices

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