

# **Warrington's Autism Strategy**

**Making Warrington a good place to live if you are child, young person or an adult with Autism**

**2019/22**

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## Section 1: Foreword

Autism is a condition that can have a great impact on children and their families. Often there are difficulties in early childhood and taking part in everyday family and school life can be harder for children and young people with Autism than for their peers.

Many young people with Autism find it difficult to imagine their life beyond school and what being in a workplace will involve. Many parents and carers have described transition to adulthood like falling off a cliff.

The Children and Families Act in 2014 introduced the biggest reforms to the special educational needs system in more than 30 years. However, in listening to stories from those people who lives have been touched by Autism it is clear that more work is required to make the system work for children with Autism and their families.

This Strategy will support the council and its partners to work together and make a difference so that children with Autism have the opportunity to receive a good education and achieve their potential, and their families feel adequately supported to care for their child.

**Councillor Jean Carter**

**Executive Board Member for Children and Young People**

Autism is sometimes described as a ‘hidden disability’, not only because it has no physical signs, but also because people with Autism are some of the most excluded and least visible people in our society.

Too many adults with Autism are unemployed, struggling to get by on benefits and reliant on the care and support of their parents, both financially and for practical help. Securing appropriate housing is another key issue faced by those with Autism when attempting to develop their independence.

Autism is a lifelong disability, but the right support at the right time can make an enormous difference to people’s lives. The main aim of this Strategy is to make sure that people with Autism have the help and support they need when they need it.

The priorities in this Strategy will help all organisations to develop a lifelong approach to supporting people with Autism living in Warrington. It will help us all to improve the identification of people with Autism; improve access to help and support pre and post diagnosis; prepare young people for adulthood; and reduce the social isolation and exclusion that people with Autism face too often.

**Councillor Pat Wright**

**Executive Board Member for Adult Services**

## Section 2: Introduction

Since we published our first Autism Strategy for Adults in 2014, we have made good progress in delivering our strategic objectives to increase awareness and understanding of Autism among professionals and to develop effective arrangements for the diagnosis and assessment for adults living in Warrington.

However, we cannot be complacent and we know that more needs to be done which is why we have extended our improvement plans to children and young people, as well as adults living with Autism in Warrington. This new all-age Autism Strategy puts in place a more joined-up approach to improving services for all people with Autism at every stage in their lives.

This Strategy will help children, young people and adults to receive a timely diagnosis and support if they need it. Newly diagnosed children will access suitable education, health and social care services. Transition support will provide young people with a seamless experience for young people with Autism who need additional support when they reach 18 years. Adults will receive the care and support they need to lead fulfilling and rewarding lives.

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<sup>1</sup> Fulfilling and rewarding lives, Department of Health

## Our vision

People with Autism are an important part of our community in Warrington. We have adopted elements of the Government's vision set out in the national Autism Strategy.

Our vision for the future is for children, young people and adults with Autism to:

- Live life to the full
- Feel accepted
- Be understood
- Make the most of their talents and abilities
- Be treated as individuals and with respect.

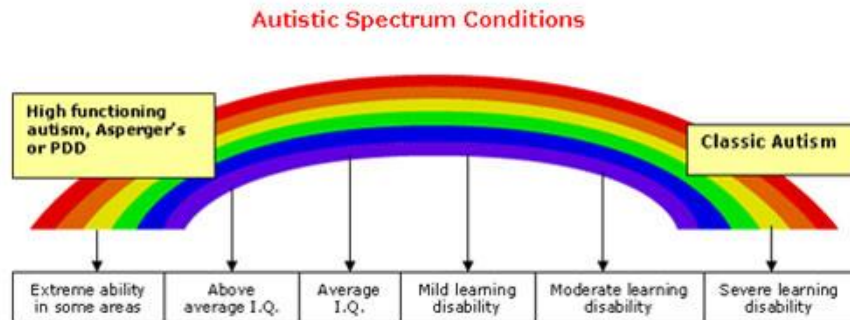
## What is autism?

Autism occurs early in a person's development and is a lifelong developmental impairment that affects how a person communicates with, and relates to, people and the world around them<sup>1</sup>. Autism is a relatively 'modern' diagnosis and whilst most diagnosis now occurs in childhood, many adults may remain undiagnosed.

## Autism as a spectrum condition

Autism is known as a spectrum condition because of the range of difficulties that affect people with Autism. Although all Autistic

people share certain difficulties, it can affect them in different ways – some can live independently without any additional support, while others will require a lifetime of support.



## How Autism can affect people

People living with Autism share three main areas of difficulty, which are called the 'triad of impairments'<sup>2</sup>:

### Difficulty with social communication

People with autism have difficulty using and understanding verbal and non-verbal communication, such as gestures, facial expressions and tone of voice. Some might not speak, or have fairly limited speech. Some are very articulate and enjoy talking, but find it difficult to engage in a two way conversation. Some people may

understand what a person says to them but prefers to use other forms of communication like sign language.

### Difficulty with social interaction

Those with the condition have problems recognising and understanding other people's feelings and managing their own. This can make it hard for people with Autism to make friends which can lead to social isolation and conflict with other people.

### Difficulty with social imagination

People with Autism have difficulty understanding and predicting other people's intentions, and behaviour and imagining situations outside their own routine. Difficulty processing information which is often experienced as being inflexible can be one of the biggest difficulties for Autistic people to overcome.

### Other difficulties

People with autism may also experience hypersensitivity or lack of sensitivity to sound, touch, taste, smell, lights or colours. This can have an impact on how people experience, and cope with, different environments

They are also more likely to have coexisting mental and physical disorders, and other developmental disorders.

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<sup>2</sup> Severe impairments of social interaction and associated abnormalities in children Epidemiology and classification, Lorna Wing & Judith Gould, 1979

## Section 3: The National Policy Framework

In recent years, a range of legislation has been passed and guidance published to assist people living with Autism and their families.

### Diagnosing children and young people with Autism

The National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence (NICE) has put in place clear guidelines<sup>3</sup> so that children and young people suspected of having Autism receive a timely diagnosis.

Diagnosis is usually for children over three years old and the process will involve a multi-disciplinary group of professionals including a paediatrician and/or child psychiatrist, a speech and language therapist, a clinical and/or educational psychologist.

An assessment will be carried out within three months of the referral and where there is a confirmed diagnosis, a follow-up appointment should be offered within six weeks of assessment to discuss access to appropriate treatment and support services.

### Education, Health Care and Plans

The Children and Families Act in 2014 transformed the system for children and young people with special educational needs and/or

disabilities (SEBD), extending support to children and young people from birth to the age of 25 years and bringing education, health and care services together in a coordinated plan around the needs of the child.

Not all children and young people with Autism will require an Education, Health and Care (EHC) Plan, but if there are difficulties with learning the school's SEND Coordinator (SENDCo) will assess their needs and put in place additional help known as SEN support. Where the school is unable to meet their needs, an application can be made to the local authority for an EHC Plan.

### Transitioning from childhood to adulthood

Local authorities have a duty under both the Children and Families Act 2014 and the Care Act 2014 to carry out an assessment for all children with Autism and an EHC Plan going onto further education or training. Where a Transition Plan is required it will be tailored to the needs and wishes of each individual and should be reviewed and updated each year.

### Diagnosing adults with Autism

There are NICE Guidelines in place for adults who did not get a diagnosis in childhood. It sets out that the referral and assessment

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<sup>3</sup> Autism: Recognition, referral and diagnosis of children and young people on the autism spectrum: NICE Clinical Guideline 128, September 2011

process should be carried out if the person has one or more of the following:

- Persistent difficulties in social interaction;
- Persistent difficulties in social communication; and
- Rigid and repetitive behaviours, resistance to change or restricted interests.

And one or more of the following:

- Problems in obtaining or sustaining employment or education;
- Difficulties in initiating or sustaining social relationships;
- Previous or current contact with mental health or learning disability services; and
- A history of a neurodevelopmental condition (including learning disabilities and attention deficit disorder) or mental disorder.

A comprehensive assessment of Autism would include diagnostic, risk and needs assessments.

## **Post diagnosis for adults**

The Autism Act in 2009 placed a number of obligations on the local authority and its partners to improve opportunities for adults with Autism.

‘Fulfilling and Rewarding Lives’ followed in 2010 and provided clear direction for how all public services must improve to better address the needs of adults with Autism.

More recently ‘Think Autism’, published in April 2014 shared detailed consultation and research into the views of people with autism and their families on how progress has been taken forward in implementing the 2009 Autism Act.

In March 2015 statutory guidance for Local Authorities and NHS organisations to support implementation of the Adult Autism Strategy was also published.

The policy framework governing our work on autism is extensive and can be found in Appendix 1.



### **An equal part of my local community**

1. 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.
2. 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.
3. 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.
4. 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.
5. I want to be safe in my community and free from the risk of discrimination, hate crime and abuse.
6. 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 life**

7. I want a timely diagnosis from a trained professional. I want relevant information and support throughout the diagnostic process.
8. 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.
9. I want staff in health and social care services to understand that I have autism and how this affects me.
10. I want to know that my family can get help and support when they need it.
11. 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.
12. 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.
13. 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**

14. I want the same opportunities as everyone else to enhance my skills, to be empowered by services and to be as independent as possible.
15. I want support to get a job and support from my employer to help me keep it.

# Key principles of working with children, young people and adults with Autism



## Section 4: What we know about Autism

### National facts and figures

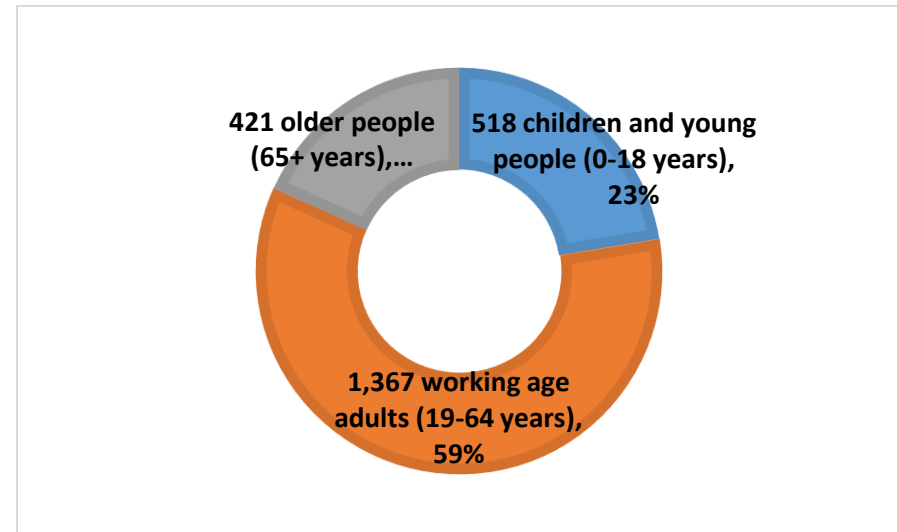
It is estimated that there are around one in one hundred people living with Autism in the United Kingdom. The National Autistic Society reports that, including their families, Autism touches the lives of 2.8 million people every day.

The National Autistic Society reports that:

- 34% of children with Autism say that the worst thing about being at school is being picked on<sup>2</sup>.
- 63% of children with Autism are not in the kind of school their parents believe would best support them<sup>3</sup>.
- 17% of Autistic children have been suspended from school - 48% of these had been suspended three or more times and 4% had been expelled from one or more schools<sup>4</sup>.
- 70% of Autistic adults say that they are not getting the help they need from social services. 70% also said that with more support they would feel less isolated<sup>5</sup>.
- At least one in three Autistic adults are experiencing severe mental health difficulties due to a lack of support<sup>6</sup>.
- Only 16% of Autistic adults in the UK are in full-time paid employment, and only 32% are in some kind of paid work<sup>7</sup>.
- Only 10% of Autistic adults receive employment support but 53% say they want it<sup>8</sup>.

### Autism in Warrington

Based on the national estimate that 1.1% of the population has Autism, it is likely that there are 2,307 people living in Warrington with Autism.



- There has been an increase in the diagnosis of neurodevelopment conditions in children and young people as a result of better understanding of conditions such as Autism, Pathological Demand Avoidance and Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder. There are currently 348 children and young people known to health services with Autism.
- There are some inconsistencies in the diagnostic pathway for children and some are diagnosed very early in their lives and others wait several years.

- The number of pupils with Autism has increased 40% in the past four years and as of January 2018 there were 335 pupils in primary, secondary and special schools were receiving additional support from school or an with an Education, Health and Care Plan.
- Around two third of pupils with Autism attended a mainstream school and the other third were placed in a special school.
- The majority of pupils with Autism attend a school in Warrington and only 74 children and young people attend out of borough provision. However, we know that the likelihood of attending out of borough provision increases with age and post 16 over half of young people travel out of Warrington to attend school or college.
- There is under-diagnosis of adults with Autism in Warrington and there is a risk that these adults only become known to services when they reach crisis point and require more intensive support from health and social care.
- Post-diagnosis support to patients and their families/carers has been identified as an issue within both children's and non-learning disability diagnosis pathways. Once the diagnosis of autism has been made, parents, carers and the person diagnosed with autism have requested additional support from the diagnosis teams as they were unsure who to contact for further support and advice.
- It is unknown how many people with Autism are in employment in Warrington.

## Consultation on the draft Strategy

We know that people living in Warrington and those affected by Autism will have important things to say about this new Strategy.

In October and November 2018, Warrington Borough Council consulted with the general public and professionals working in Warrington to get their views on what they think our priorities should be.

They told us that it was important:

- To **reduce delays** in identifying and diagnosing people with Autism and improve the communication between the different organisations involved so that people get access to the help and support they need when they need it
- For **families and carers to be able to access early help** and support before they reach crisis point
- For people with Autism to get help and **support to find and stay in work**
- For people with Autism **to live autonomously** where possible and have access to employment opportunities.

## Section 5: What's on offer for people with Autism living in Warrington

This Strategy reflects the ambition of Warrington organisations to work together and improve the services available locally to children, young people and adults living with Autism.

There is a range of provision to support positive outcomes for people with Autism including universal services to highly specialist support. The needs of children, young people and adults with Autism will be met on an individual basis and support will be personalised to the needs of each person.

Further information about what's available in Warrington can be found at [My Life Warrington](#).

### How do I get a diagnosis?

#### Children and young people 0-17 years

There is one multi-agency referral pathway for a child or young person to receive a diagnosis of Autism.

Where concerns are identified about a child's development either by a parent/carer or a professional a referral should be made to the Child Development Centre for an assessment.

Referrals are reviewed by a Panel made up of multi-disciplinary staff, including an Educational Psychologist, Speech, Language and

Communication staff, Learning Disability staff, Consultant Paediatrician, Occupational Therapist and Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services staff. The Panel decides whether an assessment would be appropriate for the child (based on the information provided within the referral forms) and if so, the child is referred on for an assessment. These assessments are reviewed and a decision is made by the Panel as to whether the child is Autistic. Health and education professionals ensure that appropriate services and support are in place for that child and that parents are signposted to support services.

We know that there are some inconsistencies in the diagnostic pathway for children living in Warrington and NHS Warrington CCG are in the process of reviewing what is on offer outside the diagnostic process for children and young people with suspected neurodevelopment conditions.

#### Adults over 18 years

There are two adult referral pathways in Warrington for an adult to receive a diagnosis:

##### 1. For adults with a learning disability diagnosis

Very few assessments are conducted through this pathway as the focus of care and support for these adults tends to be based on the pre-existing learning disabilities. For some, the diagnosis of Autism may not alter the support they already receives.

## 2. For all adults living in Warrington

The second referral pathway is for adults who do not have a previously identified learning disability. A referral can be made by the patient's GP, or another professional with specialist knowledge of Autism. If the adult is eligible, the patient will receive a comprehensive assessment, and a diagnosis will be made.

### Early Years Provision

Sandy Lane Nursery and Forest School has places available for children with special educational needs and/or disabilities, including Autisms.

The Early Years Outreach support currently commissioned out of our maintained nursery school supports social communication difficulties and those who may have Autism.

Portage services offer integrated play seminars, as well as specific sensory seminars for children aged 0-5 years with ASC. They also provide support in the home. There is also a Portage Outreach Educational Psychologist (EP) in the early years.

### What schools places are available in Warrington for children with Autism?

In Warrington there is a range of schools in Warrington to meet the needs of children and young people with Autism including:

- 69 mainstream primary schools
- 14 secondary provisions

These are a mix of academies, free schools, voluntary and maintained schools. Top up funding is in place for mainstream schools depending on the child/young person's level of need.

There are Designated Places allocated specially for children and young people with Autism in some of Warrington's mainstream schools where pupils are taught in smaller group settings, including:

- 16 places at Dallam Community Primary School for Key Stage 2 children
- 8 places at Woolston Community Primary School for Key Stage 2 children
- 22 places at Bridgewater High School for Key Stage 3 and 4 young people
- 16 places at St Gregory's Catholic High School for Key Stage 3 and 4 young people

There are also three special schools in Warrington:

Age range:	5 to 19 years	5 to 19 years	5 to 16 years
School:	Fox Wood	Green Lane	Woolston Brook
Places:	91 (5-16)	160 (5-16)	72

Need:	Severe & Profound Learning Difficulties Autistic Spectrum Disorder 12 students in Woolston Sixth Form College	Moderate, Severe & Complex Learning Difficulties Autistic Spectrum Disorder 20 students in Woolston Sixth Form College	Social, Emotional and mental health difficulties.
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### Short Breaks

Short Breaks provide some families with a disabled child or young person respite. There are many different short breaks available, including holiday clubs, group sessions, agency carer support, overnight care in a residential centre, support from another family, or a direct payment to employ a personal assistant. Further information can be found at [My Life Warrington](#).

### How do we prepare young people with Autism for adulthood?

Making the transition from childhood, through adolescence and into adulthood is challenging for any young person. Young people with special educational needs or disabilities and those with Autism can face additional barriers. This period of time, often referred to by professionals as ‘transition’ can be both daunting and frustrating for young people and their parents. Transition is most successful where there is good communication and planning between the young person, their parents, school and professionals.

Warrington Borough Council has invested in its Transition Service over the past 12 months so that eligible young people aged 14 to 25 years as prepared for adulthood. The Team assess the needs of the young person so that support can be put in place around their needs which promotes employment opportunities, community participation and housing, with a focus on maximising skills and achieving independence (where possible).

### Supported Employment and Training Service for People with Learning Difficulties

The Supported Employment Service at **Walton Lea Walled Gardens** provides training, development and education opportunities for adults from the age of 18 years to support them to find employment and develop their independence using a person centred approach.

**Macintyre Care** has been running a Community Café in Warrington since 2004 and serves good quality, competitively priced food at the same time as providing vocational training opportunities to adults with learning disabilities. The Service supports around 10 people per week to take part in all aspects of the Café according to their individual needs.

## Housing

Warrington Housing Strategy 2018/28 includes an action, over the next ten years, to provide 500 homes of independent living schemes / supported housing to meet the needs of young people and adults with a learning disability, mental health problem or autism.

There are currently thirteen affordable housing units for rent for people with a learning disability. These were completed in 2011/12. In addition, two of the 32 older persons bungalows constructed by the council in 2011/12 were leased to Adult Social Care for occupation by tenants with learning difficulties/autism who require a live in carer.

## Health Services

In addition to universal services, such as GPs and health visitors, there are a range of specialist health services providing support for children, young people and adults with Autism.

The Child Development Centre (CDC) at Sandy Lane provides a range of therapy services such as physiotherapy, speech and language

therapy, and occupational therapy. The Community Paediatric Service is also based at the CDC and has recently been enhanced with the addition of a Specialist Nurse for children with neuro-developmental difficulties, including Autism.

A Specialist Learning Disability Nursing Team works in the community to offer support and advice to parents of children with learning difficulties, delayed development and Autism. A Community Nursing Team work with children with very complex health needs. This includes children with long term and life-limiting conditions.

Support for children and young people with emotional health and wellbeing issues is provided by North West Boroughs Health Trust. Where local mental health services cannot meet the need of a child or young person and they are eligible for 'Continuing Care' Warrington Borough Council and NHS Warrington CCG will fund specialist support.

Personal Health Budgets are available for children, young people and families/carers with Autism and these are utilised to good effect by a number of families already to ensure provision can meet their needs.

Warrington Disability Partnership is delivering the Support Planning for Personal Health Budget's in Warrington on behalf of NHS Warrington Clinical Commissioning Group.



## Centre for Independent Living

Warrington Disability Partnership is an internationally acclaimed user led charity and an exemplar Centre for Independent Living (CIL) with over 27 years' experience of supporting disabled people and people living with long term health conditions. Their purpose is to enhance the lives of disabled people and their families by enabling independent living and have helped to design, develop and deliver 27 mobility and independent living services, many of which are based in the centre.

In 2018 Warrington Disability Partnership established a new service of a 'peer support job club' to support people with autism and learning disabilities. The peer-led support group offers a mix of group and personalised peer support delivered by people who have a lived experience of disability and understand the worries and concerns disabled people face in finding and securing employment. Participants in the programme can expect:

- Increased IT skills and the opportunity to access 'Avatar' – an equipment and software package using 3D IT
- Understanding of employment environments and the reasonable adjustments which may be needed to

accommodate their individual needs and strengths – and how to express these to an employer

- Improved employment related skills which they have developed and practised
- To be able to demonstrate to potential employers a range of employment related training activities which they can add to their CV's
- A reference they can add to their portfolio.

## What is available in the community?

There are a number of organisations and independent groups that support people with Autism and their parents and carers, such as the National Autistic Society, Warrington Speak Up and Warrington Parents and Carers Forum. The NAS website, [www.nas.org.uk](http://www.nas.org.uk) contains a list of useful local contacts and support groups.

There are a range of local community groups and support available for people with autism and their families. These include leisure and sport activities, youth provision, after school clubs, parent support groups and peer support groups.

## Section 6: Our priorities for children, young people and adults living with Autism in Warrington

Although we have made good progress over the past three years, we believe that the time is right to refresh our priorities in line with the changes that have happened locally and nationally since our last Strategy.

They are based on what we know about the needs of children, young people and adults living with Autism in Warrington and the changes we need to make to the way we run our services so that they are Autism friendly.

### Our priorities are for people with Autism to:

1. Be supported by professionals who understand Autism
2. Be identified at the earliest opportunity
3. Get the best from school and college
4. Be prepared for adulthood
5. Live as independently as possible.

We also understand that parents and carers of children, young people and adults with Autism also need help and support to ensure that they are able to cope with the daily challenges that face them.



**Working towards an Autism Friendly Warrington**

## Priority one: Supported by professionals who understand Autism

**“I want people who work in education, health and social care services to understand that I have Autism and how this affects me.”**

### Why is it important?

We have made good progress raising awareness of Autism in Warrington over the last three years and we know that most professionals will have heard of the condition.

However, we know that there is more to do. People who responded to the consultation about the priorities for Autistic people told us that not all staff in education, health and social care services knew enough about supporting the wide range of needs that people with Autism present with.

**“Professionals need to understand that every autistic person is different. Different strategies are needed for different people. I feel that professionals stick to the guidelines and that some of the strategies do not always work.”**

*Survey Response, November 2018*

In Warrington we want everyone working in public services to be able to recognise people with Autism and adapt the support they provide so that the experiences of people with Autism and parents and carers in contact with education, health and care services are more positive.

### What have we done?

- Put in place Autism Awareness Training for all social care and NHS staff to support them to recognise Autism.
- Set up an e-learning Autism Awareness programme for all council staff.
- Developed specialist training for professional staff who deal more closely with people with Autism in health and care settings.
- Specific training for schools working with children and young people Autism provided by the Education Psychology Service.
- Continued to provide and promote Autism training opportunities to those working in the Criminal Justice System.
- There is Disability Awareness training for drivers and support staff at Warrington’s Own Buses (Network Warrington).

### What will we do?

- Extend the e-learning Autism Awareness programme to all public service workers in Warrington and set the expectation that this must be completed as part of the general induction process for all staff in front line positions or every three years.

- Put in place access to Specialist Teachers so that teaching staff in mainstream schools can so that children with Autism receive appropriate support to access to the curriculum.
- We will encourage all services in Warrington to be Autism friendly.

## Priority two: Identified at the earliest opportunity

**“I want a timely diagnosis from a trained professional. I want relevant information and support throughout and after the diagnostic process.”**

### Why is it important?

Getting a diagnosis can be an important step for people with Autism as it can help them and their families to understand their behaviours and responses to certain situations.

We also know that an Autism assessment and diagnosis can open doors to support and services in education, health and social care, and is a route for contact with other children, young people and adults with similar experiences.

In Warrington, people who responded to the consultation on the Autism Strategy told us that we needed to reduce delays in identifying and diagnosing people with Autism.

**“Cut down on the length of time it takes to get the diagnosis confirmed.”**

***Survey Response, November 2018***

Respondents to the survey also said that we needed to improve the communication between the different organisations involved so that

people get access to the help and support they need when they need it.

**“The length of time it took to get a diagnosis has had a negative impact on our son and has delayed getting the help he needs from school.”**

***Survey Response, November 2018***

In Warrington it is our aspiration for all people to get the help and support they need when they need it. This means that support from services is guided by need and not dependent on a diagnosis.

### What have we done?

- NHS Warrington Clinical Commissioning Group have been leading the review of the current pathway for children and young people suspected of having Autism in collaboration with its partners and Warrington Parents and Carers Forum. As part of this process a provider has been procured to provide services to children and their families where there is a concern about a neurodevelopmental condition. The new service will be operational from January 2019.
- Put in place clear diagnostic pathway adults with Autism which are well understood by people working in public services and the general public.
- Put in place support and signposting to appropriate services for people and their families following a diagnosis of Autism.

## What will we do?

- Following the review of diagnostic pathway for children and young people NHS Warrington Clinical Commissioning Group will work with key stakeholders to co-design a new diagnostic pathway to speed up the timeliness of assessments.
- Make sure that parents and carers and people who receive a diagnosis of Autism know how to access help and support if they need it.
- Make sure that there are good feedback mechanisms across all services which support the improvement of assessment and diagnostic services.
- Improve our data collection and sharing systems around referrals and assessments of Autism so that we can better understand our performance and the experiences of people using our services.

## Priority three: Parents and carers of children, young people and adults with Autism are well supported

**“I want to know that my family can get help and support when they need it.”**

### Why is it important?

We know that caring for someone with Autism can be hugely challenging for some parents and carers of children, young people and adults with Autism. In Warrington we are committed to improving the help and support that they receive so that they are able to cope with the daily challenges that face them.

It was clear from the responses to the consultation, that families need access to early help and support before they reach crisis point.

**“More support groups and services are needed for parents and carers which are easy to access and where you don’t need to wait weeks/months when families can be in crisis.”**

*Survey Response, November 2018*

Some families who responded to the survey were frustrated at the level of help and support they were given following a diagnosis of Autism. All organisations working with people affected by Autism

are committed to improving this in the future and will work together to address the issues raised in the consultation.

### What have we done?

- In line with the requirements of the Care Act 2014, all carers are entitled to a carers assessment and may be eligible for a personal budget to support their needs
- Warrington Parents and Carers (WarrPac) have supported a range of events to bring parents and carers together to meet, share ideas and reduce the feeling of isolation. “Ask Away Sessions” have given parents and carers the opportunity to meet and chat directly with professionals about any concerns they may have or particular advice they may require.
- Wired Carers Centre have developed evening peer support sessions to support carers who are working during the day and would not be able to access help during office hours. The groups provide a place for carers to meet, to have a chat and a drink, to have a little respite, and to see any support staff if they need to. The groups also invite speakers and visitors and have information and awareness sessions regularly.
- The provision of a Carer Leisure Pass has been set up in conjunction with LiveWire to provide carers with a complimentary 12 month leisure pass and is available for carers aged 16 and over to access gym, swimming or exercise classes at the local Livewire facilities.

### What will we do?

- Continue to improve the information for families about Autism, local services and support networks available in Warrington.
- Make sure that professionals working directly with children, young people and adults with Autism and their families signpost to appropriate support networks for parents and carers.
- Work with the Carers Partnership Board so that carers are identified and have their needs supported in a more timely way.



## Priority four: Get the best from school and college

**“I want the same opportunities as everyone else so that I can do my best at school and college.”**

### Why is it important?

We know that young people with special educational needs, including those with Autism tend to do less well at school than their peers and are more likely not to be in education, training and employment by the time they reach 18 years.

Education and training opportunities are critical for ensuring a positive future with good outcomes for people with Autism.

In Warrington we know that we need to create more provision for children and young people with Autism and a second application has been submitted to the Department for Education to establish an ASD free school in Warrington.

**“Warrington needs to spread the school's offering help and support for children with additional needs over Warrington. There are currently 3 special schools on the same road! Also, all the schools with designated places are within a mile of each other. What about the other parts of Warrington such as Appleton, Lymm and Stockton Heath where there are no Primary Schools offering a designated places.”**

*Survey Response, November 2018*

### What have we done?

- Introduced the Committed to Inclusion kite-mark award to encourage schools to improve their inclusive practice so that more children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities, including those with Autism, continue their education in a mainstream learning environment.
- Appointed and trained 18 Specialist Lead Teachers from primary, secondary and special schools to share best practice around supporting pupils with special educational needs and disabilities including those with Autism.

### What will we do?

- We will continue to improve the knowledge, understanding and inclusive practice in schools in Warrington and encourage more schools to be Autism friendly so that more children can remain at their local school.
- Make sure that there is enough local school places for children with Autism so that fewer children travel out of area to have their education needs met at primary and secondary school.
- We will improve access to therapeutic interventions aimed specifically at children with Autism in our special schools and designated provision and make sure that they receive the sensory input they require to stay focused and organised throughout the day.

## Priority five: Prepared for adulthood

“I want to be supported through big life changes so that I am ready to live my life as an adult”

### Why is it important?

Although the majority of young people with Autism will not need specialist services as an adult, they will need support as they move towards adulthood in developing independence. This includes developing life skills such as travelling independently and seeking opportunities for further education, employment and independent living.

**“All Warrington employers especially Warrington Borough Council need to create more employment opportunities for people with Autism. They need structured, meaningful help to get and keep jobs throughout their working lives.”**

*Survey Response, November 2018*

### What have we done?

- Appointed a Transition Manager to lead the service improvements required to

- Increased capacity in the social care Transition Team as a way to support more young people eligible for social care services earlier on in their transition journey.

### What will we do?

- We will work with schools, post 16 and adult education providers to set up life skills training for young people with Autism.
- We will work with Further Education Colleges to increase understanding of the needs of young people with Autism and to improve their access to support helping more young people to remain in education post 16.
- We will make sure that there is more local options available so that more young people can be educated in Warrington rather than travelling out of area so that they can maintain links with family, friends and their community.
- We will improve the quality of our Transition Plans for young people so that they address all the key issues for young people including accommodation, occupation, friendships, health and community participation.

## Priority six: To live independently

“I want the same opportunities as everyone else to live as independently as possible in my local community”

### Why is it important?

Many adults with Autism can struggle to access the help and support they need because of sensitivity to light or noise or other issues arising from their Autism, and as a result their needs worsening. A key aim of this strategy is to make it easier for adults with Autism to access mainstream public services and support in the community.

**“The main priority should be to support people to live in their local community. People who are falling through the gaps need access to targeted support.”**

*Survey Response, November 2018*

We know that that specialist services can play a major role in helping adults with Autism to manage their condition, develop independence and access mainstream services more effectively.

### What have we done?

- We have made sure that people with Autism who have been through the safeguarding process have been supported by a suitably trained advocate.
- Made sure that people with autism know how to use the Safe Places scheme.
- Continued to strengthen partnership working with the Criminal Justice System making sure that there is engagement and representation on the Joint Learning Disability and Autism Partnership Board.
- Put in place a clear pathway and support for people with Autism who are in the Criminal Justice System.
- The majority of services for people with learning disabilities and autism are commissioned in a person centred way with good examples of creative and flexible support including the use of personal budgets.
- Made sure that people with autism, who are eligible for adult social care, have their social needs assessed and supported.
- Put in place a range of housing and accommodation to meet the broad needs of people with Autism.

### What will we do?

- We will continue to provide advocates for adults with Autism going through the safeguarding process
- We will support more adults with Autism into employment

- We will continue to develop the options available to people with Autism to support them to live independently.

## Section 7: Delivering the strategy

### Monitoring and review

This Strategy covers a three year period from the 1 April 2019 to the 31 March 2022. Delivery of the Strategy will be underpinned by an action plan which will enable us to measure the difference we have made to the lives of children, young people and adults with Autism.

Progress against the action plan will be monitored by the Warrington Joint Autism and Learning Disability Partnership Board every 3 months.

The Board includes members from:

- Warrington Borough Council departments – children’s services, adult services and housing;
- Health providers;
- Other organization involved with people with Autism and learning difficulties;
- Parents and carers; and advocates and

representatives for people with Autism and learning difficulties.

## Appendix 1: Autism Policy Framework

### A. Legislation

#### The Autism Act 2009

The Autism Act was passed in 2009. This was a landmark document as it was the first single disability specific piece of legislation and it placed a number of obligations on a range of public bodies to improve opportunities for people with autism. It also placed a duty on the Secretary of State to publish a strategy and also required them to issue guidance to NHS bodies, NHS foundation trusts and local authorities on implementing the strategy. The Act places a duty on local authorities and NHS bodies to act under the guidance.

#### Health and Social Care Act 2013

The act looked at modernising the NHS by putting clinicians at the centre of commissioning, allowing there to be greater focus on innovation, patient empowerment and the role of public health.

There are six key policy areas of the Act:

- Clinically led commissioning
- Provider regulation to support innovative services
- Greater voice for patients
- New focus for public health
- Greater accountability locally and nationally
- Streamlined arms-length bodies.

In addition to these there are nine cross-cutting themes, which look at the role of the NHS and key areas for change:

- Improving quality of care
- Tackling inequalities in healthcare
- Promoting better integration of health and care services
- Choice and competition
- The role of the Secretary of State
- Reconfiguration of services
- Establishing New Bodies
- Research
- Education and Training.

#### The Care Act 2014

The Care Act represents the most significant reform of care and support in more than 60 years, putting people and their carers in control of their care and support. For the first time, the Act will put a limit on the amount anyone will have to pay towards the costs of their care.

To help make things clearer the Act has introduced a minimum eligibility threshold across the country – a set of criteria that makes it clear when local authorities will have to provide support to people. Until now, local authorities have been able to decide this threshold themselves, meaning decisions varied from place to place.

## **Children and Families Act 2014**

The Children and Families Act states that as a fundamental requirement the local authority must follow four guiding principles:

- Listen to the views, wishes and feelings of children, young people and parents;
- Ensure children, young people and parents participate in decision-making;
- Provide the necessary information and support to help children, young people and parents participate in decision-making; and
- Support children, young people and parents in order that children and young people can achieve the best possible educational and other outcomes.

The Children and Families Act takes forward the government's commitments to improve services for vulnerable children and support strong families. It underpins wider reforms to ensure that all children and young people can succeed, no matter what their background. The Act will reform the systems for adoption, looked after children, family justice and special educational needs.

Statutory guidance about managing the transition to the new SEND support system is available for local authorities and related organisations.

## **Statutory Guidance and Best Practice**

### **The National Autism Plan for Children 2003**

The National Autism Plan for Children (NAPC) was published in 2003 under the banner of The National Autistic Society (NAS) in collaboration with the Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health and the Royal College of Psychiatrist. The Plan was primarily aimed at pre-school and primary school age children with autism and addressed the issues of identification; assessment; diagnosis and access to early interventions.

### **Education for Pupils with Autism Spectrum Disorders, Report (HMIE 2006a)**

A focused inspection of education for pupils with autism reported in 2006 by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Education (HMIE). The report highlights the variety of provision and arrangements for meeting the needs of pupils with autism.

### **I Exist: The message from adults with autism in England 2008**

This report highlighted the problems experienced by adults with autism in their own words and examined the changes needed to transform their lives.

### **Supporting People with Autism through Adulthood (2009)**

This review identified that people with autism may use a very wide range of public services. The report identified that the services available could be improved through better strategy and planning at a local and national level and a widespread awareness of autism within the workforce.

### **NAS 'You Need to Know' Report (2010)**

This report reviewed the services offered to children and young people with autism who also suffer with a mental health problem. The report showed that up to 71% of children and young people with autism have an additional mental health need. The report makes a number of recommendations for both national and local change.

### **National Autistic Society (2011)**

This report reviewed the experiences of children and young people with autism and their families in relation to education. They found that a third of parents were unhappy with their child's educational placement, and that over 50% felt they were not making good educational progress. A quarter of the children interviewed were unhappy at school and many felt their teachers did not understand them.

In trying to tackle these concerns and ensure the needs of these children are met, education authorities must make a wide range of

provision available and ensure that the teaching methods used in schools meet the needs of each individual pupil. This provision may be made in enhanced mainstream schools, mainstream schools, or by outreach, specialist support teams or special schools.

### **Autism: Recognition, referral and diagnosis of children and young people on the autism spectrum: NICE Clinical Guideline 128 (Sept 2011)**

This report highlights the areas of difficulty faced by children and young people with autism during the diagnostic process. It recommends:

- a local pathway for recognition, referral and diagnosis of possible autism;
- a multi-disciplinary group of professionals to diagnose with multi-agency support;
- a case co-ordinator throughout the diagnosis process;
- specified diagnosis tools;
- a smooth transition to adult services.

### **Autism; recognition, referral, diagnosis and management of adults on the autism spectrum: NICE Clinical Guideline 142 (2012)**

This guideline covers the care provided by primary, community, secondary, tertiary and other health and social care professionals who have direct contact with, and make decisions concerning the care of, adults with autism.



### **Autism: The Management and Support of Children and Young People on the Autism Spectrum, NICE Clinical Guideline 170 (2013)**

This guidance for professionals working with children and young people with autism takes account of the variation in severity of autism, co-existing conditions and levels of cognitive ability. It identifies that the clinical (and educational) response for these children and young people should vary accordingly.

The importance of assessing the needs of families and carers and of creating comprehensive transitions plans for young people with severe and complex needs are also discussed.

### **NICE support for commissioning for autism (Jan 2014)**

This report highlights the key actions that local authorities and clinical commissioning groups (CCGs) should take to improve the quality of care for people with autism.

### **Think Autism, Department of Health (April 2014)**

This document provides an update on the previous strategy 'Fulfilling and Rewarding Lives' (2010). It recognises success in increasing awareness of autism and increased services, but it says that there is still considerable work to be done. In particular the document notes that there are still gaps in the autism provision and extensive waiting times for diagnosis and services in some areas. The report also recognises the difficulties people with autism have in the workplace and that many people with autism find they have

difficulty gaining employment or reaching their potential. The report also looks at NHS services, the criminal justice system and benefits systems and identifies how access to these services could be improved for people with autism.