

Autism Partnership Meeting

14/02/23 at Noon – 2.00 p.m.

Venue: Fownhope Room, Plough Lane Offices & Zoom

Attendees

Name	Role
Valerie Fitch	Chair / Person on the Autistic Spectrum
Paul Choppen	Partnership Board Assistant, Herefordshire Council
Laura Ferguson	Vice Chair
Anna Wainwright	Allsorts Group
Alexia Heath	Senior Advisor Post 16 Learning and Skills, Herefordshire Council
Katie Eastaugh	Cart Shed
Ian Jarman	Head of Care Commissioning, Community Wellbeing, Herefordshire Council
Glen Crosier	Senior Commissioning Officer, Community Wellbeing, Herefordshire Council
Brigid McGrath	Brightfire CIC, Expert by Experience
Henry Webster	Autism West Midlands, Operations Manager
Zoe Backhouse	Specialist Autism Advisor, Autism West Midlands, Herefordshire and Worcestershire
John Gorman	Commissioning Officer, Herefordshire Council
NAS	Debbie Hobbs
Michelle Lewton-Jones	Head of Business and Practice Improvements, Herefordshire Council
Helen George	Accommodation Support Officer, Community Wellbeing, Herefordshire Council
Bryn Brooks	Parent Carer
James Baker	Hereford Make / Person on the Autistic Spectrum

Apologies

Name	Role
Rachel Oakley	Walsingham Support
Julie Kerin	Temporary Social Work Apprentice, Community Wellbeing, Herefordshire Council
Lauren Keen	Crossroads Together
Mary Simpson	Healthwatch
Les Knight	Head of Additional Needs, Childrens, Community Wellbeing, Herefordshire Council
Hilary Hall	Corporate Director, Community Wellbeing
Neil Layton	West Mercia Police
Rebecca Antrim	Psychotherapist working with Autistic females, Expert by Experience
Richard Clark	Senior Practitioner, Community Wellbeing, Herefordshire Council
Abigail North	TASP
Sara Siloko	Hereford Disability United
Sylvia Nicholls	Hereford Disability United
Bernadette Louise	Autism Champion

Name	Role
Anna Swift	Children and Young People Autism Lead, Herefordshire and Worcestershire NHS
Richard Keble	Integrated Care Board

Introductions and Apologies

Valerie welcomed everyone, apologised for the technical issues that had delayed the start of the meeting before going through the actions from the previous meeting.

Conflict of Interest

Valerie asked members if they had a conflict of interest to declare, which no one did.

Minutes and Actions from Previous Meeting – Valerie Fitch

Attendee	Action	Detail	Status
Paul	1	To invite Hilary to a future meeting to explain the context of her presentation.	Invited to the meeting but was unable to attend.
Valerie	2	Would ask Hilary for one sheet of explanatory information to cover her presentation.	Hilary provided a cover sheet to explain the presentation she was intending to show at the last meeting. Paul attached this to the minutes.
Brigid/Paul	3	Brigid to send a list of unhelpful phrases she asks people not to say to autistic people for Paul to send to Board Members.	Brigid sent this to Paul who forwarded this to board members.
Laura	4	To Send Harriet Yelin's contact details to James.	Completed
Laura	5	To get in touch with Judy and Bryn to assist them.	Completed

Police reports – Valerie Fitch

Valerie said Neil Layton sent his apologies. Valerie mentioned that there were four cases involving people with autism since the last meeting, all of which had been dealt with. Neighbours involved have been advised to behave themselves.

Experience Questionnaire Set Up Advice, Michelle Lewton-Jones (Head of Business and Practice Improvements, Herefordshire Council)

Michelle explained that the Community Wellbeing Directorate wants to make sure it is offering good service to the people they support. They plan to use an Experience Questionnaire to help evaluate these services and the areas that need to be improved. Through the questionnaire they hope to get feedback from the people using services along with the practitioners offering the support. Michelle wanted support from the Autism Partnership Board to help write the autism specific questions. The questionnaire will be offered in a variety of ways and formats to suit different audiences, potentially doing live conversations with people who would prefer to give their feedback verbally.

Laura mentioned the scope of the questions is key as not everyone who is autistic meets the social care assessment eligibility criteria.

Action 1 - Michelle proposed to email the questions to Paul who will disseminate with Board members and collate feedback. Michelle will then set up a Zoom meeting with members interested in collaborating further in the engagement process. Paul will also add the questionnaire to the Autism Partnership Webpage.

Bryn mentioned the need to engage with a wider group of people. Members suggested liaising with Hereford Disability United, The National Autistic Society and adding the questionnaire to the Autism Partnership Webpage to increase engagement.

If you would like further information on this consultation please email:

Michelle.Lewton-Jones@herefordshire.gov.uk

Autism West Midlands Post Diagnostic Service, Zoe Backhouse (Autism Specialist Advisor), Henry Webster (Operations Manager), Brigid McGrath (Brightfire CIC)

Zoe and Brigid went through their presentation, see attached. She explained how Autism West Midlands works across various types of support from residential homes to supported living and community services.

Autism West Midlands has been commissioned by NHS Herefordshire and Worcestershire to deliver post diagnostic support to adults across both counties. They offer their information and signposting services, a helpline where individuals can speak to autism advisers for advice and support, one to one support sessions that are person centred sessions responding to individuals' specific needs.

They offer the Autism Confident Programme which is an 8 week programme, consisting of a one to one session to identify areas the individual needs support or advice with, followed by 6 small group sessions where individuals can share experiences, discuss strategies and advice. This is followed by a final one to one session where the individual can ask questions, raise areas they would like more support with or be signposted onto the one to one support service.

Autism West Midlands is also partnered with Brightfire CIC who run the Community Autism Support Service in Herefordshire and Worcestershire. This service comprises up to 4 one hour one to one support sessions.

In the 1st year the project has focused on setting up and developing networks and partnerships across Herefordshire. In year 1 there have been limited referrals in Herefordshire, potentially due to newly diagnosed adult (18+ from August 2022) often taking time to process their diagnosis. They have also had a number of staff changes and a higher than expected take up of face to face support in year 1.

In year 2 they will open up the referral criteria up to anyone from 16+ who has an autism diagnosis. They aim to increase staffing to accommodate the increased demand. They also hope to work more closely with the Family Psychologists to improve take up of their services within Herefordshire and better understand the historic reasons for low numbers of people being diagnosed in Herefordshire.

More information about the services on offer can be found at www.autismwestmidlands.org.uk.

Action 2 - Paul will add information on the Autism West Midlands and Brightfire services to the Autism Partnership Webpage.

Housing Pathway for People with Autism, Helen George (Accommodation Support Officer)

Helen went through her presentation on the housing pathway, see attached. If you would like further information please email helen.george@herefordshire.gov.uk

Autism Strategy Update – Ian Jarman (interim Head of Care Commissioning, Community Wellbeing), Glen Crosier (Interim Senior Commissioning Officer Community Wellbeing), Emma Allen (Commissioning Officer, Worcestershire County Council) and Laura Westwood (Senior Commissioning Officer and lead for Worcestershire on the Joint Autism Strategy).

Ian introduced himself and Glen, with both confirming their support for the strategy. Ian explained that Glen will lead on the Joint Autism Strategy and that both of them intend on attending the Board meetings in future and working on the work stream for priority 7: Keeping Safe. They will also be taking an overarching approach with regards to the other priorities and will work with Worcestershire to co-ordinate the overall strategy including getting it through governance.

Glen then went through the presentation on the Autism Strategy outlining the journey that needs to be gone through over the coming months including key milestones, timelines, actions and governance processes. They hope to have a draft Strategy in place by September/October 2023, see attached for more information.

Action 3 - Laura asked Glen to double check the governance process for the strategy with Worcestershire, noting it being down on the presentation as a record of officer decision rather than the more thorough time intensive key decision process.

Valerie asked members to get their feedback on the engagement questionnaire to her my tomorrow morning (Feb 15th) and she will send on to Emma Allen and Laura Westwood. Laura Westwood has already sought feedback on the engagement questionnaire from the Worcestershire Autism Partnership Board.

The questionnaire will only be one part of the engagement with a programme of focus groups and meetings with providers across the ICS (Integrated Care System) and discussion with the autistic people those providers support. Individuals will also be able email their views across if they don't want to fill in the questionnaire.

ICS updates - Valerie Fitch

Custody - Valerie mentioned that Custody have acknowledged that they need to help the perpetrators as well as the victims. This is due to individuals often committing offences because of their autism and they do not understand how to behave in certain circumstances. Valerie has been asked to give custody training on sensory needs similar to the training she is giving to staff at the hospital and GP surgeries.

Feedback from Partner Organizations

Hereford Make/Cart Shed - James and Katie have been in discussion about doing a visit regarding forging.

James also raised the issue of the lack of supported housing in the county for people with autism, especially complex needs, which has resulted in some of his friends having to go to Worcestershire and thus having to leave their social networks.

Laura mentioned that it may be worth having a conversation about DFG's (Disabled Facilities Grants) with someone within Herefordshire Council at a future meeting. DFG's which are available for anyone with a disability to apply for in order to make adaptations to their home.

<https://www.gov.uk/disabled-facilities-grants>

Action 4 - Valerie asked Laura to email details of the Disabled Facilities Grants to her.

A.O.B

Brightfire - Brigid is doing some research into finding a place where autistic people can communicate with each other and working on Brightfire's Facebook presence and its website. Social isolation and connecting with peers has come across as a major issue. Brigid has developed a questionnaire with the help of the Taskforce group asking if individuals were to meet peers how would they like to do that. Brigid will send out the questionnaire shortly and asked members to help disseminate it to their contacts.

Action 5 - Brigid to send out the questionnaire on how autistic people would like to engage in peer support to Paul who will forward to Board members.

NAS - Oliver McGowan Mandatory Training (OMMT) - Debbie will be helping to deliver from tomorrow (15th February) the first session of the OMMT with the Herefordshire and Worcestershire ICB (Integrated Care Board). Debbie is hopeful that autistic individuals will be joining the programme as of the (15th February) shortly as experts by experience.

Items for the Next Meeting

Agenda - Valerie asked members to let her know items they wish to discuss at the next meeting including how much time will be needed to discuss said items.

Next Meeting

25th April Noon – 2:30pm in the Mordiford Room at Plough Lane Offices and by zoom. Details will be sent out in due course.

Actions

Attendee	Action	Detail
Michelle/Paul	1	To email the proposed questions for the Experience Questionnaire to Paul who will disseminate with Board members and collate feedback. Michelle will then set up a Zoom meeting with members interested in collaborating further in the engagement process. Paul will also add the questionnaire to the Autism Partnership Webpage.
Paul	2	Add information on the Autism West Midlands and Brightfire services to the Autism Partnership Webpage.
Glen	3	To double check the governance process for the strategy, noting it being down on the presentation as a record of officer decision rather than the more thorough time intensive key decision process.

Laura F	4	To email details of the Disabled Facilities Grants to Valerie.
Brigid, Paul	5	Brigid to send out the questionnaire on how autistic people would like to engage in peer support to Paul who will forward to Board members.