# Autism Partnership Meeting

16th July 10 am – 12:30pm

Venue: Mordiford Room, Plough Lane Offices & Microsoft Teams

Attendees

| Name | Role |
| --- | --- |
| Valerie Fitch | Chair/Person on the Autistic Spectrum |
| Paul Choppen | Partnership Board Assistant, Herefordshire Council |
| Sally Wilson | Head of Care Commissioning, Herefordshire Council |
| Sean Ladd | Star College, Manager |
| Tracey Harley | Social Worker, Herefordshire Council |
| Jack Caine | Senior Programme Lead – Learning Disability and Autism  NHS Herefordshire and Worcestershire |
| Julie Gardner | CVT Therapist - NHS Herefordshire and Worcestershire |
| Julie Kerin | Social Worker, Herefordshire Council |
| Laura Ferguson | ADASS WM, Vice Chair, Parent of Autistic Adult |
| Marie Bridgewater | Hate Crime Officer, West Mercia |
| James Baker | Hereford Make / Person on the Autistic Spectrum |

Apologies

| Name | Role |
| --- | --- |
| Glen Crosier | Senior Commissioning Officer, Community Wellbeing, Herefordshire Council |
| Rosie Gray | Crossroads Together |
| Bernadette Louise | Autism Champion, NHS Herefordshire and Worcestershire ICB |
| Kay Hughes | Parent carer |
| Zoe Bistow | Autism West Midlands |
| Helen George | Accommodation Support Officer, Herefordshire Council |
| John Burgess | Senior Commissioning Officer, Herefordshire Council |
| Emma Jones | Senior Social Prescriber  for the South & West Herefordshire Primary Care Network (S&W PCN) |
| Katie Eastaugh | Cart Shed |
| Brigid McGrath | Brightfire CIC |
| Hilary Hall | Corporate Director Community Wellbeing, Herefordshire Council |

Introductions and Apologies

Valerie welcomed everyone and asked for introductions.

Conflict of Interest

No one declared a conflict of interest.

Minutes and Actions from Previous Meetings – Valerie Fitch

Valerie then went through the actions from the previous meetings.

**Actions from the 23rd April**

| **Name** | **Action** | **Detail** | **Update** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Valerie Fitch / Paul Choppen | Action 1 | To send the finalised Autism Strategy, when it is available, to Paul who will forward on to Board members. | Compete |
| Paul Choppen | Action 2 | Paul to add making Every Adult Matter item to the next agenda. | Unfortunately Kate Labbett was unable to make to today’s meeting and will be invited to the next meeting. |
| James Baker/ Anna Swift | Action 3 | James suggested that Anna link in with the Youth Provision Board run by HVOSS regarding youth involvement within PINS (Partnership for Inclusion of Neurodiversity in Schools). James will share the contact information with Anna after the meeting. | James shared the contact information for the Youth Provision Board with Anna, however does not know if anything has been actioned. |
| Dave Andrews | Action 4 | Sylvia asked for letters quoting the increased telecare rates to be based on the monthly cost in line with their billing by Hoople rather than the current weekly basis. Dave will liaise with Hoople on the issue. | Anna will see if this has happened with Holly Gittings (Technology Enabled Living Innovation Lead) who has taken over on this from Dave Andrews (Senior Telecare Advisor). |
| Laura Ferguson / James Baker | Action 5 | Laura and James agreed to share the learning from their case study with Anna. This is regarding the case they shared with the board regarding an individual’s journey to getting an autism diagnosis after challenging the result from the original assessment. | Complete, Laura and James shared the case study regarding an individual’s journey to getting an autism diagnosis. |
| Zoe Bristow / Paul Choppen | Action 6 | Zoe to forward information on the Autism West Midlands projects to Paul so it could be shared with Board members. | Paul to check whether this was sent out, and resend if necessary |
| Paul Choppen | Action 7 | Paul to send out the link to the Brightfire Auti social connection project with board members. | Complete |
| Paul Choppen | Action 8 | To send out the details of the Making it Real Group’s session looking into developing a video course on how people interpret language to Board members. | Paul didn’t send this out in time for meetings. However will check with Sylvia if there are any further meetings coming up. |
| Anna Swift | Action 9 | Anna to find out when the contract for the autism diagnostic provider, which is currently the Family Psychologists, will next be up for tendering. | With Anna unable to make the meeting to give an update Jack agreed to find this out when the tendering for the Autism Diagnostic Provider will be. |

All Age Joint Autism Strategy Update - Sally Wilson

Sally discussed how the strategy was approved and supported by the Council cabinet in

Herefordshire earlier this year, and has been to Herefordshire’s Health and Wellbeing Partnership Board. She mentioned how Valerie had given an excellent presentation at the Health and Well Being Board in terms of lived experience and perspective on the strategy.

If you are interested in watching the presentation here is the link – Valerie starts nine minutes into the meeting and speaks for 18 minutes: [Health & Wellbeing Board, 10th of June, 2PM - YouTube](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Wn5iFy3wU98)

The co-production multi agency work in producing the strategy was highly commended by the cabinet along with the valuable contribution from people with lived experience in all the work that's going on around autism.

The Autism Strategy is now on the Council’s website and the Council’s communications team are working on a press release that will be out imminently. The first meeting for the oversight group took place towards the end of June which Jack Caine chairs.

Herefordshire Council, are leading on Priority 7, Keeping Safe on behalf of Herefordshire and Worcestershire. Work is already completed on an initial draft for Priority 7 to ensure that the plans are deliverable across both Herefordshire and Worcestershire and what resources might be needed.

Sally will continue to bring progress updates to the board regarding the Strategy and plans for each of the priority areas.

Valerie mentioned the importance of having the leads for each of the priority areas come to this board meetings and update us on their targets and progress regularly.

<https://www.herefordshire.gov.uk/downloads/file/26626/herefordshire-and-worcestershire-autism-strategy-2024-2029>

**Making Every Adult Matter (MEAM) – Kate Labbett**

As Kate Labbett was unable to make this meeting this item will be postponed to Octobers meeting.

Police Hate Crimes reports - Marie Bridgewater

Marie explained that she was the Hate Crime Officer for West Mercia and had been in the role since January. She discussed her role of making sure cases are reviewed by inspectors and being reviewed in a timely manner. While the inspector's review is carried out Marie will follow up the investigation, make contact with the investigation officers and ask for updates. She will make contact with the victims of the crimes to have a chat to see how they're feeling about what's gone on, making sure that they're being updated.

Information is sent out to each victim either by post or email, which has Marie’s contact details and contact details for agencies that can offer additional support such as Victim Support and West Mercia’s own Victim Advice Line.

Marie mentioned she is not currently seeing victims targeted because of their autism. However autism does feature within some of these incidents with the victims being autistic or family members or the victim were autistic.

**Action 1 -** Valerie asked Marie if she could continue to keep the Board updated on hate crime incidents where autism had been mentioned as a contributing factor in the report.

Previously when Valerie attended the LIAG (Local Independent Advisory Group) she had access to these and was able to share them with the Board directly herself, whereas now she is part of the DIAG (disability Independent Advisory Group) instead.

Marie has also been out doing engagement work in the community, working with groups in society that might not normally engage with the police and building up their trust and confidence in the police to do so. She then discussed how the number of hate crimes being reported has gone down. She further discussed the options for reporting crimes from phoning 999 to the non-emergency 101 number and online through True Vision which is anonymous.

She has been into the hospital, colleges, a couple of the schools and was involved in the Learning Disabilities week with Aspire and Hear Our Voices group big meet at the Kindle Centre.

**ICS updates - Jack Caine**

Jack spoke about how he and his colleague Anna Swift the lead for neurodivergent children and young people had decided to share attendance at this meeting. Anna has shared a template with Jack which they have both populated with the most recent information, please see attached.

**Annual Health Checks**

Annual health checks are for people with a learning disability currently, not those that only have autism.

The latest figures for the uptake across Herefordshire and Worcestershire are 33.7% which is an improvement on this time last year where the uptake was 10.9% according to EMIS (Egton Medical Information System). This is showing we are moving to a consistent uptake of annual health checks year on year and the ICB still have targets over the quality of annual heath checks.

Annual Health Check Priority Action Group met on the 20th June has agreed a quality improvement programme for the year 24/25 for annual health checks. With key actions including:

* Promotion of annual health checks to young people and families (fewer young people taking up annual health checks than adults).
* Continue to audit annual health checks for 24/25 to check the quality of them and focus more on people with a learning disability who have diabetes.
* Regular programme of communications for GPs to focus on specific areas of practice, including a forward plan. Measurable data set so improvements in annual health check quality can be tracked including how many annual heath checks have been delivered with a quality health action plan.
* Study day for annual heath checks and health action plans on the 26th of September which is targeted at all health professionals in the delivery of annual health checks in primary care.
* Setting up a community of practice and link in with the ICB’s cancer lead to implement an improvement plan to improve screening uptake for bowel cancer screening. Going to make sure a system is in place to make sure patient records are shared between the community learning disability team and GP practices. As we suspect some individuals are not on their GP learning Disability register who should be, but who are known to the community learning disability team.

Valerie mentioned that her son had recently had an annual health check as he has a learning disability along with being autistic. The annual health check had gone well although Valarie is trying to educate the GPs through the Parent Participation Group to check their records and put more people through for annual heath checks.

A discussion ensued about the need for annual health checks for people with autism, Mary mentioned that there is Talk Wellbeing in Maylord Orchards delivering health checks for anyone aged 18 or over who lives or works in the county. They offer a mixture of walk in appointments and appointments booked through general practice and can signpost to other wellbeing initiatives.

<https://www.hwics.org.uk/news/latest-news/new-hereford-city-centre-location-talk-wellbeing-service-opens>

**Reasonable Adjustments Digital Flag Project**

This is a national programme to ensure all of our health and social care record systems record anyone who has a learning disability or autism and alerts health and social care professionals via a digital flag what these individual’s reasonable adjustments are.

Richard Keble has been leading this project, with the next steps being an audit of all health and social care providers. This audit incudes which systems and what they are currently able to record who has a learning disability, who is autistic and their reasonable adjustments.

There is a national timescale for a shared care record system that will hold all this information and enable all of the various digital systems that different providers use to communicate with each other to be in place by 2025.

Laura suggested that wider public health interventions could be attempted once all these digital systems are linked with each other.

**Reviewing the accessibility of mental health services for autistic people**

The sensory friendly environments project is going into mental health inpatient settings in Herefordshire and Worcestershire.

**Partnership for Neurodiversity in Schools (PINS) project**

38 Schools have been signed up to this project

The ICB have appointed Dr Maria Gibson as GP Lead for Learning Disability and Autism.

**Anna Freud Training - Julie Gardner**

Julie a psychiatric nurse and a CVT therapist working within health talking therapies within Hereford and Worcestershire introduced herself and went through her presentation on Neurodiversity and Health and Social Care, Current Practice Issues for Inclusion of people with Autism, ADHD without learning disabilities. Please see attached for more information.

Within the presentation Julie discussed how Neurodivergent is when a person has a mind that functions differently to the norm including in the way they learn, feel, process and interpret the word around them. Julie touched on how autistic people suppress their native responses to the triggers, act as if they are normal and how society needs to reframe how it interprets autistic communication and its understanding of how autistic people see the world.

Julie explained how to people who are autistic, everyone else has a disorder. Examples she gave included, how people say things they don't mean, not caring about structure, failing to hyper focus on single important topics, having unreliable memories, dropping weird hints and creepily staring.

She highlighted how autism diagnoses are on the increase because of more understanding and more people sharing their experiences. Mentioning the need for more autism training for professionals in schools and how schools need to be more engaged with mental health services. How autistic children can get into a lot of trouble at school because they're dysregulated, with negative and corrective comments which directly impacts their self-image and esteem as they grow up.

Julie re-iterated that with environments such as classrooms and in patient environments being sensory charged, unfamiliar and chaotic there is a need for a trauma focused approach. Such as making environments sensory friendly and implementing reasonable adjustments.

She discussed how she’d like to see professionals undertake the Anna Freud Training which is commissioned by NHS England. The four day training programme explains what one needs to know about autism. It goes through how to manage environments, how to help people access healthcare, how to use a trauma focused approach, understand co-morbid mental health problems, what the difficulties autistic individuals may have and how to be more compassionate towards them.

Julie has been trained to deliver the training for people within the Herefordshire and Worcestershire NHS trust, but is currently unable to. She expressed her concern that the Oliver McGowan training was taking priority because it was mandatory for CQC registered services. Further expressing, in her opinion, doesn’t go into enough detail on autism.

Laura suggested that the Anna Freud training sits within priority four, Tackling Health and

Care Inequalities for Autistic People. She suggested that Julie have a conversation at the Priority’s subgroup around the Anna Freud training.

Valerie asked Sally do we have anything under our priorities whereby training of staff can use the Anna Freud.

Sally responded that the Anna Freud Training can be looked at as part of the planning for the next phase of delivery of the autism strategy. However, she would need to look at what's in the detail of those plans and what the resource commitment would be to take the training forward.

Whether it would be something specific we would want to do in Herefordshire or across both counties the ICB (Integrated Care Board) would be involved in that decision.

**Action 2 -** Valerie said she would be in contact with Julie and the Council to see what can be done regarding the Anna Freud training.

**Partner - Organisations**

**Hereford Make**

James discussed how the level 2 autism training that the Herefordshire and Ludlow College provides apparently it is not very good, with his support worker he has gone through it and he has left multiple times. One of the questions, which was multiple choice, had telepathy as an answer to give you an idea of the ridiculousness.

James then discussed how Hereford Make has been able to support a number of neurodivergent blacksmiths so they don’t have to re-sit a year and are able to pass their course. This only happens because Hereford Make were funded.

James wondered what the best way was to approach the colleges in regards to supporting autism to complete their courses.Hereford Make has case studies from students that were only able to complete their course because of the support they provided.

**Action 3 -** Valerie asked Sally to liaise with James and find the appropriate colleague from the Council who would be able to help as James in finding out what extra support Herefordshire and Ludlow College can offer neurodivergent students.

**Healthwatch - Mary Simpson**

Mary highlighted two projects:

1. She would like feedback from any women who is menopausal. She would like them to answer Healthwatch’s survey or give her a call to tell her their stories if they have used services, so that she can know what experiences they've had. The General Practices are going to have some online provision for menopause or women, which sounds very exciting. To do this they need to know the issues that women are facing and their experiences that they've had so far.

<https://www.healthwatchherefordshire.co.uk/key-projects>

1. Citizens UK is going to be a Herefordshire Citizens group at some point. They will collect stories from people in a particular location and then see what the community would like to change and they help people to get together to make things change. Healthwatch is working with Citizens UK to collect 10,000 stories by the end of December. It's only two questions.

* What works well in Herefordshire?
* What is one thing would you change in Herefordshire and why?

<https://www.citizensuk.org/>

**A.O.B.**

Julie Kerin - Reasonable Adjustments

Julie shared an experience of a family member who is currently trying to challenge the Herefordshire and Ludlow College with regards to getting their daughter into the College in September. With one of the issues that has been raised regarding one of the reasonable adjustments that the daughter had at school was that she could show a red card to take herself of for a walk and basically call down or manage her anxiety before going back into the lesson. The college has said they wouldn't be able to allow that because it's how it would look to other students.

Date of next Meeting

15th October 10:00 am -12:30 pm, Mordiford Room, Plough Lane Offices/MS Teams

### Actions

| **Attendee** | **Action** | **Detail** |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Marie Bridgewater | Action 1 | Valerie asked Marie if she could continue to keep the Board updated on hate crime incidents where autism had been mentioned as a contributing factor in the report |
| Valerie Fitch | Action 2 | Will be in contact with Julie and the Council to see what can be done regarding the Anna Freud training. |
| Sally Wilson | Action 3 | Sally to liaise with James and find the appropriate colleague from the Council who would be able to help as James in finding out what extra support Herefordshire and Ludlow college can offer neurodivergent students. |