# Autism Partnership Meeting

15th October 10:30am – 12:30pm

Venue: Fownhope Room, Plough Lane Offices & Microsoft Teams

Attendees

| Name | Role |
| --- | --- |
| Valerie Fitch | Chair/Person on the Autistic Spectrum |
| Paul Choppen | Partnership Board Assistant, Herefordshire Council |
| Glen Crosier | Senior Commissioning Officer, Community Wellbeing, Herefordshire Council |
| Jack Caine | Senior Programme Lead – Learning Disability and Autism  NHS Herefordshire and Worcestershire |
| Alexia Heath | Post 16 Senior Adviser, Children and Young People, Herefordshire Council |
| Sean Ladd | Star College, Manager |
| Nick Gregory | Carer Links Team Senior & Engagement Worker |
| Sylvia Nicholls | Hereford Disability United |
| Claire Hobbs | Parent Carer Voice |
| Katie Labbett | M.E.A.M Multi-Agency Strategic Lead, Community Wellbeing, Herefordshire Council |
| Rachael Oakley | Walsingham Support |
| Chris Draisey | Clinical leads, Hereford Community Learning Disability and IST for LD/Autism Service. |

Apologies

| Name | Role |
| --- | --- |
| Julie Kerin | Social Worker, Herefordshire Council |
| Mary Simpson | Healthwatch |
| John Burgess | Commissioning Manager, Community Wellbeing, Herefordshire Council |
| Emma Kelly | Commissioning Officer, SEND Market Development and Engagement, Community Wellbeing, Herefordshire Council |
| Sally Wilson | Head of Care Commissioning, Herefordshire Council |
| Marie Bridgewater | Hate Crime Officer, West Mercia |
| Laura Ferguson | ADASS WM, Vice Chair, Parent of Autistic Adult |
| James Baker | Hereford Make / Person on the Autistic Spectrum |
| Kay Hughes | Parent carer |
| Zoe Bistow | Autism West Midlands |
| 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 of April**

| **Name** | **Action** | **Detail** | **Update** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 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.  15/10/24 No update as James and Anna were absent from the meeting |
| 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).  15/10/24 Sylvia will chase this. |
| 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  15/10/24 Complete - Paul has forwarded information on Autism West Midlands project. |
| 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.  15/10/24 Sylvia noted this project is on hold. |
| 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.  15/10/24 Jack said the contract is up for review in April 2025. |

Actions from the 16th of July Meeting

| **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 | Marie sent her apologies for the meeting to Paul. Paul has not received any response regarding the sharing of hate crime reports. |
| Valerie Fitch | Action 2 | Will be in contact with Julie and the Council to see what can be done regarding the Anna Freud training. | The Anna Freud Training is to be given to staff helping Neurodivergent People within the colleges |
| 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. | No update as James and Sally were Absent |

All Age Joint Autism Strategy Update – Glen Crosier

Glen discussed how in the past the Community Wellbeing directorate and in particular the Commissioning team had struggled with resources to oversee work relating to the Joint All Ages Autism Strategy (JAAAS).

However, through the re-structure within Community Wellbeing, Glen has been working on assembling a team to work on the Implementation plan for the Autism Strategy, co-ordinating work across Herefordshire Council. Glen has been speaking to colleagues in Public Health to get their commitment. He also noted the new roles within Commissioning will include autism as part of their work portfolio.

A working group will look at how best to co-ordinate across Herefordshire Council and into an oversight group for the Autism Strategy which works across the ICB in Herefordshire and Worcestershire.

Glen is also putting the working group to lead on Priority 7: Keeping Safe which Glen is currently the work stream lead for. This group consists of colleagues from across Herefordshire and Worcestershire.

Valerie attended the ICB oversite group meeting on the 30th of September and relayed some concerns on Items not looking good from Herefordshire Council’s perspective. She also raised concerns regarding anomalies within the Strategy which seemed to imply that the Autism Partnership Boards were in charge of doing some of the items. Valerie has raised this issue with Hilary Hall so the issue can be discussed with Jack regarding the priority leads.

Alexia has agreed to lead Priority 3: Supporting More Autistic People into Employment in Herefordshire. She hopes to link this work with work she is also doing around employment pathways with SEND (Special Education Needs Assessment) and What Will Happen with Universal Support which is a new programme of work that will start in April.

Worcestershire Autism Partnership Board invited Valerie to attend their meetings. Valerie accepted and attended their last meeting on Tuesday the 8th October. Valerie hopes that priority leads from Worcestershire’s Board will attend Herefordshire’s Board and keep us up to date on the work they are doing that would be of interest to us.

Valerie also welcomed members to contact her should they have any concerns with aspects of the Autism Strategy, which Valerie can feed back to the relevant group or person.

**ICS updates & Autism Strategy-Jack Caine**

Jack went briefly through the updates to the ICB’s work programmes, please see attached for more detail.

**Autism Strategy**

Jack explained that there had been two meetings of the Joint Autism Strategy Oversight Group. This is a meeting of all the different priority leads across both counties, where action plans are agreed, and progress is monitored. The quarter 3 meeting is due in the next few weeks where leads will highlight the work that is being done on the priorities. Jack noted the points Valerie highlighted around the different actions and timescales been clearer in some of the year one priorities’ work plans than in others. Jack did highlight however that some priorities already have more established work plans and projects than others.

Making Every Adult Matter (MEAM), Katie Labbett – Herefordshire Council

Katie discussed her presentation (see attached). She discussed the various community projects she has been developing or restructuring under MEAM.

### Breaking the Cycle

This project aims to support people with multiple disadvantages such as those affected by substance abuse, poor health, homelessness and domestic violence, as well as: care leavers, those at risk of exploitation or who have contact with criminal justice. The project was initially a once-a-month online Microsoft Teams prior to Katie starting her position.

Muti agencies who support these individuals will come together and look at how they can better support the needs of individuals, so they don’t fall through the gap in the system.

Katie has re-structured the project to a face-to-face fortnightly project, alternating between Tuesdays and Thursdays to help maximise attendance. She has also made it more holistic with it previously being more homelessness focused, she has implemented an action tracker to ensure actions are completed.

She has now also got the mental health liaison team, the crisis team, Mind and the Wye Valley Trust Alcohol Liaison Nurse Specialist involved.

One of the most common blocks now is undiagnosed autism needs not being met. Kate has also updated the referral form, requesting a bit more information from the services.

**CARM**

Katie has also been looking at the CALM process (Complex Adult Risk Management) which is a multi-agency meeting for individuals who have got a lot going on and need that extra support.

The feedback around the CALM has been that it’s too multiple disciplinary team generic,

actions aren't being followed through. It's missing the point about who it's for and it's doing it for

somebody rather than with what they want.

**TAM (Team Around Me)**

Katie is currently at the evaluation stage of TAM. This is a person-centred approach to holding multi agency meetings, to help individuals with multiple disadvantages. TAM offers a strength based, trauma informed and co-produced approach to conducting meetings.

The individual can lead their own meeting, they can choose who will be there, what achievable outcomes they want and how they want to attend. The aim is to improve multi agency support, looking at different ways of working, the support from carers, risk management and how the individual is to take accountability for their wellbeing.

**Ladies Nights**

This is a women only multi agency support service to help those 16+ that need to seek refuge, engage with health services and book health check-ups. It is held once a month in the evening between 5:30-8pm at the Union Café in Hereford. The first event was held on the 24th September with the next event on the 29th October.

At the previous session they had organisations such as: Mothers Union, YSS (Youth Support Service), Taurus, Swap to Stop, Healthy Lifestyles, Turning Point and the Cart Shed.

Katie discussed the difficulty of publicising this project to the right cohort while also keeping them safe. Board members suggested the Community Organisations such as those from Hereford Activities Together alongside the schools and colleges.

**Action 1** - Alexia asked Katie to share the document on Ladies Night she sends to professionals prior to doing engagement events.

### Well Space

Katie also discussed Well Space a project that she has been working on but doesn’t have the capacity to launch. This project involves joining Mind, Turning Point and Connexus to deliver lightweight mental health support for people to get on with others and help with loneliness or interpersonal effectiveness on a weekly basis. The idea was to help individuals get used to attending sessions on a regular basis to which they could then join a structured pathway with related services.

Katie then discussed her findings from lack of support for undiagnosed autism and ADHD. Lots of substance abuse and mental health issues with many individuals having co-morbidities. She also mentioned the stigma barriers affecting these individuals with multiple disadvantages. Long waiting lists putting individuals off, and more flexibility needed for this cohort of people with multiple disadvantages. Helping these individuals to get control of one of these aspects of their

life may then enable them to gradually improve their life.

**Update 08/12/2024**

Katie has had her contract extended by another year and will be moving into adult social care. Katie will now have the capacity to drive WellSpace and is currently arranging a meeting early January to get the project launched.

Valerie noted that staff need to be trained so they know how to approach an autistic person. Mentioning how an autistic person when asked for their strengths and weaknesses will often answer with what they think they are good at or their current fixation. She also discussed the issue of loneliness amongst those who are autistic because they often lack the transportation means to get about and often the communication skills to thrive in neurotypical settings.

Police Hate Crime Reports

Valerie spoke how due to staff turnover and cuts the police community support officers and police constables are currently lacking the skills required to identify a hate crime from a public order dispute. Consequently, the autistic individuals affected aren’t getting the support they need. Valerie previously was a member of the LIAG (Local Independent Advisory Group), and noticed that due to these turnovers, autistic victims and perpetrators weren’t getting referred to her to which she could help them get the support they need and navigate the system and best outcome.

**Partner Organisations**

### Herefordshire NAS

Claire Hobbs discussed how the branch had had to scale back and re-structure because of the loss of volunteers but has plenty of things in the pipeline.

### Parent Carer Voice

Claire Hobbs said they were working with the ICB (Integrated Commissioning Board) with the PINS (Partnership for Inclusion of Neurodiversity in Schools) project. They work with anyone with a disability up to 25 years old and their parents. They hold coffee mornings, support groups and offer advice or help with signposting. Link for events:

<https://pcvh.co.uk/events/>

Claire also spoke about the lack of knowledge many parents have around the support available to help their child prepare for adulthood.

Parent Carer Guide and Neurodivergence Information

Alexia spoke about how the Preparing for Adulthood nationally starts from year 9 (14-25). She mentioned that she and her colleagues have been working with the Parent Carer Voice in developing a parent carer guide, they then plan on moving on to develop a young person’s guide. Alexia also shared a link to the Local Offer page for Neurodivergence. She also discussed how preparing for adulthood is now included in the child’s annual review of their Education, Health and Care Plan from year 9 (age 14). Link:

<https://www.herefordshire.gov.uk/local-offer/neurodivergence/2>

A Community of Practice has been set up in schools for career leaders around SEND (Special Education, Needs and Disabilities) and alternative provision through Talentino. Talentino is an organisation that helps special schools, mainstream schools, or FE Colleges to deliver better careers guidance.

**Autism Diagnostic Pathways**

Valerie briefly touched on the number of young people between 5–16-year-olds in Worcestershire that are waiting for an autistic diagnostic assessment to be 1,429. In Herefordshire there are 251 young people waiting for a diagnostic assessment.

Jack mentioned that the waiting time for an adult diagnostic assessment is 22 months.

Valerie spoke how Anna Swift (Lead for Neurodivergent children and young people) has been working ona report on the Children Diagnostic Service she gives a timeline of:

* Agree new funding for new autism diagnostic and support services - September-October 2024;
* Set up and transition processes for new services - November-June 2025;
* Implementation - 2025.

**Autism West Midlands**

They have a Teen Autism Confident Programme covering Herefordshire and Worcestershire. This is a free five-week course for 13-17 years olds about Autism for autistic teenagers. Link for events:

<https://www.autismwestmidlands.org.uk/events/list/>

**Anna Freud Training**

Work is being done to get the Police to undertake the Anna Freud Training.

**Youth Employment Hub**

Alexia mentioned a youth employment hub will be opening within the next two weeks. It will offer support for those 16-25 years old, to support them into education, employment or training. This is being co-funded with the Department of Work and Pensions. This will be based at Blueschool Street in Hereford. Young people have been involved in co-creating the hub. Link:

<https://www.herefordshire.gov.uk/youth-employment-hub>

### SEND and alternative provision inspection

An area wide SEND (Special, Education, Needs and Disability) and alternative provision inspection is expected in late October. This is a three-week inspection jointly done by the CQC (Care Quality Commission) and OFSTED (Office for Standards in Education). It will look at the whole of services and provision around: education, health and social care in Herefordshire that are in place.

### Carer Links

Carer Links are planning on starting a peer support carer group at the Wye Circus CIC, 7 Fields, Plough Lane, Hereford. A child and parent group is already going on there. Link:

<https://www.crossroadstogether.org.uk/our-services/carerlinks/carerlinks-herefordshire/>

### A.O.B

Valerie would like it noted her thanks to Glen Crosier who is leaving Herefordshire Council on November 24th. She thanked him for his input in the Joint All Ages Autism Strategy and working with the Board for the past 18 months.

Date of next Meeting

21st January 2:00 pm - 4:30 pm, Fownhope Room, Plough Lane Offices/MS Teams

Valerie mentioned that Nicole Hynek a PhD researcher and associate lecture at Worcestershire University, School of Psychology is going to come and discuss Exploring the Psychological Contract with Autistic People in Work at the next meeting.

**Action 2 –** Paul to add Nicole Hynek, Exploring the Psychological Contract with Autistic People in Work to the agenda for the next meeting.

### Actions

| **Attendee** | **Action** | **Detail** |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Kattie Labbert | Action 1 | Alexia asked Katie to share document on Ladies Night with her that Katie sends to professionals prior to doing engagement events. |
| Paul Choppen | Action 2 | To add Nicole Hynek, Exploring the Psychological Contract with Autistic People in Work to the agenda for the next meeting. |