

## Autism Partnership Meeting

21<sup>st</sup> January 2025 2pm – 4:30pm

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
Laura Sirrell	Commissioning Officer, Herefordshire Council
Many-Gill-Jawara	Head of Service, Living Well, Herefordshire Council
Jack Caine	Senior Programme Lead – Learning Disability and Autism NHS Herefordshire and Worcestershire
James Baker	Hereford Make / Person on the Autistic Spectrum
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
Nikol Harrison	Area Team Manager, Neurodiversity Team, Worcester County Council
Lucy Herds	Local Nas and HANDS CIC
Nicole Hynek	PhD researcher and associate lecture at Worcestershire University, School of Psychology
Claire Hobbs	Parent Carer Voice / Parent Carer
Amy Chandler	Healthwatch Herefordshire
Katie Eastaugh	Manager, Cart Shed
Cllr Carol Gandy	Local Councillor
Alexia Heath	Post 16 Senior Advisor, Children and Young People, Herefordshire Council
Zoe Bristow	Autism West Midlands
Ashleigh Brown	Mental Health Practitioner - South & West Herefordshire Primary Care Network

### Apologies

Name	Role
Hilary Hall	Corporate Director Community Wellbeing, Herefordshire Council
Marie Bridgewater	Hate Crime Officer, West Mercia
Rebecca Antrim	Person on the Autistic Spectrum
Katy Hughes	Parent Carer
John Burgess	Commissioning Manager, Community Wellbeing, Herefordshire Council
Julie Kerin	Social Worker, Herefordshire Council
Sylvia Nicholls	Hereford Disability United

### 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 23<sup>rd</sup> 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.  21/01/25 James has will resend the contact information to Anna. Jack will link with Anna to see if anything has come from it.
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. 21 /01/25- Paul will chase Sylvia to see what has happened.
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.  21/01/25 Valerie emailed Sylvia to ask if this project will recommence. Sylvia replied to say this project has been cancelled.
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 16<sup>th</sup> 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	Marie sent her apologies for the meeting to Paul. Paul has not received any response,

Attendee	Action	Detail	
		had been mentioned as a contributing factor in the report	however Valerie has and will be discussing this in today's meeting.
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  21/01/25 Valerie has contacted Julie but has not got a response yet, Valerie will chase.
Sally Wilson	Action 3	Sally to liaise with James and find the appropriate colleague from the Council who would be able to help James in finding out what extra support Herefordshire and Ludlow college can offer neurodivergent students.	No update as James and Sally were Absent  21/01/25 Laura contacted the H&L College and it has been in contact with Bridget Snasdell - <a href="mailto:b.snasdell@hlnsc.ac.uk">b.snasdell@hlnsc.ac.uk</a> Brigid discussed the support out there for people who are neurodiverse.  Laura agreed to contact the other colleges such as the Sixth Form College and discuss further with Alexia Heath.

#### Actions from the 15<sup>th</sup> of October 2024

Attendee	Action	Detail	Update
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.	Valerie will ask Katie to forward the information. Katie Eastaugh had been to some of these events and noted the small numbers of participants at the events so far.
Paul Choppen	Action 2	To add Nicole Hynek, Exploring the Psychological Contract with Autistic People in Work to the agenda for the next meeting.	Complete

Apologies

Paul went through the apologies Meeting and Matters Arising

Laura Sirrell mentioned she had a conversation with Briget from Herefordshire, Ludlow and North Shropshire College on how they support neurodiverse students. They want to try and start college visits for school leavers a year earlier.

Laura also noted there are currently no peer support groups for students at Herefordshire, Ludlow and North Shropshire College. Laura noted this is the start of ongoing conversations with the college and Brigid is happy for people to contact her to discuss issues.

Laura was happy to contact the other colleges to find out what support they offer but will liaise with Alexia.

**Action 1** - Alexia suggested Laura and herself liaise with each other as to not duplicate work on the transitional support for students from providers.

Ladies Night

Katie Eastaugh raised concerns on the small number of participants at these events so far.

Exploring the Psychological Contract with Autistic People in Work

Nicole Hynek a PhD researcher and associate lecture at Worcestershire University, School of Psychology

Nicole went through the presentation, please see attached for more information. Nicole discussed the experiences, challenges, barriers in the employment of autistic individuals. She discussed the research aims to improve the working relationship between autistic employees and employers using the models of the double empathy problem and psychological contract (relationship and transactional expectations that employees have).

Nicole started the project in 2019 and is approaching the end. The aim of the project is to add value to the everyday lives of autistic people as well as the autism research literature. Three studies form the basis of this project.

1. The first study was looking at all the data researchers have on the psychological contract. This study found there was no research working with autistic people and the psychological contract.
2. Interview based case study with employees and employers. This research is still ongoing. So far there is a suggestion through this study that meeting the support needs of the autistic employees by line managers and colleagues is the priority.
3. Aim to use a psychological contract survey to evaluate whether it accurately captures the experiences of autistic people, with it initially being developed with general population participants 30 years ago.

Nicole helps to then take quantitative data to employers and policy makers on the experiences of autistic adults in employment and the areas that need to be addressed which may lead to higher employment figures and outcomes. Nicole hopes the study will come to a conclusion in April-May 2026 and that data in the research will form a knowledge exchange briefing that will be accessible to those who have been involved in the study including employers, participants and HR advisers.

All-Age Joint Autism Strategy Update – Valerie Fitch

Valerie mentioned that she now attends Worcestershire Autism Partnership Board meetings and is hopeful members of the Worcestershire's Board will attend ours in future to give updates on projects that cover both counties. Worcestershire's Autism Partnership Board have now also set up an autism society group of people with lived experience.

Priority 1: Joint Autism Strategy, Improving Understanding and Acceptance - Manny Jhavar-Gill (Head of Service Living Well)

Manny mentioned that the senior commissioning officer post previously held by Glen Crosier is out for advertisement. Laura and Manny are covering this role in the meantime.

Manny sought clarity on what work Glen had worked on regarding Priority 1 and Priority 7 and how best to feedback updates to the Board. A discussion ensued and Jack clarified that Laura Westwood (Senior Commissioning Manger, Worcester County Council) was the lead for Priority 1: Improving Understanding and Acceptance and that Glen Crosier was previously the lead for Priority 7: Keeping Safe, which since his departure would now rest with Manny until Glen's replacement is appointed.

**Action 2** - Valerie proposed that members of this Board could be kept up to date regarding work related to each of the Autism Strategy's priorities via the highlight report that is produced ahead of each of the Autism Strategy Oversight Group meetings. Jack agreed to share these reports from each quarterly meetings with Paul, who will share with Board members.

ICS updates & Autism Strategy Jack Caine – Integrated Care Board

Jack discussed how the next Autism Strategy Oversight group meeting is in a few weeks' time. The leads of each priority will be sharing their update report for the end of year one that ends in March. Jack has asked the leads for each priority to send him their updated action plan for year two.

Jack also shared a highlight template on ICS updates, please see attached.

**Action 3** - Valerie asked Jack to send an e-Mail to Ugo Johnson for updates on reasonable adjustments and the digital flags projects.

Oliver McGowen Mandatory Training – James Baker

James updated the group that the funding for the OMMT is due to run out in September. Although the ICS has stopped funding for the OMMT that the training is available via other private routes. James also mentioned how tier 2 training seems to be better attended than the tier 1 training.

Jack discussed how an updated code of practice would enable the ICS to have better understanding which setting should have tier 1 v tier 2 training. Jack questioned whether all services that work closely with people with a learning disability and autism require tier 2 training as they are maybe quite experienced and knowledgeable already.

A discussion ensued about the take up and impact of the OMMT. Members questioned the value in using the Anna Freud training in some instances over the OMMT, as well as how the impact of the OMMT was being assessed. A number of questions resulted from this discussion and Jack asked Valerie to send them to him for follow up.

**Action 4** - Valerie asked Jack to contact Ugo Johnson regarding him coming to a future Board meeting to discuss the impact of the OMMT.

**Action 5** – Valerie to send the list of questions to Jack.

Police Hate Crimes reports concerning Autism - Marie Bridgewater (Police Constable, Hate Crime Officer, West Mercia)

Marie sent her apologies. Valerie showed some charts Marie sent to her, showing the number of hate crime volumes had decreased This is partly down to under reporting of hate crimes, specifically involving people with autism. At a recent Police Disability Independent Advisory Group (DIAG) meeting Valerie had highlighted three incidents that had not been marked as such. This is partly

due to victims deciding not to or being unaware they can report an incident as a hate crime, and the police not identifying victims as autistic.

Police are looking at asking questions that will help them identify if someone is autistic.

Valerie is giving training tomorrow (22<sup>nd</sup> January) to police custody sergeants at Hindlip, Worcestershire regarding identifying autistic individuals and what action should be taken

Valerie also discussed how an autistic individual had been the witness to a hate crime where an individual had been beaten up. The individual has come up with 10 recommendations for how the police can improve the experience of being a witness for those who are autistic.

Partner Organisations

### **1. HANDS CIC (Herefordshire Autism and Neurodiverse Support)**

Lucy discussed how in July last year HANDS was set up as a hub to provide a combined space for groups and services providing support for individuals with autism. The hub opened in December and is based at Berrows in Bath Street.

Within this area they have office space for hot desking and meetings. There is also a main area to provide space for groups to host events such as coffee mornings. NAS has brought their library of specialised equipment that they loan to schools or to parents. They are looking to have a room for teenagers and a permanent room for an autism reality experience.

### **2. Cart Shed**

The Cart Shed are continuing their Neurodivergent programme and are running a project on being autistic for adults with ADHD. They are also developing their creative programme. They also have secured funding to continue support sessions for parents of autistic children on the behaviours of an autistic child.

Contact the Cart Shed on [katie@thecartshed.co.uk](mailto:katie@thecartshed.co.uk)

### **3. Parent Carer Voice (PCV)**

Claire discussed coffee mornings that PCV are running every six weeks with colleagues, providers and parent carers to break down barriers helping the providers understand the issues that parent carers are having. Claire then discussed PINS (Partnership for Inclusion in Neurodiversity in Schools). Parent Carer Voice are running the project and have had all of their first meetings within the school system. They are now going to cluster them into groups of four or five schools and find out what the main issues are across those groups. They then will help them develop the skills to help solve these issues.

### **4. Hereford Make**

James mentioned that Hereford Make has nearly used up the money from the Levelling Up Fund. This funding was largely used to help neurodivergent individuals who needed help with blacksmithing technique and the process and theory.

Hereford Make are also looking to do a spoons auction as part of spoons theory.

<https://www.herefordmake.org>

### **5. Healthwatch**

Healthwatch are doing a project for Public Health on increasing the uptake of child immunisations.

Aimee is currently working on a project on understanding loneliness. She is looking for case studies on understanding the reasons why people have experienced loneliness, what support they have had, would like and how they have overcome it.

If you would like to get in touch with [amy@healthwatchherefordshire.co.uk](mailto:amy@healthwatchherefordshire.co.uk)

<https://www.healthwatchherefordshire.co.uk/>

## 6. Autism West Midlands

AWM are working with Herefordshire, Ludlow and North Shropshire College and the Art College Delivering 1:1 sessions at the college and are involved in supporting students to access reasonable adjustments and accessing support in college.

Our Teen Autism Confident programme covers transitions in and around college and schools. This is available to 13–19-year-olds in Herefordshire & Worcestershire.

Autism West Midlands have loads of events going on, if you would like more information contact Zoe Bristow on [zoeb@autismwestmidlands.org.uk](mailto:zoeb@autismwestmidlands.org.uk) or visit [www.autismwestmidlands.org.uk](http://www.autismwestmidlands.org.uk)  
A.O.B.

Autism Partnership Board Webpage

Paul asked members to look at the current Autism Partnership Board webpage get in touch with him on any new content you would like changed or added to it.

Alexa shared Herefordshire Councils Neurodivergence page that has information and support for neurodiverse children, young people and their families.

[Neurodivergence – Herefordshire Council](#)

She also pointed people to the Council's local offer page for special educational needs and disabilities

[Local offer special educational needs and disabilities – Herefordshire Council](#)

**Next Meeting:** 22nd April 2025 1pm-3:30pm, Fownhope Room, Plough Lane Offices  
Actions

Attendee	Action	Detail
Alexia and Laura	Action 1	Alexia suggested Laura and herself liaise with each other as to not duplicate work on the transitional support for students from providers.
Jack Caine and Paul Choppen	Action 2	Valerie asked Jack to share the highlight report that is produced ahead of each of the Autism Strategy Oversight Group meetings with Paul, who will share with Board members.
Jack Caine	Action 3	Valerie asked Jack to send an email to Ugo Johnson for updates on reasonable adjustments and the digital flags projects.
Jack Caine	Action 4	Valerie asked Jack to contact Ugo Johnson regarding him coming to a future Board meeting to discuss the impact of the OMMT.

<b>Attendee</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Detail</b>
Valerie Fitch	Action 5	Valerie to send Jack the list of questions around OMMT for him to submit to the next LPAPB meeting.