



22 July 2024

Title	Autism Strategy: Year 2 Action Plan update
Purpose of the report	To note the report for information
Report status	Public report
Report author	Sunny Mehmi
Lead Councillor	Cllr Paul Gittings
Corporate priority	Thriving Communities
Recommendations	1. That Committee note this report as progress of the Year 2 (2023/24) All Age Autism Strategy Action Plan.

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to inform the Committee of the progress of the Year 2 (2023/24) All Age Autism Strategy Action Plan across Reading.
- 1.2 The Reading Autism Strategy and the Action Plan is unfunded and delivered within the existing resources of the partner members of the Autism Partnership Board.

2. Policy Context

- 2.1. The Autism Act 2009 set out the requirements for local authorities and NHS bodies to work with local partners to improve services and support autistic people. The Act put a duty on Government to produce and regularly review an 'Autism Strategy' to meet the needs of children, young people and adults with autism in England. The latest Autism Strategy was published in July 2021: 'The national strategy for autistic children, young people and adults: 2021 to 2026. Reading's strategy and action plan enables us to align the national priorities with local demands and needs of residents in Reading with autism.
- 2.2. The Reading All Age Autism Strategy was agreed at the Health and Wellbeing Board on the 20th January 2023. It was agreed at that Board that regular updates on the progress of the action plan would be presented back to the Board.
- 2.3. Public and partner engagement was a core element of developing Reading's Autism All Age Strategy (2022-2026), including autistic people and their families and carers, third sector and voluntary organisations and professionals from across Reading. Engagement and coproduction took place via interviews, workshops, surveys, forums, existing local groups, targeted outreach to groups and feedback sessions. This insight was used to inform and shape the strategy and its action plan, and to test emerging findings, recommendations, priorities, and vision development.
- 2.4. As a result of the engagement and feedback **Seven** priorities were developed:
 1. Improving awareness, understanding and acceptance of autism
 2. Improving support and access to early years, education and supporting positive transitions and preparing for adulthood
 3. Increasing employment, vocational and training opportunities autistic people

4. Better lives for autistic people – tackling health and care inequalities and building the right support in the community and supporting people in inpatient care
 5. Housing and supporting independent living
 6. Keeping safe and the criminal justice system
 7. Supporting families and carers of autistic people
- 2.5. The Reading All Age Autism Strategy and its associated Action Plan is developed and delivered by the Reading Partnership Board. This Board reports directly into the Health and Well Being Board to ensure this strategy remains a priority and owned by all partner agencies. The Partnership Board has presentation from the following agencies:
- RBC Adult Social Care (Chair)
 - Reading Families Forum
 - BOB Integrated Care Board
 - Brighter Futures for Children (Operational and Commissioning representatives)
 - Adults Commissioning & Contracts
 - Autism Berkshire
 - Royal Berkshire Hospital
 - Thames Valley Police

3. The Proposal

- 3.1. The following outlines the progress Partner agencies have made in delivering Year 2 of the All Age Autism Strategy. Some of the key developments include:

Autism Training

- Oliver McGowen training, provided by a Skills for Care (as an endorsed provider) is now mandatory for care staff.
- All SENDCOs have been offered Good Autism Practice (GAP) training at a conference in May 2024, the majority of schools attended. The RISE team have been trained in Autism Education Trust GAP and are now working with schools to support implementation and audit practice

Early Years Support

- Early Years Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) continue to attend where capacity allows Education, Health and Care Plan panel & update master spreadsheet of children who may require specialist provision at school.
- Early Years SEND meet with SEND health visitor to share information and planning provision available to meet need of families before starting education.

Transitions to Adulthood

- Preparing for Adulthood policy is being refreshed and will be presented to ACE in July 2024
- Implemented and roll out of the enablement project

Employment Support

- SEND Employment Forum has been meeting frequently. Both the Elevate and SEN Teams oversee the delivery of the 3-year action plan aiming to increase participation of the young people 16 to 25 with an EHCP in supported internships.
- Elevate has a robust tracking system which allows us to identify who is not in education, employment or training (NEET) and to allow us to offer information, advice and guidance.
- Over 100 young people aged 16 to 25 accessed information, advice and guidance.
- The latest official DfE data for March 2024, our official DfE data return for the young people with SEND aged 16 to 25 in Reading shows that:
 - 74% of the same cohort was registered in mainstream education, compared with 49.5% in Southeast and 53.8% in England.

- 10.4% was NEET (not in education, employment or training). This figure is above the average for Southeast 8.2% and England 10.1%.
 - Not Known figure for Reading in March 2024 was 2%, which is below the average for Southeast 37.1% and England 30.7%.
- Between February and April 199 young people aged 16 to 25 accessed information, advice and guidance appointments with Elevate Careers Service. 72 out of those young people were neurodivergent.
- Ways into Work and Shaw Trust, our providers of supported internships in Reading, have delivered training to schools, colleges and employers raising awareness of the supported internship pathways among professionals and parents. In Reading, 2.8% of the 16 to 25 cohort are participating in supported internships, above the average for Southeast at 0.3% and England at 0.6%.
- ASC have completed and commissioned a new provider to support adults into employment.

Healthcare Support

- BOB ICB Five Year plan has been published and available for viewing on website: [Joint Forward Plan | BOB ICB](#)
 - By March 2028, we will ensure that all neuro-divergent children and young people will receive the right support, at the right time and in the right place dependent on their needs and not dependent on a diagnosis
 - Improving access to assessing, understanding and supporting a person's neurodiversity.
 - Ensuring infrastructures are in place and are effective to reduce unnecessary admissions under the MHA.
 - Improving the experience for any neurodiverse people using our Mental Health Inpatient Services.
 - Improving equity of access through anticipatory and reasonable adjustments.
 - Ensuring that staff working across BOB have the skills and knowledge to identify Neurodiversity. Understand and meet the needs of this service user group.
 - Co-producing community-based assets that support the social and emotional needs of neurodivergent people.
- ICB working to develop the BHFT Neurodiversity implementation strategy. Examples of ward environmental interventions include: non-ticking clocks / temp control in buildings / signage and notice boards reduced - inpatients / estates check list for new builds and refurbishments / sensory kits trialled / improving outdoor spaces. This is ongoing work being led within BHFT by CNS Dr Reuben Pearce

Supported Living Accommodation

- Adult Social Care Support Living provision to be tendered in Autumn 2024, analysis has been completed and part of the data gathering a workshop will be held with the Autism Board.
- Supported Living accommodation has been mapped and in Reading, there are 6 providers potentially meeting the needs of autistic person. These providers are being used by ASC brokerage for placements.

Criminal Justice Support

- There have been significant improvements in The Loddon Valley Custody Suite. TV's have been installed to provide an 'info-mercial' type commentary around the custody process. It is located in the prisoner waiting area to give prisoners an insight into what to expect. It is in the format of pictures, bullet points and a running narrative. There is also special paint on the walls in the cells to allow detainees to chalk on the walls.
- Thames Valley Police (TVP) have installed 'vista' murals on the walls within the main custody areas to provide a distraction from the plain harsh interior walls and to provide some calming scenery to focus on.

- TVP have also provided feedback on lighting which will be changed to provide a uniformed style of lighting throughout custody and hopefully reduce the sensory issues caused by the unnatural lighting and lack of natural light.
- TVP are taking part in a consultation group regarding the provisions for a new custody block that will be built in the near future, with specific neurodiversity requirements in mind.
- TVP have established / official Staff support network 'Neurodiversity Support Network', with an Executive Committee, which focuses on the external provisions for the Force and how TVP can better educate Police officers to be more Neurodiversity friendly. There has been Force wide front line training provided by Autism Berkshire. This has proven very popular and has enabled many of our colleagues to feel less alone and more confident within the workplace.

Carers and Family Support

- BFFC have further developed the Short Breaks offer with high take up:
 - December short breaks, attendance 97.5%, 16 spaces
 - Feb half term short breaks, 16 places, 100 % capacity
 - Easter short breaks, 32 places. 100 % attendance.
- Make Sense Theatre developing and presenting work as part of ongoing partnership with South Street, working with the neurodivergent community in education and community settings using drama and dance as a means to unlock potential.
- Museums, My Way (partnership with The MERL and Berkshire Autism) - Drop-in breakout space and resources now provided every Saturday at Reading Museum for neurodiverse visitors and their families.
- An updated visual story for museum visits has been created and provided on the museum website
- Whitley library was assessed by Dimensions on being Autism Friendly and have received extremely positive feedback on provision. The service are looking at lessons learned and seeing what can be replicated in other sites
- New Carers Partnership has now been commissioned to provide a more timely service for carers assessment and support.

3.2. The Autism Board will continue to give annual report to the Health and Wellbeing Board.

3.3. Appendix 3 shows the remaining areas of work outstanding which were outlined in the Autism Strategy and is planned in the next 2 years.

4. Contribution to Strategic Aims

4.1 The formation of the Autism Partnership Board, the Strategy and Action Plan alongside key partners across the Health, Educational and Voluntary sector ensure that Strategic Aims set out in the Berkshire West Health and Wellbeing Strategy are met:

1. Reduce the differences in health between different groups of people
2. Support individuals at high risk of bad health outcomes to live healthy lives
3. Help children and families in early years
4. Promote good mental health and wellbeing for all children and young people
5. Promote good mental health and wellbeing for all adults

4.2 Furthermore the following ambitions are realised through the work plan of the Board, All age Autism Strategy and its Action Plan.

- To promote equality, social inclusion and a safe and healthy environment for all
- Contributions to Community Safety, Health and Wellbeing of children, young people and adults with autism.

5. Environmental and Climate Implications

5.1 There is no environmental or climate implications arising from this report.

6. Community Engagement

- 6.1 Since the developed on the Autism Strategy and Action Plan throughout 2022, no further consultation has taken place. However ongoing partnership work to deliver the strategy and its action plan continues.

7. Equality Implications

- 7.1 Under the Equality Act 2010, Section 149, a public authority must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to—
- eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act;
 - advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
 - foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.
- 7.2 An Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) was completed as part of the development of the Autism Strategy and Action Plan for the January 2023, this has been reviewed and no amendments required.

8 Other Relevant Considerations

- 8.1 Not applicable

9 Legal Implications

- 9.1 There are no duties for the Local Authority regarding the Autism Board however there is a requirement to carry out / implement the Autism Strategy which was published in July 2021: 'The national strategy for autistic children, young people and adults: 2021 to 2026 on a local level. The Local Authority also need to consider the needs of children, young people and adults as part of our legal duties under the Care and Families Act 2014 and Care Act 2014.
- 9.2 Under the Section 1 and 4 of the Care Act the Local Authority has a duty to 'Promote individual well-being' and 'Provide Information and Advice. We have a responsibility under Section 9 to 'Assess an adult care and support needs' and under section 18 a 'Duty to meet the care and support needs'.

10 Financial Implications

- 10.1 There are currently no significant budget implications regarding the implementation for the Strategy and Action Plan. The delivery of the Action Plan would be within existing resources and reviewing existing pathways to meet the needs of residents. The care and support needs of children and young people and adults who require social care are met as per our legal duties.

11 Timetable for Implementation

- 11.1 Not applicable

12 Background Papers

12.1 There are none.

Appendices

1. All Age Autism Strategy for Reading 2022 to 2026
2. Autism Action Plan – Year 2 2023/24
3. Reading All Age Autism Strategy Priorities - What we said we would do and is still outstanding
4. The Equality Impact Assessment