



**02 July 2025**

<b>Title</b>	Autism Strategy: Year 3 Action Plan update
<b>Purpose of the report</b>	To note the report for information
<b>Report status</b>	Public report
<b>Report author</b>	Sunny Mehmi
<b>Lead Councillor</b>	Cllr Paul Gittings
<b>Corporate priority</b>	Thriving Communities
<b>Recommendations</b>	That the Adult Social Care & Education Committee note this report as progress of the Year 3 (2024/25) All Age Autism Strategy Action Plan.

## 1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to inform the Adult Social Care, Children's Services and Education Committee of the progress of delivery against the Year 3 (2024/25) 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.
- 1.3 Over the last year (2024/25) delivery of the Action Plan has been noted across all workstreams and actions were delivered on time.

## 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 adopted at the Health and Wellbeing Board on the 20<sup>th</sup> 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 and ACE Committee.
- 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, feedback through 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 delivered by partners who form the Reading Autism Partnership Board. This Board reports directly into the Health and WellBeing Board to ensure this strategy remains a priority and owned by all partner agencies. The Autism 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 3 of the All-Age Autism Strategy listed under key workstreams:

#### **Autism Training**

- Ongoing Oliver McGowen training for all health and care staff.
- Autism awareness drop-in session run by Adult Social Care for all Reading Borough Council staff
- The majority of Schools have had the Good Autism Practice (GAP) training as part of the Reading Inclusion Support in Education.

#### **Early Years Support**

- Early Years Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) continue to attend where capacity allows the Education, Health and Care Plan panel.
- Early Years Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) have embedded Good Autism Practice training from Award in Education and Training (AET) training into Inclusive Practise in Early Years training for Early Years Sector.
- Early Years ARPS (18 FTE places) supporting access to early years provision.

#### **Education Support**

- The Autism Growth Approach is Reading's strategic approach to developing neuropositive practice in schools. It was written in response to the increasing numbers of autistic and neurodivergent children in the population, a lack of professional confidence in supporting this community and information from neurodivergent children and their families about their lived experiences in Schools. The strategy outlined the need for inclusive, equitable education that shifted the perspectives and narratives about neurodivergent people from deficit to difference and supported school and setting staff to make evidence informed reasonable adjustments so that autistic and neurodivergent children can thrive authentically and confidently in education.
- The Growth strategy has achieved the following outcomes:
  - Training and Capacity Building: 63% of Reading schools have completed AET's good autism practice training. This has significantly raised awareness and

competence among educators. Other initiatives such as the Instructional coaching Project and PINS project has also involved several schools in embedding best practice approaches.

- Systemic Support: The plan and supporting research and training formed the basis of the RISE operating manual, guiding advisory support and leadership practices in schools. RISE have undertaken 314 school visits to-date to support implementation of these approaches.
- Professional Networks: The AET Hub's professional network has fostered shared practice and peer support, particularly within Additionally Resourced Provisions (ARPs).
- Quality Assurance and ARP development: New places have been created in ARPs within mainstream settings. ARP training, advice and QA processes have been further developed based on the five-point plan. ARP QA visits and SEND reviews have highlighted strengths following training, in environmental adaptations, curriculum planning, and teaching methods that support memory and reduce cognitive load.
- Community Engagement: Neuropositive approaches were discussed and reinforced at yearly local SEND conferences, amplifying the voices of national autistic and neurodivergent experts and reinforcing community commitment. Good Autism Practice training has been provided for officers working with schools and for departments across BfC.
- Development of the Reading Inclusion Five Point Plan (2024–26), aimed at embedding neuro-affirmative practices across schools in Reading. Rooted in evidence-based strategies from the Autism Education Trust (AET), National Autistic Society (NAS), Education Endowment Foundation (EEF), and Department for Education (DfE), the plan seeks to create inclusive, supportive environments in which neurodivergent and SEND learners can thrive. The five-point plan outlines practical, research-informed strategies that every teacher and school should adopt:
  - Environmental Adaptations: Schools have reduced sensory distractions, used high-quality visuals, and simplified spoken instructions to support cognitive processing and reduce overload.
  - Instructional Practices: Teachers are encouraged to use principles of instruction, build in processing time, and scaffold tasks to ensure accessibility.
  - Behaviour and Routines: Emphasis is placed on teaching routines until they become automatic, using quiet transitions, and adopting relational behaviour approaches.
  - Curriculum and Communication: Specific curriculum content has been developed to meet the needs of neurodivergent learners, with a focus on language development and oracy.
  - Whole-School Culture: All staff receive autism practice training, and schools promote positive representation and active listening to neurodivergent voices.

### **Transitions to Adulthood**

- Over 3500 hours of social development by promoting play as a wellbeing tool and provide access for young people to play support building resilience and key life skills most of which will be reaching autistic young people.
- Monthly meetings held between Brighter Futures for Children and Adult Social Care to ensure a seamless transition of young people into adulthood.
- SEN Strand 4 Action Plan refreshed with focus on commissioning services to meet future need, health and employment support
- Refresh of the Preparing for Adulthood Policy and Web pages.

## **Employment Support**

- Between April 2024 and mid-March 2025, Elevate Careers Service (BFfC) had 706 careers information, advice and guidance interventions with young people aged 16 to 25 who were registered NEET (not in education, employment or training) or were at risk of NEET. 144 of those sessions were with young people who we knew were SEN or SEND.
- Elevate continued operating an appointment system from the central location at St Mary's Butts, at Reed Recruitment Agency. They have ensured that young people had access to the Elevate support from other locations such as Reading College, Katesgrove Community Centre and RBC Civic Centre.
- Elevate have worked closely with the careers leads at The Avenue School and Brookfields School and delivered 4 days of 1:1 careers guidance sessions to 24 students.
- In December 2024, in total 421 young people aged 16- 25 with an Education and Health Care plan were registered on the system. 81.2% participated in mainstream education and training (In comparison, South East 46.1% and 51.3% England); 3.1% were registered in supported internship (0.6% South East and 0.9% England)
- In 2024, Elevate has worked on tracking all young people aged 16-25 with SEND ensuring that our post 16 SEND data is robust so the right support could be directed to those who needed our support to access education or employment. In December 2024 only 1% of our cohort's destination was recorded as "not known" (in relation to their current destination in education or employment). In comparison, the average "not known" % for South East was 41.3% and 33.5% nationally in England.
- In December 2024, 8.6% of the cohort was registered NEET, the NEET figure for South East was 8.1% and 10.3% in England. (source of data NCCIS)
- Elevate continued to lead with The Post 16 Participation and Engagement network, whose key members include several key post 16 providers from education, employment including Thames Water, John Lewis Partnership, Reading College, New Meaning Training, Chiltern Training, Reading Borough Council Apprenticeships Team, Starting Point mentoring charity, DWP, Berkshire LEP.
- In July 2024 Elevate organised a careers fair for young people aged 16 to 25 including year 11 leavers with SEN/EHCP and those at risk of NEET after leaving school. Over 105 young people aged 16-25 and many parents and support workers attended on the day. Representatives attended from Army careers, Activate Learning – college courses, Adult Social Care, AWE, BFfC - Early Years Careers, Chiltern Training – Childcare and Business apprenticeships, DWP, John Lewis & Waitrose, New Meaning– Achieve, Boast, Sport and Construction programmes, New Directions College, NHS, Reading Borough Council – Apprenticeship team, Shaw Trust – Supported internships, Starting Point – Mentoring programmes, Thames Water – Apprenticeships and employability advice, Ways into Work – Supported Internships.

## **Vocational Support**

- New Directions College provide toolkits to support teaching staff to deliver provision to adults with autism along with refresher training in working with adults with autistic traits.
- New Directions College has a supported learning course provision which support adults develop skills to support more independent living and or into work – including autistic adults and neurodiversity.
- New Directions College works with employers to provide work experience opportunities and as part of that process we ensure that the learners needs are clearly communicated to employers - which will include adults with autism.

## Healthcare Support

- During 2024, the Learning Disability and Autism ICB team have established a monthly oversight board that brings together mental health provider trusts, VCSE representation and lived experience to review and monitor progress of the Learning Disability and Autism work programmes
- Ongoing support to 40 primary schools to understand how to support and meet the needs of neuro-diverse children in school settings. Work took place in partnership with BHFT, RISE team and parent carers forums.
- Commissioning of work across Berkshire to understand profiling and support needs. ICB has led on developing a policy to standardise Dynamic Support Registers (DSR) across our system. The DSR is a national policy that aims to identify autistic CYP and adults that are at risk of MH inpatient admission and promote a multi-agency response and intervention to reduce inappropriate admission under MHA
- ICB has led on developing a policy in relation to Care, education and Treatment Reviews (CeTR) to standardise practice across the system. CeTR are a national policy and aims to ensure that a persons needs are reviewed prior to admission to a MH inpatient admission to ensure that the correct community support and intervention is provided to prevent inappropriate admissions, and if an admission is appropriate for treatment of a co-occurring MH condition that a persons needs and requirements relating to their autism are understood and care planned for. CeTR also takes place during the inpatient spell occurring at least six monthly, this review ensures that a persons needs and requirements are supported during the inpatient spell, treatment is occurring and that there are plans (and progress) toward discharge.
- Commissioner Oversight Visits (CoV) are another NHSE requirement to gain assurance that the patient is safe and well and take place on a six weekly basis. The ICB have developed a local policy to standardise this practice across the system.
- An autistic lived experience review of all MH inpatient wards within BOB took place during 2024, this has informed action plans for improving inpatient wards for autistic users. This work has supported the NHSE three year Mental health, learning disability and autism inpatient quality transformation plan (2024). Ongoing work to improve MH inpatient settings for autistic service users now sits within this programme of work.
- Version three of a co-produced reasonable adjustment passport for autistic service has been implemented in March 2025, this passport has been developed to specifically focus on improving access to services and has been adopted and implemented across our MH system for adults. Work is now starting with our acute provider trusts to pilot this into out patient clinics.
- During 2024 a reasonable adjustment passport to support dental appointments in community special care dentistry was developed, piloted and evaluated. Pilot demonstrated benefits for service users attending appointments and for dental staff providing the appointment. Work will be taking place during 2025 to embed the passport into the new patient registration process and ensure it is available and can be located within the patient record.
- BOB ICB have established a service user engagement group for neuro-divergent services that supports co-production approaches. The forum meets monthly and engages with services to understand barriers to accessing services or support and identify solutions. Examples of work undertaken includes review of the ambulance experience which led to a range of recommendations being implemented by South Central Ambulance Service, co-production of the reasonable adjustment passport for special care dentistry and identifying reasonable adjustments for accident and emergency departments in acute hospitals.

### **Supported Living Accommodation**

- Supported Living accommodation tender work is underway ahead of going out to tender Autumn 2025. Approved by Reading Borough Council. Needs Analysis completed and service specifications under development. Service user working group has been set up for consultation on the tender to ensure it meets the needs of people with neurodiversity.

### **Criminal Justice Support**

- There has been significant improvement in officer understanding and awareness around Autism.
- Whilst a new Custody suite is still a few years off, but it is being designed with Neurodiversity and vulnerability in mind.

### **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.
    - Cressingham Short Breaks Residential Home has had renovation works undertaken to the home to make the garden and outdoor spaces more accessible.
  - Relaxed and adapted performances at The Hexagon and South Street, where the production and environment has been specifically designed to welcome people who will benefit from a more relaxed performance environment, including families with young children, people with an Autism Spectrum Condition.
  - Visual Stories for those visiting the arts venues are available to view or download. Familiarisation visits for those for whom new venues can cause anxiety are available under arrangement with box office.
  - The Access List for arts venues was launched in 2024 this is a way to register needs in order to make the booking process and the show experience as smooth as possible, anyone can join the Access List.
  - All library sites except Reading (pending move) have a virtual tour space on homepages for each site example <https://www.reading.gov.uk/leisure/libraries/all-libraries/tilehurst-library/>
  - 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. In addition, the museum has held special events to talk to people supported by organisations including Berkshire Vision, and Autism Berkshire.
  - Staff within Children and Young People's Disabilities Service have accessed Attention Autism Training to assist in direct work with children and young people.
  - Carers Partnership service is now embedded with no waits for carers assessments and support.
- 3.2. The Reading Autism Partnership Board will continue to oversee the delivery of the action plan through regular governance meeting and will provide an annual report to the Adult Social Care, Children's Services and Education Committee and the Health and Well-Being Board
- 3.3. Appendix 2 shows the remaining areas of work outstanding which were outlined in the Autism Strategy and is planned in the next year. Given the budget constraints, the following actions may be challenging to achieve: ongoing increasing public awareness, support with getting driving licences and reducing waiting times for autism assessments. However these will be monitored closely through the Board and mitigations sought where possible.

- 3.4. Year 4 (2025/26) is the last year of the Autism Strategy, the Board has discussed a light refresh of strategy, confirming the priorities with people with lived experience and partners. It is anticipated this work will take place between October 2025 and March 2026.

#### **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.

4.3 In addition, the Autism Strategy aims to deliver the the council plan vision to help Reading realise its potential and to ensure that everyone who lives and works here can share the benefits of its success, promoting more equal communities in Reading and Safeguard and support the health and wellbeing of Reading's adults and children.

#### **5. Environmental and Climate Implications**

5.1 There is no environmental or climate implications arising from this report. This is an existing strategy and action plan with no additions to be considered that would have environmental and climate implications.

#### **6. Community Engagement**

6.1 Since the development of 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. We ensure the voice of autistic and neurodiverse residents is reflected through our partners on the Board.

#### **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, see Appendix 3.

## **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 is within existing resources and reviewing existing pathways to meet the needs of residents. The care and support needs of our autistic residents who have eligible needs and 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 Action Plan Year 3 update
2. Reading All Age Autism Strategy Priorities - What we said we would do and is still outstanding
3. The Equality Impact Assessment

## Appendix 1 - Reading All-Age Autism Action Plan Year 3 2024/25 - Year end updates

Priority 1: Improving awareness, understanding and acceptance of autism		Lead (s): Autism Partnership Board		
Action	Measure of Success / Outcome	By When	By Whom	Work completed in 2024/25
Create opportunities for more regular and informal engagement (coffee mornings, autism forums)	Improved engagement	March 2025	Autism Berkshire  RISE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Autism Berkshire in 2024/26 supported 544 people with 4388 contacts.</li> <li>• Programmes of work delivered by Autism Berkshire included:                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Autistic Adults are offered an individual consultation when they first register. They can book another session later if they require.</li> <li>○ They can choose between a phone call, MS Teams call, face to face session either before or after the Reading Drop In (Monday afternoons twice a month), or a booked appointment at Maidenhead Library.</li> <li>○ Drop In sessions (daytime in Reading or evening in Maidenhead, rather than book another appointment as this is more efficient and builds independence and resilience; and promotes peer support and reduces isolation.</li> <li>○ Group workshops to learn about autism are held online using Zoom</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Autism awareness drop-in session run by Adult Social Care for all Reading Borough Council staff</li> <li>• Ongoing support to 40 primary schools to understand how to support and meet the needs of neuro-diverse children in school settings. Work took place in partnership with BHFT, RISE team and parent carers forums.</li> </ul>
Working with Reading Buses to increase knowledge of Autism	Raised awareness of Reading Bus workforce	March 2025	BFFC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work deferred to 2025/26</li> </ul>

Working with Ethical Reading improve the understanding and guidelines for employers, including reasonable adjustments	Increased engagement from local employers	March 2025	BFFC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Elevate continued to lead with The Post 16 Participation and Engagement network, whose key members include several key post 16 providers from education, employment including Thames Water, John Lewis Partnership, Reading College, New Meaning Training, Chiltern Training, Reading Borough Council Apprenticeships Team, Starting Point mentoring charity, DWP, Berkshire LEP.</li> <li>Elevate organised a careers fair for young people aged 16 to 25 including year 11 leavers with SEN/EHCP and those at risk of NEET after leaving school. Over 105 young people aged 16-25 and many parents and support workers attended. Their were representatives from Army careers, Activate Learning – college courses, Adult Social Care, AWE, BFfC - Early Years Careers, Chiltern Training – Childcare and Business apprenticeships, DWP, John Lewis &amp; Waitrose, New Meaning– Achieve, Boast, Sport and Construction programmes, New Directions College, NHS, Reading Borough Council – Apprenticeship team, Shaw Trust – Supported internships, Starting Point – Mentoring programmes, Thames Water – Apprenticeships and employability advice, Ways into Work – Supported Internships.</li> </ul>
<b>Priority 2: Improving support and access to early years, education and supporting positive transitions and preparing for adulthood</b>		<b>Lead (s): BFFC &amp; Adult Social Care</b>		
<b>Action</b>	<b>Measure of Success / Outcome</b>	<b>By When</b>	<b>By Whom</b>	<b>Work completed in 2024/25</b>
Dissemination of national material to raise awareness in schools to addressing bullying towards autistic children	Improve the awareness in schools to addressing bullying towards autistic children	March 2025	BFFC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Majority of Schools have had the Good Autism Practice (GAP) training as part of the Reading Inclusion Support in Education</li> <li>The Autism Growth Approach is Reading’s strategic approach to developing neuropositive practice in schools. It was written in response to the increasing numbers of autistic and</li> </ul>

				<p>neurodivergent children in the population, a lack of professional confidence in supporting this community and information from neurodivergent children and their families about their lived experiences in Schools.</p> <p>The strategy outlined the need for inclusive, equitable education that shifted the perspectives and narratives about neurodivergent people from deficit to difference and supported school and setting staff to make evidence informed reasonable adjustments so that autistic and neurodivergent children can thrive authentically and confidently in education.</p>
Ensure there is a clear process for information sharing in place between BFFC and ASC on children transitioning into adulthood	<p>Redesign of the Preparing for Adulthood Website</p> <p>Refresh of the Preparing for Adulthood Policy</p>	March 2025	BFFC / ASC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Preparing for Adulthood website and policy reviewed and refreshed</li> <li>• Monthly meetings held between Brighter Futures for Children and Adult Social Care to ensure a seamless hand over of young people</li> <li>• SEN Strand 4 Action Plan refreshed with focus on commissioning services to meet future need, health and employment support</li> </ul>
<b>Priority 3. Increasing employment, vocation and training opportunities autistic people</b>		<b>Lead (s): BFFC Elevate &amp; New Directions College</b>		
<b>Action</b>	<b>Measure of Success / Outcome</b>	<b>By When</b>	<b>By Whom</b>	<b>Work completed in 2024/25</b>
ASC to work in partnership with Job Centre+ to increase employment opportunities	Increase in the number of ASC LDA service users in employment	March 2025	ASC / Job Centre +	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ASC have established strong collaborative links with Disability Employment Advisers at Reading Jobcentre. Through this partnership with Jobcentre Plus, we aim to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Identify and tailor job opportunities that align with the strengths and interests of individuals on the autism spectrum.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Provide ongoing support to both employers and employees to ensure sustainable employment.</li> <li>○ Raise awareness among local employers about the benefits of a neurodiverse workforce.</li> <li>○ Facilitate training and workshops to improve workplace inclusivity and understanding of Autism Spectrum Conditions (ASC).</li> <li>○ Together, we are committed to creating a more inclusive job market where adults with Autism can thrive and contribute meaningfully to the workforce.</li> </ul>
Targeted work with schools and employers to support young people	Increase participation of autistic young people 16 to 18 (up to 25 with an EHCP) in accessing employment, education and training opportunities	Ongoing	Elevate, BFFC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Between April 2024 and mid-March 2025, Elevate Careers Service (BFfC) had 706 careers information, advice and guidance interventions with young people aged 16 to 25 who were registered NEET (not in education, employment or training) or were at risk of NEET. 144 of those sessions were with young people who we knew were SEN or SEND.</li> <li>● Elevate continued operating an appointment system from the central location at St Mary's Butts, at Reed Recruitment Agency. They have ensured that young people had access to the Elevate support from other locations such as Reading College, Katesgrove Community Centre and RBC Civic Centre.</li> <li>● Elevate have worked closely with the careers leads at The Avenue School and Brookfields School and delivered 4 days of 1:1 careers guidance sessions to 24 students.</li> </ul>
<b>Priority 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</b>		<b>Lead (s): BOB Integrated Care Board (ICB)</b>		
<b>Action</b>	<b>Measure of Success / Outcome</b>	<b>By When</b>	<b>By Whom</b>	<b>Work completed in 2024/25</b>

Reasonable Adjustment Projects:				
Reasonable Adjustments into Specialist Dentistry Pathways	Pilot completed. Pilot Evaluated Findings and Learning Published Implementation as BAU		BOB ICB and TVCDS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>During 2024 a reasonable adjustment passport to support dental appointments in community special care dentistry was developed, piloted and evaluated. Pilot demonstrated benefits for service users attending appointments and for dental staff providing the appointment. Work will be taking place during 2025 to embed the passport into the new patient registration process and ensure it is available and can be located within the patient record.</li> </ul>
Reasonable Adjustments into acute / MH hospitals planned procedures	Pilot completed. Pilot Evaluated Findings and Learning Published	March 2025	BOB ICB RBH, BHT, OUH	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Version three of a co-produced reasonable adjustment passport for autistic service has been implemented in March 2025, this passport has been developed to specifically focus on improving access to services and has been adopted and implemented across our MH system for adults. Work is now starting with our acute provider trusts to pilot this into out patient clinics.</li> <li>An autistic lived experience review of all MH inpatient wards within BOB took place during 2024, this has informed action plans for improving inpatient wards for autistic users. This work has supported the NHSE three year Mental health, learning disability and autism inpatient quality transformation plan (2024). Ongoing work to improve MH inpatient settings for autistic service users now sits within this programme of work.</li> </ul>
Improve DSR consent rates and uptake among autistic people in the community	Reduction of inpatient admissions for autistic people	March 2025	BOB ICB	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>ICB has led on developing a policy to standardise Dynamic Support Registers (DSR) across our system. The DSR is a national policy that aims to identify autistic CYP and adults that are at risk of MH inpatient admission and promote a multi-agency response and intervention to reduce inappropriate admission under Mental Health Act</li> </ul>
Ensure that Commissioner Oversight Visits (COVs) put	Improved engagement with COVs	March 2025	BOB ICB	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Commissioner Oversight Visits (CoV) are another NHSE requirement to gain assurance that the patient is safe and well and take place on a six weekly basis. The ICB have developed a local policy to standardise this practice across the system.</li> </ul>

reasonable adjustments in place for Commissioner Oversight Visits				
Improve C(E)TR consent rates and uptake among autistic people, both in the in-patient and community contexts and ensuring reasonable adjustments are put in place	Increasing numbers of C(E)TRs for autistic people and reduced numbers of refusals	March 2025	BOB ICB	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>ICB has led on developing a policy in relation to Care, education and Treatment Reviews (CeTR) to standardise practice across the system. CeTR are a national policy and aims to ensure that a persons needs are reviewed prior to admission to a MH inpatient admission to ensure that the correct community support and intervention is provided to prevent inappropriate admissions, and if an admission is appropriate for treatment of a co-occurring MH condition that a persons needs and requirements relating to their autism are understood and care planned for. CeTR also takes place during the inpatient spell occurring at least six monthly, this review ensures that a persons needs and requirements are supported during the inpatient spell, treatment is occurring and that there are plans (and progress) toward discharge.</li> </ul>
<b>Priority 5. Housing and supporting independent living</b>	<b>Lead (s): Adult Social Care Commissioning</b>			
No specific Year 3 actions				
<b>Action</b>	<b>Measure of Success / Outcome</b>	<b>By When</b>	<b>By Whom</b>	<b>Work completed in 2024/25</b>
<b>Priority 6 Keeping safe and improving support within the criminal and youth justice system</b>	<b>Lead (s): Autism Berkshire</b>			
<b>Action</b>	<b>Measure of Success / Outcome</b>	<b>By When</b>	<b>By Whom</b>	<b>Work completed in 2024/25</b>
Further develop a Neurodiversity Support Network for officers and Staff	Helping to raise awareness across the board and officers, which aims to normalise Neurodiversity in the workplace.	April 2025	Thames Valley Police	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>There has been significant improvement in officer understanding and awareness around Autism.</li> <li>The new Custody suite which is still a few years off is being designed with Neurodiversity and vulnerability in mind.</li> </ul>

<b>Priority 7: Supporting families and carers of autistic people</b>		<b>Lead (s): Autism Partnership Board</b>		
<b>Action</b>	<b>Measure of Success / Outcome</b>	<b>By When</b>	<b>By Whom</b>	<b>Work completed in 2024/25</b>
Work across the One Reading partnership to improve the parent / carers assessment	To support carers better, all organisations will refer all parents to the Local Offer, so they can access information and signposting, as some parents are reporting that they are unaware of the service	April 2025	BFFC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• BFFC have further developed the Short Breaks offer with high take up: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ December short breaks, attendance 97.5%, 16 spaces</li> <li>○ Feb half term short breaks, 16 places, 100 % capacity</li> <li>○ Easter short breaks, 32 places. 100 % attendance.</li> <li>○ Cressingham Short Breaks Residential Home has had renovation works undertaken to the home to make the garden and outdoor spaces more accessible.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
Recommission the Carers contract ensuring there is an emphasis for Carers of autistic residents	New carers contract in place	April 2025	Public Health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Carers Partnership service is now embedded with no waits for carers assessments and support.</li> </ul>

## **Appendix 2 - Reading All Age Autism Strategy Priorities – Year 4 Deliverables inc ongoing work from previous years**

### **PRIORITY 1 – IMPROVING AWARENESS, UNDERSTANDING AND ACCEPTANCE OF AUTISM WITHIN SOCIETY**

- Review pathways to ensure these recognise specific needs of older autistic adults, women with autism, autistic people from ethnically diverse backgrounds.
- Employment - Improved understanding and guidelines for employers, including reasonable adjustments (applying anticipatory reasonable adjustments duty – Equality Act 2010).
- We will develop and test an autism public understanding and acceptance initiative, working with autistic people, their families, and the voluntary sector.
- Use multiple methods of raising awareness of existing pre assessment and post diagnosis support provision and making it clear and easy to find including addressing language and cultural barriers for underrepresented groups, to aid proactive identification of people awaiting assessment, crisis prevention and prevention of avoidable admissions into inpatient mental health settings, making it easier to find and engage with the appropriate support, offered throughout the life course.

### **PRIORITY 2 – IMPROVING SUPPORT AND ACCESS TO EDUCATION, SUPPORTING POSITIVE TRANSITIONS AND PREPARING FOR ADULTHOOD**

- Ensuring school transport is appropriate for autistic children through training for drivers and escorts to know the needs of the autistic children and how best to communicate with them, so provide better assistance. Liaise with relevant Transport teams.
- Additional support of getting driving licence for people with anxiety and sensory difficulties
- Autistic CYP are supported to ensure better outcomes throughout their education by schools making reasonable adjustments and a commitment to address bullying towards autistic children
- Improve transitions planning for all (education/social care/health) children and adult services – more work to be done so Young People and family are provided with robust information to support

### **PRIORITY 3 – SUPPORTING MORE AUTISTIC PEOPLE INTO VOCATIONAL TRAINING AND EMPLOYMENT**

- Identify the strengths and needs of neurodivergent CYO and adults and support them to make good progress and have good outcomes.
- Develop a clear pathway through school, from school, in further and higher education and into vocational training, volunteering and work opportunities
- Peer mentorship/ championship training
- Improved understanding and guidelines for employers, including reasonable adjustments both during recruitment and in employment.

### **PRIORITY 4 – BETTER LIVES FOR AUTISTIC PEOPLE – TACKLING HEALTH AND CARE INEQUALITIES FOR AUTISTIC PEOPLE, BUILDING THE RIGHT SUPPORT IN THE COMMUNITY AND SUPPORTING PEOPLE IN INPATIENT CARE**

- Continue to work to reduce waiting times for autism assessments for children and young people.
- In order to tackle morbidity and preventable death in individuals with autism it is of utmost importance to provide regular physical health checks and to maintain high level of
- Raise the long waiting times for adult assessments in order to increase resources to bring the waiting times down.
- Provision for autistic adults who received a late diagnosis and have different support needs to those who have had earlier diagnosis or who are without learning disabilities – an identified gap.
- Action to tackle the over representation of autistic young people in mental health beds.
- Groups for adults especially social clubs for diverse interests in spaces appropriate for autistic people due to noise and sensory stimulation (i.e. light, noise, volume of music)
- Invest into activities and services adapted/adjusted to meet the needs of autistic people and to minimise sensory impact.

## **PRIORITY 5 – HOUSING AND INDEPENDENT LIVING**

- Improved data to help inform future commissioning of adapted / specialist housing.
- Autistic adults supported to access suitable accommodation
- Improve transitions planning to support independent living
- Develop innovative models of accommodation with agile care and support options including reablement.
- Address the specific needs of autistic adults in future housing and homelessness strategies
- Make better use of existing specialist housing
- Ensure there is clearer identification by BFFC of the requirements for children within their current homes so that adaptations may be considered.

## **PRIORITY 6 – KEEPING SAFE AND IMPROVING SUPPORT WITHIN THE CRIMINAL AND YOUTH JUSTICE SYSTEM**

- Work with partners to better understand the representation and needs of Autistic people within the CJ system
- Ensure partners are aware of and using the registered intermediary where appropriate.

## **PRIORITY 7 – IMPROVING SUPPORT FOR FAMILIES AND CARERS OF AUTISTIC PEOPLE**

- In order to support carers better, all organisations will refer all parents needing pre-assessment or post-diagnosis support to the Berkshire West NHS Autism and ADHD support service,
- To support carers better, all organisations will refer all parents to the Local Offer, so they can access information and signposting, as some parents are reporting that they are unaware of the service.

## Appendix 3 - Equality Impact Assessment (EIA)

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Name of proposal/activity/policy to be assessed:  
**Reading's All Age Autism Strategy 2022 - 2026**

Directorate:

**Directorates of Adult Care and Health Services and Council wide services**

Service: **Adult Social Care and Public Health and Wellbeing Team**

Name: **Sunny Mehmi**

Job Title: **Assistant Director: Adult Social Care**

Date of assessment: **12/04/2025**

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### Version History

Version	Reason	Author	Date	Approved By
1.0	Creation	Amanda Nyeke	07/06/2022	
2.0	Reviewed	Sunny Mehmi	09/06/2022	
3.0	Reviewed	Sunny Mehmi	11/10/2022	
4.0	Reviewed	Amanda Nyeke	03/11/2022	
5.0	Reviewed	Sunny Mehmi	09/06/2024	
6.0	Reviewed	Sunny Mehmi	09/06/2025	

### Scope your proposal

#### 1. What is the aim of your policy or new service/what changes are you proposing?

The proposal is to adopt a Reading All Age Autism Strategy for the period 2022-2026 in accordance with The Autism Act 2009 which sets 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 adults with autism in England. Following the publication of the latest "**The national strategy for autistic children, young people and adults: 2021 to 2026**", Reading has started the development of a local autism strategy. This aligns the national priorities in conjunction with local demands and needs of those autistic residents in Reading.

Reading's All Age Autism Strategy 2022-2026 sets out key priorities across Reading and the services which serve the Reading autistic population, their families and carers.

The Strategy identifies 7 priorities. These are:

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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, vocation 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
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## **2. Who will benefit from this proposal and how?**

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It is intended to be an important strategy in improving the health, wellbeing and wider outcomes of Reading autistic people, their families and carers;

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## **3. What outcomes does the change aim to achieve and for whom?**

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Adopting the 2022-2026 Reading All Age Autism Strategy will give the Autism Partnership Board a focus on the 7 identified priorities (see above), and set a framework for ensuring that plans to address these are monitored effectively and help to:

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4. Promoting the partnership working and integration of services.
  5. To promote equality, social inclusion and a safe and healthy environment for all
  6. Contributions to Community Safety, Health and Wellbeing of residents with autism.
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In turn, the commissioning plans over the next four years should also be driven by and reflect Reading's All Age Autism Strategy 2022-2026 priorities.

The Strategy is aimed at the entire autistic population in Reading including their families and carers and adopting it should co-ordinate efforts to outcomes for any resident potentially affected by the priority issues.

The Autism Partnership Board will drive performance forward in the chosen priority areas as set out in the Strategy. In addition, the Autism Board will continue to work collaboratively and receive reports and monitor strategy action from other local strategic partnerships involved in supporting autistic people and improving health and wellbeing.

Reading's All Age Autism Strategy 2022 - 2026 acknowledges the risks related to climate change but is not designed to address those risks at this point in time. However, the implementation plans will endeavour to include detailed actions wherever relevant to address those risks and the health implications of climate risks.

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## **7. Who are the main stakeholders and what do they want?**

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- Current autistic children, young people and adults
  - Carers and family of autistic people
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- Staff and volunteers across care and support providers in the statutory, private and voluntary sectors that support autistic people.

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### **Assess whether an EqIA is Relevant**

How does your proposal relate to eliminating discrimination; advancing equality of opportunity; promoting good community relations?

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- 8. Do you have evidence or reason to believe that some (racial, disability, sex, gender, sexuality, age and religious belief) groups may be affected differently than others?**
- 9. Make reference to the known demographic profile of the service user group, your monitoring information, research, national data/reports etc.**

Priority 1 and 4 of the strategy, address raising awareness, acceptance, understanding and reducing the health differences between groups based on the data analysis and consultation we have undergone to ensure all in the population benefit from the strategic aims.

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- 10. Is there already public concern about potentially discriminatory practices/impact or could there be? Make reference to your complaints, consultation, feedback, media reports locally/nationally.**

No

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If the answer is **Yes** to any of the above, you need to do an Equality Impact Assessment. If **No** you **MUST** complete this statement.

**An Equality Impact Assessment is not relevant because:**

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Lead Officer  
Sunny Mehmi  
Assistant Director: Adult Social Care

## Assess the Impact of the Proposal

Your assessment must include:

11. **Consultation**
12. **Collection and Assessment of Data**
13. **Judgement about whether the impact is negative or positive**

Think about who does and doesn't use the service? Is the take up representative of the community? What do different minority groups think? (You might think your policy, project or service is accessible and addressing the needs of these groups, but asking them might give you a totally different view). Does it really meet their varied needs? Are some groups less likely to get a good service?

How do your proposals relate to other services - will your proposals have knock on effects on other services elsewhere? Are there proposals being made for other services that relate to yours and could lead to a cumulative impact?

**Example:** A local authority takes separate decisions to limit the eligibility criteria for community care services; increase charges for respite services; scale back its accessible housing programme; and cut concessionary travel. Each separate decision may have a significant effect on the lives of disabled residents, and the cumulative impact of these decisions may be considerable. This combined impact would not be apparent if decisions are considered in isolation.

## Consultation

### See section 7. Community Engagement and Information

#### Collect and Assess your Data

Using information from Census, residents survey data, service monitoring data, satisfaction or complaints, feedback, consultation, research, your knowledge and the knowledge of people in your team, staff groups etc. describe how the proposal could impact on each group. Include both positive and negative impacts.

(Please delete relevant ticks)

#### 14. Describe how this proposal could impact on racial groups

#### 15. Is there a negative impact?      No

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No negative impact in terms of different racial groups has been identified.

Where take up of other services is disproportionately low for some racial groups which may face particular barriers to access, there will be a focusing of resources on those communities as part of the drive to reduce inequalities.

There is an ongoing need to recognise that cultural norms and barriers such as language may impact on access to support, and the All Age Autism Strategy should be a tool to address this.

Responses to the initial engagement raised the importance of ensuring that information and advice about health and wellbeing and other key information is accessible to all groups.

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**16. Describe how this proposal could impact on Sex and Gender identity (include pregnancy and maternity, marriage, gender re-assignment)**

**17. Is there a negative impact?** No

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No negative impact in terms of gender has been identified.

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**18. Describe how this proposal could impact on Disability**

**19. Is there a negative impact?** No

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No negative impact in terms of disability has been identified.

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**20. Describe how this proposal could impact on Sexual orientation (cover civil partnership)**

**21. Is there a negative impact?** No

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No negative impacts on the grounds of sexual orientation have been identified.

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**22. Describe how this proposal could impact on age**

**23. Is there a negative impact?** No

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No negative impacts on the grounds of age have been identified

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**24. Describe how this proposal could impact on Religious belief**

**25. Is there a negative impact?** No

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No negative impact in terms of religion or belief has been identified.

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### **Make a Decision**

If the impact is negative then you must consider whether you can legally justify it. If not you must set out how you will reduce or eliminate the impact. If you are not sure what the impact will be you **MUST** assume that there could be a negative impact. You may have to do further consultation or test out your proposal and monitor the impact before full implementation.

**No negative impact identified – Go to sign off**

**26. How will you monitor for adverse impact in the future?**

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The long-term impact of adopting Reading's All Age Autism Strategy 2022 - 2026 should be a reduction in health inequalities and improvement in outcomes for autistic people, their families and carers. In order to track progress towards this goal, Action Plans will be developed with progress reports made to the Autism Partnership Board and fed into the Health and Well Being Board.

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Lead Officer  
Sunny Mehmi  
Assistant Director: Adult Social Care