

West Berkshire Council's All-Age Autism Strategy

2026-2029 (Draft)



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Foreword

On behalf of the Autism Partnership Board, we are proud to present and endorse the All-Age Autism Strategy for 2026–2029. This strategy reflects our commitment to recognising and supporting autistic people at every stage of life. Unlike previous approaches this strategy acknowledges that autism affects individuals irrespective of age.

The strategy celebrates the strengths, talents, and unique contributions autistic people bring to our communities, while also addressing the barriers and challenges they may face. Our priority is to make West Berkshire an inclusive district where autistic people and their families can live fulfilling, rewarding lives and enjoy the same opportunities as everyone else.

We want autistic children to receive the right support to reach their full potential. We will work with professionals and families to provide tailored guidance and care. This will be achieved through a holistic approach, with professionals and families working together to provide tailored guidance and care.

By working together, we can build a community that actively supports autistic individuals and champions their unique strengths and needs. Taking this path moves us toward a society where inclusion is fully realised in action, not just in principle.



Patrick Clark

Executive Portfolio Holder
Adult Social Care and
Public Health



Councillor Heather Codling

Executive Portfolio Holder
Children and Family Services

Summary

The vision and purpose of the strategy:

We envision a community where autistic individuals and their families are respected, empowered, and fully included in every aspect of life. Our purpose is to deliver high-quality, responsive services that reflect the diverse needs of autistic people across all ages. By ensuring equitable access to support and opportunities, we are committed to building a brighter, more inclusive future for autistic residents in West Berkshire.

The Priorities of the strategy:

1. Improving understanding and acceptance of autism within society.

Organise awareness raising campaigns for Annual Autism Awareness Day in April, using approaches such as school based activities and public posters to help increase understanding.

Enhance the knowledge and confidence of professionals working with autistic people in health and social care settings through high quality training, delivered as part of the Oliver McGowan Training for Adult Social Care.

National training program to start September 2026. The target is to train 2000 staff in the Children's workforce.

To publish a simplified easy read version of the West Berkshire Autism Partnership Board Information for Adults Living with an Autistic Spectrum Condition in West Berkshire.

Adult Social Care to develop an Easy Read version of the following information:

Autism: getting support - West Berkshire Council

Council support for people with a learning disability - West Berkshire Council

Council support for people with dementia - West Berkshire Council

General Practitioner (GP) surgeries should implement consistent reasonable adjustments to better support autistic individuals. This includes offering simple and accessible alternatives such as an online appointment booking system instead of requiring patients to phone the surgery. This is particularly important for those who may find it difficult to speak directly with reception staff. These adjustments should be adopted across all GP surgeries in West Berkshire to ensure fair and inclusive access for everyone.

2. Improving autistic children and young people's access to education and supporting the move from childhood to adulthood.

Introduce multi-support family hubs for autistic children and families. These provide a centralised, integrated access point for diverse and timely support, reducing the burden on parents. Enabling early intervention and collaboration between health, education and social care departments helps address the unique needs of families, improving outcomes and preventing crises.

The Berkshire neurodivergent strengths and needs tool will enable children, their caregivers and the professionals that know the child best (e.g. teaching staff, family workers, voluntary sector specialists) to answer questions on neurodivergent characteristics. The questions are written by national clinical and educational psychology leaders. The tool enables a neurodivergent picture of a child to be identified, visually summarised in a picture of the child's functioning, for the family and for professionals. The picture of the child's functioning will be accompanied by a series of recommendations of the adjustments that will best support the child at home, in school or setting and in the community, so that adjustments to support the child can begin immediately (to support the plan and review expectations for our SEND children).

Inclusion and belonging should underpin school behaviour policies, ensuring they are fully applicable to autistic students. Ensure schools regularly review their behaviour policy to evaluate its impact on autistic children. Encourage a structured approach that considers individual needs and promotes fair, supportive disciplinary practices. Strengthen communication between teachers and students by encouraging understanding tailored interventions. Align these efforts with the Equality Act 2010 to uphold inclusivity, protect rights and create a learning environment where autistic students thrive.

Support autistic individuals through key transitions such as moving from school to college or employment via the Autism Team Transition Project. This should be seen as a permanent project considering the many benefits it offers to autistic individuals.

Support the creation of quiet rooms in all schools. Use quiet rooms in schools as a supportive space, ensuring positive handling strategies that foster a calming and inclusive environment for autistic children.

Unauthorized absence coding, national guidance and involvement from Emotionally Based School Non-Attendance Team can support cases where children lack diagnosis or experience burnout at school level.

3. Supporting more autistic people into employment.

Promote inclusive hiring practices and workplace adjustments.

Encourage businesses to engage with the Disability Employer Scheme. Raise awareness among companies and employers about the benefits of the disability employer scheme, fostering inclusive hiring practices and increasing employment opportunities for neurodivergent individuals.

Provide guidance for employers to enhance workplace experiences and improve job retention for autistic people by strengthening their understanding of responsibilities, including the need for reasonable adjustments and awareness of support available through Access to Work.

Provide information about volunteering opportunities for young people and offer support to help them access these roles. Signpost individuals to relevant services such as the Jobcentre (Disability Employment Advisers) and Graft for additional guidance and employment support.

4. Tackling health and social care inequalities for autistic people.

Care Act assessment and reviews should include:

- Checking whether a person who has a learning disability and autism is being offered their annual health check by their GP surgery
- Checking whether they are receiving the support they need to attend their appointment.

Promote joined up working between all agencies involved in autistic person's care, such as Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services, Community Mental Health Team, Adult Social Care, Mental Health Inpatient Services and Thames Valley Integrated Care Board and ensure effective signposting to appropriate support.

Promote informed consent for young people from 14 up to 25 years with a learning disability by guiding them and their families to accessible resources, including social stories that explain health screening and help ease anxiety.

Identify areas for best practice and improvement from the LeDeR reviews (Learning from Lives and Deaths).

Promote the use of the Neurodiversity Passport and ensure it is kept up to date and uploaded to the electronic system so all clinicians can access it.

5. Building the right support in the community and supporting people receiving inpatient services.

Enhance access to information for autistic inpatients. Ensure assessments focus on individual needs, making it easier for autistic inpatients to access clear and relevant information about their treatment options and available support.

Gather feedback from autistic individuals on the quality of community and inpatient support.

Promote workshops for parents and carers of autistic adults.

Advocate for Care and Treatment Review (CTR) appointments for eligible autistic individuals in inpatient and community settings, and request CTRs where appropriate to help prevent escalation or imminent risk.

National Autistic Training Program for Inpatients.

Promote and support staff participation in the National Autistic Training Program, ensuring inpatient care teams are equipped with the knowledge and skills to provide effective support for autistic individuals.

6. Improving support within the criminal and youth justice systems.

Identify support needs early requires providing autism specific training for professionals across the criminal justice system. This includes understanding where such training is not currently taking place, how frequently it is delivered, whether refresher sessions are offered, whether the training is mandatory or optional, and whether new staff receive it automatically as part of their induction.

Provide preventative support and advocacy for autistic individuals across all sectors of the criminal justice system.

Ensure that an appropriate adult or an advocate is available to support the autistic person. Leaflets explaining the role of an appropriate adult, along with guidance on how to access one, should be made available and translated into different languages to ensure accessibility for all.

Identify and develop opportunities for partnership working between Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service, Community Mental Health Teams, the Police and other sectors of the Criminal Justice System to ensure seamless, coordinated support for autistic individuals across West Berkshire.

Promote the Berkshire Autism Alert Card. Encourage autistic individuals to consider applying for the Berkshire Autism Alert Card, ensuring they know where and how to obtain it.

Support carers in acquiring the card for those they care for, while respecting individual choice. Assess the card's effectiveness in providing recognition and improving access to appropriate support.

1. Introduction

In West Berkshire we feel it is right to have an autism strategy which covers the whole life span from childhood to adulthood, and also considers the needs of parents, siblings, carers and loved ones.

Autism can influence many different aspects of a person's life, and its impact can change over time. It may affect children in schools, colleges and universities, as well as adults in areas such as employment, housing, physical and mental health, wellbeing, social relationships and later life. Because of this, we believe it is important to involve a wide range of professionals, including those working with children in educational settings, hospital staff involved in admissions, and people working in the voluntary sector. Our strategy is therefore designed to take a whole life approach.

The estimated prevalence of autism in the UK is 1.7%, almost double the previous estimate of 1% of the population often cited in policy documents (O'Nions 2023). Autism is now recognised as a lifelong neurodevelopmental difference that is being identified in an increasing number of children and young people. It has been estimated that 90% of autistic adults aged over 50 years are undiagnosed (O'Nions 2023).

Thames Valley Integrated Care Board Autism Prevalence (Based on 1.7%)

ICB Place	Population	Autistic Population
Buckinghamshire	595,303	10,120
Oxfordshire	827,848	14,073
Berkshire West	589,245	10,017
Total	2,012,396	34,210

Patients Registered at a GP Practice, April 2024 [Internet]. NHS England Digital. [cited 2024 Dec 24]. Available from: <https://digital.nhs.uk/data-and-information/publications/statistical/patients-registered-at-a-gp-practice/april-2024>

This strategy has been co-produced through several key contributions. First, an autistic mother of three autistic children, who is a member of the Autism Partnership Board and part of the subgroup responsible for revising the strategy, has played a central role in shaping its development.

In addition, the 2023 All-Age Autism survey, reflecting the views and experiences of autistic people in West Berkshire, has significantly informed the co production process.

Another important element of co-production has come from the subgroup members of the Autism Partnership Board, together with the wider board, all of whom have contributed to revising the strategy. We have also worked closely with the Autism Lead at Prospect Park Hospital, particularly in relation to Priority 5 building the right support in the community and improving support for people receiving inpatient services.

In addition, we consulted with the Berkshire Neurodiverse System Transformation Lead to ensure our work aligns with current and planned developments. The Berkshire Neurodivergent Transformation Programme is an evidence based, whole system change initiative supported by more than 1,500 co-design partners, including over 500 people with lived experience and 459 Headteachers. Governance is provided by Directors from Frimley and Thames Valley Integrated Care Board alongside the six Directors of Children's Services across Berkshire. As part of this work, the programme is introducing the Berkshire Neurodivergent Needs and Strengths Tool. This tool represents a significant development and is highlighted under Priority Two within this strategy.

The draft strategy was shared with the Principal Social Worker for Children and Family Services at West Berkshire Council for her comments, who at the time also held the role of Service Manager for the Disabled Children's Team.

Engagement with the police has also taken place to ensure that the needs and considerations of autistic people are reflected within the wider criminal justice system. It is recognised that the police represent only one part of this system, but their involvement remains an important component of this work.

Consultation has taken place with a community link worker from the Key Working Team in Berkshire West. The team supports autistic children and young people aged 0 to 25, both in inpatient settings and within the community.

We also worked collaboratively with professionals who support autistic people by organising a focus group to ensure their perspectives were included. The questions used in this focus group were aligned with the six national priorities to ensure consistency with the national strategy.

There are key themes that will run across the strategy that we would like to highlight:

- needs led approach for children and adults to ensure the right support is provided at the right time
- sensory profile of any child
- strengths based approach
- personalisation/person centred
- enabling and empowerment
- developing a 'listening culture'
- partnership working between the home and school
- developing healthy relationships between parents and school,
- co-production, working with our autistic community to develop solutions
- clear communication and expectations.

The strategy sets out clear objectives and actions for the Autism Partnership Board to meet its vision, that West Berkshire is a place for autistic people to live, work and thrive. Our priorities align with the six priorities in the National Strategy for autistic children, young people and adults 2021-2026.

2. Purpose

1. Inclusive, Lifelong Support

The strategy adopts a whole-life approach, extending beyond adult-focused care to include children and young people. Support is provided across all stages of life from early childhood to older age, ensuring no one is left behind.

2. Promoting Autistic Wellbeing and Challenging Stigma

It advocates a shift from a deficit-driven 'medical model' of autism focused on changing the individual towards a 'social model' that prioritizes adapting environments to help autistic people thrive.

3. Enhancing Local Services

A key objective is to strengthen how local services such as education, health, employment, criminal justice, and social care understand and meet the needs of autistic individuals and their families.

4. Engaging the Community

West Berkshire Council co-produced the strategy by actively involving autistic individuals, their families, professionals, and partner organisations such as the NHS and Autism Berkshire. This collaborative effort was carried out through surveys and focus groups, ensuring the strategy is firmly rooted in real, lived experiences.

5. Alignment with National Priorities

The strategy is closely aligned with six nationally identified priority areas, ensuring consistency with broader United Kingdom objectives for autism support and inclusion.

6. How the Partnership Has Been Shaped Through Co-production

The strategy is being shaped collaboratively with the Autism Partnership Board, placing the voices of those with lived experience at its core. This co-production approach ensures the strategy is informed, inclusive, and representative of the community it serves.

3. What is Autism?

Autism describes a lifelong variation in how the brain works, shaping the way a person perceives, communicates, interacts with others, and experiences the world. It is known as a developmental spectrum condition because it presents in many different ways and can involve varying levels of support. Diagnostic features typically include differences in social communication and interaction, along with repetitive or restricted behaviours and interests. Autistic people all share some important similarities including:

- differences in the way they experience the sensory world
- differences in the way they process information
- differences in the way they communicate and socialise

‘Difference is just that, ‘difference’. This does not mean ‘deficit’ or that autistic people are processing ‘less well’. While some autistic people may need support with day-to-day living (for example if they also have learning disabilities), many do not. Living in a world designed for non-autistic children and adults can present many barriers for autistic people, and it is important that we work towards removing these barriers’.
(Sue Granger 2024).

The Autism Partnership Board endorses the definition below.

Autism definition by Sue Jukes (Autistic mother of three autistic children in West Berkshire).

Autism falls within an umbrella term referred to as neurodivergence, it is likely hereditary and often runs in families. People who are not autistic and have no other neurodivergence are referred to as neurotypical. Autistic people have a difference in the way that their brain responds to their environment when compared to neurotypicals.

Autism is not a mental illness, nor is it a condition that can or should be cured. The autistic brain works differently, it isn't faulty, and you don't grow out of it. Autism is classed as a disability in the UK, this is because an autistic person is at a disadvantage in society when compared to a non-autistic/neurotypical person because the autistic person's brain does not easily navigate society's neurotypical expectations that appear extremely odd to them.

Autism affects everybody differently; one autistic person can have a very different experience of the world to another. The table on page 10 sets out the criteria that a person should meet to obtain a diagnosis. These criteria are portrayed negatively as what is wrong with the person. As a society, we need to do more to recognise the unique strengths of the autistic brain. Some strengths are listed on the right-hand side of the table.

Diagnostic Criteria (DSM-5)	Observations by clinicians	Autism strengths
Social communication and interaction	A different view of social rules/expectations, body language, facial expressions. May need more time to respond, or may be less inclined to talk. Many autistic people have a low tolerance of hierarchy, particularly if it doesn't make sense.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Honest communicator • Deep loyalty • High levels of empathy • Strong recognition of patterns in social situations that others may miss • Won't accept societal norms if they do not feel they are appropriate
Restricted, repetitive patterns of behaviour, and interests	Need for routine often with very focused interests. If plans change, difficulty with accepting the change. Stimming – repetitive movements, actions or sounds that the individual uses to regulate their nervous system. Great enjoyment from repeatedly watching a show or listening to music on repeat.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deep focus, often experts in their field • Not easily distracted • High levels of concentration particularly on a subject of interest • Goal orientated • Creative problem solver • Reliable • Excellent memory • High levels of attention to detail
Symptoms significantly impair important aspects of functioning in society	Sensory reactions which often co occur with autism can make daily life difficult (Lights, sound, crowds, textures, tastes, smell). Some everyday tasks may need more support. Will need additional support to engage in learning at school, social environments or work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resilience (living in a world not set up for autistic people) • Skilled in advocating for themselves • When the environment suits them, they flourish
Early development	Signs must have been present in early childhood (examples could include): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Differences in play style • Not reaching expected milestones • Fewer friends than expected • Disciplinary approaches didn't work • Food intolerances 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adaptive coping skills • Strong willed • Observant
Rule out Intellectual Disability or Global Developmental Delay	Intelligence has no bearing on an autism diagnosis. Clinicians must look for evidence of other conditions that can co occur (anxiety, ADHD, dyslexia, learning difficulty).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unique cognitive profile • Potential for expertise in a certain area

Whilst acknowledging the challenges that exist for an autistic person in our world, we also need to appreciate that the different processing style also brings strengths such as high attention to detail and deep focus, creative problem solving, and desirable characters traits such as reliability and a strong moral code. Autism often co-occurs alongside other neuro-divergent presentation such as Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder and Dyslexia.

The medical model of autism focuses on deficits such as poor communication skills, with a goal of curing the individual via interventions. This model indicates that the problem is with the person rather than the environment. The medical model results in a view that autism is an impairment or a deficit which is highly stigmatising for our autistic community.

Conversely, the social model of autism focuses more on how an environment affects autistic people. The key aim being to support an autistic person by modifying their environment to meet a person's needs. There are a growing number of autism advocates (many of whom are autistic themselves) who are calling for inclusivity, in many areas to improve access to basic resources such as education, employment and transport to name a few. Providing adjustments to improve access to general resources such as education, employment, transport and health care.

Autism impacts more people than statistics suggest. Many are on long waiting lists for autism assessment, many adults are undiagnosed and there is still a gender bias resulting in under diagnosis in females. The increasing recognition of autism in our society is resulting in increasing need and demand for appropriate support to be available for this population of people.

4. National Guidance, Legislation and Programmes

4.1 The Autism Act 2009

The National Autistic Society led a campaign to create the Autism Act in England.

'In the early 1990's Jim Sinclair frequently participated in autism conferences led by parent-centric organisations but found them to be 'overwhelmingly hostile from both sensory and emotional standpoints'. The Autism Act 2009 was introduced to improve the services and support available to autistic adults in England and to guarantee their rights. The Act placed a duty on the government to produce and regularly review an autism strategy to meet the needs of autistic adults in England. It also placed a duty on the government to produce statutory guidance for local authorities to implement the strategy locally.

www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2009/15/contents

4.2 England's first Adult Autism Strategy - The Adults Autism Strategy 2010: Fulfilling and Rewarding Lives was published in 2010 and was updated in April 2014 along with statutory guidance published in November 2014. This guidance outlined nine areas of focus to be addressed:

- Training of staff who provide services to autistic adults in both voluntary and statutory services;
- Identification and diagnosis of autism in adults, leading to assessment of needs for relevant services;
- Planning in relation to the provision of services for autistic people as they move from being children to adults;
- Local planning and leadership in relation to the provision of services for autistic adults;
- Preventative support and safeguarding in line with the Care Act 2014;

- Reasonable adjustments for everyone that requires them;
- Supporting people with complex needs, whose behaviour may challenge or who may lack capacity;
- Employment for autistic adults;
- Working with the criminal justice system.

www.gov.uk/government/news/fulfilling-and-rewarding-lives-the-strategy-for-adults-with-autism-in-england

The Equality Act 2010 replaced existing anti-discrimination laws with a single Act. The Act legally protects people from discrimination, harassment and victimisation in the workplace and wider society. Autism is described as a ‘hidden disability’ within this act and therefore considered a ‘protected characteristic’. The Act applies to all service providers and those providing goods, facilities and services in Britain.

4.3 The Adults Autism Strategy 2014: Think Autism

This was an update to the government adult autism strategy (2010) version. ‘Think Autism’ set out a clear programme the Department of Health and other government departments will be taking to improve the lives of autistic people primarily through taking actions that will support local authorities, the NHS and other public services and their partners with their local implementation work. In summary its focus was on building supportive communities, promoting innovative local areas and services and improving advice and information for autistic people. Many of the requirements are now included in the Care Act 2014 and the Children and Families Act 2014.

https://data.parliament.uk/DepositedPapers/Files/DEP2014-0547/Think_Autism_Fulfilling_and_Rewarding_Lives_-_an_update.pdf

Department of Health 2015 statutory guidance for local authorities and NHS organisations to support the implementation of the adult autism strategy.

<https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5a7f7b68e5274a2e87db61e5/autism-guidance.pdf>

4.4 National Institute for Clinical Excellence Guidelines (NICE) 170 Autism Management of Autism in Children and young people.

<https://livingautism.com/nice-clinical-guideline-170-autism-management-autism-children-young-people/#:~:text=All%20health%20and%20social%20care,on%20the%20entire%20family%20unit.>

NICE produced the guidelines in conjunction with SCIE (Social Care Institute for Excellence) about the management of autism in children and young people. The aim of the guidelines is to outline and enable more effective support and provision for children and young people with autism from health and social care practitioners.

4.5 The National Strategy for autistic children, young people and adults 2021 to 2026

www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-strategy-for-autistic-children-young-people-and-adults-2021-to-2026

The Care Act 2014 places responsibility on local authorities to protect people who are at risk from abuse or neglect (sections 42-47). Many public services play a key role in helping people, including adults with learning disabilities and/or autism, to stay safe. The Care Act also strengthens the rights of people with learning disabilities, autism, their family and carers. It promotes fairer and more personalised care for individuals to be supported to achieve the outcomes that matter to them.

Other legislation inclusive of meeting the needs of autistic children and adults

- The Children Act 1989 and 2004
- Health and Social Care Act 2022
- Children and Families Act 2014
- Mental Capacity Act 2005
- Mental Capacity (Amendments) Act 2019
- The Mental Health Act 1983 and 2007 Act
- Mental Health Act 2025 (received Royal Assent 18.12.25)

NHS Long Term Plan (2019)

To ensure autistic people (and those with a learning disability) live happier and healthier lives. Focus on ensuring adjustments are provided to improve access to health care services.

5. Local Strategies, Policies and Guidance

- [West Berkshire Council Strategy 2023-2027](#)
- [West Berkshire SEND & Inclusion Strategy 2024-29](#)
- [Carers Strategy 2025-2028](#)
- [Berkshire – Safeguarding Adults Policy](#)

The West Berkshire SEND & Inclusion Strategy (2024-2029) and All-Age Autism Strategy are closely aligned in their shared commitment to fostering inclusive, person-centred support for neurodivergent individuals across all life stages. Both strategies emphasize early intervention, co-production, and the importance of tailored strength-based approaches. The SEND & Inclusion Strategy outlines priorities such as developing local specialist provision, improving transitions to adulthood and enhancing mental health support all of which are echoed in the All-Age Autism Strategy's focus on improving access to education, supporting transitions, and tackling health and care inequalities. Additionally, both strategies advocate for increased Autism awareness, inclusive environments, and collaborative working across education, health and social care sectors. Together, they form a cohesive framework aimed at ensuring autistic individuals and those with SEND receive the right support at the right time to thrive.

However there is widespread national consensus in England that the Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) system is broken and requires significant, urgent reform. Reports indicate the system is in crisis, fragmented, and under-resourced, with Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) numbers increasing by 165% since 2014. The reforms aim to transform mainstream education to be more inclusive, reducing reliance on expensive independent special school placements. The proposed reforms are based on five pillars: early Support, locality of Provision, fairness, effectiveness, and shared responsibility.

6. Members of the Autism Partnership Board

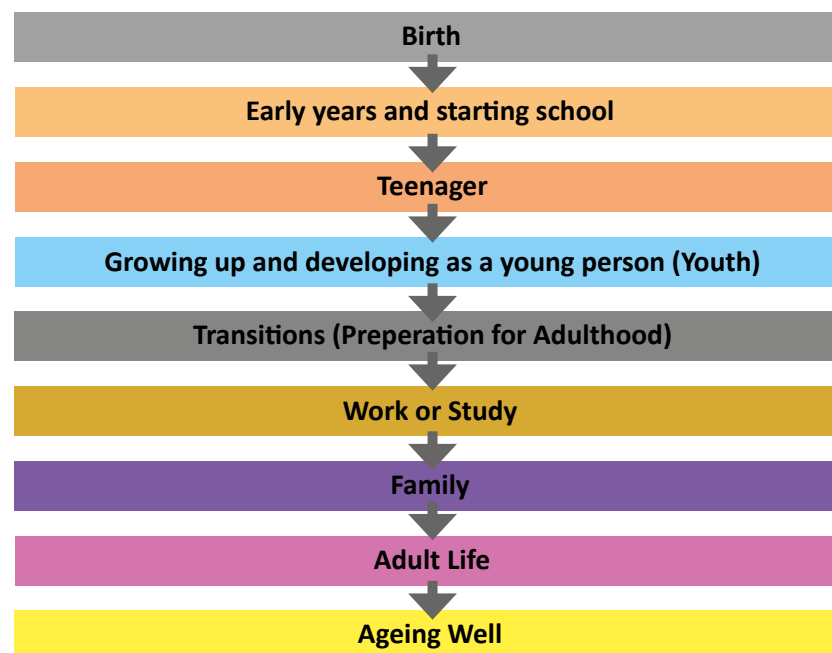
- Principal Social Worker for Adults, West Berkshire Council
- Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Strategy Officer, West Berkshire Council
- Public Health Principal (Adults), Public Health & Wellbeing Team, West Berkshire Council
- Carer for an autistic person, West Berkshire Council
- The Advocacy People, Learning Disability Partnership Board
- Chief Executive Officer, Autism Berkshire
- Adult Support Mentor, Autism Berkshire
- Head of Section 117 Adult for Learning Disabilities & Autism, Thames Valley Integrated Care Board
- Autism and Crisis Care Pathway Development Manager for Thames Valley Integrated Care Board
- Autistic Parent of three autistic child
- Team Manager Children with Disabilities Team, West Berkshire Council

7. Our Vision

We want autistic people of all ages in West Berkshire to lead fulfilling, rewarding lives and to be supported to reach their full potential. This applies whether they are in school, college, employment, or taking part in community activities, and ensures that being autistic does not limit their aspirations or opportunities. This aligns with the council's second strategic priority: creating a fairer West Berkshire with opportunities for all. We want West Berkshire to be:

- a community where autistic people feel understood and accepted
- to be an autism inclusive district or county

To deliver this vision requires us to work together with organisations and partners so that autistic children and adults receive the right support at the right time, and they are able to enjoy school, retain employment and see an improvement in their overall general wellbeing.



8. Scope

The Autism Strategy is an all-age strategy. It is pre and post diagnosis. It applies to those on the waiting list (NHS or Private) as well as those who self-identify and are formally diagnosed. It will focus on understanding the strengths and needs of the autistic person and promoting adjustments to overcome or reduce barriers to a fulfilling life. We need to be able to demonstrate and have respect for a different way of interacting or different way of doing things. The focus will be on equality, equity, diversity, maintaining identity and inclusion.

9. Overview of Priorities

In order to achieve our vision, we are aligning the six priority areas in the National Strategy:

Priority 1. Improving understanding and acceptance of autism within society

Priority 2. Improving autistic children and young people's access to education and supporting the move from childhood to adulthood

Priority 3. Supporting more autistic people into employment

Priority 4. Tackling health and care inequalities for autistic people

Priority 5. Building the right support in the community and supporting people receiving inpatient services

Priority 6. Improving support within the criminal and youth justice systems

10. Priority 1

Improving understanding and acceptance of autism within society.

Why is it important?

Increasing public understanding and acceptance of autism is essential to creating a society where autistic people have equal opportunities. For awareness to be truly effective, it must go a step further, beyond simply knowing, to actively putting that understanding into practice. This requires a cultural shift towards recognising and valuing neurodiversity, challenging stereotypes, and addressing misconceptions. It focuses on fostering inclusion, belonging, and anti discriminatory practice, while strengthening understanding. Achieving this may sometimes require a holistic approach within a multi-disciplinary setting.

An inclusive society ensures autistic people can fully participate in community life, from using public transport to accessing leisure facilities. Services should be designed with autism accessibility in mind, for example, providing clear bus timetables, simple and consistent signposting, quiet spaces, easy read version and flexible booking systems.

Improving accessibility means reviewing how services are planned and delivered, removing barriers, and making reasonable adjustments. Crucially, these changes should be co-produced with autistic people to ensure they reflect real needs and lived experiences. This collaborative approach not only improves services but also fosters greater mutual understanding between autistic and non-autistic communities.

Priority 1

Improving understanding and acceptance of autism within society.

How will this be achieved?

Link to other priorities/ strategies in the council	What will we do?	Who will do it?	The impact we are expecting
	Organise awareness raising campaigns for Annual Autism Awareness Day in April, using approaches such as school based activities and public posters to help increase understanding.	Autism Partnership Board Autism Schools Advisors Children and Family Service, West Berkshire Council	Autistic people and their families will feel more supported and understood.
	Enhance the knowledge and confidence of professionals working with autistic people in health and social care settings through high quality training, delivered as part of the Oliver McGowan Training for Adult Social Care. National training programme to start September 2026. The target is to train 2000 staff in the Children’s workforce.	Service Director in Adult Social Care, Learning and Development Lead, Principal Social Worker for Adults, West Berkshire Council Service Director for Education and SEND, West Berkshire Council	Strengthen person-centred care, improving the recognition of anxiety, and supporting better mental health outcomes for autistic people all contribute to more accessible and effective health and social care services.
	Publish a simplified easy read version of the West Berkshire Autism Partnership Board Information for Adults Living with an Autistic Spectrum Condition in West Berkshire. WBC to develop an Easy Read version of the following information: Autism: getting support - West Berkshire Council Council support for people with a learning disability - West Berkshire Council Council support for people with dementia - West Berkshire Council	Information Co-ordinator, Adult Social Care	Autistic people can access information at the right time when they need it.

Link to other priorities/ strategies in the council	What will we do?	Who will do it?	The impact we are expecting
	<p>General Practitioner (GP) surgeries should implement consistent reasonable adjustments to better support autistic individuals. This includes offering simple and accessible alternatives such as an online appointment booking system instead of requiring patients to phone the surgery. This is particularly important for those who may find it difficult to speak directly with reception staff. These adjustments should be adopted across all GP surgeries in West Berkshire to ensure fair and inclusive access for everyone.</p>	<p>Thames Valley Integrated Care Board Representative</p>	<p>Improved self- esteem and confidence when autistic individuals understand their unique abilities, they develop a stronger sense of self -worth.</p>

11. Priority 2

Improving autistic children and young people's access to education and supporting the move from childhood to adulthood.

Why is it important?

Nationally, delays in identifying neurodivergent characteristics mean that many children are not recognised early enough, and this pattern is also seen in Berkshire. As a result, families often struggle to understand how to adapt their home environments and support their children's needs, while schools can face difficulties in creating settings that are inclusive and responsive to neurodivergent pupils. When children's differences are not understood and their needs go unmet, they become disproportionately represented in mental health services, child in need and child protection processes, residential and specialist Tier 4 placements, and, indirectly, within the criminal justice and Prevent systems. They also experience poorer transitions into adulthood. Overall, outcomes for this group of children are significantly worse than for their peers.

Children waiting for diagnosis (or more specifically waiting to understand their neurodivergent characteristics through screening) are demonstrated through national and local evidence to be more likely to:

- be excluded from school and to drop out of education due to difficulties coping in the school environment without adjustment.
- burn out and present at Hospitals (A&E), children's mental health services and Children's Social Care front doors in crisis.
- be overrepresented in SEND and Social Care high-cost placements when families and education providers are unable to manage children's needs e.g., following child or family crisis.
- be overrepresented in Tier 4 inpatient care facilities

Many autistic children, teenagers, and young people require additional adaptation to thrive in education. Ensuring they can access high-quality, inclusive learning is vital for their development, wellbeing, and future opportunities. This includes providing tailored teaching approaches, sensory-friendly environments, and staff trained in autism awareness.

Support should extend beyond school years to help with the transition to adulthood. This involves coordinated planning between parents/carers, education, health, and social care services, as well as guidance on employment, further education, independent living, and community participation. A smooth, well-supported transition helps young autistic people build confidence, develop life skills, and achieve their personal goals.

Priority 2

Improving autistic children and young people's access to education and supporting the move from childhood to adulthood.

How will this be achieved?

Link to other priorities/ strategies in the council	What will we do?	Who will do it?	The impact we are expecting
	Introduction of multi-support family hubs for autistic children and families, as they provide a centralised, integrated access point for diverse, timely support, reducing the burden on parents, enabling early intervention, and fostering collaboration between health, education, and social care to address the unique needs of the whole family, improving outcomes and preventing crises.	Berkshire Transformation Lead	Families will benefit from a single, coordinated, and non-stigmatising point of access to a wide range of services, which improves outcomes for the children and reduces stress and isolation for the families.
	The Berkshire neurodivergent strengths and needs tool will enable children, their caregivers and the professionals that know the child best (e.g., teaching staff, family workers, voluntary sector specialists) to answer questions on neurodivergent characteristics. The questions are written by national clinical and educational psychology leaders. The tool enables a neurodivergent picture of a child to be identified, visually summarised in a picture of the child's functioning, for the family and for professionals. The picture of the child's functioning will be accompanied by a series of recommendations of the adjustments that will best support the child at home, in school or setting and in the community, so that adjustments to support the child can begin immediately (to support the plan, do, review expectations for our SEND children).	Berkshire Transformation Lead	We will be able to create a more inclusive, supportive, and effective environment for neurodivergent staff, children and families, leading to improved staff retention, better care, and reduced stigma.
	Inclusion and belonging should underpin school behaviour policies, ensuring they are fully applicable to autistic students. Ensure schools regularly review their behaviour policy to evaluate its impact on autistic children. Encourage a structured approach that considers individual needs and promotes fair, supportive disciplinary practices. Strengthen communication between teachers and students by fostering understanding tailored interventions. Align these efforts with the Equality Act 2010 to uphold inclusivity, protect rights and create a learning environment where autistic students thrive.	Service Director for Education and SEND, West Berkshire Council	Improving school behavior policy can significantly benefit autistic students by fostering a more supportive and inclusive environment. Adjustment that consider individual needs can reduce anxiety, prevent misunderstandings and promote fairness in disciplinary actions.

Link to other priorities/ strategies in the council	What will we do?	Who will do it?	The impact we are expecting
	Support autistic individuals through key transitions such as moving from school to college or employment via the Autism Team Transition Project. This should be seen as a permanent project considering the many benefits it offers to autistic individuals.	Autism Transitions Team, West Berkshire Council	Successful transitions can lead to better outcomes in education, employment and wellbeing.
	Support the creation of quiet rooms in all schools. Use quiet rooms in schools as a supportive space, ensuring positive handling strategies that foster a calming and inclusive environment for autistic children.	Service Director for Education and SEND, West Berkshire Council	Improved emotional wellbeing. Students can take a break in a supportive space, reducing anxiety and frustration. Children are encouraged to develop coping strategies.
	Unauthorised absence coding , national guidance and involvement from Emotionally Based School Non-Avoidance (EBSNA) team can support cases where children lack diagnosis or experience difficulties at school.	Service Director for Education and SEND, West Berkshire Council	This can help reduce stress for families, as parents often struggle to justify absences when their child's challenges are not formally recognised.

12. Priority 3

Supporting more autistic people into employment.

Why is it important?

Supporting autistic people in gaining meaningful employment is not just a matter of equity, it's a powerful opportunity to enrich workplaces and society. Employment plays a vital role in enhancing their well-being and financial independence, while their distinctive strengths such as precision, creativity, and analytical thinking, drive innovation and productivity across industries. By embracing neurodiversity, organisations cultivate more inclusive, empathetic environments that benefit everyone.

Benefits for Autistic Individuals

- Meaningful work can boost mental health, self-esteem, and overall life satisfaction.
- Employment provides economic stability and fosters autonomy.
- Jobs offer a platform to develop talents, pursue special interests, and build professional confidence.

Benefits for Businesses and Society

- Autistic employees often bring exceptional attention to detail, creative problem-solving, pattern recognition, and unwavering dedication.
- Their fresh perspectives and unconventional thinking can lead to breakthroughs and smarter solutions.
- Neurodiverse teams promote empathy, collaboration, and a richer workplace culture.

High Unemployment Rates:

The Disability Employment gap is still too wide, with around half of disabled people in work, compared to over 80% of non-disabled people. But the autism employment gap is even wider, with just 22% autistic people reported in paid work' (National Autistic Society [New shocking data highlights the autism employment gap.](#))

Despite their capabilities, many autistic people face significant barriers to employment, resulting in high unemployment rates in the UK and worldwide.

Priority 3

Supporting more autistic people into employment.

How will this be achieved?

Link to other priorities/ strategies in the council	What will we do?	Who will do it?	The impact we are expecting
	<p>Promote inclusive hiring practices and workplace adjustments.</p> <p>Encourage businesses to engage with the Disability Employer Scheme. Raise awareness among companies and employers about the benefits of the disability employer scheme, fostering inclusive hiring practices and increasing employment opportunities for neurodivergent individuals.</p>	<p>Jobcentre Plus, West Berkshire</p>	<p>More autistic individuals will gain employment.</p>
	<p>Provide guidance for employers to enhance workplace experiences and improve job retention for autistic people by strengthening their understanding of responsibilities, including the need for reasonable adjustments and awareness of support available through Access to Work.</p>	<p>Autism Partnership Board</p>	<p>Better workplace experiences for autistic people.</p>
	<p>Provide information about volunteering opportunities for young people and offer support to help them access these roles. Signpost individuals to relevant services such as the Jobcentre (Disability Employment Advisers) and Graft for additional guidance and employment support.</p>	<p>Key Working Team, Berkshire West, Berkshire Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust</p>	<p>Volunteering opportunities offer significant positive impacts for autistic people, including enhanced self-confidence, improved social and communication skills, better mental well-being, and valuable pathways to paid employment.</p>

13. Priority 4

Tackling health and social care inequalities for autistic people.

Why is it important?

The national autism strategy acknowledges the health and social care inequalities that autistic people experience throughout their lives. The independent review by the Office of the Children’s Commissioner highlights the significant national disparities in waiting times and reinforces the urgent need to move towards a needs led system. Such a system enables early screening for neurodivergent characteristics within the community and supports timely adaptations across home, school or setting, and wider community environments.

The Children’s Commissioner’s October 2024 report identifies further inequalities that require focused attention from system leaders:

- National inequity and its impact on vulnerable children: The current system disproportionately affects children living in poverty and those experiencing wider societal adversity.
- An equalities issue: The Office of the Children’s Commissioner describes the situation as “an equalities issue” that “disproportionately impact(s)” the “most [economically] disadvantaged children.” Slough and Reading are significantly affected by child poverty, and West Berkshire has seen a 52.8% increase in child poverty over the past decade.
- Inequalities for global majority heritage families: The report identifies specific disparities affecting families from global majority backgrounds. This mirrors Berkshire’s co-production feedback, which highlighted that “Asian and Black children made up just 1% and 4% of ADHD diagnoses – despite making up 12% and 6% of the child population.”
- Emotional and long term impact of waiting: Prolonged waits for diagnostic assessment place a recognised toll on children’s emotional wellbeing and mental health, with consequences that extend across

the life course. The report warns of “storing up a tidal wave of demand for adult social care services, with neurodivergent children who do not get the right support disproportionately likely to grow up experiencing problems with poor mental health, substance misuse, and offending behaviour.”

Autistic people experience higher rates of physical health conditions, and autistic adults are much more likely to live with long term health issues. They also encounter major barriers when trying to access healthcare: around 80% report difficulties in seeing a GP, and 88% feel that health professionals do not fully understand their needs. Improving access to essential healthcare is therefore critical.

Social Care Institute for Excellence ‘Tackling Inequalities in Care for People with Learning Disabilities and Autistic People project (published January 2025) examined the disparities they face, including delays in diagnosis, insufficient reasonable adjustments, and the impact of diagnostic overshadowing. [https://www.scie.org.uk/tackling-inequalities/tackling-inequalities-guidance/#:~:text=People%20with%20learning%20disabilities%20continue,autism%20\(LGA%2C%202024\).](https://www.scie.org.uk/tackling-inequalities/tackling-inequalities-guidance/#:~:text=People%20with%20learning%20disabilities%20continue,autism%20(LGA%2C%202024).)

Tackling inequalities in health and social care is key to reducing the gap in outcomes that currently contributes to reduced life expectancy, preventable deaths and unmet medical needs. By removing systemic barriers and shaping support around each person’s needs, we can uphold dignity, strengthen wellbeing and promote genuine inclusion across society.

Priority 4

Tackling health and social care inequalities for autistic people.

How will this be achieved?

Link to other priorities/ strategies in the council	What will we do?	Who will do it?	The impact we are expecting
	Care Act assessment and reviews should include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Checking whether a person who has a learning disability and autism is being offered their annual health check by their GP surgery • Checking whether they are receiving the support they need to attend their appointment. 	Adult Social Care, West Berkshire Council	This will help spot health problems earlier, reduces significant health inequalities, builds better doctor-patient relationships (including making accommodations), improves overall physical and mental health outcomes, and helps individuals manage their own care more effectively by addressing barriers to healthcare access.
	Promote joined up working between all agencies involved in autistic person's care, such as Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services, Community Mental Health Team, Adult Social Care, Mental Health Inpatient Services and Thames Valley Integrated Care Board and ensure effective signposting to appropriate support.	Key Working Team, Berkshire West , Berkshire Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust	Joined-up working for autistic people leads to more holistic, effective, and person-centred care, resulting in improved outcomes, greater independence, and a better quality of life.
	Promote informed consent for young people from 14 up to 25 years with a learning disability by guiding them and their families to accessible resources, including social stories that explain health screening and help ease anxiety.	Key Working Team, Berkshire West , Berkshire Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust	It will improve uptake among autistic people, who are currently less likely to access healthcare screenings, and help increase life expectancy. Early identification of any issues will also enable timely treatment.
	Identify areas for best practice and improvement from the LeDeR reviews (Learning from Lives and Deaths).	Adult Social Care, West Berkshire Council	Reduction death rates among autistic people.
	Promote the use of the Neurodiversity Passport and ensure it is regularly updated and uploaded to the electronic system so that all clinicians can access it	Key Working Team, Berkshire West , Berkshire Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust	Autistic individuals are able to advocate for their specific needs and assert their rights in various environments, such as healthcare, education, and employment.

14. Priority 5

Building the right support in the community and supporting people receiving inpatient services.

Why is it important?

Many autistic adults are unable to access proactive and effective mental health care. As a result, many autistic adults experience high degrees of unmet health needs, often have poor mental health outcomes, and are admitted to mental health hospitals, sometimes for long stays.

According to the National Autistic Society, data published in July 2025 shows that <https://digital.nhs.uk/data-and-information/publications/statistical/learning-disability-services-statistics>, as of June 2025, 2,040 autistic people and people with a learning disability were detained in mental health hospitals in England. Of these, 1,480 (73%) were autistic. There were also 250 under 18s in inpatient units who were either autistic or had a learning disability, and 240 of them (96%) were autistic. The number of autistic people without a learning disability detained in mental health hospitals has risen by 144% since 2015.

Supportive facilities and services are crucial for autistic individuals to live fulfilling lives by providing personalised help for sensory needs, communication challenges, and educational or employment opportunities, enabling them to thrive in society. Key examples include sensory-friendly spaces, visual communication aids, specialised staff training, early intervention, mental health support, and community resources that foster inclusion and independence by addressing the unique and diverse needs of autistic people across all stages of life.

Priority 5

Building the right support in the community and supporting people receiving inpatient services.

How will this be achieved?

Link to other priorities/ strategies in the council	What will we do?	Who will do it?	The impact we are expecting
	Enhance access to information for autistic inpatients. Ensure assessments focus on individual needs, making it easier for autistic inpatients to access clear and relevant information about their treatment options and available support.	Nurse Consultant, Autism Lead, Prospect Park Hospital, Berkshire Healthcare Foundation Trust	Implementing a person-centred approach to information accessibility can significantly improve healthcare experiences for autistic inpatients Greater patient engagement.
	Gather feedback from autistic individuals on the quality of community and inpatient support.	Nurse Consultant, Autism Lead, Prospect Park Hospital, Berkshire Healthcare Foundation Trust Community Mental Health Team, Newbury, Berkshire Healthcare Foundation Trust Key Working Team, Berkshire West , Berkshire Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust	Better inpatient services for autistic individuals.
	Promote workshops for parents and carers of autistic adults.	Autism Berkshire	This will result in improved communication and more effective support strategies.
	Advocate for Care and Treatment Review (CTR) appointments for eligible autistic individuals in inpatient and community settings, and request CTRs where appropriate to help prevent escalation or imminent risk.	Nurse Consultant, Autism Lead, Prospect Park Hospital, Berkshire Healthcare Foundation Trust	Improved quality of care. Regular reviews help ensure that treatment aligns with an individual's specific needs, preferences, and well-being. Reduced hospital admissions.
	National Autistic Training Program for Inpatients. Promote and support staff participation in the National Autistic Training Program, ensuring inpatient care teams are equipped with the knowledge and skills to provide effective support for autistic individuals.	Key Working Team, Berkshire West , Berkshire Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust Nurse Consultant, Autism Lead, Prospect Park Hospital, Berkshire Healthcare Foundation Trust	Staff will be more knowledgeable and able to support autistic patients.

15. Priority 6

Improving support within the criminal and youth justice systems.

Why is it important?

In an article titled *'Neurodiversity in the Criminal Justice System'*, published on the National Autistic Society website in July 2021, the report highlights the hidden challenges autistic people can face within the criminal justice system. In 2024, research was conducted into autistic female offenders in prison. All 12 female prisons in England were contacted and asked to provide: (1) the total number of autistic females, and (2) the total female prison population. The findings revealed an autism rate of 4.78% among the English female prison population, indicating that autism is approximately 13.7 times more prevalent in female prisons compared to the general population.

The justice system often fails to recognise or accommodate autistic needs, leading to misinterpretations of autistic traits like communication differences, which can result in misunderstandings and inadequate support.

A lack of support can lead to severe mental health impacts, social isolation, bullying, exploitation, and poor life chances for autistic individuals.

The **Equality Act 2010** requires reasonable adjustment and the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 takes into account the individual circumstances ensuring additional provision is made for those with vulnerabilities.

The research findings highlight a significant lack of understanding of autism across the criminal justice system, along with a need for enhanced training on communication needs in all sectors, not only within the police. Police services have also noted that, in many cases, the behaviour in question has already taken place by the time they are called to the scene.

Neurodivergent individuals do at times come to the attention of counter terrorism policing. According to official Home Office statistics published in November 2025, covering Individuals referred to and supported through the Prevent Programme from April 2024 to March 2025, around one third of all referrals (2,955 out of 8,778) had at least one recorded mental health or neurodiversity (MHND) condition. Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD) was the most frequently recorded condition, accounting for 14% of all referrals (1,226 out of 8,778). <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/individuals-referred-to-prevent-to-march-2025/individuals-referred-to-and-supported-through-the-prevent-programme-april-2024-to-march-2025#:~:text=around%20one%2Dthird%20of%20Prevent,relevant%20information%20was%20not%20captured>

Priority 6

Improving support within the criminal and youth justice systems.

How will this be achieved?

Link to other priorities/ strategies in the council	What will we do?	Who will do it?	The impact we are expecting
	Identify support needs early requires providing autism specific training for professionals across the criminal justice system. This includes understanding where such training is not currently taking place, how frequently it is delivered, whether refresher sessions are offered, whether the training is mandatory or optional, and whether new staff receive it automatically as part of their induction.	Thames Valley Police Probation Services Crown Prosecution Services (CPS) The Prison Service	Early intervention can significantly reduce the likelihood of autistic individuals becoming involved in the criminal justice system.
	Provide preventative support and advocacy for autistic individuals across all sectors of the criminal justice system. Ensure that an appropriate adult or an advocate is available to support the autistic person. Leaflets explaining the role of an appropriate adult, along with guidance on how to access one, should be made available and translated into different languages to ensure accessibility for all.	Thames Valley Police Probation Services Youth Justice Service Prisons Crown Prosecution Services (CPS)	Improved preventative support and advocacy for autistic individuals.
	Identify and develop opportunities for partnership working between Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service, Community Mental Health Teams, the Police and other sectors of the Criminal Justice System to ensure seamless, coordinated support for autistic individuals across West Berkshire.	Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service Community Mental Health Team, Newbury, West Berkshire Youth Justice Service and Thames Valley Police	Enhanced holistic support Improved early intervention and prevention.
	Promote the Berkshire Autism Alert Card. Encourage autistic individuals to consider applying for the Berkshire Autism Alert Card, ensuring they know where and how to obtain it. Support carers in acquiring the card for those they care for, while respecting individual choice. Assess the card's effectiveness in providing recognition and improving access to appropriate support.	Autism Berkshire	Reduced stress and burnout Improved mental and emotional health.

16. Monitoring arrangements

The Autism Partnership Board will take the lead in delivering the All-Age Autism Strategy and establishing the monitoring arrangements to track progress. The Autism Partnership Board will report to the Locality Integration Board, and regular updates on the Action Plan will also be submitted to the Locality Integration Board.

An accompanying Action Plan will be developed to run alongside the strategy. This plan will outline how each of the six identified priorities will be achieved.

- The Autism Partnership Board will continue to meet quarterly.
- At each meeting, the Action Plan will be reviewed to identify barriers, gaps, and areas for improvement.
- Regular updates on the Action Plan will be shared with the Senior Management Team to ensure transparency and accountability.

The Autism Partnership Board will collaborate with autistic individuals, carers, and partner organisations to identify solutions and drive progress. Autistic people and their families will have meaningful opportunities to contribute to the delivery of the All-Age Autism Strategy through a range of channels, including:

- An autistic parent of three autistic children who serves as a representative on the Autism Partnership Board
- A SEND Strategy Officer who is an active board member
- An Autism Spectrum Adviser for schools who contributes expertise to the board
- Partner agencies and organisations from both the voluntary and private sectors

The All-Age Autism Strategy will be formally reviewed and updated every three years, with the next revision scheduled for 2029.

17. References

1. [Autism Act 2009](#)
2. [Equality Act 2010](#)
3. [Fulfilling and rewarding lives : the strategy for adults with autism in England](#)
4. [The Adults Autism Strategy 2014: Think Autism](#)
5. [Patients Registered at a GP Practice, April 2024](#)
NHS England Digital. [cited 2024 Dec 24].
6. [West Berkshire carers strategy 2025-2028](#)
7. [West Berkshire council strategy 2023-2027](#)
8. [West Berkshire send and inclusion strategy 2024-2029](#)

18. Appendix 1 - Action Plan (Delivery Plan)

Priority 1

Improving understanding and acceptance of autism within society.

	Activity	Lead Organisation(s)
1.1	Organise awareness raising campaigns for Annual Autism Awareness Day in April, using approaches such as school based activities and public posters to help increase understanding.	Autism Schools Advisors Autism Partnership Board
1.2	Staff in Adult Social Care and Health to complete the Oliver M’Gowan Training (Tier 1 and Tier 2) in line with the training criteria and requirements.	Adult Social Care, West Berkshire Council Community Mental Health Team and other areas of the NHS
1.3	National training programme by start September 2026 – 2000 staff- Children’s workforce.	Children and Family Services, West Berkshire Council Service Director for Education and SEND, West Berkshire Council
1.4	To publish a simplified easy read version of the West Berkshire Autism Partnership Board Information for Adults Living with an Autistic Spectrum Condition in West Berkshire. Adult Social Care to develop an Easy Read version of the following information: Autism: getting support - West Berkshire Council Council support for people with a learning disability - West Berkshire Council Council support for people with dementia - West Berkshire Council	Information Co-ordinator, West Berkshire Council
1.5	General Practitioner (GP) surgeries should implement consistent reasonable adjustments to better support autistic individuals. This includes offering simple and accessible alternatives, such as an online appointment booking system instead of requiring patients to phone the surgery. This is particularly important for those who may find it difficult to speak directly with reception staff. These adjustments should be adopted across all GP surgeries in West Berkshire to ensure fair and inclusive access for everyone.	Thames Valley Integrated Care Board Representative.

Priority 2

Improving autistic children and young people's access to education and supporting the move from childhood to adulthood.

	Activity	Lead Organisation(s)
2.1	Introduction of multi-support family hubs for autistic children and families, as they provide a centralised, integrated access point for diverse, timely support, reducing the burden on parents, enabling early intervention, and fostering collaboration between health, education, and social care to address the unique needs of the whole family, improving outcomes and preventing crises.	Berkshire Transformation Lead
2.2	The Berkshire neurodivergent strengths and needs tool.	Berkshire Transformation Lead
2.3	Ensure schools regularly review their behaviour policy to evaluate its impact on autistic children. Encourage a structured approach that considers individual needs and promotes fair, supportive disciplinary practices. Strengthen communication between teachers and students by fostering understanding tailored interventions. Align these efforts with the Equality Act 2010 to uphold inclusivity, protect rights and create a learning environment where autistic students thrive.	Service Director for Education and SEND, West Berkshire Council
2.4	Support autistic individuals through key transitions such as moving from school to college or employment via the Autism Team Transition Project. This should be seen as a permanent project considering the many benefits it offers to autistic individuals.	Autism Transitions Team
2.5	Support the creation of quiet rooms in all schools. Use quiet rooms in schools as a supportive space, ensuring positive handling strategies that foster a calming and inclusive environment for autistic children.	Service Director for Education and SEND, West Berkshire Council
2.6	Unauthorised absence coding , national guidance and involvement from Emotionally Based School Non-Attendance Team can support cases where children lack diagnosis or experience difficulties at school.	Service Director for Education and SEND, West Berkshire Council

Priority 3

Supporting more autistic people into employment.

	Activity	Lead Organisation(s)
3.1	Encourage businesses to engage with the Disability Employer Scheme. Develop a register of employers on the scheme, work with Autism Berkshire to increase employers signing up to the scheme.	Adult Social Care, West Berkshire Council Autism Berkshire, Job Centre West Berkshire
3.2	Provide guidance for employers to enhance workplace experiences and improve job retention for autistic people by strengthening their understanding of responsibilities, including the need for reasonable adjustments and awareness of support available through Access to Work.	Autism Partnership Board
3.3	Provide information about volunteering opportunities for young people and offer support to help them access these roles. Signpost individuals to relevant services such as the Jobcentre (Disability Employment Advisers) and Graft for additional guidance and employment support.	Key Working Team, Berkshire West, Berkshire Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust

Priority 4

Tackling health and social care inequalities for autistic people

	Activity	Lead Organisation(s)
4.1	Care Act assessment and reviews should include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Checking whether a person who has a learning disability and autism is being offered their annual health check by their GP surgery • Checking whether they are receiving the support they need to attend their appointment. 	Adult Social Care, West Berkshire Council
4.2	Promote joined up working between all agencies involved in autistic person's care, such as Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services, Community Mental Health Team, Adult Social Care, Mental Health Inpatient Services and Thames Valley Integrated Care Board and ensure effective signposting to appropriate support.	Key Working Team, Berkshire West , Berkshire Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust
4.3	'Health Screening: Promote and support informed consent among young people aged 14 plus up until 25 years, with a learning disability by directing them and their families to accessible resources, such as social stories that explain the health screening process and help reduce anxiety.	Key Working Team, Berkshire West , Berkshire Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust
4.4	Identify areas for best practice and improvement from the LeDeR reviews (Learning from Lives and Deaths).	Adult Social Care, West Berkshire Council and other stakeholder or partners
4.5	Promote the use of the Neurodiversity Passport and ensure it is regularly updated and uploaded to the electronic system so that all clinicians can access.	Key Working Team, Berkshire West , Berkshire Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust

Priority 5

Building the right support in the community and supporting people receiving inpatient services

	Activity	Lead Organisation(s)
5.1	Enhance access to information for autistic inpatients. Ensure assessments focus on individual needs, making it easier for autistic inpatients to access clear and relevant information about their treatment options and available support.	Nurse Consultant, Autism Lead, Prospect Park Hospital, Berkshire Healthcare Foundation Trust
5.2	Gather feedback from autistic individuals on the quality of community and inpatient support.	Nurse Consultant, Autism Lead, Prospect Park Hospital, Berkshire Healthcare Foundation Trust Community Mental Health Team, Newbury, West Berkshire Key Working Team, Berkshire West, Berkshire Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust
5.3	Promote workshops for parents and carers of autistic adults.	Autism Berkshire Autism Partnership Board
5.4	Advocate for Care and Treatment Review (CTR) appointments for eligible autistic individuals in inpatient and community settings, and request CTRs where appropriate to help prevent escalation or imminent risk.	Mental health inpatient services, West Berkshire
5.5	National Autistic Training Programme for inpatients. Promote and support staff participation in the National Autistic Training Programme, ensuring inpatient care teams are equipped with the knowledge and skills to provide effective support for autistic individuals. To monitor the number of staff who attend the training programme.	Mental health inpatient and outpatients services, West Berkshire

Priority 6

Improving support within the criminal and youth justice systems.

	Activity	Lead Organisation(s)
6.1	Identify support needs early requires providing autism specific training for professionals across the criminal justice system. This includes understanding where such training is not currently taking place, how frequently it is delivered, whether refresher sessions are offered, whether the training is mandatory or optional, and whether new staff receive it automatically as part of their induction.	Thames Valley Police Probation Services Crown Prosecution Services (CPS) The Prison Service
6.2	Provide preventative support and advocacy for autistic individuals across all sectors of the criminal justice system. Ensure that an appropriate adult or an advocate is available to support the autistic person. Leaflets explaining the role of an appropriate adult, along with guidance on how to access one, should be made available and translated into different languages to ensure accessibility for all.	Thames Valley Police Probation Services Youth Justice Service Prisons Crown Prosecution Services (CPS)
6.3	Identify and develop opportunities for partnership working between Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service, Community Mental Health Teams, the Police and other sectors of the Criminal Justice System to ensure seamless, coordinated support for autistic individuals across West Berkshire.	Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service Community Mental Health Team, Newbury, West Berkshire Youth Justice Service and Thames Valley Police
6.4	Promote the Autism Alert Card. Awareness and Impact encourage autistic individuals to consider applying for the Autism Alert Card, ensuring they know where and how to obtain it. Support carers in acquiring the card for those they care for, while respecting individual choice. Assess the card's effectiveness in providing recognition and improving access to appropriate support.	Thames Valley police, Autism Berkshire, Adult social care, West Berkshire Council