



**Dudley  
Disability  
Service**

# **Dudley All Age Autism Strategy**

2019-2025



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## Foreword and introduction

This All Age Autism Strategy 2019-25 sets out Dudley's vision, priorities and plan for supporting children, young people and adults with autism and autistic spectrum conditions, for the next seven years, to ensure they are valued members of the community.

Dudley Council and Dudley Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) are committed to working with people with autism, their families, carers and key partner organisations to improve the lives and life opportunities of people of all ages with autism, and to enable them to contribute to the community.

The Council and CCG have developed this strategy in partnership with the Dudley Autism Partnership Board, which brings together representatives from Dudley Voices for Choice, Dudley Parent Carers Forum, social care, Dudley CCG, mental health, GP's, community safety, West Midlands Police, Jobcentre Plus, the National Autistic Society, Autism West Midlands, Autism Outreach, Autism Support Group, and parents, carers and people with autism.

This strategy sets out Dudley Council, Dudley CCG and partner organisations vision and strategic priorities for the next five years, to ensure that services are identified, commissioned and improved to meet current and future needs, and improve services for children, young people and adults with autism and their families and carers.

The Dudley Autism Partnership Board will monitor progress to deliver these priorities.

### **Dudley's vision is for:**

*'people of all ages with autism in Dudley, to achieve a full and happy life, in which they are independent, gain skills and knowledge and have a confident and sociable life.'*

# Autism and its effects

## What is autism?

Autism is a lifelong neurodevelopmental condition, a 'spectrum' disorder, which means that individuals experience it differently and are affected in different ways. It can be a 'hidden disability' because it can be difficult to tell whether someone has autism from their outward appearance.

Autism is a neurological difference in brain development that has a marked effect on the way in which people with autism develop. It affects the way in which they communicate with and relate to other people, and make sense of the world around them. They have difficulty in the following areas, to a greater or lesser extent:

- Social communication: for example, problems using and understanding verbal and non-verbal language, such as gestures, facial expressions and tone of voice;
- Social interaction: for example, problems in recognising and understanding other people's feelings and managing their own feelings, and predicting other people's intentions and behaviour and imagining situations outside their own routine;
- Restricted and repetitive patterns of behaviours, activities or interests; and
- Sensory sensitivity, such as over, or under-sensitivity to sounds, touch, tastes, smells, light or colours.

Everybody on the autism spectrum will have a range of abilities within each of these areas.

## The effects of autism

Many people with autism prefer to have a fixed routine and can find it difficult to cope with change. Many have high levels of anxiety and experience higher levels of stress than someone who does not have autism. This can result in mental health problems, with autistic adults without a learning disability being nine times more likely to die from suicide. The Autistica Research Group states that 80 percent of people with autism have experienced mental health issues at some point in their lives.

The National Autistic Society has identified that between 44 per cent and 52 per cent of people with autism spectrum conditions have a learning disability. About one in 10 adults with autism has epilepsy. The Autistica Report into Early Death in Autism highlights that autistic adults with a learning disability are 40 times more likely to die prematurely due to a neurological condition.

Many people with autism are able to live independent lives. Many can access mainstream services with reasonable adjustments, although some people may need support to access these services positively. Most will not need long-term specialist health and social services, but they may need specialist support at certain times in their lives to learn to manage and overcome their social, communication and sensory difficulties.

The effects of autism can make it hard for people to access services. The lives of people with autism can be significantly enhanced if their needs are known and recognised, and those who interact with them are aware of the condition. However, receiving support can rely heavily on a person's ability to communicate effectively when completing forms and taking part in assessments. Professionals may not be aware of autism and the different ways in which it affects people, which may result in them overlooking or misjudging their needs. People with high functioning autism or Asperger's Syndrome may be excluded from some social care services because they do not qualify for learning disability or mental health specific support.

Children and young people with autism are more likely to be excluded from school, and to have changed schools apart from during normal transitions.

National Autistic Society data shows that only 16 per cent of autistic adults are in full time employment and only 32 per cent are in some kind of paid work.

Research from the National Autistic Society shows that people with Autism Spectrum Conditions are four times more likely to be lonely and 79 per cent of people with autism feel socially isolated.

National and local data indicate that people aged 55 and over with autism who probably have never received a diagnosis are the least likely of all age groups to access the support they may require.

## Key national legislation and guidance

Dudley Council and Dudley CCG's key statutory responsibilities for people with autism are set out in the following legislation and guidance:

**National Autism Strategy, Fulfilling and Rewarding Lives, 2010**, which relates to adults, and not children, has five areas for development:

- Increasing awareness and understanding of autism;
- Developing pathways for diagnosis and personalised needs assessment;
- Improving access to support services in the local community;
- Helping people with autism into work; and
- Enabling local partners to plan and develop appropriate services.

**Think Autism, 2014**, refreshed the National Autism Strategy 2010, and set out three new key proposals:

- Autism Aware Communities;
- Autism Innovation Fund; and
- Better data collection and more joined up advice and information services.

**The Equalities Act 2010**, states that public bodies must develop policies and strategies in line with the requirements of S149 of the Act, which:

- eliminate unlawful discrimination victimisation and harassment;
- advance equal opportunities; and
- foster good relations.

**NICE Guidance (National Institute for Health and Care Excellence):**

- **Autism spectrum disorder in under 19s:** support and management, 2013. This covers the different ways that health and social care professionals can provide support, treatment and help for children and young people with autism, and their families and carers, from the early years through to their transition into young adult life.

- **Autism spectrum disorder in adults:** diagnosis and management, 2012 and 2016. This covers diagnosing and managing suspected or confirmed autism spectrum disorder (autism, Asperger's syndrome and atypical autism) in people aged 18 and over. It aims to improve access and engagement with interventions and services, and the experience of care, for people with autism.

**The Care Act 2014** aims to put people and their carers' in control of their care and support and includes:

- A national minimum eligibility threshold for care and support;
- The right to receive a personal budget for people and their carers who meet eligibility criteria;
- New rights for carers, including a duty to offer them an assessment and to provide support if they have eligible needs; and
- A duty for councils to consider the physical, mental and emotional wellbeing of people needing care, and to provide preventative services and support.

**The Children and Families Act 2014** sets out the following general principles that local authorities must have regard to when supporting disabled children and young people and those with Special Educational Needs under Part 3 of the Act:

- the views, wishes and feelings of children and their parents, and young people;
- the importance of them participating as fully as possible in decision-making and providing the information and support to enable them to do so; and
- supporting children and young people's development and helping them to achieve the best possible educational and other outcomes.

**The Special Education Needs and/or Disability (SEND) Code of Practice**, reflects the changes introduced by the Children and Families Act 2014, came into force in September 2014, and was updated in January 2015. It requires children and young people with more complex needs aged 0-25, to have a co-ordinated assessment process, with education, health and care (EHC) plans replacing statements and learning difficulty assessments. There is greater focus on support that enables those with SEND to succeed in their education and make a successful transition to adulthood.

**Transforming Care for People with Learning Disabilities – Next Steps 2015**, requires local authorities and the NHS to work together to transform the care for children, young people and adults with learning disabilities and/or autism and mental health problems or behaviour that challenges. This emphasises personalised care and support planning, personal budgets and personal health budgets.

**Statutory guidance for local authorities and NHS organisations to support implementation of the adult autism strategy, Department of Health 2015**, states that local authorities and the NHS:

- Should provide autism awareness training for all staff;
- Must provide specialist autism training for key staff, such as GPs and community care assessors;
- Cannot refuse a community care assessment for adults with autism based solely on IQ;
- Must appoint an autism lead in their area;
- Have to develop a clear pathway to diagnosis and assessment for adults with autism; and
- Need to commission services based on adequate population data.

**No Voice Unheard, No Right Ignored – a Department of Health Consultation for People with Learning Disabilities, Autism and Mental Health Conditions 2015**, sets out proposals to ensure that:

- People with learning disabilities are in charge, supported by family and friends;
- Inclusion and independence in the community;
- The right care is in the right place with person centred planning.

**Keep On Caring - Supporting Young People from Care to Independence, Department for Education July 2016**, strategy states that the Children's Social Care Innovation Programme will be used to rethink transitions to adulthood for young people in the children's social care system. It focuses on developing new ways to provide care leavers with the personal support networks they need to thrive; piloting 'Staying Close' for those leaving residential care; and testing out alternative models of delivery for leaving care services.

**The Think Autism Strategy Governance Refresh 2018**, sets out a revised governance model to oversee the implementation of the national autism strategy, with two overarching strategic objectives:

- Reducing the gap in life expectancy for autistic people; and
  - Autistic people are able to play a full role in society.
- The government has stated that the national autism strategy will be extended from adults to children so that it is for people of all ages, during its next review.

**The NHS Long Term Plan 2019** sets out the following new commitments for people with learning disabilities and autism:

- action will be taken to tackle the causes of morbidity and preventable deaths;
- the whole NHS will improve its understanding of the needs of people....and work together to improve their health and wellbeing;
- reduce waiting times for specialist services (for children and young people);
- enable use of personalised health budgets;
- increased investment in intensive crisis and forensic community support; and
- focus on improving the quality of inpatient care across NHS and independent sector.

## The Dudley vision for people with autism

### Dudley's vision is for:

*'people of all ages with autism in Dudley, to achieve a full and happy life, in which they are independent, gain skills and knowledge and have a confident and sociable life'.*

## The number of people with autism in Dudley

There is estimated to be about 3,160 people with autism in Dudley, and together with their families, this means at least 12,500 people in Dudley have lives touched by autism. This is based on national studies of autism, which indicate that 1.1 per cent of the population in the UK may have autism spectrum disorder, or an ASD (which includes both autism and Asperger's syndrome). This means that over 695,000 people in the UK may have ASD.

## Children and young people with autism

In 2018/2019, the Dudley Disability Service and Dudley Autism Outreach Service was working with 300 children in primary, and 227 in secondary mainstream schools, who had been diagnosed with autism. There has been a significant increase in the number of children diagnosed, rising from 250 in 2008 to 527 in 2019.

The Mental Health of Children and Young People in England 2017 publication found that 1.2 per cent of 5-19 year olds had an autistic spectrum condition. This is more common in boys (1.9 per cent) than girls (0.4 per cent). The study suggests that 1 in 7 (13.9 per cent) children aged 5-19 with special educational needs have autism spectrum conditions.

In 2010, the Science Daily's research found that there are many children who have autistic traits who are never clinically diagnosed. Therefore, they do not receive the support they need through education or health services. They also found a gender bias in diagnosing children with Autistic Spectrum Disorders, as boys are more likely to receive a diagnosis than girls, even when they display equally severe symptoms.

## Adults with autism

In 2018/2019, Dudley Disability Service worked with 77 adults with autism aged 18-24 years, 63 aged 25-34 years, 11 aged 35-44 years, 12 aged 45-54 years, four aged 55-64 years, four aged 65-74 years, and one aged 75-84 years. Seventy-eight per cent were under the age of 35 and male. This reflects the national picture, in which there are four men to one woman diagnosed with autism; and people under 35 years are more likely to have had a diagnosis, so they are more likely to access support. The lower number of people with autism aged over 35, and particularly aged over 55, reflects the national picture of people never having received a diagnosis, and so they are unable to access the support they may require.

## Support for people with autism in Dudley

Dudley Council and Dudley Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) are working with partner organisations and service users, families and carers to support children, young people and adults with autism.

This strategy reflects Dudley's ambition to improve the range of services available locally. The information below highlights the different types of provision currently available for children and adults with autism in the Dudley Borough.

There is a continuum of provision to support positive outcomes for people with autism ranging from universal services to highly specialist support. The needs of children, young people and adults with autism are met on an individual basis, and support is personalised to the needs of each person.

### Diagnosis and support for children and young people aged up to 16 years with autism

For children aged up to five years, where there are concerns about autism, a GP or paediatrician can make a referral to the Children's Assessment Service (CAU) at the Black Country Partnership NHS Foundation Trust, which provides a multi-professional medical and social assessment under the Physical and Sensory Pathway. The referral to first appointment can take up to 12 weeks, and the full assessment process can take up to six months.

For children aged 12 months to school age with a social communication disorder or a physical disability or a sensory disability, who need additional support and input, a physiotherapist or occupational therapist can make a referral to the CAU.

For children aged up to five years with emotional health and psychological development issues, a GP, paediatrician or social worker can make a referral to the Pre School Clinic in the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Unit (CAMHS), at the Dudley and Walsall Mental Health Partnership NHS Trust, for support for the families and carers.

There is an integrated pathway between the CAU and the CAMHS Pre School Clinic, with an ASD (Autism Spectrum Disorder) Liaison Lead working across the two services.

For young people aged up to 16 years, a GP can make a referral to CAMHS under the ASD Pathway. CAMHS then screens referrals before referring them to the ASD Clinic where appropriate, where a multidisciplinary team carries out a full multidisciplinary diagnostic assessment in line with NICE (the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence) guidelines. The referral to first appointment may take up to 12 weeks, and the full assessment process from a multidisciplinary team can take up to six months. The multidisciplinary team may consist of a paediatrician, psychiatrist, speech and language therapist, clinical psychologist, occupational therapist, specialist CAMHS consultant, educational psychologist, and a specialist teacher from the Autism Outreach Service (AOS). The team has specialist skills in autism diagnostic assessments. They can advise other professionals involved in the individual's care about the impact of a diagnosis or treatment, education or social support.

Following diagnosis, CAMHS refers all school age children in mainstream settings to the AOS for post diagnostic support. If further support or services are required after a diagnosis, it is provided on an individual basis, and may include therapy services, counselling, carer support, signposting to support networks, information or attending a support group. This may involve joint working with mental health or learning disability providers.

Parents of, or professionals working with, children and young people with autism can make a referral to access services provided by children's social care (for higher functioning conditions) or The Dudley Disability Service 0-25 years teams (for children with a learning disability). They can request that a Child in Need Assessment be carried out to see if their child is eligible to receive support or short breaks from social care.

Short breaks are available to some children, young people and their families where their caring responsibilities are significant and where they need a break. Information on short breaks provision can be found on the Local Offer website.

## **Diagnosis and support for young people and adults aged over 16 years with autism**

Where a young person aged over 16 years or an adult requests an autism diagnosis, they will complete an AQ50 questionnaire for the GP. Obtaining a score of 32 for males and 28 for females indicates a 'suspected' or 'likely' diagnosis of autism. However, a referral for a formal diagnosis is not made unless there is evidence that one is required for legal reasons or specialist educational support. In this case, the GP submits the completed AQ50 to the CCG with evidence of why a formal diagnosis is required, to request funding for an assessment through Dudley's neurodevelopmental pathway for adults with autism.

The time from the referral to the decision on whether to fund the assessment is approximately 30 days. If funding is agreed, the CCG will make a referral to the Adult Neurodevelopmental Service at Dudley and Walsall Mental Health Partnership NHS Trust based in Stourbridge, and the Specialist Adult Autism Assessment and Resource Centre (SPARC) for the West Midlands, based in Birmingham. The adult autism diagnostic team may include a psychologist, psychiatrist and other mental health professional.

The neurodevelopmental pathway has been designed specifically for adults with higher functioning autism, and works with mainstream services. Its main focus is diagnostic assessment – that is, to see whether or not a person has autism or Asperger syndrome. The main needs of the person will also be established and recommendations made as to how these might be addressed.

Adults with a learning disability, who are suspected of having an autism spectrum disorder, may be referred to the Learning Disability Service at the Black Country Partnership NHS Foundation Trust for support. These services provide specialist health care to adults with learning disabilities and additional complex health needs, including autistic spectrum disorders, mental health difficulties and behaviour problems.

If further support or services are required after a diagnosis, it is provided on an individual basis, and may include further signposting to relevant

services and support, such as therapy services, counselling, carer support, signposting to support networks, information or attending a support group. This may involve joint working with mental health or learning disability providers or social care.

Adults who have been diagnosed with autism are entitled to have a social care assessment that will consider individual communication preferences. Those with social care needs may be eligible to receive support from the Council; this support is means-tested, and may be free of charge subject to eligibility.

The Council will consider prevention measures that reduce social care needs, for example, adults with autism can also access adult education classes and local support groups where these are available; and for those in further education, disability advice workers may be able to signpost students to the right support and help to maintain their education.

## **Education provision for children and young people with autism**

The majority of children and young people diagnosed with autism attend their local nursery, pre-school, maintained mainstream school or academy, and have their needs met within the mainstream education services.

The Dudley Early Years Specialist Service provides specialist nurseries, which support children from birth to entry into full time school where learning development is delayed, or where there is a diagnosis of autism or evidence of ASD but without a diagnosis, or where there is a diagnosis of special educational needs. The Service provides Early Bird training to parents of children with ASD; and staff are trained in specialist teaching techniques such as TEACCH and PECS.

Those with a diagnosis aged 5-16 years may be referred to the Autism Outreach Service for targeted support and advice. This service provides support in schools through a team of specialist teachers and specialist teaching assistants who work on a peripatetic basis across mainstream schools to meet the individual support needs of children and young people diagnosed with autism.

The Autism Outreach Service's Family Advisor provides support, advice and the Cygnet Support Programme to parents and carers. The Service also provides autism awareness training to school staff, and awareness raising through peer training.

All children and young people up to age 25 years may request an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) needs assessment if they have, or the referrer has specific concerns that they might have, special educational needs (SEN). The SEND Team carried out an EHCP assessment to assess whether the pupil has SEN - a learning difficulty or disability - which calls for special educational provision to be made for him or her.

All mainstream schools must appoint a teacher to be their SENCO (Special Educational Needs Coordinator), who is responsible for the day-to-day operation of the school's SEN policy. The SENCO co-ordinates additional support for pupils with SEN, and liaises with their parents, teachers and other professionals who are involved with them. The Council encourages all education settings to develop their knowledge, skills and competencies to meet a wide range of needs including autism.

The Council's Educational Psychology Service (EPS) works in schools and with families, and provides consultation, assessment and advice for children displaying social communication and interaction difficulties or traits of autism without a diagnosis. The EPS has a senior educational psychologist who is a specialist in ASD and provides advice, consultation, training and support on individual cases and strategically to the local authority.

## **Preparing young people with autism for adulthood**

Preparing a young person with autism for adulthood involves their transition from children's to adult services. A good transition is seamless, and provides opportunities to access further education, employment, and independent living including access to supported living; full inclusion and active participation in local communities and society; being supported to build relationships and friendships; and maintain health and wellbeing with reasonable adjustments being made to support access to universal services.

Dudley has a Preparing for Adulthood Strategy and Action Plan 2018-2025, which sets out its vision and strategy for preparing young people with special educational needs and disabilities, including autism, for adulthood.

The Preparing for Adulthood Strategy supports individual planning and assessment through the transition period, using the Preparing for Adulthood section of the Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP). Young people with autism and their families and carers can request an EHCP; and the SENCOs in schools make young people with autism and their families aware of their right to request these assessments.

The Dudley Preparing for Adulthood Strategy and Action Plan is about enabling, empowering and supporting young people and adults with autism, their parents and carers to:

- Acquire the skills and knowledge they need to access ongoing education, pursue vocational opportunities and supported employment;
- To develop the skills, abilities and confidence they need to maximise / promote their independence and wellbeing. This includes independent travel training, life skills, and management of finances, daily living skills and building positive sustaining relationships with friends into adulthood;
- Active and participating citizens, inclusion, living, contribution and participating in local communities, both in terms of their development and improvement;
- To maintain good health and wellbeing and to ensure that health services are accessible to support them; and
- To ensure that appropriate advice, information is made available in accessible formats.

## Support for families and carers of people with autism

Families and carers of people with autism are entitled to request a carers' assessment to identify their own support needs in caring for someone with autism, through children's social care, the Dudley Disability Service, or the Dudley Carers Hub and Wellbeing Service, which provides information and signposting.

## Support in the community for people with autism and their families and carers

Further information on the services available for children and young people in Dudley with autism is available on the Local Offer website; for people of all ages with autism it is on the Dudley Disability Service website and the Dudley Community Information Directory website.

Information is also available from Dudley libraries.

Dudley Advocacy has advocates who are trained in autism awareness, and publish accessible information that is available online.

There are a number of organisations and independent groups that support people with autism, such as the National Autistic Society (NAS). Their website contains a list of useful local contacts and support groups.

There are a range of local community groups and support available for people with autism and their families. These include leisure and sport activities, youth provision, after school clubs, parent support groups and peer support groups.

The Dudley Group of Hospitals has introduced a system designed to alleviate stress for people attending children's, outpatients and admission wards for whom waiting and waiting rooms induce social anxiety. Patients are permitted to leave the waiting area to go for a walk and are notified when they should return by a pager provided by the hospital. There are six disability champions in the accident and emergency departments located in the borough.

Dudley and other local authorities across the West Midlands have partnered with Autism West Midlands to create a website that enables people to access google tours of the interior of key community buildings before visiting. This is to reduce some of the stress that people with autism experience when visiting new places. It includes Russell's Hall Hospital, the Ladies Walk Centre, Sedgley Library, Dudley Leisure and the Oakfield Centre.

## Training

Social care providers involved in delivering services for the Council are required to provide autistic spectrum disorder awareness training as a minimum. The Dudley Disability Service provides specific training to ensure the needs of service users and their carers are met. The current training plan consists of an e-learning module, which is supplemented by face-to-face training, taught sessions and access to accredited QCF level 2 and 3 courses. This programme is co-produced and co-delivered with people with autism.

Dudley Group NHS Foundation Trust includes autism awareness in all learning disability and autism training sessions.

## Employment

There is the following support for people with autism to access employment, which can be accessed online or through the Jobcentre Plus:

- Access to Work is a national employment support programme that provides practical and financial support to help people with disabilities, including autism, start or stay in work;
- Access to Disability Employment Advisors (DEA's) and other employment support, advice and initiatives is available through local Job Centres.

## Housing and accommodation

Dudley Council has successfully supported people with autism into new accommodation. The Council has developed a promotional CD on housing that includes the experiences of someone with autism living in Dudley.

The Council has carried out research into best practice in housing specifications for people with autism, and developed new build housing that supports people with learning disabilities and autism. Over the last ten years over 50 new homes for people with learning disabilities, autism and mental health care needs, have been built and a range of extra care and sheltered housing schemes for people aged 55 and over. The majority of these supported housing schemes consist of one and two bedroom properties to promote opportunities for independent living. In order to complement the existing schemes, the future approach to new accommodation will be on delivering bespoke housing within larger new build general needs housing schemes, for example, dormer bungalows that are suitable for families or properties that contain bespoke adaptations.

The Council has approximately 22,000 homes, and there are 5,000 housing association homes in the Borough. The Dudley MBC Housing Options Service has a dedicated Housing Occupational Therapist Team and a register of previously adapted housing. They work with people to source the right property for their needs, by considering how an existing home may be adapted, or matching the applicant to an already adapted home or considering a bespoke new build property. This service can be accessed through Dudley Council Plus.

## Criminal justice system

Oldbury Custody Suite is the nominated custody suite for detainees from the Dudley area. As part of the detainee 'booking on' procedure the Custody Officer must complete a risk assessment to establish any factors that may affect the detainee whilst they are in custody, and take action on any issues, and one of the questions is. 'Have you ever been diagnosed with autism?'

There are two functions embedded within the custody suite that may be activated if the custody officer deems it necessary; these are that health care professionals from Mountain Healthcare may be contacted, and the Mental Health Liaison and Diversion Team.

Anyone with autism or whom the custody officer believes may have autism is referred for an assessment to establish whether there are any specific needs or control plans that will minimise any risk factors. Evidence for this is obtained from a variety of sources - the detainee, arresting and escorting officers, witnesses and family members, documentation and medication carried.

Custody staff have been trained on autism, and would request assistance from an Appropriate Adult if necessary.

## Key priorities identified through consultation

This strategy sets out the Dudley area's key priorities for the next five years, which we will focus on to improve the lives of children, young people and adults with autism. The priorities are based on gaps in services and issues identified during consultation with representatives from service users, families and carers, health and social care, and professionals in a wide range of organisations through the Dudley Autism Partnership Board, Dudley Providers Forum and Learning Disability Partnership Board. An action plan to deliver these priorities accompanies this strategy.

### Priority 1: Data collection to support service planning for people with autism

The Council and CCG intend to improve their data collection on people with autism, so that they can use this information to model future demand and assist with service planning.

#### We will:

- Identify what data is currently being collected, and any gaps;
- Identify what data is required to provide comprehensive services, and any gaps;
- Carry out full needs assessments on people with autism, and capture this data as primary, secondary and tertiary needs in both the Council's Liquid Logic and Synergy ICT systems; and
- Use this information to model future demand and assist with service planning.

### Priority 2: Reasonable adjustments to enable people with autism to access services

The Council and CCG intend ensure that reasonable adjustments are made to enable people with autism to access services.

#### We will:

- Gather information on the reasonable adjustments currently being made, and identify gaps;

- Identify actions to be taken to extend the number of reasonable adjustments made, e.g. use factual information rather than metaphors in public information; provide training to services so that they are autism-friendly;
- The Autism Partnership Board will identify how its members' organisations make reasonable adjustments;
- Identify a repository to hold information on reasonable adjustments, including case studies and practice;
- Identify health inequalities;
- Pilot specific health checks for autism;
- Support STOMP (Stopping over medication of people with a learning disability, autism or both);
- Support STAMP (Supporting Treatment and Appropriate Medication in Paediatrics);
- Establish digital flags for autism on casefiles;
- Establish a designated key worker system; and
- Establish Personal Health Budgets (PHBs) and joint notional budgets through the Black Country Partnership NHS Trust Community Intensive Support Team and Forensic Community Team.

### Priority 3: Transition planning

The Council and CCG intend to ensure there is good transition planning for people with autism, during all periods of transition.

#### We will:

- Support transition planning for all periods of transition with projections of demand based on improved data collection;
- Include this data in the Preparation for Adulthood Strategy to support the delivery of its action plan for young people with autism;
- Identify how services can be reasonably adjusted for people with autism who are aged 65+, women or BAME; and
- Ensure that independent living/housing needs are identified at an early stage, and early engagement is made with the Dudley MBC Housing Options Service.

## Priority 4: Training on autism

The Council and CCG intend to develop and implement a multi-agency autism training plan to ensure that all staff working with people with autism receive autism training.

### We will:

- Develop a multi-agency training plan that:
  - Identifies training provided elsewhere;
  - Provides autism awareness training to all staff working in health, social care and education including those who work with people aged 65+;
  - Provides autism training to all primary and secondary healthcare providers as part of their ongoing workforce development;
  - Provides training to staff working in primary and secondary education services;
  - Provides training to staff working in criminal justice, i.e. police, court and probation services; and
- Include autism training in the DCCG 2019/20 mental health contracts.

## Priority 5: Dudley autism diagnosis pathway

The Council and CCG intend to review and revise the Dudley Autism Diagnostic Pathway to develop an all age autism pathway with smooth interfaces between early years, young people and adults aged 18+ years, and develop services to meet gaps in provision.

### We will:

- Identify what provision is statutory and what is good practice;
- Map the pathway, and identify gaps;
- Develop the interface between the three pathways: early years, young people and 18+ years, to develop a clear and consistent pathway that provides timely diagnoses and reduced wait times;
- Agree service development to meet the gaps, e.g. extending wrap around crisis support, hospital avoidance, services for children placed in 52 week residential schools; and
- Ensure it has formal sign off by the Autism Partnership Board.

## Priority 6: Post diagnostic support

The Council and CCG intend to ensure there is post-diagnostic support and reasonably adjusted access to services for people with autism.

### We will:

- Ensure there is reasonably adjusted access to health, social care and education provision for people with autism, both with and without a learning disability;
- Develop specialist and community care and support services for people with autism:
  - Map specialist and community support services, to identify gaps; and
  - Test joint commissioning of services (new models of care);
- Jointly commission services.

## Priority 7: Access to information, advice and support

The Council and CCG intend to ensure that people with autism have access to information, advice and support; and ensure that the DDS website, the Local Offer website and the Dudley Community Information Directory are autism friendly.

### We will:

- Agree how to share and provide access to information for people with autism, and their families and carers;
- Ensure there is access to information on post diagnostic support;
- Ensure the Local Offer website is autism friendly; and
- Ensure Dudley Community Information Directory (DCID) is autism friendly.

## Priority 8: Education support

The Council intends to ensure there is support in schools, both for pupils with a diagnosis of autism, and for those who do not have a diagnosis but there is evidence of ASD.

### We will:

- Continue to provide free support and training in schools and colleges to raise awareness of autism and promote autism friendly school environments;
- Ensure educational settings make reasonable adjustments to reduce barriers in relation to completing courses, obtaining qualifications and in the social aspect of college life; and
- Develop links with the Thrive Approach.

## Priority 9: Employment and training opportunities

The Council and CCG intend to ensure there is employment and training for people with autism; and improve and expand employment opportunities for people with autism.

### We will:

- Liaise with Jobcentre Plus to enable people with autism to access support from the Access to Work employment support programme, and the Work and Health Programme, and receive Specialist Employability Support to help them into work; and
- Engage with employers to support the development of employment, supported employment and training opportunities for people with autism.

## Priority 10: Criminal justice system

The Council and CCG intend to improve engagement and information sharing with the criminal justice system, to help prevent people with autism from entering it, and to ensure they receive appropriate services if they enter the system.

### We will:

- Improve engagement with the criminal justice system through a named individual from the custody estate attending the Autism Partnership Board regularly;
- Improve information sharing with the criminal justice system, to ensure that:
  - They understand people with autism;
  - They know how to make reasonable adjustments; and
  - They can prevent people with autism entering the criminal justice system.

## Delivering these priorities

The key actions to deliver these priorities are included in an action plan that accompanies this strategy, which includes who is responsible for delivering the actions, the timeframe for delivering them, and progress made.

The Council's Autism Lead and the Dudley Autism Partnership Board will lead and monitor the delivery of these priorities.

## National developments

The developing national guidance will inform changes to the action plan to implement these priorities.

## Organisations involved in the development of this strategy

The following organisations and services have been involved in the development of this strategy:

- Dudley Autism Partnership Board
  - Dudley Voices for Choice
  - Dudley Parent Carers Forum
  - Dudley Learning Disability Partnership Board
  - Dudley Providers Forum
  - Autism West Midlands
  - DMBC Dudley Disability Service (DDS)
  - Dudley Clinical Commissioning Group
  - DMBC Public Health
  - DMBC Commissioning Service
  - DMBC Performance Team
  - DMBC Specialist Education Service
- Queens Cross Network
  - Lead GP for Mental Health and Autism
  - DMBC Access and Inclusion Service
  - DMBC Educational Psychology Service
  - DMBC Housing Services
  - SENCO Forum
  - Headteachers
  - Glasshouse College
  - Langstone Society
  - Jobcentre Plus
  - West Midlands Police.





## How do I contact the service?

You can contact Dudley Disability Service by calling  
**0300 555 0050 - for children • 0300 555 0055 - for adults**  
or emailing **dds@dudley.gov.uk**

This publication is available in large print, braille or audio.  
An easy read version is also available.  
To request a copy call 01384 813400 or email [L2L@dudley.gov.uk](mailto:L2L@dudley.gov.uk)



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