



Telford & Wrekin
Co-operative Council

Protect, care and invest
to create a better borough

Telford & Wrekin Autism Strategy

Adult Social Care (including
transition into adulthood)

2023-2028

Acknowledgements



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Co-operative Council

Protect, care and invest
to create a better borough



Midlands Partnership
NHS Foundation Trust
A Keele University Teaching Trust



**Shropshire, Telford
and Wrekin**

autism
west midlands



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FOREWORD

Welcome to the Autism Strategy 2023-2028.

It is such an important time for autistic people in Telford and Wrekin. The publication of the Autism Strategy provides views and opinions on how to shape local services, what is needed to become more autism friendly and to ensure a safer community for autistic people in the local borough. The Autism Strategy also highlights the importance of partnership working, in particular, the work that continues with our engagement partners CVS and the Telford Autism Hub and The Autism Partnership Board.

Working alongside our partners and autistic people, their families, carers and other professionals we are committed to ensuring children, young people and adults, have a sense of purpose, aspiration and belonging in their local communities. It will also support initiatives that create inclusive spaces, raise awareness and acceptance throughout Telford and Wrekin with meaningful and transparent engagement. By focusing on partner agencies and working together to celebrate good work and provide challenge in making access to services easier. We are committed to focusing on the areas that autistic people told us were key in ensuring they were able to live a good life.

It is also important to acknowledge the role of families and carers in ensuring autistic people achieve and have the best possible access to education, recreation, employment, housing, finance information, advice and guidance, pre-and post-assessment support. We all want to make sure Telford understands and accepts autism and we create an inclusive community for all.

The Autism Strategy is ambitious and sets out the vision for Telford and Wrekin to be a place that offers opportunities for people to live healthy and fulfilling lives, where people are supported and valued and where no-one feels disadvantaged. We are all proud to be involved in the development and implementation of the Autism Strategy and will continue to ensure the priorities will be delivered in full for all autistic people.



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Introduction

This adult's autism strategy is a five-year strategy which supports our aim for Telford and Wrekin to be an autism friendly borough where people can live full, healthy and rewarding lives, in a society that is inclusive.

The strategy has been co-produced with autistic adults, young people and their families to capture what is important to them and their lived experience, recognising that autism is lifelong.

During the time of the pre-engagement consultation (that informed the development of this adult's strategy) the National Autism Strategy had advanced into an all-age autism strategy. Whilst completing our pre-engagement consultation and our strategy consultation we were, and continue to be, mindful of the 'all age' changes to the national strategy. It is the aspiration of Telford & Wrekin Council and its partners that this adult focused strategy develops further with Children's Services, Special Educational Needs (with Disabilities) and education partners into an "all-age" autism strategy.

Our all-age Autism Partnership Board, is run and delivered in partnership with CVS. Their adults and children's Autism Hubs are already supporting an all-age agenda with key organisations around the table working together to make Telford and Wrekin a more autism inclusive community. However, we know we need to do more. Further consultation with children, young people, carers, professionals and services across the borough is still needed to complement and enhance the developments taking place in children's and younger peoples services, including education.



We recognise the alignment that will be needed and over time, once a further consultation has taken place, the feedback from children, young people, parents, carers, professionals and partners can be captured and a true all age autism strategy can be produced.

What is autism?

Autism is a spectrum condition that affects people in different ways, and, like all people, autistic people have their own strengths and weaknesses. The National Autistic Society state "autism is a life-long developmental disability which affects how people communicate, interact with the world and experience their senses".

It is recognised that autism is a fundamental part of who someone is and it is therefore important to use the right language. It is recognised that there are individual preferences (that should be used) however, following the advice from the National Autistic Society, below are some commonly used terms that are recommended.

The strategy has been developed with support from Autism West Midlands, taking data from national and local sources to provide up to date information on autism and to assist the understanding of the makeup of our borough. Partners have been working together to ensure a shared understanding of what is currently being delivered and where services and systems can work together.

The autism consultation has enabled valuable insight into the lived experiences of people who participated in the workshops, conversations and completed the autism consultation questionnaire.

Our priorities include:

- **good information, advice and guidance;**
- **supporting raising awareness/acceptance;**
- **supporting to improve inclusion;**
- **focusing on education, training and employment opportunities;**
- **supporting healthy living;**
- **supporting young people in preparing for adulthood; and**
- **working with the criminal justice system.**

RECOMMENDED TERMS INCLUDE

Autistic adult/child/person
...is autistic
...has an autism diagnosis
Disabled person
Asperger syndrome, a form of autism
(pronounced with a hard 'g')
Providing support or adjustments
Traits or characteristics
Using the infinity symbol

TERMS RECOMMENDED TO AVOID

...has autism
An autistic
...suffers from autism
High/low functioning
Normal (referring to non-autistic people)
Living with autism
Treating symptoms
No to the jigsaw symbol
We are not all a little bit autistic

Context

The key to developing an autism strategy is knowing and understanding the:

- national context;
- local context; and
- local autistic population.

National context

Although national statistics vary, it is believed that one in 100 people are on the spectrum and there are around 700,000 autistic adults in the UK, 79% of autistic adults live with other mental health difficulties (co-morbidities) and that as many as four times more males than females are diagnosed (beyondautism.co.uk).

Autism is reported in all racial, ethnic and socio-economic groups around the world however, it is recognised that there are groups of people who are harder to reach or identify. There is a lack of research in this area often meaning getting the right help and support can be even harder for minority groups. It is known that some of the barriers include:

- language and understanding the processes involved in accessing support;
- that negative assumptions are made about certain behaviours within minority groups; and
- that there is the feeling of being judged by professionals and members of a community resulting in dealing with things within the family structure.

It is also widely accepted that girls and women are often overlooked for an autism assessment or are commonly misdiagnosed. It is known that autism often presents differently in girls and women and that the ability to mask and camouflage difficulties results in professionals missing identifiers. Non diagnosis, or a misdiagnosis, can have a significant impact on women and girls' development and outcomes in all stages of life. The research available also suggests minority groups including LGBT+ (in particular the transgender community) and Black and Asian communities also struggle to identify and access autism specific support.

The National Autistic Society provides more information in this area and are currently undertaking more research. In recognising there are harder to reach groups Telford & Wrekin Council have developed the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy with the difficulties associated with autism and hard to reach groups forming a key part of this strategy.



Local context

In response to the legislation and national drivers alongside autistic people, organisations have been working together to deliver and improve services for the autistic community. Some of these organisations include:

- parent/carer representative organisations;
- Autism Hub (led by CVS);
- Telford & Wrekin Council;
- voluntary, community and social enterprise sector;
- NHS Shropshire, Telford & Wrekin;
- Midlands Partnership Foundation NHS Trust;
- Shropshire Community Health NHS Trust;
- Shrewsbury and Telford Hospital NHS Trust; and
- Shropshire Council.

This programme has transitioned in the past 12 months to the Shropshire, Telford and Wrekin wide Learning Disabilities and Autism Programme which has created a three year road map. The road map sets a number of key priorities and this includes a local focus on autism.

Understanding the local autistic population – who do we know about?

Telford and Wrekin is a relatively new town with an estimated population of 185,600¹. The population is growing at a faster rate than the England population, it is younger than the national average, and is becoming more diverse. Estimated numbers of people with autism² aged 15 years and over are given in table 33. This table is an indication of prevalence only and further data is explored from other sources available locally.

Table 1. Estimated number of autistic people aged 15 years and over

	15-44	45-65	65+	Total
Lakeside south	200	100	100	
Hadley Castle	300	200	100	
The Wrekin	200	200	100	
Telford & Wrekin	700	500	300	1500



GP records estimate the population to be 1,185³. This data set identifies those people who have a diagnosis of autism. The local authority adult social care service supports 224⁴ autistic people and the Telford Autism Hub has supported 300 people in the year 2021/22, with 60 people supported to go through the autism diagnosis process.

¹Telford & Wrekin Census 2021

²Counts have been independently rounded to the nearest 100. Prevalence rates from POPPI/PANSI have been applied to national statistics, 2017 mid-year estimates by output area.

³Taken from ICS COVID-19 Vaccination data set as supplied by GPs

⁴Data as at 31.03.2022

Involving local autistic people and their families

What did we do?

The approach taken locally was to ask people about their life in the borough. A questionnaire was co-produced with autistic adults based on the national autism strategy to draw responses from people about their everyday life experiences in partnership with Autism West Midlands.

The analysis of the pre-engagement responses was completed by an Autism West Midlands autistic employee who provided a report detailing the feedback and aligned the themes to the national strategy. A draft strategy was then produced and a further public consultation was held to gain feedback about the content, priorities and to help create an action plan that will offer specific details of how the strategy will be implemented and how progress is measured.

Who responded?

A variety of ways to engage was offered to make accessibility easier for autistic people to share their thoughts and input into the development of the draft autism strategy. This included completing an online questionnaire, face to face sessions and group events.

The pre-engagement questionnaire was centred around the following themes:

- housing;
- health, care and wellbeing;
- getting out and about;
- diagnosis and support; and
- education, training and employment.

The level of response is given over the page:

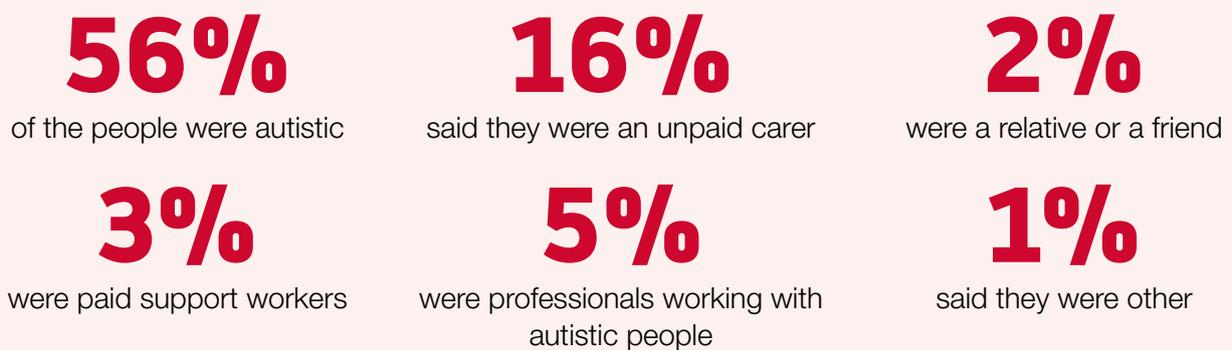
Engagement via the Council's social media channels



Responses to the questionnaire



Demographic - we had lots of responses from different people including:



Individuals may be included in more than one category

Responses included a range of different roles and professionals, such as social workers, carers, 3rd sector workers, parents, family practitioners.

Gender - the gender split was as follows:



You said...we will do

Through the engagement and consultation people have shared what is important to them. We asked people what was important to them, or the person they supported and/or worked with in the following areas:

- housing;
- health, care and wellbeing;
- getting out and about;
- diagnosis and support; and
- education, training and employment.

This section of the strategy provides more detail on what they have said and what we will do in response. People also raised areas that were important that were not covered in the five areas. The overarching areas will also be covered in this section.

People we spoke to identified a general lack of understanding of autism in society. People said that this causes barriers and challenges across all areas of life, from accessing GP and other medical appointments, receiving support in education, recruitment and employment, accessing public transport, shops and community services and social activities.

The word “understanding” was frequently used in the responses received. People said a focus on removing barriers and improving autism understanding and acceptance would assist in creating more inclusive services and communities.

Some of the comments shared include:

"I think the strategy alongside the NHS long term plan will improve the lives of all autistic people and their families by building on and improving existing services."

"The lack of awareness of the general population around autism is very frustrating. People don't see that it's a spectrum."

"People in general understand and accept autism and autistic differences."

"There are more people who know about autism but accepting autism is now the priority."

"Services need to be more joined up."

The importance of getting autistic people involved

People told us that it is also important that autistic people should be involved in the development of services that support them. Quotes included:

"Things need to be developed in conjunction with autistic people."

"Speak to autistic people, involve them and then join up the services."

People spoke about how important it is that autistic people influence current services and support but also to help shape future services. By involving autistic people from the start will make services and support more autism friendly and more accessible.

The individual experience

People we spoke to said that autistic people experience autism very individually – every individual has a different autistic profile, different sensory needs, communication needs and support needs. People said that support needs can vary for an individual too, this may mean support needs to be tailored and flexible at times.

"Those with greater need often already have advocates in place and so their needs are clearer. Those who have functioned in society to a certain extent but are starting to struggle despite seemingly holding down marriages and families and jobs still need help to access what is made available to them. Providing no support to access will result eventually in a deterioration of their situation and increased support needs."

Getting it right

Some people highlighted that autistic people were falling through the gaps of services because autism is not a mental health condition or a physical health condition.

People told us it is important autistic people know where to get help from with their emotional health and wellbeing – signposting to suitable services, getting advice, information and activities all assist. People also identified a need to be supported in a holistic way and having access to professionals who understand autism and associated conditions.

People told us that it would be helpful to have access to peer support such as a mentor or groups to share experiences and support each other. They also identified that having practical help with day-to-day challenges would help to improve emotional health and wellbeing.

Home

People told us that they do not always need support, but may need some assistance if their circumstances change.

People told us:

- trades people understanding and accepting autism was important;
- being able to communicate in different ways with trades people would be beneficial;
- having a 'trusted trader' scheme locally would be helpful;
- knowing where to go if housing repairs were needed would help;
- housing association staff not having the knowledge about autism could be problematic;
- knowing about assistive technology/digital support at home – prompting and sequencing in particular would help with being independent;
- learning skills in the home that will develop independence would also help with being more independent; and
- support with learning skills to plan and budget money would help in everyday life.

Quotes

"Access to Trusted Trader scheme (if that still exists), in the same way that senior citizens do, as allowing a stranger into your home to complete trade work is very distressing to an ASD person."

"The assistance of someone autism friendly to help guide me to the relevant services,' if any' who can advise and support my needs without belittling me!"

"Assistance with doing everyday things, somewhere to go nearby to give independence lessons."

"Easy access."

"Approachable customer services."

What we will do...

- make sure we work with housing providers throughout the borough to raise awareness/acceptance of neurodiversity;
- work with Trading Standards to raise acceptance/awareness of autism – promote the Trading Standards Accredited website;
- support autism awareness training to staff with partner agencies in partnership with the Autism Hub;
- promote the Independent Living Centre for Assistive Technology and digital solutions at home;
- promote community services that support independence skills – raise awareness/acceptance of autism at community venues;
- promote services that support budgeting and financial planning – including the use of assistive technology and digital solutions;
- work with supermarkets, markets, shops to extend autism friendly hours; and
- support development of specialist accommodation.



Health, wellbeing and care

It is important to acknowledge the context of this piece of work being undertaken during the Covid-19 pandemic: services were stretched, moved to deliver different priorities and therefore may not have been delivering at full capacity during the period of this consultation. Research has identified that rates of depression and anxiety during and post pandemic have significantly increased in the general population however, the negative impact of Covid-19 has been more significant within the autistic population. Covid-19 is still having an impact on services - there remains a general concern nationally that some services are stretched, that waiting lists have significantly increased and that there are ever increasing demands on health related services making it even harder for autistic people to access support.

People told us being healthy was important to them, their physical, emotional and mental health is important and that health services need to work in collaboration to provide suitable support for autistic people.

People told us:

- GPs need to be more inclusive – offer appointments via text, more appointments available to book in advance and be flexible if late for appointments;
- leisure services should be more inclusive and accessible;
- create more quiet times in leisure centres;
- having accessible information about healthy diets and healthy living; and
- mental health support needs to be more available with reasonable adjustments made if and when needed.

Quotes

"Access to IAPT after an assessment is really important"

"Support person to help with advice and access to leisure."

"Exercise classes with a trainer who understands autism at local leisure centres would be beneficial."

"Access to local facilities and the extra guidance on how to exercise rather than the general service provided."

"Doctors at GP surgeries could do with being better educated about communication issues that cause difficulties for autistics seeking healthcare."

"Any health related services need to have trained professionals"

"Access to healthcare is vital"

"Quiet areas in leisure facilities."

What we will do...

- make sure we are always listening to people about what is important to them about healthy living;
- work with Public Health to promote more inclusive information, advice and guidance about healthy lifestyles;
- work with leisure services to be more inclusive;
- support training, awareness raising and acceptance in more community spaces;
- promote literature about healthy lifestyles and healthy diets;
- promote autism friendly services wider;

- work with community centres and venues to raise awareness and create inclusive spaces;
- work with universal, community and specialist health services to ensure they are more inclusive; and
- ensure training to staff is in line with national developments.

Getting out and about

People told us being a part of their local community was important to them but they can feel anxious when going somewhere for the first time, and/or unfamiliar places.

People told us:

- they wanted to volunteer/work in places local to them;
- they want staff in universal services to be patient and give more time to process what they need to do when out and about;
- knowing where to go for help, if needed, is really important;
- having staff in places that are autism aware;
- more quiet times in universal services are needed;
- public transport should be more inclusive;
- having spaces for peers and/or friends to get together was important;
- to have spaces that encourage and welcome autistic people to attend/access was important; and
- taxi companies to have training of autism was vital to support safe travel.

Quotes

"Due to my autism I don't go out very often, as I don't like being around crowds of people. I've considered volunteering at my local community centre, but haven't as yet."

"We access some local community services but to be honest we don't know exactly what local community services there is. it is not common knowledge what's available and to who. is there anything specifically for autistic adults a community information booklet would be a fantastic idea."

"I can find all of the above places overwhelming at times and they often lack an area to escape to for a sensory break."

What we will do...

- work with individuals and communities to link people together with similar interests;
- explore how we can enable people to access support in the community if/when they need it;
- further promote and develop Live Well Telford to provide advice, information and guidance of provisions within the borough;
- continue to work with the Autism Hub to promote, develop and support activities;
- work with universal services to improve inclusivity, including taxi companies and public transport
- work with DWP to support more autistic people into work;
- work with public transport providers to support awareness raising and training for more inclusive public transport; and
- promote the use of digital technology/assistive technology when out and about to support with managing anxiety.

Diagnosis and support

83% of people who responded told us they have a formal diagnosis of autism and 12% were waiting for an assessment for a formal diagnosis.

People told us:

- more advice, guidance and support is needed for autistic people;
- having support, advice and guidance about the diagnostic process would be beneficial;
- employers need more information about autism and reasonable adjustments that can be made once a diagnosis is received or if an employee asks for support at work with their neurodiversity;
- regular updates about the timeframe when waiting for an assessment would be beneficial;
- being signposted to support services sooner while waiting for a diagnosis would be helpful; and
- support for carers through the diagnostic/assessment process and after diagnosis is important.

Quotes

"Long time to wait for assessment."

"The Support worker at West Midlands Autism at the time, was vey good, very helpful and understanding. He made me understand autism and the impact it can have on you."

"The Autism Hub helped me with all aspects of my diagnosis."

"I did not get diagnosed until I was 23 years old, always knew I felt different and struggled socially throughout school, still I went undiagnosed and I struggled. My mum requested an assessment from the Autism Hub and finally got a diagnosis."

What we will do...

- support to create and promote more information and guidance on post assessment services and support;
- work with the Autism Hub to create content for Live Well Telford;
- work with DWP to raise awareness about the assessment process and post assessment support and reasonable adjustments in the workplace;
- work with the Autism Hub to include regular keep in touch points during the assessment pathway;
- promote the autism drop in service; and
- promote the Carers Centre to support unpaid carers of autistic people, including those waiting for an assessment.

Navigating the Criminal Justice System

People told us autistic people struggle to navigate the Criminal Justice System. The National Autistic Society outline research they have undertaken suggesting autistic people are more likely to be victims of, or witnesses of, crime and less likely to be perpetrators. Dealing with the police, solicitors, courts and also accessing appropriate adults are all areas that are important.

People have said:

- there is no single alert card to let other people know what reasonable adjustments I might need. It is often ignored anyway;
- custody suites are often scary places where no one understands autism;
- autistic people with communication difficulties need to be supported to report crime – and then supported through the process;
- appropriate adults need to be more aware of autism;
- misunderstandings often lead to police intervention – more is needed to prevent this;
- the language used in the Criminal Justice System is often hard to understand. An easy read for commonly used documents would be recommended;
- help is needed for both victims and perpetrators;
- more autism specific support is needed in the courts; and
- arrangements need to be made for parents and carers if something happens to them.

Quotes:

“I had an appropriate adult helping me but I felt they didn’t really know about autism”

“I witnessed a crime and I was made to feel like the criminal as my anxiety levels heightened when answering questions”

“the alert card I used really helped to deescalate the situation”

“i was a victim of a crime. The Police were really understanding and helped me”

What we will do:

- work with partners within the Criminal Justice System to raise awareness of the needs of autistic people;
- work with partner agencies to ensure all our practices are inclusive and agencies challenge themselves; and
- ensure the Autism Partnership Board has appropriate representation from the Criminal Justice System.

Education, training and employment

People described a variety of experiences which have supported them, but also the challenges they may have faced too.

People told us:

- they had positive experiences when, even without a diagnosis, adjustments are made in education or in the workplace;
- some people enjoyed the online learning/working during the pandemic;
- more information about adult learning in Telford would be beneficial;
- some people preferred online training when in the workplace;
- more support services to assist people to find work are vital;
- when in work to have support if needed;
- assistance with interview skills, job application and CV writing would help with finding or getting back to work;
- having an individual approach about what works best is vital; and
- they want to be busy and keeping active both physically and mentally is really important.

Quotes

"Being self employed, where they could work in their home environment, could switch off when they needed too and can limit stimulation."

"Training everyone in the work place to understand autism as they presume one size fits all and everyone who is autistic is the same as the next person and they aren't its individual to each individual with varying needs."

"Awareness. Flexibility on the part of employers. I could write a thesis on this."

"Allowances could have been made earlier on and better understanding of what difficulties can occur with autism. Better teacher training/awareness and educating children on differences and problems."

"Better access to online courses and Zoom-based meetings rather than traditional brick and mortar college classes."

"I think the trainer could ask at the start of a course about learning styles, say anyone of a different neurotype or with a disability can sit out of any activity/do an alternative with no questions asked."

"An understanding employer in a quiet safe environment with necessary adjustments put into place."

"Help and support from services to help find employment, currently there are no services who specialise in autistic people getting into paid employment."

"Something I struggled with greatly when I was applying for jobs was interviews. I struggled to formulate sentences very well and it came out like garbled mess. I think in school/college they should have practice interviews to teach you how to answer questions, read between lines of questions and general interview behaviour."

"My son is eight. I would like to know what the pathways are for adulthood for him. This has not been discussed with me. It is never too early."

What we will do...

- support universal employers with more information about autism in the work place;
- work with DWP, EAST and Telford Job Box to create more opportunities for employment with information and guidance for employers;
- work with the Autism Hub to continue to raise awareness and acceptance of autism;
- promote adult learning opportunities available in Telford;
- work with education providers and SEN/SEND services to start conversations early about aspirations into employment; and
- work with partners to reduce barriers into employment/education/training and when in employment/education/training.

You told us it was important for the council to lead the way when it comes to being an inclusive employer by encouraging autistic people to apply for jobs, to help autistic people maintain employment and to provide reasonable adjustments for autistic people when working for the council.

We will..

- be open and transparent about the internal support that is available;
- provide statistics on the number of staff that have attended awareness training;
- provide additional autism related support for managers and department heads;
- share reasonable adjustments that have been made to encourage good practice in other organisations; and
- link in with other departments to create more employment opportunities both internally and externally.

What happens next?

How will we make it happen?

This strategy explains the areas of focus needed to become more autism friendly and to ensure a safer community for autistic people in the local borough in the “We will do…” sections. To support the delivery of this strategy an action plan has been developed which will provide more detailed actions as to how “we will do”. This action plan will continue to be developed and co-produced with autistic people, families, carers, people important to them and professionals through the Autism Partnership Board.

The All Age Autism Partnership Board will support the delivery of the strategy. The board and its members will all play an active role in delivering the strategy to ensure its longevity and success.

The board is made up of people with lived experience, carers, staff from the council, NHS, Police, the third sector and voluntary organisations. The Autism Partnership will report to the Telford & Wrekin Integrated Place Partnership every six months (as a minimum) outlining progress made and what difference it has made. This update will also be presented to the Telford & Wrekin Health and Wellbeing Board.

How will we know it is working?

Whilst there is much good work to build on, we recognise that this work is challenging in the context of limited resources across the health and care system in Telford and Wrekin and the community and system recovery from the covid pandemic.

As the previous sections outline we have identified a series of actions (‘We will…’) to ensure that we become more autism friendly and to ensure a safer community for autistic people in the local borough. The decisions we take to implement this strategy need to be clear on whether it takes us closer to achieving this, or further away.

It is really important that we continually monitor the impact of our work to better support autistic people across Telford and Wrekin. We will review our progress in respect of the outcomes that we have developed with autistic people and their families/carers.

The Autism Partnership will play a key role in ensuring that organisations are on track to deliver the strategy. They will also engage with autistic people and their family/carers to ensure any developments are co-produced and meet the identified outcomes, including through the Autism Hub and Making it Real Board.

Alongside this, we will also consider the following:

- regular feedback from the Telford Autism Partnership board with open and accessible minutes from each meeting;
- developing a specific experts by experience co-production group to support the implementation of the autism strategy alongside the Autism Partnership Board;
- offer regular, open forums for people to feedback on experiences and noticeable changes/improvements;

- open a mid-term consultation (2025) to gain your views on change within the borough and to gain further suggestions and ideas;
- promote the use of feedback from people accessing services / support / training and use this to make changes when required; and
- promote the Autism Champion Training delivered by the Telford Autism Hub and provide the number of Autism Champions trained by the Telford Autism Hub.
- **Key performance indicators including:**
 - autism assessment waiting list;
 - number of autism assessments completed; and
 - number of autistic people receiving in patient care.
- **Key outcomes include:**
 - increasing the number of autistic people in training and employment;
 - increasing the number of autistic people who have had an annual health check;
 - recognising the health inequalities experienced by autistic people and working across the Shropshire, Telford and Wrekin health and care system to address them;
 - reducing the number of people awaiting an autism assessment, and the time between referral, diagnosis and support (supporting a model of “waiting well”);
 - monitoring the number of autism assessments completed and the outcomes of them; and
 - reducing the number of autistic people receiving inpatient care.

Appendix 1 – national law, policy and guidance, local partnerships and strategies

2009 – Autism Act

Campaigning resulted in recognition of a gap in service provision. This led to the Autism Act 2009 and subsequent strategy and statutory guidance. The Autism Act 2009 www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2009/15/contents was the first autism specific legislation issued by central government placing duties on local authorities and clinical commissioning groups to implement local strategies.

2010 – Autism Strategy – Fulfilling & Rewarding Lives

The Autism Strategy 2010 www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2009/15/section/1 laid clear the requirement for people to be recognised for being individuals where someone's experience of autism may not be the same as someone else's, that reasonable adjustments to support access to the community, work and social activities would mobilise people, awareness would ensure people around them would understand and accept them and support from public services would be timely and co-ordinated.

2014 – Autism Strategy (revision) – Think Autism

The initial vision of Fulfilling & Rewarding Lives still remained and Think Autism added to it. It shared a full implementation which was key to meeting the vision. With it came the Innovation Fund.

2014 – Care Act

The Care Act 2014 www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2014/23/contents/enacted quantified national eligibility criteria. A duty to provide preventative care and a duty of assessments to be carried out by someone with autism expertise – Care & Support (Assessment) Regulations) 2014.

2015 – Building the right Support Transforming Care Partnerships

This strategy placed responsibilities on local health and social care systems to ensure the whole spectrum of services from hospital to home were considered in strategic planning across systems, making it clear that hospital was not home for those learning-disabled people with complex needs, including those with a mental health condition in in-patient facilities.

2021 – NHS Long Term Plan

The Long Term Plan sets out action to ensure patients get the care they need, fast through closer alignment of services, proactive care and support upfront to relieve pressure on A&Es.

2021 – National All-Age Autism Strategy

The National Strategy for autistic children, young people and adults: 2021 – 2026 www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-strategy-for-autistic-children-young-people-and-adults-2021-to-2026/the-national-strategy-for-autistic-children-young-people-and-adults-2021-to-2026 is the latest document which follows six themes which can be measured and evaluated; understanding and acceptance, improving access to education and positive transitions, employment, tackling health inequalities, building the right support and inpatient care and improving support within the criminal and youth justice systems.

Supporting local partnerships and strategies

- Shropshire, Telford & Wrekin Integrated Care Strategy and five year plan;
- Shropshire, Telford & Wrekin Learning Disability, Autism and Mental Health Board;
- Health and Wellbeing Strategy, 2020-2025;
- Telford & Wrekin Integrated Place Partnership Strategic Plan, 2022-2025;
- Telford & Wrekin's Making it Real Board;
- Telford & Wrekin Council Plan;
- Telford & Wrekin Community Safety Strategy, 2017-2019;
- Telford & Wrekin Safeguarding multi-agency safeguarding arrangements;
- Specialist Housing and Accommodation policy; and
- Market Position Statement.