

Appendix A

Autism Task and Finish Group – Update on Recommendations

The Autism Task and Finish Group, jointly established by Health and Social Care Scrutiny Board 5 Education and Childrens' Services Scrutiny Board 2 took their recommendations to Cabinet on 12th April 2022 and these were approved. The purpose of this report is to provide scrutiny Members with a progress report on the implementation of the approved recommendations.

	Recommendation	Update - October 2022
1	That the Council work with partners to identify sustainable, long-term funding as there is currently only funding available for the first year of the All-Age Autism Strategy delivery plan.	<p>Funding has been identified to support the commissioning of pre and post diagnostic support for years 2 and 3 of the Autism Strategy delivery. Coventry City Council have also contributed to the investment into additional diagnostic capacity.</p> <p>As future funding needs are identified, leads of the five priority areas of the strategy will develop business cases for investment. However, there is also focus on considering wider funding opportunities such as the system-wide health inequalities fund.</p> <p>Investment of £11m across the Coventry and Warwickshire system has been identified to address the diagnostic waits issue and to support the development of post diagnostic support provision.</p>
2	Ensure tackling health inequalities for autistic people is prioritised for delivery as part of the All-Age Autism Strategy implementation plan to improve physical health, mental health, and emotional wellbeing.	<p>This is a focus of Priority 2 of the Autism Strategy. Allison Duggal, Director of Public Health and Well-being for Coventry City Council has recently been identified as the lead for this Priority Area.</p> <p>A delivery plan for this Priority Area is currently being developed with key stakeholders.</p>

		<p>A new system-wide health inequalities lead for mental health, learning disability and autism across Coventry and Warwickshire has recently been appointed. The local Autism Partnership Board are liaising with the postholder to identify areas for focus.</p>
3	<p>Work with partners to accelerate and build on existing workstreams, to reduce the unacceptably long waiting times for diagnostic assessment</p>	<p>Significant investment has enabled CWPT to recruit additional internal diagnostic capacity and to source an additional 8 external “neuro partners” who can complete diagnostic assessments. This is enabling progression towards the reduction of the autism diagnostic waits as per a business case and trajectory that was developed to support the investment.</p> <p>Whilst progress is being made and we are currently ahead of plan in relation to reduction in the wait for an assessment, a new challenge has arisen as there has been a significant increase in the number of referrals for assessment – CWPT are currently undertaking analysis of this and revising the associated modeling to identify the capacity required to meet demand.</p>
4	<p>The Council and health partners work with schools, colleges and universities to ensure that all educational professionals (teachers, senior leaders, early career teachers, support staff) have a good understanding of the needs which may present for autistic and neurodiverse pupils and provide appropriate Continuous Professional Development (CPD) to ensure high quality provision at both whole class and individual intervention level.</p>	<p>Extended Non-Attendance at School (ENAS) Programme is well developed in Coventry. A termly panel meets to consider individual cases and provides advice and signposting to schools. More information can be found here: https://www.coventry.gov.uk/attendance-inclusion/extended-school-non-attendance-advisory-panel-esnaap.</p> <p>Training on non-attendance regularly offered to schools by members of the ENAS Panel and Complex Communication Specialist Practitioners are in post and providing training and modelling of good practice to school professionals as part of a traded service managed by Coventry City Council. .</p>

		<p>Two Coventry secondary schools were involved in an NHSE funded Autism In Schools project during the 21/22 academic year, developing awareness and resources that can be shared across settings to improve the school experience of autistic pupils. During the 22/23 academic year, key learning from the project will be shared with other schools in their MAT.</p> <p>Priority 3 of the Autism Strategy outlines a commitment to developing an understanding of training and workforce needs across Coventry and Warwickshire to identify gaps and enable consistency of workforce development – this will feature as part of years 2/3 delivery plans.</p> <p>The Community Autism Support Service, delivered by Coventry and Warwickshire Mind, leads monthly topic-based toolbox sessions for education, care, and health professionals with a focus on helping them to successfully navigate working with children and/or young people with autism and other neurodevelopmental conditions. Topics of focus have been agreed based on feedback from professionals.</p> <p>An e-booklet is now available for neurodiverse children, their families, and professionals. This includes resources and links to services who offer training in autism.</p>
5	The Council strengthen data sharing, alongside all relevant partners, between organisations to enable evidence gathered through assessments to be used by other professionals as part of the autism assessment process, to assist and expedite diagnosis with the necessary data protection safeguards put in place.	The data sharing agreement was renewed in 2021 to enable the Key Worker pilot to function.

6	Support the Education and Childrens' Service Scrutiny Board undertaking a task and finish group during the 2022/23 municipal year to look at the in-depth challenges facing schools in providing support to children, young people and their families who are on the autism assessment pathway.	The task and finish group has been established.
7	Health partners review the referral process for diagnosis to simplify it and enable electronic submission of referral forms.	<p>Work in progress. Referrals currently submitted via email to CWPT who are the lead provider of diagnostic provision and hold the local waiting list.</p> <p>The referral process is under review as part of the neurodevelopmental transformation plan. Work is also underway to widen capacity and capability of the wider health workforce to be able to diagnose individuals, as part of a local differentiated diagnosis pilot.</p>
8	Health partners to include schools in correspondence about appointments where schools were involved in the referral process. This will enable schools to support pupils and families through the diagnostic process.	Work in progress. Processes linked to this are being co-produced with parents/carers of children and young people with and awaiting diagnosis. There are a range of issues and concerns regarding consent and lengthy waits meaning that children may be attending different schools to that which they were attending at the time of referral – however, these instances should reduce as we progress to much shorter waiting times.
9	The Council work with partners to ensure information on referral and support pathways is accessible to parents, carers, young people, and professionals.	<p>This is a feature of the information stored on the Local Offer website.</p> <p>CWPT also deliver the Dimensions tool which provides a range of self-care resources and hosts the recently published e-booklet providing information and advice for neurodivergent people https://dimensions.covwarkpt.nhs.uk/Events.aspx</p> <p>Further development of the information and advice offer will be progressed via Priority 1 of the Autism Strategy – this includes</p>

		further development of the e-booklet resource, video resources and an expanded offer of co-produced accessible resources.
10	Community support services should be offered in the wider context of neurodiversity rather than limited to those with an autism diagnosis. Services should be titled and described to reflect that not all services require a diagnosis to access them.	<p>There is an increased focus on need across provision so that access to support is not diagnosis dependent.</p> <p>The Community Autism Support Service is commissioned to provide support to people with and without diagnosis.</p>
11	The Council, with partners develop a holistic approach to support for families post diagnosis which includes emotional as well as clinical support and access to training.	<p>As per update 9 above</p> <p>In addition, CWPT are developing a clinical model of care and plans for a community specialist neuro team who will provide additional post diagnostic support</p>
12	To continue the Council's participation in the Employ Autism scheme, or the development of an inhouse equivalent and ensure there is appropriate resource for it to be delivered.	Although Coventry University and Ambitious About Autism had obtained funding for 2 interns this year this has not proceeded due to the participating service area being unable to proceed and too little time available to engage another placement area. Ambitious About Autism are currently in talks with Santander, regarding the future of the scheme and whether or not they will continue to fund it moving forward. Depending on the outcome, this is likely to affect our ability to be able to provide such employability opportunities, going forward, particularly given the current economic climate.
13	For the Council to lead by example and become an inclusive employer including for autism and neurodiversity.	The Council recently commissioned Enna, an organisation specialising in supporting neurodiverse individuals in joining the workforce, to deliver Neurodiversity 101 training as part of National Inclusion Week in September. The session was recorded and is available on the intranet for all staff to access. The Workforce D&I team do not have a specific neurodiversity project in progress at this time.

		The Council were re-validated as Disability Confident Level 2 (disability Confident Employer) in August 2022 work has not yet started on achieving Level 3 (Disability Confident Leader).
14	Support SCRUCO including a future item on skills resilience pathways into employment for those with disabilities, including neurodiversity	This item went to SCRUCO in September 2022.
15	<p>The Council works towards Coventry becoming a city which celebrates, supports, and accepts autism and neurodiversity. This would include</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. the introduction of more inclusive spaces and autism friendly environments throughout the City including in the City Centre, Parks and Open Spaces b. safe spaces/low sensory stimulus areas to enable autistic people to decompression throughout the City. c. public realm designs should include inclusive spaces including Autism friendly environments. 	This is a focal area of Priority 2 of the Autism Strategy
16	The Council resource and pursue digital opportunities including the development and rollout of a Neurodiversity Support App for Coventry	Brain in Hand is an app tool used to help improve confidence and resilience when facing anxiety and stress. This was piloted across Coventry and Warwickshire during 2021/22 - evaluation suggested the app may not be appropriate for individuals who were in or approaching crisis. Coventry and Warwickshire are now entering into a 6-month self-referral model of Brain in Hand which will consist of 50 licenses made available to individuals aged 16+, who are autistic, or awaiting a neurodevelopmental assessment. The impact of use of the app will be evaluated to inform future commissioning decisions.

		The first iteration of the information and advice booklet for neurodivergent people was issued as an e-booklet, with a mobile phone compatible version created alongside a traditional booklet
17	Support Health and Social Care Scrutiny Board receiving an update in 6 months-time on progress towards the recommendations, particularly the impact of measures to reduce waiting times for diagnostic assessments with regular briefings to the Chair in-between.	This report is to update the Chair and the Board on the progress.