



Autism Partnership Meeting

Date & Time: 22nd April 2025 1:30pm – 4pm

Venue: Fownhope Room, Plough Lane Offices & Microsoft Teams

Attendees

Name	Role
Valerie Fitch	Chair/Person on the Autistic Spectrum
Laura Ferguson	Vice Chair, Co-Project Lead, Autism and Parental Blame Research Project, WM-ADASS
Paul Choppen	Partnership Board Assistant, Herefordshire Council
Hannah Offord	Commissioning Manager, Herefordshire Council
Jack Caine	Senior Programme Lead – Learning Disability and Autism NHS Herefordshire and Worcestershire
James Baker	Hereford Make / Person on the Autistic Spectrum
Alexia Heath	Post 16 Senior Adviser, Children and Young People, Herefordshire Council
Cllr Carol Gandy	Local Councillor
Val Howard	Parent Carer of a person on the Autistic Spectrum
Nick Gregory	Carer Links Team Senior & Engagement Worker
Nikol Harrison	Area Team Manager, Neurodiversity Team, Worcester County Council
Harriet Morton	Assistant Manager, Herefordshire and Worcester Community Service Team, Autism West Midlands
Emma Jones	Senior Social Prescriber for the South & West Herefordshire Primary Care Network (S&W PCN)
Dr Claire Middle	Consultant Clinical Psychologist / Lead for Psychological Interventions (Children & Families) Herefordshire and Worcestershire NHS Trust
Julie Kerin	Social Worker , County Team, Community Wellbeing, Herefordshire Council
Katie Eastaugh	Manager, Cart Shed
Ashleigh Brown	Mental Health Practitioner - South & West Herefordshire Primary Care Network

Apologies

Name	Role
Hilary Hall	Corporate Director Community Wellbeing, Herefordshire Council
Marie Bridgewater	Hate Crime Officer, West Mercia
Rachel McMorro	The Family Psychologist
Rosie Gray	Tuvida
Sean Ladd	Star College, Manager
Rachel Fellows	Walsingham Support
Lucy Herds	Local Nas and HANDS CIC
Claire Hobbs	Parent Carer Voice / Parent Carer
Rebecca Antrim	Person on the Autistic Spectrum
Katy Hughes	Parent Carer
Sylvia Nicholls	Hereford Disability United
Zoe Bristow	Community Service Manager, Autism West Midlands
John Swinson Davis	Spectrum Mondays

Introductions and Apologies

Valerie welcomed everyone and asked for introductions.

Conflict of Interest

No one declared a conflict of interest.

Minutes and Actions from Previous Meetings

Valerie then went through the actions from the previous meetings.

Actions from the 23rd of April 2024

Name	Action	Detail	Update
James Baker/ Anna Swift	Action 3	James suggested that Anna link in with the Youth Provision Board run by HVOSS regarding youth involvement within PINS (Partnership for Inclusion of Neurodiversity in Schools). James will share the contact information with Anna after the meeting.	22/4/25 Jack will link Anna Swift with James.
Dave Andrews	Action 4	Sylvia asked for letters quoting the increased telecare rates to be based on the monthly cost in line with their billing by Hoople rather than the current weekly basis. Dave will liaise with Hoople on the issue.	Dave Andrews (Senior Telecare Advisor) has since left the Council. 22/04/25- Paul will chase Sylvia and Holly to see what has happened. 21/05/24- Silvia has spoken to Mark Bywater who heads up the Technology enablement Team, who confirmed that all Telecare equipment is hired on a weekly basis as equipment is often only needed for a number of weeks. Hence the billing department, bill in weeks. For long term hire, they can invoice for a whole year, and divide that into 12 monthly payments, which are then set up as a Direct Debit.
Zoe Bristow / Paul Choppen	Action 6	Zoe to forward information on the Autism West Midlands projects to Paul so it could be shared with Board members.	Paul to check whether this was sent out, and resend if necessary 15/10/24 Complete - Paul has forwarded information on Autism West Midlands project.

Name	Action	Detail	Update
Paul Choppen	Action 8	To send out the details of the Making it Real Group's session looking into developing a video course on how people interpret language to Board members.	Paul didn't send this out in time for meetings. However, will check with Sylvia if there are any further meetings coming up. 21/01/25 Valerie emailed Sylvia to ask if this project will recommence, she has since replied to say this project has been cancelled.
Anna Swift	Action 9	Anna to find out when the contract for the autism diagnostic provider, which is currently the Family Psychologists, will next be up for tendering.	With Anna unable to make the meeting to give an update Jack agreed to find this out when the tendering for the Autism Diagnostic Provider will be. 22/4/25 Jack informed the group that the contract with the Family Psychologists has been extended till April 2026.

Actions from the 16th of July 2024

Attendee	Action	Detail	
Marie Bridgewater	Action 1	Valerie asked Marie if she could continue to keep the Board updated on hate crime incidents where autism had been mentioned as a contributing factor in the report	22/04/25 Marie sent her apologies for the meeting to Paul. Valerie has received a response from Marie and will be discussing this in today's meeting.
Valerie Fitch	Action 2	Will be in contact with Julie and the Council to see what can be done regarding the Anna Freud training.	The Anna Freud Training is to be given to staff helping Neurodivergent People within the colleges 22/04/25 Valerie has contacted Julie and has not got a response, however the topic is being discussed at this meeting with Dr Claire Middle H & W NHS Trust.
Sally Wilson	Action 3	Sally to liaise with James and find the appropriate colleague from the Council who would be able to help James in finding out what extra support Herefordshire and Ludlow college can offer neurodivergent students.	No update as James and Sally were Absent 21/01/25 Laura Sirrell contacted the H,L&NS College and it has been in contact with Bridget Snasdell - b.snasdell@hlnc.ac.uk Brigid discussed the support out there for people who are neurodiverse.

Attendee	Action	Detail	
			Laura agreed to contact the other colleges such as the Sixth Form College and discuss further with Alexia Heath. 22/04/25 Paul will make sure James has Brigid's email.

Actions from the 15th of October 2024

Attendee	Action	Detail	Update
Kattie Labbert	Action 1	Alexia asked Katie to share document on Ladies Night with her that Katie sends to professionals prior to doing engagement events.	Valerie will ask Katie to forward the information. Katie Eastaugh had been to some of these events and noted the small numbers of participants at the events so far.
Paul Choppen	Action 2	To add Nicole Hynek, Exploring the Psychological Contract with Autistic People in Work to the agenda for the next meeting.	Complete

11th January 2025

Attendee	Action	Detail	Update
Alexia and Laura	Action 1	Alexia suggested Laura and herself liaise with each other as to not duplicate work on the transitional support for students from providers.	22/04/25 Complete Alexia and Laura Sirrell have liaised with each other.
Jack Caine and Paul Choppen	Action 2	Valerie asked Jack to share the highlight report that is produced ahead of each of the Autism Strategy Oversight Group meetings with Paul, who will share with Board members.	22.04/25 Jack suggested Paul contact Emma Allen (Senior Commissioner, WCC regarding getting the high light report from the Autism Strategy Oversight group. Paul has emailed Emma and is waiting for a reply.
Jack Caine	Action 3	Valerie asked Jack to send an email to Ugo Johnson for updates on reasonable adjustments and the digital flags projects.	22/04/25 Jack noted he could give a brief update on the OMMT and Digital Flags Project in his update.
Jack Caine	Action 4	Valerie asked Jack to contact Ugo Johnson regarding him coming to a future Board meeting to discuss the impact of the OMMT.	22/04/25 Jack did however suggested Valerie to contact Ugo for a more comprehensive update. James said he would send Paul an update on what

Attendee	Action	Detail	Update
			people have taken away from the OMMT training.
Valerie Fitch	Action 5	Valerie to send Jack the list of questions around OMMT for him to submit to the next LPAPB meeting.	22/04/25 Complete.

Assisted living

Cllr Gandy mentioned the virtual home which showcases the potential assisted living equipment that can help people live more independently as part of technology enabled care.

Please see: <https://www.herefordshire.gov.uk/adult-social-care-1/living-aids-technology-enabled-care-tec-telecare/1>

All-Age Joint Autism Strategy Update

Laura Ferguson asked a question on whether there was an action plan for each of the priority areas within the joint strategy. Jack clarified that each priority lead is asked to submit an action plan each year, currently they have had all of year one's action plans and most of year two.

Laura asked whether an update on what has been achieved and what the challenges are could be produced. Jack stated although a comprehensive update on the priority areas is provided in the minutes of the Joint Strategy meetings, members had raised concerns over the complexity of this information and the need for it to be presented in a simpler and more accessible format.

Worcestershire Autism Partnership Board Meeting Update

Valerie informed the group that Worcestershire's Autism Partnership Board has set up a experts by experience advisory subgroup that meets every three months.

Valerie asked members for their views on having an official advisory group in Herefordshire. James said he would need more context in the form of a terms of reference before commenting. Laura Ferguson suggested that a task and finish group maybe more appropriate.

Oliver McGowan Training vs Anna Freud Training Claire Middle – NHS

Claire Middle (Consultant Clinical Psychologist / Lead for Psychological Interventions, Children & Families, Herefordshire and Worcestershire NHS Trust) introduced herself. Her work covers the CAMHS Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service for both counties. From a review of the CAMHS last year some needs were identified including the need to upskill staff on their knowledge of autism as well as the need for the service to be more autism friendly.

The Anna Freud Training was looked at as part of this upskilling approach. This training was developed by Anna Freud in collaboration with AT Autism for the NHS to upskills staff in settings such as:

- adult, children and young people in inpatient mental health hospitals including CAMHS;
- community mental health settings;

- residential special schools and colleges; and
- health and justice settings.

The training was co-produced and delivered by autistic people with a trauma informed approach. This training is viewed as complimentary training to the OMMT (Oliver McGowan Mandatory Training).

Currently with the Herefordshire and Worcestershire NHS trust all staff have been asked to do the OMMT with CAMHS staff asked to additionally undertake the Anna Freud Training. The aim of the training is to understand the challenges of autistic people and staff and looking at perceptions of autism through lived experience.

Valerie and Julie Kerin explained the view that the OMMT was very hospital based and there wasn't the specialist training to help social workers understand the variety of complex needs of people with autism.

A discussion ensued about the challenges of rolling out the training through locality teams and whether these locality teams would need an autism champion within their team.

Valerie asked Hannah Offord for her views as the Herefordshire lead for Priority 7: Keeping Safe as part of the Autism Strategy. Hannah noted that her predecessor Glen Crosier had identified the need for a scoping exercise to identify the training needs of staff and training providers out there, to which the Anna Freud training could be part of this discussion.

Nick raised his view that if the Anna Freud Training could be adapted to fit a social care model it would be beneficial to extend the training to a commissioned services and third sector providers.

Action 1 - Hannah asked if Claire could pass on the contact details of the Anna Freud Centre to discuss the merits of the training with them.

Priority 7: Keeping Safe, Hannah Offord, Commissioning Manager

Hannah introduced herself before running through a presentation on the key areas within Priority 7: Keeping Safe that they will be concentrating on, see attached. Key points from the presentation include:

- Organisations are to be contacted to form a working group for Keeping Safe. This group will review the priorities' action plan.
- Scoping work is underway with Healthy Lifestyles team, CLDT on what training needs for commissioned supported living and community activity providers regarding Keeping Safe.
- Laura is working with support providers on helping people build a crisis plan and circle of support, as well as reducing isolation through a circle of support.
- Gathering of good practice from other areas is underway to help in the development of the other priority areas including training, peer and professional support, specifically involving reducing risk and helping keep people safe.
- Co-production, further consultation and engagement with the autistic community on what needs to happen to support their choices, needs and lifestyle.

Alexia mentioned within Children and Young People conversations were being had with young people on feeling safe, including, buses and CCTV.

Action 2 - Alexia suggested these conversations could be brought together suggesting Laura contact Tracy Duffy the SEND Participation Officer to bring both groups together.

Cllr Gandy suggested conversations should be had with Charles Yarnold (Head of Regulation and Technical Services, Economy and Environment) who is the lead on CCTV in the street under the Safer Streets project.

Hannah asked members to forward any suggestions for the Keeping Safe working group onto herself, Laura or Paul.

ICS updates & Autism Strategy Jack Caine/Anna Swift – Integrated Care Board

Jack shared a presentation on ICS updates. Please see attached. He confirmed that Pendeen GP Surgery was on the list for the sensory friendly environment GP Practise training.

Valerie questioned why Anna Swift didn't ask the board for feedback on a neurodiversity profiling tool she had been seeking feedback on. Jack was happy to pass on this feedback to Anna.

Jack highlighted that if anyone had feedback or queries regarding making GP surgeries booking systems more accessible, he would be happy to pass this onto Marie Gibbson. He suggested members could get involved in the Patient Participation Group at Hereford Medical Group or similar groups at the other GP Groups.

<https://www.herefordmedicalgroup.co.uk/practice-information/patient-participation-group/>

Valerie raised an issue with the Klinik form that many GP surgeries are using being over complicated for some autistic individuals.

Joint Autism Strategy

Jack also highlighted how the Strategy was being delivered such as:

- Autism Provider Forum has been set up in Worcester to cover development of audit tools for public services and transport services.
- A Children's and Young People Co-Production Officer is currently being recruited for by Worcester County Council to be in post by April 2025.
- A Herefordshire school will be offered a new base from September 2025 for children with SEND including those with diagnosed and undiagnosed neurodivergent conditions.
- Funding for Oliver McGowan training has been extended till September 2025.
- Autism Provider Forum set up and will initially meet in March 2025.
- Internal Autism Network established within West Mercia Police.

Laura Ferguson suggested to Jack that a summary could be produced of the work behind the Joint Autism Strategy which could be shared via the APB, its webpage. Laura said she was happy to help with producing this.

Police Hate Crimes reports concerning Autism Marie Bridgewater - Police Constable, Hate Crime Officer, West Mercia Police

Marie sent her apologies. Valerie then went through an update Marie had provided.

- Marie had done several presentations at Hereford County Hospital to the Freedom to Speak Up Guardians.
- Attended a Probus meeting where she spoke to them about hate crime.

- She has also done pop up events in Feathers in Ledbury with the safer neighbourhood team, Hereford Train Station and Hereford County Hospital with colleagues from her team and British Transport Police.
- Marie has also attended an open afternoon at the RNCB and the Leominster Police Station Open Day.

Valerie is currently training up 999 and 111 officers on how they can spot signs that someone is autistic. The Police are now allowed to ask individuals whether they have a disability. She is also still doing autism awareness training with the custody sergeants.

Partner Organizations

Hereford Make

James mentioned that he was struggling to get support for students from the Council. James is working with his support worker Josh to rectify this.

Action 3 - Hannah said she would meet with James to understand the level and type of support they need.

Hereford Make hopes to support some of the students from the Cart Shed if they can secure the appropriate level of funding.

Cart Shed

Is still running a variety of programmes including for young children. More classes for people with ADHD will start in the autumn.

<https://www.thecartshed.co.uk/courses>

A.O.B.

DWP Consultation.

Hannah mentioned there is a DWP consultation which sets out the plans and proposals to reform health and disability benefits and employment support in England, Wales and Scotland. They are keen to hear from a wide group of people, in particular disabled people and people with health conditions and disability organisations. The consultation ends on Monday 30th of June 2025.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/pathways-to-work-reforming-benefits-and-support-to-get-britain-working-green-paper>

Agenda items for the next meeting

- Autism Parental Blame Research- Laura Ferguson offered to give an overview at the next meeting.
- Connect to Work Supported Employment Programme- which Alexia to give an update on. This is a voluntary programme for people with learning disabilities, physical disabilities and autism

Action 4 - Paul to add Autism and Parental Blame, and Connect to Work Supported Employment Programme as agenda items for the next meeting.

Next Meeting: 22nd July 2025 10:30-1pm, Fownhope Room, Plough Lane Offices

Actions

Attendee	Action	Detail
Claire Middle	Action 1	Hannah asked if Claire could pass on the contact details of the Anna Freud Centre.
Laura Sirrell	Action 2	Alexia suggested Laura contact Tracy Duffy the SEND Participation Officer regarding joined up group work on Keeping Safe and CCTV.
Hannah Offord	Action 3	Will meet with James to understand the level and type of support Hereford Make students need.
Paul Choppen	Action 4	Add Autism and Parental Blame, and Connect to Work Supported Employment Programme as agenda items for the next meeting.