

**Children, Education and Communities Policy and Scrutiny Committee and Health and Adult Social Care Policy and Scrutiny Committee - Commissioned Joint Committee**      **9 November 2022**  
**(postponed from 27 September 2022)**

Report of the Corporate Director Adult Social Care and Integration

## **A refreshed all-age Autism Strategy for the City**

### **Summary**

1. This paper outlines the current strategic position in York around improving the support available to autistic people and their families and carers.
2. The paper proposes a refresh of the York All-Age Autism Strategy, aligned with the national strategy for Autistic Children, Young People and Adults 2021-2026.
3. The decision required from members is to support the proposed refresh, and the schedule of consultation with key stakeholders outlined below.

### **Background**

4. Between 2017-2021 the City of York had an [all-age Autism Strategy](#), which was underpinned by the joint-strategic needs assessment for the same period, and written by autistic people, alongside a number of the organisations available to support them.
5. This strategy was written in response to the challenges being faced at that time and committed to improving services in the following 6 areas:
  - a. Diagnostic support
  - b. Inclusive communities
  - c. Transitions
  - d. Training / education
  - e. Employment
  - f. Parent / Carer support

6. Since the strategy was published, work has been undertaken to address the outlined challenges, including the development of an improved local offer around employment, services which provide opportunities during the day, short breaks for families when crises occur, and early intervention and prevention (e.g., after school activity pilots, YIKs Autism Hub). There is new building-based provision for autistic people in the city- with the purpose-built Beehive for children and young people, and an autism-specific supported living scheme for adults. Despite all of this however, work remains.
7. Since 2016, the number of people predicted to have autism in the city has risen by somewhere between 6-15% (the higher estimate is based on emerging research around increased prevalence in children). In 2015 there were 204 autistic children in our schools- and in 2020 this had increased by 99% to 406<sup>1</sup>. The rate of autistic children known to schools is lower in York than nationally however, and also lower than our nearest statistical neighbours (15.9 per 1000, as opposed to 18 per 1000 and 16.2 per 1000 respectively). This would indicate that the challenge around diagnosis remains.
8. Over the next 20 years<sup>2</sup>, it is predicted there will be an increase of 6.4% in the number of autistic adults living in the city, from 1,709 now to 1,819 in 2040 (6.7% more males and 2.8% more females). There is a notable predicted increase in the number of older people who will be living with autism, as a result of our ageing population.
9. Waiting times for Autism assessments can be high in the city, with the average patient waiting more than 13 weeks for their first appointment. Across 2020 and 2021, only 8% of patients were seen within 13 weeks.
10. Last year, the government renewed its commitment to autistic people, publishing a refreshed [National Strategy for Autistic Children, Young People and Adults 2021 - 2026](#). This strategy builds on and replaces the preceding adult autism strategy, Think Autism (2014), recognising the importance of taking a lifetime approach. The Strategy outlines 6 areas for change, which through extensive consultation, the government believe would have a significant impact on autistic people's lives:
  - a. improving understanding and acceptance of autism within society

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<sup>1</sup><https://fingertips.phe.org.uk/search/autism#page/4/gid/1/pat/6/par/E12000003/ati/302/are/E06000014/iid/92133/age/217/sex/4/cat/-1/ctp/-1/yrr/1/nn/nn-10-E06000014/cid/4/tbm/1/page-options/car-do-0>

<sup>2</sup><https://www.pansi.org.uk/index.php?pageNo=392&arealD=8301&loc=8301>

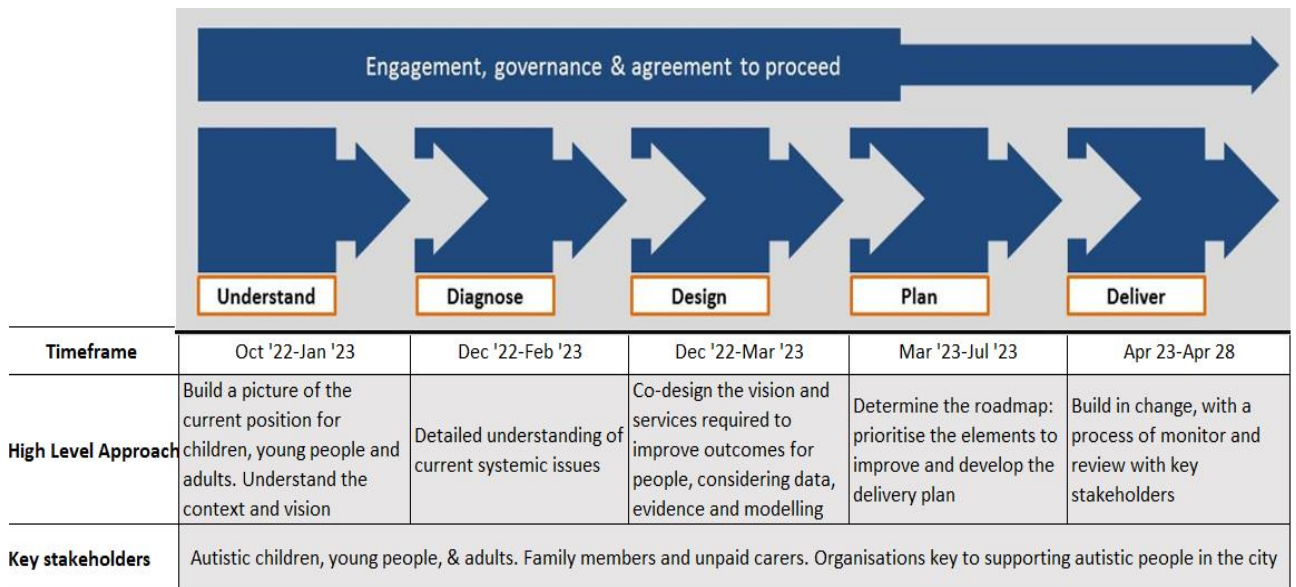
- b. improving autistic children and young people's access to education, and supporting positive transitions into adulthood
  - c. supporting more autistic people into employment
  - d. tackling health and care inequalities for autistic people
  - e. building the right support in the community and supporting people in inpatient care
  - f. improving support within the criminal and youth justice systems
11. In July this year, the government set out an [action plan](#) to strengthen community support for people with a learning disability and autistic people. The plan echoes the key changes highlighted above and puts particular focus on addressing the need for and use of inpatient settings.

### **Consultation**

12. In order to build upon the work completed locally during 2017-2021, and to address the nationally identified challenges for autistic people, it is proposed that York develop a refreshed All-age Autism Strategy based upon the framework outlined in the national strategy and action plan.
13. Our SEND Written Statement of Action (June 2020) and subsequent SEND Strategy for Children, Young People and Families in York (September 2021 – September 2025) and SEND Outcome Framework (2022) demonstrate our clear priority that:
- “co-production drives the improvement, development and joint commissioning of services in education, health, care and the community” (SEND WSoA, para 1).
14. This is reflected in Adult Social Care, where the Care Act 2014 suggests that co-production should be a key part of its implementation by local authorities.
15. The term 'co-production' describes working in partnership by sharing power between people who draw on care and support, carers, families and citizens (Social Care Institute for Excellent, 2022), and in relation to developing this Strategy, it is pivotal to share this power from the outset in understanding the issues faced, and codesigning the solutions.
16. In order to refresh York's All-Age Autism Strategy, there is a firm requirement for a schedule of co-production which ensures that the many and varied voices of citizens are heard. This will require different methods of engagement which draw out the expertise from people with lived experience, in a way that is right for them.

17. This schedule needs to account for the work required also to collaborate with key service providers in the city, ensuring that the work aligns with other strategic priorities within Health, Social Care and Education.

18. A proposed schedule is outlined below:



## Council Plan

19. Developing a refreshed all-age Autism Strategy primarily supports the councils core outcomes of 'good health and wellbeing' and 'a better start for children and young people' but also contributes to outcomes such as 'an inclusive economy' and 'safe communities'.

## 20. Implications

- **Financial** – Contact is being established with Finance Officers. It is not anticipated that the Strategy will specify additional investment in support for autistic people from within current budget, but it is recognised that some ambitions will only be achievable through ongoing consideration of how each system partner can best contribute resources in this area.
- **Human Resources (HR)** – Contact is being established with HR. The strategy is not expected to specify impact upon Human Resources, but it is recognised that some ambitions may require stakeholders to think about how they best use their human resource to achieve the collective goal. Advice is being sought from CYC workforce development advisers due to the training implications.

- **Equalities** - An equalities impact assessment is being undertaken to ensure that the Strategy complies with the law, by taking account of equality, human rights and socioeconomic disadvantage implications in the decisions made.
- **Legal** – Contact is being established with legal services. There is a risk that our current Autism Strategy is now out of date. The new national strategy for Autistic Children, Young People and Adults 2021-2026 remains aligned with the [statutory guidance 2015](#) and therefore with the duties this places on us.
- **Crime and Disorder** – Contact is being established with key partners in youth justice and North Yorkshire Police to consider the strategic priority to improve support within the criminal and youth justice systems.
- **Information Technology (IT)** – There are no known implications for IT
- **Property** – There are no known implications for property

### Recommendations

21. Members are asked to support the proposed refresh, and the schedule of consultation with key stakeholders outlined.

The reason for this recommendation is that having a co-produced all-age autism strategy for the city will ensure that we are meeting the growing needs for autistic people in our population and that we are compliant with our statutory responsibilities.

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<b>Wards Affected:</b> List wards or tick box to indicate all			<b>All</b> √
<b>For further information please contact the author of the report</b>			

## **Annexes**

Annex A: A Proposed framework for the York All-Age Autism Strategy

## **Abbreviations**

SEND – Special Educational Needs and Disability