

Brighton & Hove City Council

Health and Wellbeing Board

Agenda Item 23

Subject: Brighton and Hove Adult Autism Strategy

Date of meeting: 07 November 2023

Report of: Executive Director, Health & Adult Social Care

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Ward(s) affected: All

For general release

1. Purpose of the report and policy context

1.1 This report contains the Brighton and Hove Adult Autism Strategy for 2023-2028 and associated action plan. The strategy has been developed through extensive engagement with the local community and been agreed by the Brighton and Hove Autism Partnership Board. The strategy focuses on six key themes to improve the wellbeing of local autistic people, their unpaid carers and members of their support network.

2. Recommendations

2.1 That the Committee notes the Brighton and Hove Adult Autism Strategy 2023-2028 and accompanying action plan.

3. Context and background information

3.1 Statutory guidance (2015) states each local area is required to have an autism partnership board. The aim of autism partnership boards is for local authorities, NHS organisations, voluntary sector organisations and communities to collaborate in shaping and monitoring local services to improve the lives of autistic people and their families.

3.2 The Brighton and Hove Autism Partnership Board was re-established in January 2023 and has led on the development of this strategy. The board has strong representation from across the local authority, local NHS organisations, the community and voluntary sector and local autistic self-advocates. The board is co-chaired by Alice Conroy – autistic parent and self-advocate – and Rob Persey - Executive Director of Health and Adult Social Care.

3.3 The Brighton and Hove Autism Partnership Board have agreed to focus on the needs of autistic adults without a learning disability so not to duplicate work associated with the Adult Learning Disability Strategy 2021-2026 or the Brighton and Hove Special Educational Needs and Disability Strategy 2021-2026.

3.4 There is a community belief that there is a significantly large autistic community in Brighton and Hove. Health and social care staff report a

significant increase in the number of autistic adults seeking support and the complexity of their needs.

3.5 Based on community engagement and consultation issues reported by the community include:

- A lack of understanding and implementation of autistic adults' legal right for reasonable adjustments to be made in order to access health and social care services in accordance with the Equality Act 2010.
- Minimal and outdated professional understanding of autism and reports of professional gaslighting when autistic people and unpaid carers shared their experiences.
- Autistic adults regularly being passed between different health and social care teams as one survey respondent stated: "due to being the wrong type of disabled to fit current systems".

3.5 Based on community engagement and consultation, these issues: prevent autistic people from accessing support from services, exacerbate physical and mental health inequalities, significantly impact unpaid carers' health and wellbeing, and increase risks of homelessness, hospital admission and suicide.

4. Community engagement and consultation

5.1 An online consultation took place in June 2023 exploring community experiences and priorities. Over 200 people responded – the majority of whom were autistic.

5.2 Engagement work was completed by local community organisations including Assert, Amaze, Trust for Developing Communities and Possability people. Separate engagement groups were also held for autistic women and/or autistic people assigned female at birth, autistic parents and LGBTQ+ autistic people. Engagement sessions were also held with health and social care staff.

5.3 Based on consultation and engagement work, six key themes were identified:

- Physical health
- Mental health
- Neurodevelopmental assessment and support
- Housing
- Social Care
- Relationships, feeling safe and part of the community

5.5 The priority areas for survey respondents were mental health, physical health and neurodevelopmental assessment and support. Mental health was considered to be a key priority by 93.4% of respondents to the consultation.

5.6 Working groups were established based around these key themes to develop outcomes and actions to improve the wellbeing of autistic adults and their unpaid carers. Working groups were attended by autistic adults, people who support them and staff working in that particular area.

5.9 Actions and outcomes include:

- ensuring all staff have the knowledge and skills to work with autistic people
- ensuring inclusive adjustments are being made to enable autistic people equal access to mainstream services
- where autistic people are not able to access a service through inclusive adjustments – highlighting the need for specialist services, particularly in mental health and social care
- ensuring consideration of the needs of unpaid carers and family members
- piloting an integrated health and social care team to support autistic people whose needs cannot be met by other services.

5.10. The development of the Brighton and Hove Autism Strategy coincides with a Sussex wide review of the all age neurodevelopmental pathway programme led by the NHS Integrated Care Board. The outcomes and actions of the Brighton and Hove Autism Strategy complement and are aligned to the goals of this ongoing Sussex wide Neurodevelopmental review.

5.11. In order to enable the delivery of this strategy, links have been made to existing statutory developments and initiatives including:

- Sussex Learning Disability and Autism Strategy 2021-24
- Brighton and Hove SEND strategy 2021-26
- Brighton and Hove Adult Learning Disability Strategy 2021-26
- Brighton and Hove Suicide Prevention Action Plan
- City Employment and Skills Recovery Plan
- The Oliver McGowan Mandatory Training on Learning Disability and Autism

5. Conclusion

6.1 The Brighton and Hove Adult Autism Strategy sets out the key areas to improve the wellbeing of local autistic people, their unpaid carers and members of their support network.

6.2. The Brighton and Hove Autism Partnership Board and associated working groups will focus on prioritising, monitoring and evaluating the outcomes and actions and progress of the strategy.

6. Financial implications

7.1 Any financial implications from the Brighton and Hove Adult Autism Strategy and action plan, will need to be considered as part of the implementation plan.

The Council and its partners are facing significant budget challenges alongside a rise in demand for services and all are likely to have to seek efficiencies across the life of this strategy. The Council will need to commission and re-design services jointly with other agencies in the most

efficient and streamlined way to ensure that this strategy can be delivered from within available resources.

Name of finance officer consulted: Sophie Warburton Date consulted: 19/10/2023

7. Legal implications

The rationale and legal requirements for an Autism Partnership Board to ensure implementation of the *2015 Statutory Guidance for Local Authorities and NHS organisations to support implementation of the Adult Autism Strategy* are described in the body of this report. The Guidance (and Autism Act 2009) imposes duties on the Local Authority and NHS bodies and it is therefore a function of the Health and Wellbeing Board to oversee and monitor the implementation of those duties.

Name of lawyer consulted: Sandra O'Brien Date consulted 18/10/2023

8. Equalities implications

8.1. An equality impact assessment has been completed for this strategy (please see Background documents).

8.2 The outcomes and actions Brighton and Hove Adult Autism Strategy 2023-2028 aim to mitigate or avoid adverse impacts experienced by local autistic people and their unpaid carers and advance equality and opportunity. The strategy outcomes and actions have been adapted to take account of the analysis included within the equality impact assessment.

9. Crime & disorder implications:

9.1. As part of consultation and engagement work completed to develop this strategy many autistic people reported experiences of harassment from other members of the public and reported negative experiences of the police.

9.2. The outcomes and actions included within this strategy have the potential to promote community safety through ensuring that the police, the justice system, the young offending service, substance misuse services and services supporting people with domestic violence all have the knowledge and skills to support, and make reasonable adjustments for, autistic people.

10. Public health implications:

10.1. Public health and wellbeing is a core theme throughout this strategy. The outcomes and actions of the Brighton and Hove Adult Autism Strategy 2023-28 pose a significant opportunity to reduce health inequalities, reduce barriers to autistic people accessing health and social care services and take a holistic approach to improving the health and wellbeing of autistic people and their unpaid carers.

Supporting Documentation

1. Background documents

Brighton and Hove Adult Autism Strategy 2023-2028

Brighton and Hove Adult Autism Strategy Action Plan

[Equality Impact assessment](#)

Statutory Guidance for local authorities and NHS organisations to support implementation of the Adult Autism Strategy ([Statutory guidance for Local Authorities and NHS organisations to support implementation of the Adult Autism Strategy \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](#))

