

Cheshire West & Chester Council

Minutes



ALL-AGE AUTISM AND NEURODIVERGENCE PARTNERSHIP BOARD

DATED: WEDNESDAY, 2 JULY 2025

ATTENDANCE:

Facilitation Team:

Oliver Downing (Commissioning Officer, Learning Disability/Autism) - Co-Facilitator

Tony McLinden (Person with Lived Experience) – Co-Facilitator

Alistair Jeffs (Head of Policy, Performance & Partnerships SC Joint Strategic Commissioning – Cheshire West and Chester Council) – Champion

Katy Ellison (Coproduction Development Manager) – Supporting Co-Facilitator

Ashiq Ashraf – Notetaker

Along with representatives from:

- Strategic Commissioning Team – Learning Disability and Autism, Cheshire West and Chester Council (Ruth Robinson, Su Chapelow)
- Strategic Commissioning Team – Mental Health, Cheshire West and Chester Council (Carla Preston)
- Strategic Commissioning Team – Children and Families, Cheshire West and Chester Council - (Steve Arnold)
- Strategic Commissioning - Co-Production (Katy Ellison)
- Prevention and Wellbeing, Cheshire West and Chester Council (Kate Salvoni)
- Disabled Children's Service (Sarah Banks)
- Vivo Care (Luke Sheehan)
- Cheshire and Wirral Partnership NHS (Chris Colwell)
- Cheshire and Merseyside Integrated Care Board (Dan Jones)
- Cheshire West Voluntary Action (Andrew Herbert)
- Cheshire Autism Practical Support (Chloe Carter)
- People's Choice Group
- Active Cheshire
- Ellesmere Port Catholic High School
- Parent Carer Forum
- Parent/Carers
- People with Lived Experience

WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS:

Oliver welcomed everyone to the meeting and introductions were given.

FUTURE MEETINGS: DATES AND TIMES

The group discussed the suitability of the current meeting slot, 10am to noon on the first Wednesday of every other month. Tony preferred this time but acknowledged flexibility may be needed. Alistair emphasised the importance of a regular slot for planning and commitment, noting the hybrid approach's success despite recent technology issues. The consensus was to maintain the current slot for clarity and consistency. Board to ensure the technology and support for hybrid meetings is improved to provide a better experience for all participants

During the conversation they acknowledged Carla's departure and thanked for her contributions.

ACTIONS

- Oliver/Su to arrange dates, times and venues for future meetings up until March 2027.

AUSTISM STRATEGY

Oliver shared the strategy and the meeting focused on refining the draft for supporting Neurodivergent individuals, particularly those with Autistic people. Key points included the need for better alignment with local and national strategies, such as Active Cheshire's 'Playing Our Part' strategy.

The discussion highlighted the importance of addressing intimate relationships, with suggestions for inclusive sexual health services and confidential support channels. The need for tailored support for Autistic parents and carers was emphasised, along with the necessity of considering the needs of siblings and individuals with ADHD. The Board also discussed the importance of engaging young people directly in discussions about relationships and sexual health.

The meeting focused on strategies for supporting siblings of Autistic Children. The discussion highlighted the importance of courses for parents and siblings to understand and balance needs. The Board discussed the lack of relevant courses and the need for tailored support. Also emphasised the gap in specific courses for Neurodivergent families and suggested linking with the Carers Trust for emotional support. The Board agreed on the need for a comprehensive strategy, suggesting additional co-production workshops and resource-based sub-groups to address various support needs effectively.

ACTIONS

- Oliver Downing to Review the strategy content to ensure it addresses the needs of Autistic parents/caregivers, not just the Autistic individual. Explore adding content about ensuring sexual health services provide reasonable adjustments.
- Oliver Downing and Katy Ellison to coordinate with Petty Pool College and the Choices youth group to directly engage with young Autistic people.
- The Strategy Sub-group and Lived Experience Sub-group to include aligning the strategy objectives with any relevant aspects of the 'Playing Our Part' local strategy.
- Katy Ellison to organise additional co-production workshops to ensure all proposed strategy areas are thoroughly covered.

SPECIALIST COMMUNITY FORENSIC TEAM

Chris Colwell, Operational Team Manager at Mersey Kam, presented on the Cheshire & Merseyside Specialist Community Forensic Team for Autistic people and people with a learning disability. The team aims to reduce admissions to secure hospitals and enhance community support. They have a multi-disciplinary team, including social workers, occupational therapists, and psychiatrists, and operate seven days a week. The team has recruited 96 staff members and uses AI for referral processes. Challenges include misinterpretation of autistic behaviours and the need for better support for individuals with ADHD. The team emphasises person-centered care and collaboration with criminal justice agencies.

ACTIONS

- Chris Colwell to reach out to Helen Walton to discuss potential collaboration opportunities with local authority and health services.
- Chris Colwell to incorporate feedback from people with lived experience, families, and service partners to improve the team's approach and language.
- Chris Colwell to advocate for the inclusion of ADHD support services within the team's scope, as this is an identified need.

Please see the PowerPoint which was shared with the Board below:

[SCFT](#)

SUB-GROUPS

- **Lived Experience**

The lived experience group highlighted the importance of integrating online services and frontline interactions, with plans for a 'Just Ask' campaign to improve customer experience. Autism scripts were discussed to enhance understanding and reasonable adjustments.

ACTIONS FROM LAST MEETING

The meeting concluded with a call for updates on actions via email to ensure progress and accountability.

NEW ACTIONS

Number	Action	By
1	Oliver/Su to arrange dates, times and venues for future meetings up until March 2027.	Oliver Downing / Su Chapelow
2	Review the strategy content to ensure it addresses the needs of Autistic parents/caregivers, not just the Autistic individual. Explore adding content about ensuring sexual health services provide reasonable adjustments.	Oliver Downing
3	Coordinate with Petty Pool College and the Choices youth group to directly engage with young Autistic people.	Oliver Downing / Katy Ellison
4	The Strategy Sub-group and Lived Experience Sub-group to include aligning the strategy objectives with any relevant aspects of the 'Playing Our Part' local strategy.	Oliver Downing / Katy Ellison
5	Organise additional co-production workshops to ensure all proposed strategy areas are thoroughly covered.	Katy Ellison / Oliver Downing
6	Reach out to Helen Walton to discuss potential collaboration opportunities with local authority and health services.	Chris Colwell
7	Incorporate feedback from people with lived experience, families, and service partners to improve the team's approach and language.	Chris Colwell
8	To advocate for the inclusion of ADHD support services within the team's scope, as this is an identified need.	Chris Colwell

FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

Meeting date	Items for discussion
September	Strategy update; membership – consistency and expansion of representation; housing requirement for under 55s/housing prospectus
November	Action planning, TBD

March 2026	AGM (during ND Celebration Week)
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DATES OF NEXT PARTNERSHIP BOARD MEETINGS

Wednesday, 3 September 2025

DATES OF NEXT SUB-GROUPS MEETINGS

Autism/Neurodivergence Strategy

Wednesday, 27 August 2025

Lived Experience

Dates to be confirmed

Service Mapping

Friday, 15 August 2025