

Cheshire West & Chester Council

Minutes



ALL-AGE AUTISM AND NEURODIVERGENCE PARTNERSHIP BOARD

DATED 7 MARCH 2025

ATTENDANCE:

Oliver Downing, Commissioning Lead (Learning Disability and Autism), Cheshire West and Chester Council – Chair

Along with representatives from:

- Strategic Commissioning Team – Learning Disability and Autism, Cheshire West and Chester Council
- Strategic Commissioning Team – Mental Health, Cheshire West and Chester Council
- Sensory Support Team – Cheshire West and Chester Council
- Transitions and Autism Team, Cheshire West and Chester Council
- Skills and Employment, Cheshire West and Chester Council
- Fresh Start, Cheshire West and Chester Council
- Cheshire and Wirral Partnership NHS
- Cheshire and Merseyside Integrated Care Board
- Mid Cheshire Trust
- People's Choice Group
- Active Cheshire
- Ellesmere Port Catholic High School
- Adult Safeguarding, Leighton Hospital
- Parent Carer Forum
- Parent/Carers
- People with Lived Experience

WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS:

Oliver welcomed everyone to the meeting and introductions were shared. It was shared that that Tony will co-chair today's meeting, but Oliver stated that expressions of interest can be sent to him from anyone else who may be interested in co-chairing the meeting.

Alistair Jeffs has now stepped into a champion role, which it was felt crucial for the boards progress in terms of its links into Senior management at the Council.

TERMS OF REFERENCE:

Key objectives will be to focus on co-production (of the strategy but also of future services and continuous improvement projects), neurodivergent leadership, and community support. Dan suggested adding carer support to the objectives. The board debated the focus on autism versus neurodivergence, agreeing to prioritise autism and ADHD, with a trauma-informed approach. Tony emphasised the need for more lived experience representatives.

ACTION:

1. Carer support to added to/be linked into the Terms of Reference – *Oliver Downing*
2. Terms of Reference for the Partnership Board to be reviewed by everyone so that a final version can be issued and shared on the Council's website – *All*
3. Su to confirm how many people with lived experience attend the meeting compared to the number of professionals who attend – *Su Chapelow*

SUB-GROUP UPDATES

Lived Experience: Tony highlighted the need for more lived experience members in sub-groups to ensure all decisions involve the voice of lived experience when reviewing current services and challenges for Autistic people and then developing ideas and solutions. The sub-group is being supported by Katy Ellison will continue to work on a variety of themes such as training for school staff and teachers; the culture around young people and work with their peers who have autism; raising the Partnership Board's profile; education for front-line services.

Service Mapping: The service mapping project aims to capture and update service information to drive change. The information gathered by this group and collated by Su will inform the strategic work in identifying gaps in provision and sharing good practice.

Strategy: The Strategic Planning Workshop focused on agreeing 18 main goals, emphasising the need for a collaborative approach. The sub-group has been getting the main goals into priority order. Oliver mentioned that he is keen for a co-production workshop to take place which will feed into this strategy.

REFLECTIONS AND COLLABORATION:

Tony shared his thanks to everyone on the board for the work being done and encouraged people to keep going even if they hit a barrier as together, those barriers can be broken down.

Claire spoke about those people who may not be aware of the services out there and how ICP could be used to signpost people with lived experience to this group and other services. She also mentioned that she would be willing to present the Reasonable Adjustment Campaign to the board.

Jackie shared her thoughts about Autistic elders and commented on how vulnerable they are and the necessity of safer communities. The discussion also highlighted the need for better housing, such as soundproofing and accessible features.

Additionally, discussion centered on the importance of increasing awareness and training for neurodivergent conditions and the need for better representation on the partnership boards and its sub-groups.

ACTIONS FROM LAST MEETING

The actions from the last meeting were discussed and updated on the action log as appropriate.

ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Housing Benefits: There is guidance on the position of the Council and the DWP in relation to the impact when there are 53 weeks in a year. This guidance will be on the Council's website.

New Group Supported Internship: Karina will give more details in the next meeting but wanted everyone to be aware of the deadline of Friday, 2 May 2025 for applications.

Education/Children's: Update from The Head of Children's Social Care there three new ASD specialist teachers to enhance support for Autistic children being recruited. Issues such as the lack of effective strategies for neurodivergent students in schools and the need for inclusive, holistic approaches were highlighted.

FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

Meeting date	Items for discussion
May	Strategy update; Oliver McGowan training and alternative ideas; New Ground Internship
July	Strategy update; short breaks/respite focus on need and demand
September	Strategy update; membership – consistency and expansion of representation; housing requirement for under 55s/housing prospectus
November	Action planning, TBD
January 2026	Strategy sign-off post consultation/feedback; action planning; TBD
March 2026	AGM (during ND Celebration Week)

DATES OF NEXT PARTNERSHIP BOARD MEETINGS

Wednesday, 7 May 2025

Wednesday, 2 July 2025

Wednesday, 3 September 2025

DATES OF NEXT SUB-GROUPS MEETINGS

Autism/Neurodivergence Strategy

Wednesday, 30 April 2025

Wednesday, 25 June 2025

Wednesday, 27 August 2025

Lived Experience

Dates to be confirmed

Service Mapping

Friday, 13 June 2025

Friday, 15 August 2025

ACTIONS:

Number	Action	By
1	Carer support to added to/be linked into the Terms of Reference.	Oliver Downing
2	Terms of Reference for the Partnership Board to be reviewed by everyone so that a final version can be issued and shared on the Council's website.	PB members ahead of next meeting
3	Su to confirm how many people with lived experience attend the meeting compared to the number of professionals who attend.	Su Chapelow
4	Request to continue to encourage wide membership of the Partnership Board, including regular representation by Council Members and Councillors.	Alistair Jeffs