

Cabinet

25 November 2021

Coventry and Warwickshire Joint Autism Strategy

Recommendation(s)

That Cabinet

1. Endorses the joint All Age Autism Strategy for Coventry and Warwickshire 2021-26
2. Authorises the Strategic Director for People (in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Adult Social Care & Health and the Portfolio Holder for Children, Families & Education) to approve the Strategy Delivery Plans and Written Statements of Action for each year.

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 Local Authorities and Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs) have statutory responsibilities to support autistic people as outlined in the Autism Act 2009, Equality Act 2010, Care Act 2014, Children and Families Act 2014, SEND Code of Practice 2014 and NHS Long Term Plan 2019.
- 1.2 In recognition of these statutory responsibilities and the inequalities faced by autistic people, the Coventry and Warwickshire Collaborative Commissioning Board approved the development of a joint all age strategy for autistic people. This is a joint five-year strategy which is owned by the following organisations:
 - Warwickshire County Council
 - Coventry City Council
 - NHS Coventry and Warwickshire Clinical Commissioning Group
- 1.3 The Strategy builds on the previous Warwickshire All Age Autism Strategy (2014-2017) 'Fulfilling & Rewarding Lives' and the joint commissioning plan developed by Warwickshire County Council and Coventry City Council in 2017. Publication of this local strategy was delayed while the national strategy was being developed, however, work has continued towards delivery of the strategy in the meantime.
- 1.4 An accessible and easy read version of this strategy is being developed and will be published following sign off of this strategy.
- 1.5 Significant progress has been made since the previous strategy to develop diagnostic pathways for adults and children; pilot new support services for autistic people pre- and post diagnosis and those in mental health crisis; improve support for young people in education with

communication and sensory needs; and deliver autism training for parents, carers and the wider workforce. However, autistic people continue to experience inequalities due to gaps in services and support, hence the need for this strategy.

- 1.6 This autism strategy is informed by a range of co-production and mapping activity which was completed in 2019 and 2020 with experts with lived experience and key professionals, which was undertaken to build our shared understanding of the experience of autistic people of all ages and their families in accessing support appropriate to their needs and getting a formal diagnosis of autism. A number of new services for autistic people have been piloted since 2018 and the learning from those pilots has contributed to the strategy.
- 1.7 A joint Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission (CQC) inspection was carried out in Warwickshire between 12 July and 16 July 2021. The inspection identified a number of areas for improvement in the way children and young people with a disability and special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are supported. Some of the 5 key areas of weakness identified are the long waiting times for autism (ASD) assessments and the lack of appropriate support for children and young people awaiting assessment and following diagnosis of ASD.
- 1.8 A detailed Written Statement of Action and plan to address waiting times for autism assessment and improve pre- and post diagnostic support is being developed.
- 1.9 The strategy gives the overarching objectives for the next 5 years. These will be delivered in a co-ordinated way across Warwickshire and Coventry and some elements will be delivered differently in different places to take account of the different services and communities across the area. A delivery plan for year 1 of the strategy has been developed, with a key focus reflecting local priorities on redesign of the diagnostic pathway, including pre- and post diagnostic support as well as the development of community services to reduce avoidable admissions to mental health hospital.
- 1.10 In line with the Coventry and Warwickshire Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) and Inclusion Strategies, the Autism Strategy emphasises the importance of promoting inclusive practice and supporting young people to access their full potential through education. Delivery of the strategy will therefore be aligned with the Warwickshire SEND change programme and the Coventry SEND Strategy 2019 to 2022 'Lifting the Cloud of Limitation'. Signing off and publishing this strategy is critical in light of the recent CQC and OFSTED inspection outcome in Warwickshire.
- 1.11 The new national Autism Strategy (2021-2026) launched in July 2021 builds on the previous national Strategy's pre-existing duties placed on commissioners and service delivery providers in relation to adults; and it builds on the SEND Code of Practice in relation to children and young people. The new strategy introduces a new element of identification and

provision of support to autistic adults in accordance with relevant legal duties.

- 1.12 Overall there is close alignment between the local and national strategies, although the priorities are described differently between the two documents. A year 1 strategy delivery plan has been developed for 2021/22, in line with the approach in the national strategy. Priorities identified within this plan are funded and are deliverable. The year 1 plan focusses on reducing waiting times for a diagnosis and pre- and post diagnostic support, as well as reducing the numbers of autistic people admitted to mental health hospitals. In year 2 priorities will reflect the wider scope beyond health, social care and education.
- 1.13 In reflecting on the national strategy priorities, there is the opportunity to strengthen the focus on workforce development in our local delivery plan for year 2 and build the links with education, criminal justice, and public health as well as with our own organisation's employment practices in promoting the employment of autistic people. For example, greater consideration needs to be given in the local delivery plan to improving the experience of autistic people in accessing public transport and advocacy services and improving support in and environments of services working with autistic people through enhanced workforce development and autism awareness raising.
- 1.14 A key difference is that the national strategy has a key focus on improving diagnostic waiting times and does not reflect our local ambition to ensure that while prompt access to a diagnosis is imperative, it is also of importance that people can access support without needing a diagnosis and are not excluded from services on the basis of their diagnosis.
- 1.15 Furthermore, since August 2020, the Strategy has been presented to the following boards and committees, with feedback incorporated into the document:
 - Learning Disability and Autism Transformation Board – August 2020
 - South Warwickshire CCG Chief Officers Team – September 2020
 - Coventry Adult Social Care Management Team – September 2020
 - Coventry Children's Joint Commissioning Group – September 2020
 - South Warwickshire Clinical Commissioning Group Chief Officers – September 2020
 - Coventry SEND Autism Champions Workshop – October 2020
 - Warwickshire Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee - October 2020
 - Coventry Rugby /Warwickshire North CCG Clinical Quality Safety and Governance Committee – October 2020
 - Coventry Rugby /Warwickshire North CCG Finance and Performance Committee – October 2020
 - South Warwickshire CCG Executive Team – October 2020
 - Learning Disability and Autism Transformation Board – October 2020
 - Warwickshire SEND Senior Leadership Team – October 2020
 - Health Care Professionals Clinical Forum – November 2020

- Health Care Professionals Mental Health Strategy Group – November 2020
- Warwickshire Children’s Partnership Board – December 2020
- Arden Learning Disabilities and Autism Board – June 2021
- Strategy sign off by WCC Directorate Leadership Team - September 2021
- Strategy sign off by WCC Corporate Board - October 2021
- Coventry and Warwickshire Clinical Commissioning Group Clinical Quality Safety and Governance Committee - October 2021
- Coventry and Warwickshire Clinical Commissioning Group Finance and Performance Committee - November 2021
- Coventry Children’s Services Leadership Team –November

2. Financial Implications

- 2.1 There is no new recurrent funding identified to deliver the strategy, however it is recognised that autistic people currently access high cost support from a range of specialist services once they are in crisis. The strategy must therefore be delivered in a way that ensures existing resources are used in the most cost effective way, including promoting prevention and early intervention and making existing health, care and education services and pathways of support more accessible and effective for autistic people.
- 2.2 To date, funding for delivery of the Strategy has been sourced through a variety of routes including pooled LA/CCG budgets, Warwickshire Integrated Better Care Fund and NHSE one off monies. These include funding bids to support transformation of the neurodevelopmental diagnostic pathway redesign and enhancing community based support. Bids will continue to be made for any future funding streams to help support delivery of this strategy.
- 2.3 The national strategy launched in July 2021 introduces a number of funding streams to support delivery of the six national priority areas by local systems. In reviewing the detail of the funding outlined in the national strategy, in the main this reflects funding streams that have already been secured from NHSE/I to support local delivery plans for 2021/22. Locally in Coventry and Warwickshire we have already made a number of successful bids to be part of national initiatives and programmes outlined in the strategy, including the Keyworker Pilot, Digital Flag Pilot, Autism in Schools and funding to support innovative redesign of diagnostic pathways for adults and children.
- 2.4 Delivery of the model of care will require system wide decisions about recurrent investment in autism services, which is being managed through the development of the 3 year plan for Learning Disabilities and Autism through the Arden Learning Disabilities and Autism Board.

3. Environmental Implications

3.1 None

4. Supporting Information

4.1 The joint All Age Autism Strategy for Coventry and Warwickshire 2021-26 is informed by a range of co-production, engagement and mapping activity which was completed during 2019 and 2020 and which was undertaken to build our shared understanding of the experience of autistic people of all ages and their families in accessing support appropriate to their needs and getting a formal diagnosis of autism. A number of new services for autistic people have been piloted since 2018 and the learning from those pilots has contributed to the strategy.

4.2 Based on the evidence base gained through the co-production and research activity, as well as statutory responsibilities for partner organisations, five priority areas have been identified. A number of objectives have been developed against each of the priority areas:

Table 2. Coventry and Warwickshire All Age Autism Strategy Priority Areas and Key Objectives

Priority Area:	Key Objectives:
Priority 1: Support autistic people and people with social, communication and emotional health needs to help themselves pre and post diagnosis	<p>Improve early identification of characteristics linked to autism through wide ranging education and training and reduce the need for a diagnosis to access appropriate support. Provide information and advice to people with social, communication and emotional health needs in order to promote self-management, family resilience, independence and wellbeing.</p> <p>Enable and empower people to develop their own solutions and networks of support in their communities through developing a better understanding of the third sector services people are using; enhancing peer support networks and facilitating information sharing.</p>
Priority 2: Reduce inequalities for autistic people and make Coventry and Warwickshire autism friendly places to live	<p>Improve the health and wellbeing of autistic people through developing autism friendly towns and cities in Coventry and Warwickshire, including taking action to ensure autistic people experience equality of access and inclusive services and support. We all want to live in communities that support each other, without prejudice, to get the most out of our lives.</p> <p>Respecting human rights, citizenship and offering inclusive approach to all citizens must extend</p>

	to everyone, including in access to education and employment, and autistic people as well as their parents and carers should be no exception.
Priority 3: Develop a range of organisations locally with the skills to support autistic people	<p>Ensure that a wide range of organisations that can provide skilled support and services are available and accessible in local areas to meet the health, care and education needs of autistic people.</p> <p>Enhance the skills of our existing workforce to achieve more personalised support from services through an increased understanding of autism across the workforce, from awareness raising through to specialist autism expertise.</p>
Priority 4: Develop the all age autism specialist support offer	Commission and deliver a coordinated and personalised offer of support for autistic people across all levels of need, promoting early intervention and enabling people to navigate this offer as their needs change. This includes redesigning the autism diagnostic pathway and focussing on all age pathways to better support transition from children's to adult's services.
Priority 5: Co-produce, work together and learn about autism	Co-produce solutions and services with autistic people and their families and collect and share the information that will enable us to learn and improve our offer to autistic people.

- 4.3 The draft strategy has been endorsed by the Coventry and Warwickshire Learning Disability and Autism Transformation Board to be shared with partners for review prior to finalisation of the strategy.
- 4.4 The Strategy reflects Warwickshire County Council's ambitions to make Warwickshire:
- a county with a vibrant economy and places with the right jobs, skills, and infrastructure;
 - a place where people can live their best lives; where communities and individuals are supported to live safely, healthily, happily and independently;
 - a place with sustainable futures which means adapting to and mitigating climate change and meeting net zero commitments.
- 4.5 A new five year Council Plan is being developed which will also reflect the 5 Autism Strategy priorities in its vision and planned actions to transform the lives of local residents.

Strategy Delivery

- 4.6 Delivery of the strategy objectives will require system wide commitment to prioritise the needs of autistic people within wider programmes of work including education, primary and secondary mental and physical health services, social care and support, public health, communities, housing, businesses, police and youth justice. The work to deliver the identified year 1 priorities in 2021/22 within the local strategy is already in progress as outlined below.
- 4.7 A robust co-production approach underpins the delivery of the strategy priorities to ensure that we build on strengths, experience and voices of individuals with direct experience of using health and social care services in supporting them in relation to autism related needs.

Priority Actions for Delivery in 2021/22

- 4.8 A detailed Strategy Delivery Plan has been provided in Appendix 2.
- 4.9 The following activities have been agreed by Coventry and Warwickshire health and social care system as priorities for the first year of the strategy (2021/22):

Priority 1: Support autistic people and people with social, communication and emotional health needs to help themselves pre and post diagnosis

- The contracts for existing community based autism support services are due to end October 2022. A proposed model of future support has been co-produced, building on the evaluation of existing services. The model includes the following elements which will inform the re-procurement activity during 2021/2022:
 - Improved and coproduced offer of information and advice provided in an accessible format, working in partnership with Coventry and Warwickshire Partnership trust to further enhance their Dimensions tool to be the one stop shop for information about the diagnostic process, signposting to support and provision of self-management resources.;
 - Support for children, young people and adults awaiting an autism assessment and those diagnosed with autism residing in Coventry and Warwickshire, their siblings and parents/carers/family members via a range of options for 1:1 support, social groups, peer support and mentoring;
 - Improved transition support including sessions for specific age groups and workshops for professionals;
 - Autism awareness and peer networking sessions for parents and family members;
- The development of a housing action plan for learning disabilities and autism will improve access to suitable housing for autistic people living in Coventry and Warwickshire, by raising awareness of autism and improving access to housing that is designed to consider the sensory needs of autistic people.

Priority 2: Reduce inequalities for autistic people and make Coventry and Warwickshire autism friendly places to live.

- Autistic people and families highlighted that working with education and mental health and wellbeing services should be the priority in this area, along with improving access to employment.
- Two pilot projects have been funded by NHS England working with a small number of schools in Coventry and Warwickshire. One project aims to improve school attendance for autistic young people through a graduated offer of support and the other will focus on developing autism empowered school environments and developing positive self-identity of secondary school students, thus leading to improved outcomes around education and mental health needs. The learning from these pilot projects will inform the delivery of SEND support into schools across Coventry and Warwickshire.
- Coventry and Warwickshire Partnership Trust have developed autism training which is being rolled out to staff in emotional wellbeing and specialist mental health services (including CAMHS). Specialist roles are being created to build autism awareness in mental health services, including the employment of people with lived experience of learning disabilities and / or autism.
- Both Councils are working towards disability confident employer level 3 as part of the commitment to promote and support employment of autistic people within the Council.

Priority 3: Develop a range of organisations locally with the skills to support autistic people

- A systemwide workforce development plan will be developed to support delivery of the strategy by addressing workforce gaps in relation to autism and ensuring that training staff in relation to autism is a priority for all partners. The aim is to upskill the workforce to be able to identify characteristics linked to autism early on and provide reasonable adjustments within their service offer to avoid the need to access diagnosis in order to receive support.
- An introductory autism awareness e-module has been developed for professionals and Connections workshops have been commissioned for staff across Coventry and Warwickshire to ensure that workforce have an improved experience of and understanding of autism, feel empowered and skilled to meet the health, care and education needs of autistic people and provide support that is tailored to individual need.

Priority 4: Develop the all age autism specialist support offer, including redesign of the diagnostic pathway to address waiting times for a diagnosis.

- A multi-agency Neurodevelopmental Diagnostic and Support Transformation Programme commenced in November 2020 in line with the Coventry and Warwickshire All Age Autism Strategy's priority to reduce waiting times for a neurodevelopmental assessment. Over the last 10 months, the programme has focused on redesigning the all age diagnostic pathway and exploring the potential to develop the wider workforce to be able to diagnose and appropriately support people with neurodevelopmental conditions, including in mental health, CAMHS and education services. Additional investment by the CCG and Coventry and

Warwickshire Partnership Trust will create additional diagnostic capacity to contribute to reducing the waiting list. A number of projects funded by NHS England are being piloted to test a differentiated approach to the diagnostic pathway, enabling more straightforward diagnoses to be completed by the wider workforce, without referral to a specialist service, thus further building the capacity for diagnosis.

- Specialist services are being developed to prevent unnecessary admissions to hospital, with a particular focus on young people age 14-25 as this is where the majority of admissions are seen.
- Coventry and Warwickshire are the most advanced system nationally in developing and delivering a Keyworker service for 14-25 year olds, which is now supporting over 70 young people and families, ensuring young people can navigate and access support from all agencies to prevent admission or facilitate discharge.
- The existing intensive support service for children and young people delivered by Coventry and Warwickshire Partnership Trust has been extended to age 25 to provide specialist intensive support for young autistic adults at risk of admission to hospital. CWPT are working to develop the model to further extend the offer to adults over 25 years. This is complemented by an emergency community outreach service delivered by Fine Futures which provides specialist care and support at home for autistic adults age 16 plus to provide additional wrap around support to prevent unnecessary admissions to hospital.
- A new community forensic service will be delivered by CWPT to support autistic adults in contact with or at risk of contact with the criminal justice system

Priority 5: Co-produce, work together and learn about autism

- Coproduction is a key factor underpinning delivery of the Strategy. Coventry and Warwickshire Grapevine have been commissioned to facilitate delivery of a new Experts by Experience Coproduction service to support us to ensure all aspects of the Strategy are coproduced with people with lived experience. The model includes payments to ‘experts by experience’ for their time.

Timescales associated with the decision and next steps

Key milestone	Meeting Date
Strategy sign off by WCC Cabinet	25 th November 2021
Strategy sign off by Joint Adult and Children Social Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee	30 th November / 1 st December
Coventry and Warwickshire Clinical Commissioning Group Governing body	17 th November 2021
LDA Strategic Steering Group	Date TBC
Strategy sign off by Warwickshire Parent Carer Voice	November 2021

forum	
Strategy sign off by Coventry OneVoice Parent Carer forum	November 2021
<i>Strategy implementation – Year 1 Delivery plan (2021-22)</i>	<i>March 2022</i>
<i>Delivery Plan 2022-23 development</i>	<i>March 2022</i>

Appendices

Appendix 1 – Draft Coventry and Warwickshire All Age Autism Strategy 2021-26

Appendix 2 – Coventry and Warwickshire All Age Autism Strategy 2021-26 Delivery Plan

Background Papers

None

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The report was circulated to the following members prior to publication:

Local Member(s): Cllr Margaret Bell and Cllr Jeff Morgan