



## Mayor and Cabinet

### Lewisham All-Age Autism Strategy Document 2023-2028

**Date:** 1 February 2023

**Key decision:** Yes.

**Class:** Part 1

**Ward(s) affected:** All

**Contributors:** Integrated Commissioning Officer, Assistant Director Integrated Commissioning

### Outline and recommendations

The Lewisham All Age Autism Strategy 2023-2028 presents our collective vision for the borough and describes the priority areas we will work on over the next five years. The strategy and its subsequent action plans will determine the route map to make Lewisham a more autism-inclusive borough to live and work. It outlines the groundwork for a whole-system partnership approach.

#### **Mayor and Cabinet is recommended to:**

- Agree the Strategy and commit to its priorities.
- Agree to the launch of the Lewisham Autism Partnership.

### Timeline of Engagement and decision making

May 2021	Engagement workshops with autistic individuals, parents, carers and health professionals
April – May 2022	Internal Council meetings including Divisional Management Teams / Lewisham Safeguarding Adults Board
May 2022	Lewisham Council Public Consultation
September – December 2022	Collaboration with system partners for each of the priority areas to have input with respective leads
October – November 2022	Survey asking young people to share their experiences of living with autism
December 2022	Executive Management Team
January 2023	Healthier Communities Select Committee

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## 1. Summary

- 1.1. The Lewisham All-Age Autism Strategy 2023-2028 has been developed in collaboration with autistic residents, carers/guardians and local professionals, the strategy outlines our vision to make Lewisham an autism inclusive borough and the objectives we need to meet to achieve this.
- 1.2. The Lewisham Autism Partnership Board will be established to drive forward progress against the strategy to improve the quality of life of our autistic population.
- 1.3. The Strategy is the first of its kind in the borough and ensures the Council is meeting its statutory requirements as per the Autism Act 2009 and acting in accordance with the government's policy paper "Autism Strategy for autistic children, young people and adults 2021 to 2026".

## 2. Recommendations

- 2.1 The Mayor and Cabinet are recommended to:
  - Agree the Strategy and commit to its priorities.
  - Agree to the launch of the Lewisham Autism Partnership.

## 3. Policy Context

- 3.1 The Councils Corporate Strategy 2022-2026 priorities most relevant to Autism strategy are as follows;
  - Young People
    - We will ensure the most vulnerable children are protected from harm, driving improvement in children's social care and aiming to reduce the number of children coming into care through earlier targeted support for families in crisis.
  - Open Lewisham
    - We will celebrate Lewisham's diversity, ensuring we are a representative and inclusive council and workforce.
    - We will maintain and strengthen the Lewisham Way of working in collaboration with our voluntary and community sectors and seek new areas where we can partner together. We will actively listen to our residents, being responsive to their concerns and communicative in our approach.
    - We will co-design services with those affected by them and ensure strong consultation processes that reach out to people whose voices are seldom heard
  - Health and Wellbeing
    - We will learn from our Birmingham and Lewisham African and Caribbean Health Inequalities Review, aiming to mitigate and ultimately end, structural racism and discrimination as a driver of health inequalities
    - We will work with the local NHS to deliver the services Lewisham residents need and create the Lewisham Health Care and Wellbeing

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Charter.

- We will collaborate with other organisations to deliver the places, activities and programmes our autistic residents need to feel empowered to live a physically active lifestyle.

## 4. Background

- 4.1 Autism is a spectrum condition that impacts the way autistic people interpret the world, communicate and regulate their emotions.
- 4.2 Autistic people often experience discrimination and isolation as a result of their condition and consistently report a lower quality of life than the general population.
- 4.3 There are currently just over 4,000 people diagnosed with autism in the borough, however, the actual number of those with autism could be closer to 9,000. Considering the significant inequalities faced by those with autism and the disproportionate outcomes they can often experience.
- 4.4 Whilst the Lewisham All-age Autism Strategy aligns with the government's national priorities as set out in the policy paper referred to above, several consultation processes have been undertaken during the various stages of development to ensure that the Strategy is oriented around what is important to our local communities.
- 4.5 In order to ensure that the Strategy remains a living, working set of priorities and deliverables we will establish a Lewisham Autism Partnership Board ("LAPB") comprised of the Council's strategic partners, providers and community members. The role of the LAPB will be to oversee the development, mobilisation and delivery of the Strategy.

## 5. Strategy Summary

- 5.1 The key elements of the Strategy are summarised below. The full Strategy can be found in Appendix A.
- 5.2 Our vision is that Lewisham is an inclusive borough in which autistic people can lead fulfilling lives. We aim to become an autism-inclusive borough, improving conditions for autistic people to ensure they are welcome, safe and able to thrive.
- 5.3 Only when a large proportion of our autistic community feel that these vision statements are a true reflection of their lives, can we say we are autism-inclusive:
  - I feel safe and welcomed in the community, including public services, schools and in my workplace.
  - I have access to reliable information about autism; and have access to diagnostic services.
  - I can ask for help whilst I am waiting for an assessment for a diagnosis of autism.
  - My family, carers, and I are supported to understand autism and what it means for me.
  - I can learn in ways that work for me and my teachers understand how to support me.
  - I am supported to make my own decisions about my future. My views are taken seriously regardless of my sex, gender, ethnicity, sexuality or any disability I may have.
  - I have access to services and therapies based on my needs. The NHS and service providers understand how to make reasonable adjustments so that I can access these services.

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- My family and carer(s) receive the help they need to care for me and for themselves.

5.4 Our priority areas that we will focus on over the next five years are:

- Priority 1: Improving understanding and acceptance of autism within society
- Priority 2: Improving autistic children's and young people's access to education
- Priority 3: Improving diagnostic pathways and autism support services
- Priority 4: Tackling health and care inequalities for autistic people
- Priority 5 Supporting more autistic people into employment
- Priority 6: Reducing mental health admissions & supporting quality inpatient care
- Priority 7: Improving support within the criminal and youth justice systems
- Priority 8: Improving experiences of caring

## 6. Strategy Development

- 6.1 In order to develop a strong understanding of the current evidence base, we reviewed over 100 sources of data and evidence, including health records data, local practitioner evidence, research from expert organisations, and academic literature.
- 6.2 In order to better understand the local context and need, we hosted a series of workshops bringing together groups of local experts by experience, including autistic residents, carers and professionals. We engaged with 16 professionals and 18 autistic residents/carers and generated the first iteration of our vision statements and priority areas.
- 6.3 We then worked to develop a picture of how other councils have implemented autism-inclusive strategies by spending time with professionals and reviewing online materials. We also consulted with over forty professionals within the council to ensure the content of the Strategy was well aligned and our priorities well defined.
- 6.4 In spring/summer 2022, we shared our vision statements and priority areas with the general public and received feedback on how suitable these elements were and advice as to how we might achieve them. We received a total of 149 responses to our public consultation survey; 28 autistic people, 38 professionals who work with autistic people and 81 carers. In October/November 2022 we undertook further targeted engagement where we received 70 responses from young people.
- 6.5 As part of the consultation activity, we also undertook the first Autism 'Temperature Check', which seeks to determine to what extent our autistic residents agree with our vision statements. We will continue to undertake temperature checks throughout the life of the strategy.
- 6.6 We established a small working group of professionals across children and adult health and social care, education, SEND and other divisions in the council who each took a lead on developing their respective priorities. The strategy was then sent to key stakeholders, including parent and carer forums to provide further comments and input into the strategy.

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## 7. Strategy Implementation

- 7.1 Once established the LAPB will be formally established that will bring together residents, representatives from adult and children health and social care commissioners, education commissioners and providers, SEND, parents and carers and providers of key borough based services who will work together to deliver the strategy.
- 7.2 The LAPB will be responsible for working to co-produce the action plan that will sit underneath the Strategy, ensure that the plans are implemented and that the Strategy objectives are achieved. The Partnership Board will establish working groups as necessary to deliver on these plans and will oversee the work of these groups.
- 7.3 The action plan will include realistic timescales and actions ensure that we have the framework in place to monitor the impact the actions are having. The first draft of the action plan will be available in May 2023.
- 7.4 The Partnership Board will ensure that services and support across social care, schools, primary care and hospitals are improving the information they collect so they can measure the impact on the action plan.

## 8. Financial implications

- 8.1 There are no direct financial implications for the council arising from the implementation of the recommendations in this report.

## 9. Legal implications

- 9.1 There are no legal implications arising from the implementation of the recommendations in this report.

## 10. Equalities implications

- 10.1 Equality Act 2010 brought together all previous equality legislation in England, Scotland and Wales. The Act included a new public sector equality duty, replacing the separate duties relating to race, disability and gender equality. The duty came into force on 6 April 2011. It covers the following nine protected characteristics: age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.
- 10.2 The Council must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to:
- eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act
  - advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
  - foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

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- 10.3 The strategy recognises that improvements in provision for autistic people has not benefitted everyone and the strategy outlines plans to explore how to reduce inequalities moving forward.
- 10.4 A copy of the Equalities Analysis Assessment can be found in Appendix B.
- 10.5 One of the key quality criteria measured during any commissioning process is “Processes for addressing equality and diversity”. All the services contained in this report will be subject to robust contract monitoring processes which include evaluating fair access to services for all.

## **11. Climate change and environmental implications**

- 11.1 There are no direct climate change or environmental implications arising from the implementation of the recommendations in this report.

## **12. Crime and disorder implications**

- 12.1 There are no direct crime and disorder implications arising from the implementation of the recommendations in this report.

## **13. Health and wellbeing implications**

- 13.1 The health and wellbeing implications are outlined throughout the strategy.
- 13.2 Implementing the proposals will have a significant impact on the wellbeing of our autistic residents, both directly and indirectly.
- 13.3 With a focus on practical support, the delivery of our strategic objectives should have a direct impact on the of health and support residents can access in order to thrive.
- 13.4 In addition to interventions designed to promote emotional wellbeing, the service will also promote social wellbeing and the reduction of social isolation and loneliness. This is particularly important considering autistic people are reported as some of the most isolated and lonely people in society.

## **14. Social Value implications**

- 14.1 The importance of social value is embedded throughout the strategy and proposed delivery plans.

## **15. Glossary**

- 15.1 Description of terms below.

<b>Term</b>	<b>Definition</b>
NHS SEL ICB	NHS South East London Integrated Care Board
NHS	National Health Service
SEND	Special Education Needs and Disabilities
LAPB	Lewisham Autism Partnership Board

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## **16. Report author (s) and contact**

- 16.1 Natalie Sutherland, Interim Assistant Director – Adult Integrated Commissioning  
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## **17. Comments for and on behalf of the Director of Law, Governance and Elections**

- 17.1 There are no legal implications for London borough of Lewisham Council regarding the adoption of the proposals.
- 17.2 Berkeley Montandon, Adult Social Care Solicitors  
[berkeley.montandon@lewisham.gov.uk](mailto:berkeley.montandon@lewisham.gov.uk)

## **18. Comments for and on behalf of Finance**

- 18.1 Abdul Kayoum, Strategic Finance Business Partner  
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