
North Lincolnshire

Autism Plan 2022-2026

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Foreword

Welcome to the North Lincolnshire Autism Plan 2022-2026 which describes our aspirations and plans for autistic children, young people and adults to achieve their full potential.

This plan was developed in partnership with autistic people and their carers, professionals and partner agencies and the drive amongst all partners, to further improve outcomes for autistic people living in North Lincolnshire, remains as strong and as ambitious as ever.

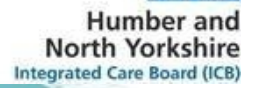
We are committed to work hard to achieve our ambition that people remain at the heart of everything we do and will continue to lead by example to ensure and promote positive behaviours in how we respond to the needs of autistic people in North Lincolnshire.

Thank you to all those involved with the development of this plan.



This plan has been developed with and supported by the following organisations/partnerships:

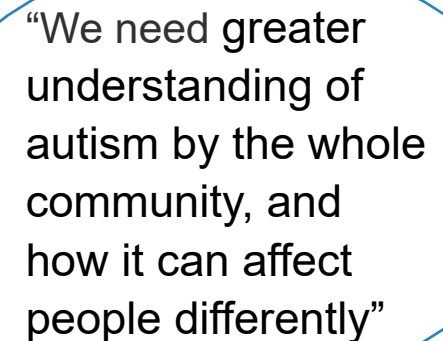
North Lincolnshire Council



Introduction

In July 2021 the Government published the new [National Strategy](#) for autistic children, young people and adults: 2021 to 2026, setting out a vision for what the Government wants autistic people and their families' lives to be like in 2026. The new strategy builds on and replaces the preceding adult autism strategy Think Autism, which was published in April 2014 and now extends the scope of the strategy to children and young people for the first time, in recognition of the importance of ensuring that they are diagnosed and receive the right support as early as possible and across their lifetime. The six priority areas identified are:

1. Improving understanding and acceptance of autism within society.
2. Improving autistic children and young people's access to education, and supporting positive transitions into adulthood.
3. Supporting more autistic people into employment.
4. Tackling health and care inequalities for autistic people.
5. Building the right support in the community.
6. Improving support within the criminal and youth justice systems.



“We need greater understanding of autism by the whole community, and how it can affect people differently”

Autism is a lifelong developmental disability that affects how people perceive, communicate and interact with others, although it is important to recognise that there are differing opinions on this and not all autistic people see themselves as disabled.

There are an estimated 700,000 autistic adults and children in the UK, approximately 1% of the population and, in addition, there are an estimated 3 million family members and carers of autistic people in the UK (National Autistic Society). In North Lincolnshire it is estimated that there are 999 autistic young people and adults, aged 18-64 (PANSI) and while autism is not a learning disability, nationally, around 4 in 10 autistic people have a learning disability (Autistica). Locally, as per national trends, the rate of increase of diagnosis is increasing. In North Lincolnshire a 66% increase of 6-22 year olds with a diagnosis is predicted, bringing the total to approximately 2,185 by 2027.

Autistic people see, hear and feel the world differently to other people. Some autistic people will need very little or no support in their everyday lives while others may need high levels of care. People may need help with a range of things, from forming friendships, coping at school, managing at work, or being able to get out and about in the community. Depression is a mental health problem that is common in autistic people, being more common during adolescence and young adulthood. It often occurs with other conditions, such as anxiety.


In North Lincolnshire we also think about autism under the concept of **neurodiversity**, which refers to the different ways the brain processes information. It is estimated that around 1 in 10 people across the UK are neurodivergent, (Embracing Complexity Coalition, 2019).

In response to the new National Strategy, the North Lincolnshire Autism Plan 2022 to 2026, has been refreshed following engagement and consultation with children, young people and adults, their carers, professionals and partner agencies.

One Family / Community First is how we will respond to the needs of children and families in North Lincolnshire. It provides a model for innovative, integrated working which builds upon strengths, finding solutions in families and communities, builds resilience and confidence, and enables independence.

The trends and themes captured from our engagement with children, young people and adults, their carers, professionals and partner agencies, inform the priorities and areas for development.

The priorities and commissioning intentions set out in this plan are aligned to the national strategy and actions and progress made will be monitored through the Delivery Plan.



“It is important that people with autism are given the encouragement and guidance on developing the skills they need to live independent lives”

One Family/Community First

Community (Self help and Enablement)

Through taking self responsibility, autistic people actively participate in their communities with support from their families and friends:

- Access available information, amenities, and support that are accessible to all.
- Develop skills and resilience and enable behaviour changes without the need for more targeted and specialist interventions.
- Actively engage with proactive, preventative, health promoting services.
- Receive the benefits of early intervention and support to maximise their health, wellbeing and resilience.

Targeted (Focused and Preventative)

Autistic people are entitled to equality of opportunity and through excellent education, improved skills and access to employment.

They are supported and empowered to enable behaviour changes that will build resilience, enable self help and contribute to them being safe, well, prosperous and connected, preventing the need for more specialist support.

Specialist (Protection)


Where there are specific concerns, through early, creative, flexible and responsive agency involvement/integrated working, autistic people are supported and empowered to protect themselves and enable behaviour changes around their whole network.

This will contribute to reducing harm, for them to be independent in their community, enabling relationships to be maintained.

Autistic children, young people and adults

Enablers – Voice; Data; Intelligence; Workforce

Our ambition is for North Lincolnshire to be the best place and for all residents to be safe, well, prosperous and connected. We want autistic people in North Lincolnshire to:

- 
- Feel safe in their homes, education, employment and communities.
 - Enjoy good health and emotional wellbeing.
 - Have excellent education and improved skills and access to employment.
 - Live fulfilled lives in a place they call home within flourishing communities with people they care about.

Outcomes

SAFE

in their homes, education, employment and communities

Where autistic children, young people and adults:

- Are empowered and supported to identify and develop their strengths and aspirations.
- Live in families and homes which reflect their aspirations, needs and circumstances.
- Are offered proactive personalised care and have choice and control over the way their care is delivered.
- Are accepted and valued for who they are.
- Are safe in their community and free from discrimination, hate crime and abuse.
- Are enabled to build resilience and confidence to manage a range of challenges.
- Feel safe when accessing social media.

WELL

enjoying good health and emotional wellbeing

Where autistic children, young people and adults:

- Have access to timely diagnostic assessments when required.
- Have the information they need to access education, social care and health services.
- Have a planned and smooth transition from child to adulthood.
- Have fulfilling, healthy and active lives with the same opportunities as other people.
- Enjoy positive emotional wellbeing and mental health.
- Receive the health care and support they need in their community where possible.
- Are supported by family carers/relatives whose own needs, rights and views have been fully considered and are supported in their caring role.

PROSPEROUS

having excellent education, improved skills and access to employment

Where autistic children, young people and adults:

- Are enabled to have social mobility and equal access to resources in their early years and education.
- Have high levels of communication skills.
- Have equal and fair access to a consistent, high quality education offer in schools and colleges.
- Have opportunities to continue learning beyond the age of 25.
- Are empowered and supported to achieve their aspirations as they transition through life, including work, home and relationships.
- Are supported to access employment opportunities.
- Achieve their potential.

CONNECTED

living in flourishing communities with people they care about

Where autistic children, young people and adults:

- Are empowered and enabled to participate in their community.
- Are resilient and find solutions for themselves.
- Are able to transport themselves around the area.
- Have access to information and resources including online and social media.
- Access their community and early support where their needs are understood.
- Do activities they enjoy and find interesting and stimulating.
- Have people in their lives they care about and who care about them.

How outcomes for autistic children, young people and adults translate into key priorities and areas for further development.

SAFE

Where autistic people feel safe in their homes, education, employment and communities

- To continue to involve autistic people in the planning and decisions about the support they receive.
- To continue to consult and involve families, carers and friends in planning and decision making.
- To continue to develop innovative models of accommodation with agile care and support options, which enable people to be independent.
- To enhance the access to simple relevant information on the options and process of transitioning to independent living.
- To improve easy read material including use of simple language and not just pictures.
- To enhance opportunities for those in contact with autistic people to always seek feedback, listening and responding in a positive way.
- To continue to provide advocacy support to enable access where needed.
- To consider ways to improve awareness of safety, including digital safety, enabling autistic people to live safely in their communities.
- To consider ways of improving support, when required, within the criminal and youth justice systems.

Continued:

WELL

Where autistic people enjoy good health and emotional wellbeing

- To explore existing good practice and development around learning disability liaison and extend to support autistic people.
- To further develop a better understanding of reasonable adjustment necessary for autistic people to access and improve their experience of primary health care.
- To progress Autism Health Checks as part of NHS long term plan.
- To continue to develop a regional dynamic support register.
- To further develop 'care in treatment' reviews (CTR) for autistic people.
- To further work with partners across the Humber and North Yorkshire Integrated Care Board footprint to explore and develop options for a sustainable model for autism diagnosis, including pre and post diagnosis support'.
- To further enhance access to mental health provision and CAMHS services and overall mental health support.
- To continue to offer support to autistic people, including their families and carers to understand information available.
- To further improve the understanding of autism amongst the public, professional groups, businesses and community organisations.

Continued:

PROSPEROUS

Where autistic people have excellent education and improved skills and access to employment

- To review and further develop the skills and employability offer.
- To further support strong transitions and positive, sustainable opportunities.
- To review and further develop opportunities for volunteering and employment, including the opportunities for accessing these with support.
- To develop and introduce a clear pathway through school, from school, in further and higher education and into vocational training and work opportunities.
- To further enhance the opportunities for learning the required life skills for independent living.
- To continue to increase investment in aids, adaptations and new technologies which support independent living.
- To enhance information and advice in relation to finances to support access to employment and community activities.

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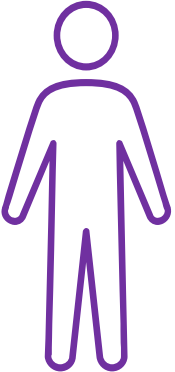
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Where autistic people live in flourishing communities with people they care about

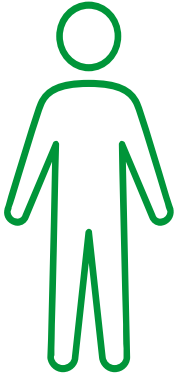
- To continue to support people with complex health/care and educational needs to access services/provision close to home so they can remain with their family and in their community setting.
- To review and further develop public awareness through a targeted campaign to increase understanding.
- To increase opportunities and access to community and leisure facilities for autistic people.
- To continue to encourage shops and businesses to be more autism friendly, providing opportunities for reasonable adjustments.
- To develop the opportunities and support for autistic people to make and maintain relationships including friendship and buddy schemes.
- To enhance opportunities for autistic people to be connected to their communities with adjustments made to ensure access to and support is made as easy as possible.
- To re-establish the Autism Partnership Group, providing opportunities for autistic people to influence and be involved in co-production.

We will know we are achieving these outcomes when autistic people say:

I have a place I can call home



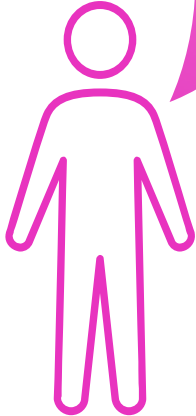
I know about the activities, social groups, leisure and learning opportunities in my community, as well as health and care services



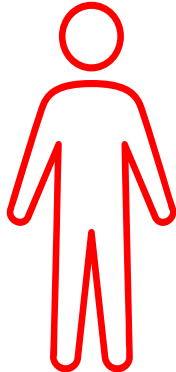
I have opportunities to learn, volunteer and work and can do things that match my interests, skills and abilities



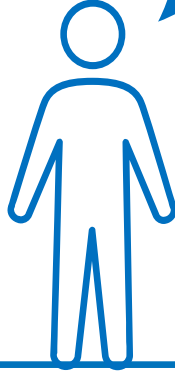
I have care and support that enables me to live as I want to, seeing me as a unique person with skills, strengths and personal goals



I can choose who supports me, and how, when and where my care and support is provided



I am supported to plan ahead for important changes in life that I can anticipate




Longer term impact of Covid-19

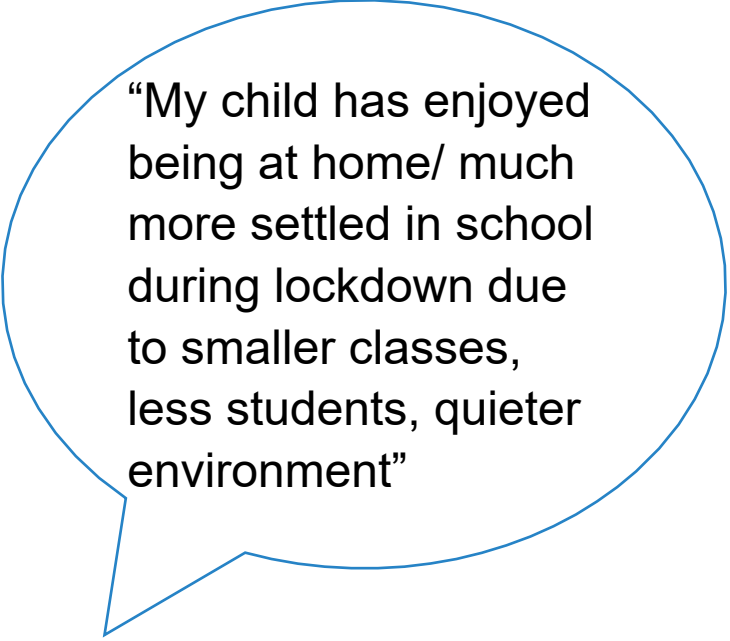
This plan takes into account the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on autistic people and their families' lives, as we know this has been very challenging for many.

Research has shown that the COVID-19 pandemic has increased the challenges many autistic people already face, such as loneliness and social isolation, and anxiety.

However, the research has also shown the benefits of the lockdowns for some autistic people, who have been better able to engage in virtual spaces, have felt less social pressure and have been able to avoid anxiety-inducing activities like using public transport. This has also provided learning about what can be different as we move out of the pandemic.



“Transition back into society has been a challenge”



“My child has enjoyed being at home/ much more settled in school during lockdown due to smaller classes, less students, quieter environment”

Engagement and consultation feedback includes:

Feeling part of your community

- Many people feel safe and supported in their own community especially by their neighbours.
- There needs to be more public awareness and education of the neuro diverse community and access to autism friendly social events, friendship groups and support with relationships.

Education

- Education is meeting individual needs and there is smooth transition between all levels of education.
- Mainstream education settings to improve their understanding of autism with specialist autism training available for all staff.

Preparation for adulthood

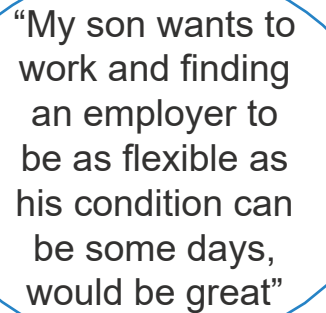
- Young people have been supported with early planning, transitioning, and preparing for adulthood.
- There could be more opportunities for social groups, peer support and education in relation to life skills.

Employment


- Some schools offer good career advice enabling students to explore their further education and job opportunities and there is support available when preparing for interviews and completing applications.
- There could be shorter and more autism friendly applications forms with better description of roles and the environment and autism training for employers to support young people and adults with autism into employment.

Housing and living independently

- Support is available for setting up finances and people are supported to move into their own tenancies.
- There could be more information, advice and guidance available in relation to housing opportunities and life skills to support independent living.



“My son wants to work and finding an employer to be as flexible as his condition can be some days, would be great”



“Somewhere to live independently but safely”

Engagement and consultation feedback includes:

Health, social care, and community support

- Some people have had good experiences around timeliness and supportiveness of the assessment and diagnosis process, while some people felt it could be improved.
- Some people have had good experiences of reasonable adjustment being made during hospital visits while some people felt it could be improved.
- Support has worked well with planning and preparation for health and wellbeing and adulthood.
- Better changing places facilities required for those with complex autism.
- Need for better access to counselling and mental health support.
- The need for a 'one stop shop' where people can access information, advice and guidance on services available for people with autism

Social life, leisure, and financial support

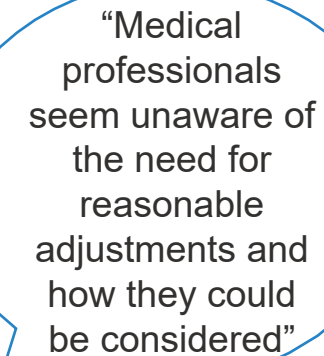
- Most people have access to leisure and social activities.
- There should be more activities tailored to children with autism.
- More buddy schemes to be available.
- Availability of information, advice and guidance around leisure facilities could be improved.

Criminal justice system

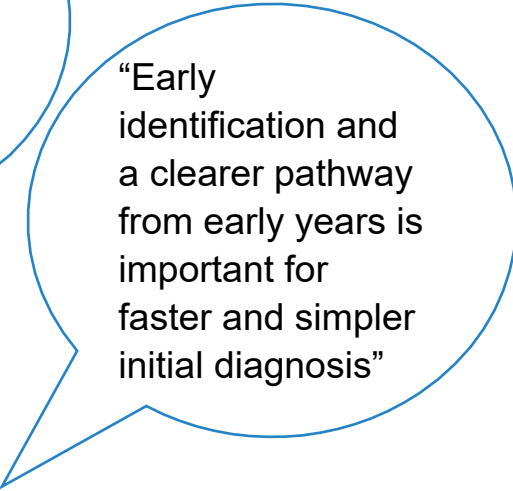
- Autistic people are starting to get better support from the probation service.
- More support could be available at a younger age

Impact of COVID-19

- Increased feeling of isolation and increasing anxieties.
- Anxiety about accessing the community as restrictions have eased.

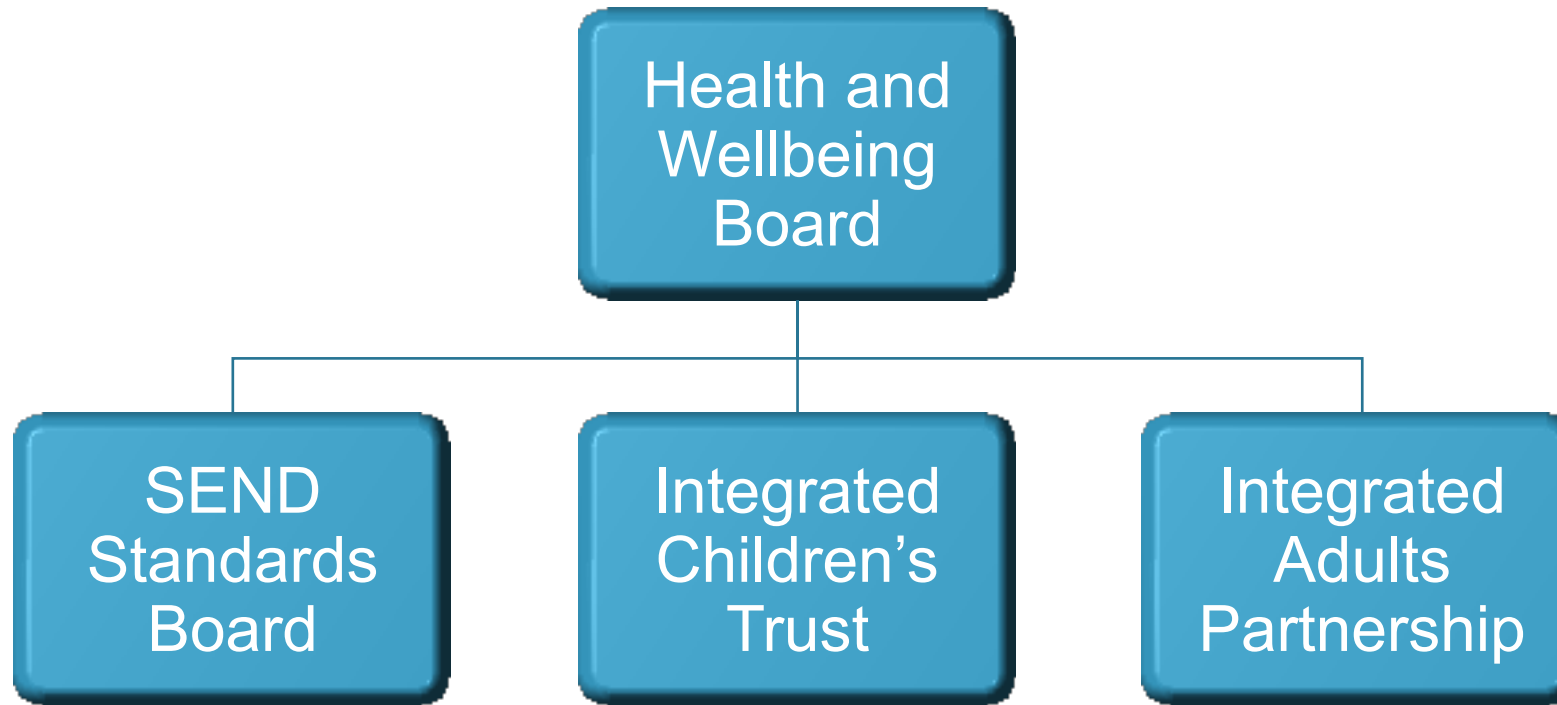


“Medical professionals seem unaware of the need for reasonable adjustments and how they could be considered”



“Early identification and a clearer pathway from early years is important for faster and simpler initial diagnosis”

Local governance and monitoring against the priorities and commissioning intentions set out in this plan:



Legislation and Policy

- [National Strategy for Autistic Children, Young People and Adults 2021-2026](#)
- [NHS Long Term Plan 2019](#)
- [Transforming Care Programme 2017](#)
- [SEND Code of Practice 2014](#)
- [Children and Families Act 2014](#)
- [The Care Act 2014](#)
- [Think Autism 2014](#)
- [Equality Act 2010](#)
- [Autism Act 2009](#)
- [Employment Rights Act 1996](#)
- [Disability Discrimination Act 1995](#)

Supporting plans, strategies and guidance

- Humber TCP plan (link to be included once published)
- [Children's Commissioning Strategy](#)
- [Helping Children and Families in North Lincolnshire](#)
- [One Family Approach](#)
- [Health and Care Integration Plan](#)
- [National Institute of Health & Care Excellence \(NICE\) Guidelines 2019](#)
- [Skills for Care, the National Development Team for Inclusion and the National Autistic Society – A guide to help commissioners to identify local demand and develop the right service and support for autistic people](#)
- [National Autistic Society](#)
- Right support, right care, right culture <https://www.cqc.org.uk>