



Bromley's All Age Autism Strategy 2022-2027

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Footnote

Throughout this strategy, the term a 'person with Autism' is used. It is recognised that when describing people there is no single term that everyone prefers. Other labels will include terms like 'Autistic, Autism Spectrum Condition (ASC), whereas medical terminology has historically used Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD).

Locally we prefer to talk about the person, their strengths, wishes and goals before any condition. Our communities use a variety of positive terminology and language, we recognise it's an individual's preference to their identity.

There are also references to language such as 'neurodiverse' or 'neurodivergent' that celebrates neurodevelopmental conditions which cover an umbrella of conditions including Autism.

We celebrate and champion difference in all our community, whilst we aim through this strategy to be the voice of our Autism community these terms are merely to ensure the wider population understands who in the community this strategy is referencing.



Foreword

On behalf of the London Borough of Bromley and the Southeast London Clinical Commissioning Group (Bromley), the Bromley All-Age Autism Board is delighted to present this Joint All-Age Autism Strategy for the Borough, which sets out local priorities for people of all ages with Autism in Bromley.

This Strategy has been informed by the views of individuals with Autism, their families, carers and friends, national guidance, policy and legislation, local priorities, and providers.

The vision in this Strategy is *“to enable people with Autism to live their lives as they choose, as part of their community, with the right support at the right time”*

Over the next five years, the offer will be developed with our public sector agencies and our local communities. Continued improvement to the wellbeing of residents will be driven forward, promoting early intervention, prevention, independence, flexibility and choice, supporting local community-based solutions that will supplement and extend the core offer.

Message from the Chair of our Bromley All Age Autism Board

“The aim of the strategy is to support people with Autism and their families or carers, living and working in the borough. We want them to have full access to educational, work and leisure opportunities so that they can play their full role within society”.



Introduction

In July 2021, the Government published the new National Autism Strategy which covers people of all ages in England for the first time. 'The strategy must put in place the right health, care and education services, reduce social isolation and open up opportunities for autistic people of all ages'

Since 2018 in Bromley, there has been a focus on improving outcomes for people with Autism through the Bromley All-age Autism Board and its supporting action plan. The Board is multi-agency with representation from services across education, health and care together with parent/carers and partners in the voluntary sector and brings together a shared investment to bring about positive change and the voice of our Autism community.

This strategy has been driven by the Bromley All-Age Autism Board and outlines the commitment in Bromley to do more to help people with Autism. It sets out the objectives and strategic direction across the Local Area over the next five years

The strategy has been coproduced with people with Autism, their families, and carers, across social care, health, education, voluntary and community services and is aligned to key priorities across the borough including the SEND Vision and Priorities (2019 – 2022), The NHS South East London Clinical commissioning groups (SELCCG) All Age Autism Strategy, The Bromley Transformation project, as well as aligning to key national legislation and policy.



The strategy is also aligned to the Bromley Learning Disability Strategy (2020 - 2025) which supports an estimated 15-30% of the Autism Community with a learning disability.

However, for the large proportion of the Autism population without a learning disability it is recognised this strategy must champion their voice for improvement. The aim is that changes promoted by the strategy will benefit people with Autism and other neurodivergent people whether or not they have a formal Autism diagnosis.

The governance and accountability of this strategy is overseen and aligned, firstly to the Bromley all Age Autism Board (BAAB), the SEND Governance Board (SEND GB) and the Integrated Commissioning Board (ICB). We want to ensure that throughout the delivery of the strategy people with Autism, their families and carers a clear understanding of how and where improvements are being made. To see where their voice and participation is directly influencing positive change.

The strategy has two main aims:

- To ensure there's equality of access to universal services for people with Autism
- To ensure specialist services can support people with Autism

The strategy will be delivered via an accompanying action plan updated yearly to ensure local priorities are met over the next five years. Priority leads will be identified from across services and the community to drive and deliver positive change.



Our Vision

The vision of this strategy is to enable people living in Bromley with Autism to live their lives as they choose, as part of their community, with the right support at the right time.

It is for Bromley to be a place that offers opportunities for people to live healthy and fulfilling lives, where contributions to local communities are welcomed, supported, and valued, and no-one is left behind.

These opportunities should extend to all people in Bromley with Autism including those without a diagnosis. All organisations involved in developing and implementing this strategy are committed to ensuring that the vision and priorities will be delivered across the next five years

The development of the strategy has been centred around involvement of people with Autism, their families, and carers. The implementation of the strategy will continue by growing the partnership network and engaging the community services as much as possible to ensure that Bromley is a place that is aware, accepting and supports all its diverse community



Why is there a need for an All-Age Autism Strategy in Bromley?

Autistic children, young people, adults, their families, and carers have told us that there are significant barriers to achieving the vision across the service system and the wider community. Addressing these barriers will require better understanding of Autism, and culture change across Bromley's services and community. These are not quick things to deliver, but we know that with focussed leadership across the system over time, autistic children, young people, and adults in Bromley can be supported to achieve better outcomes.

The work of the strategy will need to be embedded in organisations and the wider community so that it is sustained and can be built on. We want to identify autistic people's needs earlier and improve their physical and mental health and better understand the inequalities people with Autism face. We are committed to bringing the right people together to break down barriers to community access and use our resources effectively to deliver the support that people need. Our strategy is here to focus the action of all the partners across Bromley who will work together to make the changes we need to see.



Autism - An overview

Background

Autism is a lifelong developmental disability which affects how people communicate and interact with the world. One in 100 people are on the autism spectrum and there are around 700,000 autistic adults and children in the UK. Autism is a spectrum condition and affects people in different ways like all people, autistic people have their own strengths and weaknesses. Autism is described as a spectrum condition.

Historically there have been a number of different names given at the point of diagnosis. An individual may have received a diagnosis of Asperger's syndrome, Classic Autism or even High Functioning Autism. Nowadays there is one diagnosis/description given and that is Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD)

Diagnosis

In order to receive a diagnosis of ASD a person will need to present with differences in the area of:

- Social communication and social interaction
- Repetitive and restrictive behaviours.

Autistic people may also be over or under sensitive to sensory stimulation (or fluctuate between the two). They may be highly focused on particular interests and hobbies and many report struggling with high anxiety levels, especially in social situations.

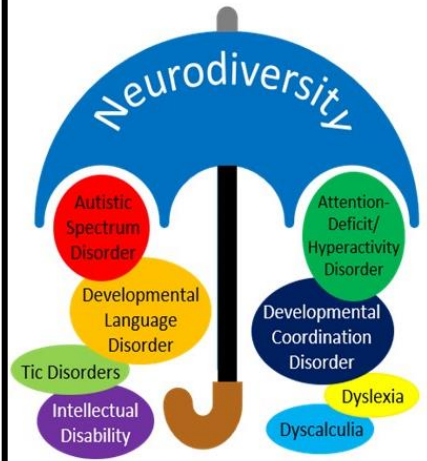
Boys and men are more likely to receive a diagnosis than girls and women and the ratio is thought to be three to one. Girls/women may present differently to boys/men and are known to mask their challenges, especially in social situations.

We know that not all Autistic people have had or would like a diagnostic assessment. The aim is that changes promoted by this strategy will benefit the Autistic community as a whole and other neuro divergent people, whether or not they have a diagnosis.

Neurodiversity

Neuro developmental conditions (neuro diversity) are caused by differences in early brain development and can affect the way a person processes information, thinks and learns, Autism is one such condition. Other conditions include specific learning difficulties (dyslexia, dyscalculia, dyspraxia) ADHD and Tourette Syndrome. Autistic people may have additional learning disabilities, and this accounts for 15 to 30% of the population.

Under the neurodiversity umbrella!



The diagram shows a blue umbrella with the word 'Neurodiversity' written across its canopy. Below the umbrella, several colored circles represent different neurodevelopmental conditions: a red circle for 'Autistic Spectrum Disorder', a yellow circle for 'Developmental Language Disorder', a green circle for 'Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder', a blue circle for 'Developmental Coordination Disorder', a purple circle for 'Intellectual Disability', a light blue circle for 'Dyscalculia', and a light green circle for 'Tic Disorders'. A yellow circle for 'Dyslexia' is also present but partially obscured by the 'Developmental Coordination Disorder' circle.

Neurodiversity is a relatively new term, thought to have been coined in the 1990s by Judy Singer (an autistic individual, parent of an autistic child and Sociologist). It was originally used by the autistic community, who were keen to move away from the medical model and dispel the belief that autism is something to be 'treated' and 'cured', rather than an important and valuable part of human diversity.

The idea of neurodiversity has now been embraced by many other groups, who are using the term as a means of empowerment and to promote the positive qualities possessed by those with a neurodevelopmental difference. It encourages people to view neurodevelopmental differences as natural and normal variations of the human genome. Furthermore, it encourages them to reject the culturally entrenched negativity which has typically surrounded those that live in, learn from and experience the world in a particular way that is sometimes perceived as different.



Autistic people process the world around them differently and this often gives them areas of particular strength and ability e.g., strong attention to detail, honesty and punctuality. Despite this very few autistic adults enjoy fulltime paid work. The Office for National Statistics (ONS) has published data that shows only 22% of autistic adults are in any kind of employment.

Co-occurring Conditions

The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) estimates that around 70% of autistic people have an additional condition, which is “often unrecognised”. The main conditions that co-occur more frequently in people who have Autism compared with the general population can include:

- Mental health conditions. Research suggests that 70% people with Autism have a mental health condition, and that 40% have two or more.
- People with Autism are up to four times more likely to have anxiety, and twice as likely to have depression.
- Research has shown that people with Autism are more vulnerable to negative life experiences, which may also impact mental health. Compared to the general population, people with Autism report having a lower quality of life.



The Local Picture

The National picture identifies an estimated 700,000 people diagnosed with Autism in the UK, with an estimated prevalence of 1 in every 100 children and 2 in every 100 adults.

Based on the national prevalence data this means that from Bromley's general population in figure 1, we can make a conservative estimate that we have 5300 adults (16+yrs) and 680 Children and young people (0-15yrs) who are Autistic.

Figure 1

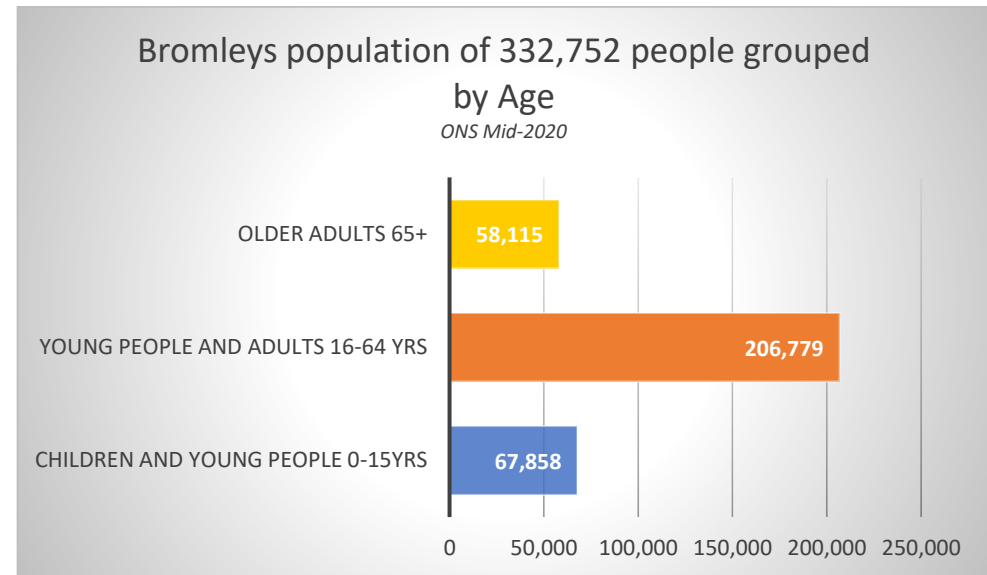


Figure 2

Figure 2 identifies children and young people within Bromley’s school settings who have an Educational Health care Plan (EHCP) by their primary need. Based on this data Speech, Language and Communication needs (SLCN) is most prevalent at 22% and receives 31% of Special Education Needs (SEN) support. Whilst Autism Spectrum Condition (ASC) has second highest EHCP’s at 21% receiving 16% of SEN Support provision.

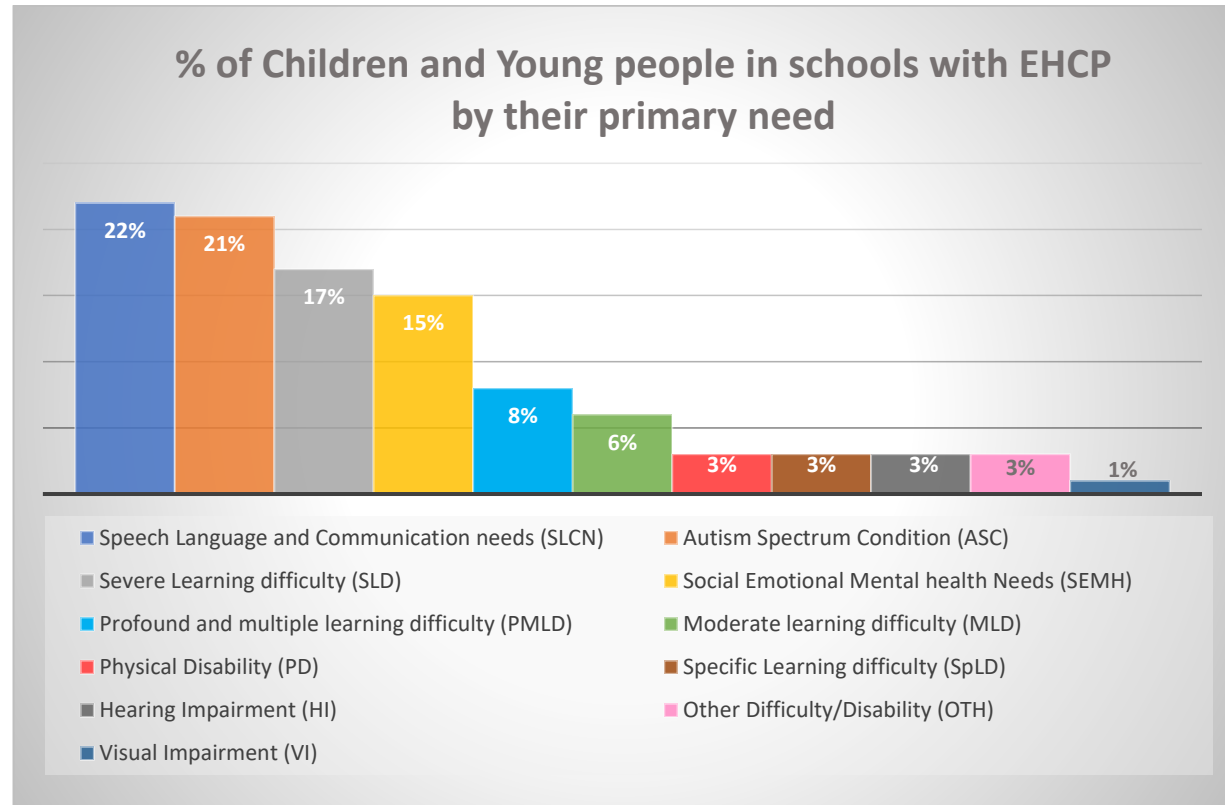


Figure 3

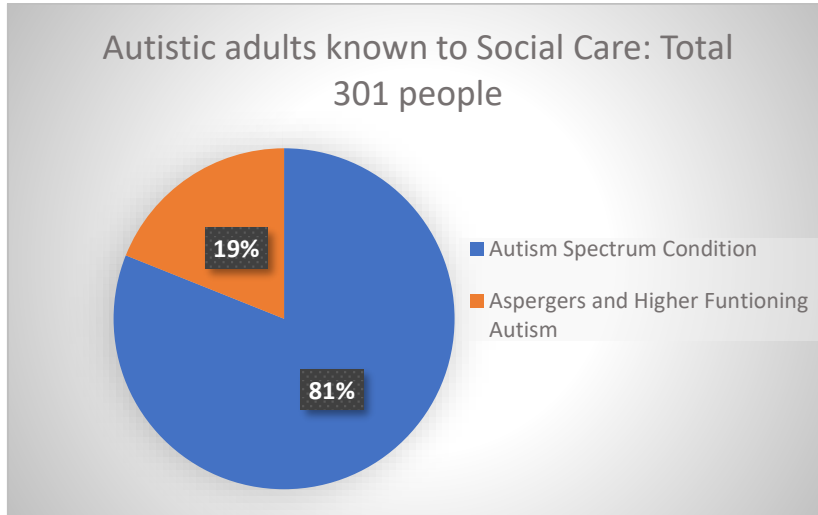


Figure 4

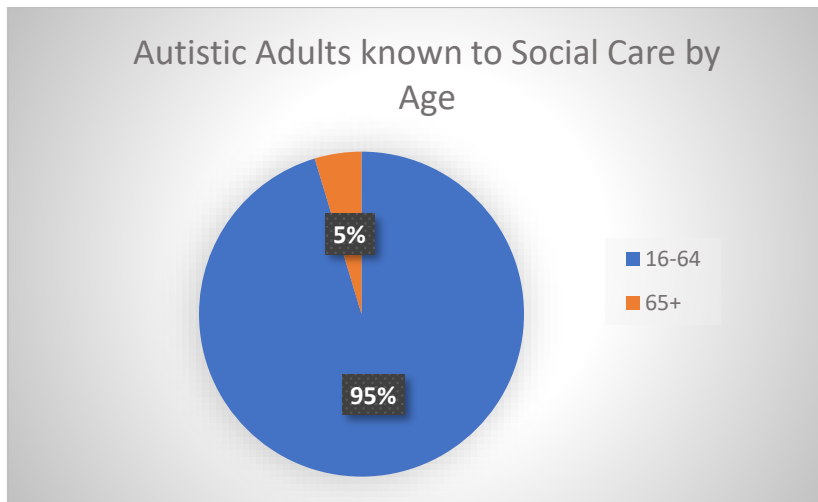


Figure 5

Based on our conservative estimate in figure 1 Bromley have 5300 adults with Autism. In figure 3 we have identified 301 adults known to Adult Social Care, by their Autism needs.

Figure 4 identifies that 95% of those people are aged 16-64, that's 286 people in comparison to 15 people aged 65+. This could indicate areas of our community that aren't diagnosed, managing within society who may have wellbeing needs.

There will also be 15-30% percent of Bromley Autism population that will also have a learning disability. These people will be supported through Learning Disability services and their strategy.

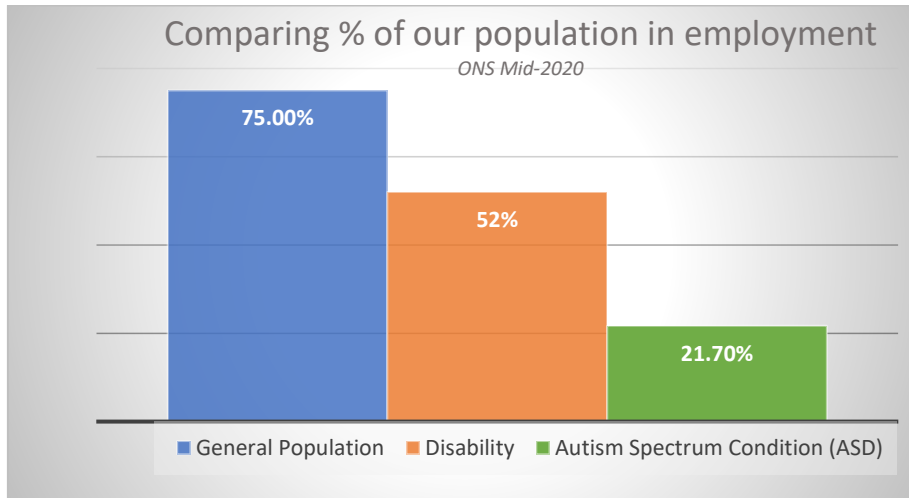


Figure 6

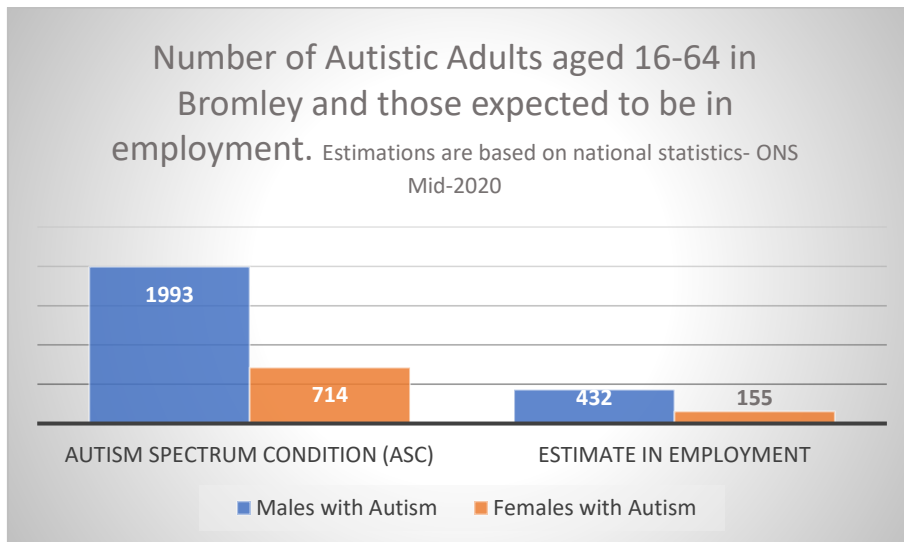


Figure 5 highlights the national gaps in our population within employment. The general population has 75% in employment. Those with general disabilities at 52% in comparison to just 21.7% of the Autism Population.

A key focus locally is to support people to bridge these significant gaps of independence. Enabling people to access training, employment, and career opportunities.

Figure 6 focuses on the conservative estimation of the working age population in Bromley who are Autistic. Included, is the current estimated prevalence of male to females with Autism. Of which sees 3 males to every 1 female being diagnosed. Highlighting the limited number of people within employment.



Developing this strategy – Our approach

The last 2 years has been a period of comprehensive and sustained engagement with our Autism community to ensure as many views and ideas as possible have contributed to this strategy

- The 100-day Bromley Autism challenge was launched which involved over 100 individuals from across Education, health and social care including people with Autism and their families expressing their views about the key issues and subsequent priorities for the Local Area for children and young people 0-25
- In order to better understand the voice of adults with Autism in the borough, numerous engagement events took place across the local area to allow young people, adults with Autism, their families and carers to share their lived experience in relation to the national all age autism priorities. This included parent/carer specific events as well as a focus group session for people with Autism.
- Young advisors from CASPA (Children on the Autistic Spectrum Parent's Association) have contributed towards the strategy by advocating for Bromley's Autistic community by sharing their experiences, ideas, and expertise. The group provides a valuable insight into their world and how Bromley can lead the way in making Autistic voices heard. The Young Advisors have relished the opportunity to help 'change the rulebook' in order to make our community more inclusive. As members of the Bromley All Age Autism Board, they have had the opportunity to showcase their skills and develop their confidence. The clear message from their engagement with other children and young people with Autism was that more support was needed for Autistic young people and adults, especially regarding employment, mental health, social connection and independence.



- To support the engagement events, a survey/questionnaire has been circulated by partners across the borough aimed at identifying further feedback and lived experience for autistic people of all ages and their families – this questionnaire has also been produced in an easy read format
- In total so far over 536 individuals have contributed their views to help form this strategy.
- Part of this engagement, a survey captured the views of people with Autism, their families, carers and professionals, these can be found in the strategies priorities. Of 52 responses 52% were from parents or family members, 35% Autistic person, 10% professionals, 2% carers and 2% unknown. Some of the data from the survey included:
 - Out of 47 responses 78% said they had a difficult experience due to lack of support at the right time.
 - Out of 45 responses 73% said they had received positive support within the community.
 - Out of 41 responses 44 % said they have had positive experiences where a Bromley education setting has enabled their child or young person with Autism to access the right support.
 - Out of 34 responses 26% said they had a positive experience into employment.
 - Out of 33 responses 33% said they had difficulties finding a job and within employment.
 - Out of 32 responses 18% said their health and care needs were being met.



- Out of 40 responses 22% said they had received support from inpatient mental health services.
- Out of 38 responses 78% said they needed support with their mental health.
- Out of 40 responses 25% said they had received input from the police and wider criminal and youth justice services.

Our Local developments

With our joint, local authority and Southeast London clinical commissioning group (SELCCG) approach, this has helped us to develop our services to be more inclusive for the community. With positive local initiatives that will provide a strong foundation for the strategy to grow from. Some of these include:

- **Bromley All-Age Autism Board (BAAB)**- The board was formed following real success in raising the profile of Autism amongst our children and young people services. Despite the pandemic this has grown over the past couple years and formed an all-age focus. With board members and Autism representatives we have an action plan which drives improvements lead by professionals, who make positive change in their service areas.
- **Autism Education Trust (AET)**- Starting in early 2022 following a drive to improve awareness, understanding, and outcomes within education for our students with Autism. AET, are supported by the Department for Education, with programmes that offer professionals training, practical tools, and a wealth of free resources to better support autistic children and young people across all education settings. Using frameworks and standards to support culture change within head teachers and senior leaders. That will see positive changes



amongst approaches to supporting its students, enabling them to remain in the education setting and support their wellbeing.

- **Autism Family Support Service-** have provided critical family intervention support. Following engagement with families the service has grown, there is now an Autism family support co-ordinator that supports low level intervention and signposting to all services across the borough. If families need more intensive support, they can be triaged to a further 6-8 weeks of intervention. Families can move between services as and when they need to.
- **Autism Champions Development Network-** Professionals in the Autism Champions Network work together to develop their school-based practices and provisions. Any professional in a school can join the network and can access, free of charge, fortnightly e-Digests and termly Development Network Forums. Autism Champions and SENCOs can also access a comprehensive range of produced and sourced Autism resources, as well as Autism Supportive Schools reviews.
- **CASPA-** Began supporting children and has grown over the years to provide support to all people of all with Autism, their families, and carers. Their support ensures people with Autism are fulfilling life aspirations, whether that's social, leisure, relationships, support into employment etc. Whilst working closely with the board to drive the voice of Autism and improvements as representatives, including towards this strategy.

'Caspa is understanding and accepting'.

'Caspa is a brilliant resource'.



- **Bromley Autism Promise-** Is an initiative driven from the Autism board in early 2020; to improve awareness and understanding within community services and organisations including public services, leisure centres, retail spaces etc. Organisations are supported to reflect on the service they provide, they may receive Autism training, whilst supported to make positive changes to environments, their programmes, workforce and employment.
- **Bromley Well-** Launched in October 2017 to help people living in Bromley borough to improve and maintain their health and wellbeing. Recently employing an Autism Specific Information and Support officer to help drive continued improvements for our Autism community.

‘I go to Bromley Well peer groups and have made lots of friends. We are planning walks together which is going to help my mental health’.

‘Bromley Well have been amazing’.

‘The support I have had from Bromley Well LD and Autism service has been very good’.



The Bromley All Age Autism Strategy Priorities

Through our engagement with residents, families, carers, and local professionals a set of priority areas have been identified. These are based on the views and feedback we have received that have helped to develop an understanding of what needs to change or improve to make Bromley aware, inclusive, and open opportunities for our people with Autism. It is recognised that over the five years of this strategy, needs may arise and can be added as part of the Bromley All Age Autism Board's Action plan. There are some areas of work that straddle more than one priority. In addition, there are some themes that cross all priorities. The Priorities are:

1. Increasing awareness and understanding.
2. Build sustainable Education placements.
3. Supporting Independence and Employment.
4. Reducing health and care inequalities.
5. The right support at the right time.

The strategy has two main aims:

- To ensure there's equality of access to universal services for people with Autism
- To ensure specialist services can support people with Autism

The strategy will be delivered through the All-Age Autism Partnership board's action plan.

- **Throughout all 5 priorities the actions outlined in 'What we need to do?' columns will be delivered over the next five years.**
- **We will achieve this by creating S.M.A.R.T (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant and Time bound) goals with Priority leads and teams, identified from across services and the community.**



Priority 1. Increasing awareness and understanding

What people have told us	What do we want to achieve?	What do we need to do?
<p><i>‘If you are an Autistic adult without a learning disability, there is a lack of understanding across all service providers (public and private) about how your needs are different from most people’.</i></p> <p><i>‘Training professionals who need to know how to respond to those with Autism’.</i></p> <p><i>‘More awareness and training, particularly engaging business leaders as they are responsible for creating cultures and environments’.</i></p> <p><i>‘It’s the healthcare professionals, security guards, police and social workers that need to understand me and my Autism’.</i></p>	<p>Autistic people are understood, welcomed and can access community services.</p> <p>We want to grow our communities understanding of neurodiversity within its population. To support professionals to recognise difference and know how best to support individuals.</p> <p>We want our businesses to identify where they can make changes to service delivery that will make them inclusive to our Autism community.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Identify those services within our community that need to become Autism aware and inclusive so that they can appropriately support people with Autism. - Identify a sustainable Neurodiversity including Autism Awareness training. For our front-line staff and services. This will help grow understanding and skills for our workforce to support its community. - As part of the Awareness work, support organisations to look at how assessable their information and advice is to our Autism community.



<p><i>'The Police were very supportive but took a long time to respond which caused a lot of anxiety'.</i></p> <p><i>'Training for police, security guards etc, on how to deal with situations where an autistic person is having issues to ensure that they don't inadvertently make the situation worse'.</i></p> <p><i>'Often people don't understand and think you are being difficult or strange and it's hard to explain why a person with Autism struggles sometimes with the smallest change'.</i></p> <p><i>'Expecting that people with Autism can easily travel etc, I think other methods should routinely be offered such as video call or telephone calls'.</i></p> <p><i>'We are not supported by our community; we don't have a clear understanding of the support and resources available'.</i></p>	<p>We want to celebrate where organisations have supported the Autism community. Recognise how they achieved success and encourage them and other organisations to replicate.</p> <p>We want to highlight the difficulties some people face with Autism that prevents them accessing services. I.e., difficult environments like Public Transport and Health appointments. By doing so look how we can adjust to provide better access and outcomes for this group.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Identify opportunity of training offer with partner organisations. Focussed on how we work together to raise the profile and Awareness of Neurodiversity including Autism within workforces and the people they support. - Increase participation in the Bromley Autism Promise which supports commercial and community businesses to be more aware, welcoming and offer opportunity to its community. - Identify how and where building a partnership approach across the universal offer, specialist services and other organisations; will help each other in championing Neurodiversity including Autism.
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<p><i>'We need to improve education of Autism, inform people, help them understand'.</i></p> <p><i>'I don't understand what I need, someone needs to help me identify my needs and advise me what support I could receive I struggle with lots of text, a lot of my Autistic friends do to. We need consideration for easy read and bullet pointed text to make it easier to read and understand'.</i></p>	<p>People with Autism know where to access information that provides help and guidance.</p> <p>Raise awareness across services to support professionals to recognise when a person with Autism may need support or advice and guidance to achieve their aspirations.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Improve information, guides and general content (including website) to make more relevant for all people with Autism. This includes pictures, symbols and easy read formats. - Roll out of a communications campaign across the Bromley All-Age Autism Boards partners. With a purpose of signposting, accessing support, advice and guidance across all our Universal offer and specialist services for Autism. - Consideration across all partners for the use of easy read formats and those using non-verbal communication. How we ensure the information is truly accessible and understood by all people with Autism.
<p><i>'Housing is a massive issue for people with MH or Autism, where's the support for higher functioning Autistic people to help understand'.</i></p>	<p>Services are inclusive, accessible, and helpful for people with Autism and their families and carers.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Focus on how services are commissioned with Autism in mind. Designed to support and meet the needs of our Autism Community.

<p><i>‘Few professionals have understanding how adjustments are needed for some people with Autism’.</i></p> <p><i>‘As a professional working with neuro diverse young people, I feel I have a duty to provide an environment that is neuro diverse aware and inclusive. For all workers to have positive training’.</i></p> <p><i>‘The social workers could change/ leave and move at difficult times e.g., just before going to the Panel for approval, for a placement or completing the information for panel’.</i></p> <p><i>‘Some social workers are living out of the area or move on from cases quickly and have no knowledge or experience of local placements suitable to meet complex needs’.</i></p> <p><i>‘Ensure that anyone offering any kind of service - shops, schools, hospitals, transport, police, LBB all have proper</i></p>	<p>Ensure our front-line support staff have all the information and guidance required to inform their roles supporting our Autism community to appropriate support.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Review of current information and service advice including directories. Ensure where possible information can be found easily and all in one place. - Support professionals to build a good knowledge of services available and guide people with Autism to appropriate support. - Continue to grow the Autism Champion network. Expanding our champions knowledge. Maintain the e-communications, highlighting key developments, research and evidenced based strategies and interventions.
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<p><i>training on Autism...especially adults with Autism’.</i></p>		
<p><i>‘Bromley Recovery College (offers workshops and courses which enable students to achieve a greater insight into their own mental wellbeing). – we need to get more out there so we can learn more’.</i></p> <p><i>‘I need help understanding how my Autism impacts on me compared to neurotypical people’.</i></p> <p><i>‘More awareness of neurodiversity among older people and those without a diagnosis’.</i></p> <p><i>‘I think families should all be informed about different kinds of neurodiversity and not just the families affected’.</i></p>	<p>Autistic people are supported to understand what their Autism means to them, their strengths, and skills, so that they can live fulfilling lives.</p> <p>Ensure families and carers have access to guidance and advice to enable them to best support their family or person with Autism.</p> <p>Design our services to recognise the support families, and carers provide. Ensure they feel knowledgeable and empowered to support their loved ones throughout all stages of their lives.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Work in partnership to better advertise specialist services that offer training, support, advice and guidance for people with Autism. - Continue engagement with our families and carers living with Autism to understand what advice, guidance and support they need. This will influence the strategy year upon year to better develop services to meet the boroughs needs.



Priority 2. Build sustainable Education placements

What people have told us	What do we want to achieve?	What do we need to do?
<p><i>'There should be some understanding of neuro diverse presentation, there might be some severe areas of difficulty often not supported'.</i></p> <p><i>'More staff training in education settings'.</i></p> <p><i>'Earlier observation by professionals in schools'.</i></p> <p><i>'Work more closely with schools to signpost resources and support'.</i></p> <p><i>'Schools truly understanding what is required and not being scared to do the right thing by individuals'.</i></p> <p><i>'Schools work very well with people with Autism'.</i></p>	<p>Support our education settings to be inclusive, accessible and able to support its students with Autism to reach their full potential.</p> <p>Support professionals within schools to grow knowledge and skills that help them to identify individual needs within students.</p> <p>Reduce the number of students with Autism that have failed placements. Recognising Positive Demand avoidance (PDA) impact on accessing education.</p> <p>Within our education settings create culture change programme that will ensure we have long-term</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Roll out the Autism Education Trust (AET) programmes across all year's education facilities- Early Years, Schools and Post 16. Using the AET frameworks which include Competencies that support individual development of professionals. The Standards, which focus on whole setting development, and culture change. Finally, progression which supports individual pupil development. - Grow the knowledge and understanding of Autism through our Champions within education settings.



<p><i>'Support for Families whose child is presenting with a PDA profile who experiences issues accessing their education'.</i></p>	<p>positive education experiences for students with Autism.</p>	
<p><i>'No support for me whilst I was studying for my degree. I wanted to learn about people so that I could get on better. This is where I discovered that I had autism'.</i></p> <p><i>'More educating children of their Autism from at least the age of 7'.</i></p> <p><i>'Someone to talk & somewhere to go in school breaks means anxiety is significantly lowered'.</i></p> <p><i>'The awareness and openness of staff can and has made a positive education experience'.</i></p> <p><i>'The school offer support and social groups, Children can feel understood, safe and achieve'.</i></p>	<p>Students with Autism are supported to understand what their Autism means to them, their strengths and skills, so that they can live fulfilling lives.</p> <p>Support our education settings to identify neurodiversity within its students from as early as possible.</p> <p>Enable Education settings to share where they have had successes in their approach and support.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Identify within existing resources how we develop awareness and approaches for an Autism support/training offer for students with Autism which is relevant and proportionate to their individual needs. - Through the AET programme support professionals to consider the individual needs of a student. How environmental changes, adjustments to the day including support can enable that student to achieve and reach their full potential.
<p><i>'Education is key - people have religious education yet we learn nothing about disabilities and Autism- we need to understand it's impact on individuals, education and their families'.</i></p>	<p>Develop a local education provision able to meet the growing Autism Populations needs.</p> <p>Long term planning within our education settings to enable</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Develop a free school to meet local needs, included within this offer will be our Bromley Autism centre of excellence, which will ensure we continue to provide improvements



<p><i>'Autism doesn't need to be recognised by a diagnosis. So many students are struggling with Autism or Neurodiverse conditions, this will only increase as we understand more about Autism.'</i></p>	<p>students with Autism to achieve in school.</p>	<p>and provision as our borough needs change.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The Centre of Excellence (based at the new free school) can become a place for all providers, services, and support groups to build a community led Autism support hub.
<p><i>'I struggled with depression for a short time in secondary school, the doctor just thought my autism is the reason for not being liked. We need more understanding and guidance from these professionals.'</i></p> <p><i>'When diagnosed we need support groups for mainstream education settings that support understanding of communication, social skills, friendships etc'.</i></p> <p><i>'More early intervention prior to diagnosis - more training of boys and girls masking at school'.</i></p>	<p>Support and reduce the negative impact a student's mental health have on their education including those masking their issues within school.</p> <p>Ensure the staff within our partner settings are skilled and equipped with the knowledge to support our students with Autism.</p> <p>Through appropriate training, support our education settings staff to identify individual needs early, including students masking issues.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Support to education settings via the Autism Education Trust (AET) to work with heads and senior leadership teams to identify a culture change programme. Focused on early intervention and prevention, supporting student's welfare and achievement within education. - Through the SEND Training Collaborative identify gaps in our training offer and quality assure training delivered. Focus on Initial Teacher Training and Early Career Teacher Training – an emphasis on

		<p>every teacher being a teacher of SEND.</p>
<p><i>'No support for me whilst I was studying for my degree. I wanted to learn about people so that I could get on better. This is where I discovered that I had Autism'.</i></p> <p><i>'Teachers tried to limit my aspirations. I had no structure or guide preparing me so that once out of education I knew what to do with my life'.</i></p>	<p>Ensure there is sufficient information and guidance supporting our students through transition years, beyond education into adulthood.</p> <p>Ensure each students skills and strengths are identified and we support the student to identify their needs in order to reach education and life goals.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ensure our preparing for adulthood pathway equips young people with the appropriate skills they need to fulfil their adult life goals. - Increase the use of person-centred planning tools to support transition and build on strengths towards further education and employment. - Identify through the AET schools and Post 16 framework how we enable professionals to support a student to reflect upon their needs within education but also for the future; into further education and employment. - Explore the link between Autism and Emotionally Based School Avoidance (EBSA) to support Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSLs), Special Educational Needs Coordinator (SENCoS) and Mental



		<p>Health (MH) leads to intervene early. Using the MH leads network to support EBSA as an agenda item.</p>
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Priority 3. Supporting independence and Employment

What people have told us	What do we want to achieve?	What do we need to do?
<p><i>'Living in social housing has impacted on my mental health. I am high functioning and living independently but wish that the services I work with could be more understanding of my individual need'.</i></p> <p><i>'Support throughout school enabled my child to achieve their goals, move onto higher education and gain their chosen job'.</i></p>	<p>Support to be independent, achieving levels of independence will vary per persons wishes and aspirations. We want to ensure that our community and services can efficiently support people with Autism on their life journey.</p> <p>Ensure all people with or without Autism diagnoses are supported to build independence.</p> <p>Ensure support is clear through the universal offer supporting all people with or without an Autism diagnosis</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Promote our specialist services and community organisations offering individualised support focussed on building knowledge and independence. - Look at how we offer advice, and guidance across services that support people with Autism. Ensure it will help build knowledge and independence. i.e. life skills, communication, relationships, managing finance, housing, independent living skills, employment etc.



		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Work closely with Learning Disability services to ensure people can access the support they need to build or maintain independence, including support into employment.
<p><i>'Job centre experience was awful. It was overwhelming with too many sensory issues'.</i></p> <p><i>'Everyone with Autism is different- if you employ people on the spectrum, it will help others with Autism feel supported, whilst growing understanding in the workforce'.</i></p> <p><i>'Diversity and inclusion for Neuro diverse adults in the workplace to be included in solving the problem'.</i></p> <p><i>'Ensure sufficient educational support and job opportunities'.</i></p>	<p>increase the number of people with Autism into meaningful employment.</p> <p>Celebrate and learn from successful employment of our people with Autism.</p> <p>Our partner organisations to advocate for its Autism community, looking at roles within our organisations.</p> <p>Share examples of good practice across employer organisations.</p> <p>Get employer organisations to work with schools and colleges so that employment opportunities/pathways are accessible.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Build a skill and strength model across organisations that supports looking at the individual before their Autism. - Through employment projects, including 100-day challenge and Bromley Autism Promise, support organisations to look at strengths approach to Autism specific roles and schemes. Leading towards employment- Voluntary, Apprenticeships, Supported internships and graduate schemes as well as part- or full-time employment. - Identify how we deliver partnership working with employment services to better understand and support



		<p>our Neurodiverse/ Autism community looking for work. To make the process a positive experience.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Need to review where employment is working well for those people with Autism. What support they received, where reasonable adjustments have supported the employee, and how the employer supports them to remain in work.
<p><i>'We need to get employers to really define Reasonable adjustments for people with disability or Autism'.</i></p> <p><i>'Employer who has taken the time and initiative to research Autism and what an Autistic person might need, then speaking with the individual to ensure everything is appropriately put in to place for them to achieve and carry out their role'.</i></p>	<p>To work with business to build Autism awareness, this can lead to sustaining employment for its workforce with Autism.</p> <p>Build greater understanding across the community of the skills and strengths of our people with Autism.</p> <p>Build an inclusion approach to employment projects with businesses. Including looking at how roles can be adapted through job</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Raise the importance of employment among strategic boards, understand the role of our organisations can have and look to identify ways to deliver an employment programme. This should empower employers to understand and support the employees needs in order to meet their roles, and job specification. - Build a training offer that supports building understanding in

<p><i>'Continuing support once in work e.g., meetings, someone to talk to about issues, someone to guide clearly on what to do'.</i></p> <p><i>'Adjustments should be for the individual, not generic'.</i></p> <p><i>'Due to the lack of understanding in many 'normal' workplaces, they have been unable to sustain employment, something they very much want to be able to do'.</i></p> <p><i>'The Job CentrePlus (JCP) seem very confused about their approach, providing Intensive Personalised Employment Support (IPES) - which is meant to be intensive employment support, but contact once a month by phone. This isn't supportive, the types of appointments need to be flexible without threats of sanctions (losing benefits)'.</i></p> <p><i>'I used to have a job, I worked on areas outside my Job description, I wasn't paid well, I ended up having mental health issues for two and half years, I lost confidence, now I need more</i></p>	<p>carving or adjustments that support positive employment experiences.</p> <p>Promote an inclusive, workforce first approach to support culture change across workforces.</p>	<p>businesses and organisational changes and approaches to employing people with Autism. Including how its workforce can support its people with Autism.</p>
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<p><i>support to build confidence and get back to work’.</i></p>		
<p><i>‘I’ve had support given to find job but nothing after, there can be issues in work and it can be hard to keep a job sometimes’.</i></p>	<p>For our borough to have Autism confident Employers.</p> <p>For adults in work to know where they may turn to get support. Either within their workforce, HR, or external support, including mental health and wellbeing support.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Grow the Autism Promise training offer to support organisations to be aware, understand difference, neurodiversity and support its Autism workforce. - Through the Promise explore where there may be opportunity to build and support employment opportunities.
<p><i>‘I don’t understand about housing types, benefits, and money, I need support’.</i></p> <p><i>‘Maybe having a generalised system, a main online source for Autism across the borough-information/website/all links for services/social media/an Apps’.</i></p> <p><i>‘Any advertisements, events or services need to use inclusive pictures, symbols and easy read text particularly in Local authority papers/newsletters’.</i></p>	<p>Promoting clear information and guidance of the support and services on offer to our people with Autism looking to build their independence, open opportunities within employment or otherwise.</p> <p>Ensure our services and pathways are clear for our people with Autism.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Set up a of Autism ambassador group to review the online, downloadable resources and leaflets to ensure the service offer and access information is clear and understood including easy read or other formatting where required. - Ambassadors to identify where support for people with Autism isn’t clearly defined within our service offer. Then how we can advertise this support better.



		<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Ensure any gaps identified by the Autism Ambassadors are shared at the Autism Partnership board and a focus at solving service issues, where possible agreed add new S.M.A.R.T goals to action plan.- Work with partners to identify opportunity to make a central Autism focused Hub for all services to advertise their support/offer. This could sit within the Autism centre of Excellence offer.
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Priority 4. Reducing the health and care inequalities

What people have told us	What do we want to achieve?	What do we need to do?
<p><i>'In my experience there are no specialists who can help, unless you are prepared for a 2-year waiting list. System is discriminatory for those that have Autism along with other conditions'.</i></p> <p><i>'If there is a 3-month list for those with MH, this should be the same for those with Autism and MH issues. Good looks like equality'.</i></p> <p><i>'Ensuring that the local community paediatric service offer a sensitive approach to assessment, where parents are not expected to speak in front of their child</i></p>	<p>Improve the waiting times for Autism diagnosis, advice and guidance of diagnostic pathway and the support available throughout process and post diagnosis.</p> <p>Look at how health appointments can be adjusted to make them inclusive for the person with Autism as well as beneficial for families to be able to confidently communicate needs and wishes.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Review how we currently provide diagnostic support services. From this understand how we're able to reduce waiting times for diagnosis and offer timely support interventions such a triage service. - Review of current guidance around the pathway for diagnosis (all ages), support available, the expected times frames for each process, and support or signposting upon diagnosis. How clear is this information, can we produce using easy read format, pictures, symbols etc.



<p><i>about their difficulties, if they don't feel this is helpful'.</i></p> <p><i>'Services understanding how the presentation of girls on the spectrum can be vastly different to boys and many difficulties masked, so they become extremely vulnerable to internalising and having mental health difficulties. A diagnosis for these children can be extremely important'.</i></p> <p><i>'I don't understand the Support through the diagnostic pathway'.</i></p> <p><i>'Bromley Y and CAMHS waiting lists are too long to cope with the huge influx of Need since Covid. More triage services needed'.</i></p> <p><i>'If would have been nice to not feel neglected once I turned 18'.</i></p>	<p>Understand the demand on services across all ages and growing Autism population.</p> <p>Recognising the changing picture of Autism diagnosis, including reports of underdiagnosis within girls.</p> <p>Need to support the increased issues and service pressures around wellbeing and mental health needs of young people preparing for adulthood and in transition years. To many mask issues in settings, how can we identify issues early, provide support, advice before ending up at crisis.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - As delivery of NHS Long term plan implements changes to services locally all developments to be fed back into the All-age Autism partnership board's action plan, to keep local people informed. - Look into how we create support and interventions along service pathways to avoid a person hitting crisis, in particular young people preparing for adulthood. - Identify nationally where diagnosis process differs, what's working well elsewhere and if replicating locally would have a positive impact.
<p><i>'We want choice to group our appointments together or have them all separate'.</i></p>	<p>Support reasonable adjustments to healthcare appointments for our Autism</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Identify where it's appropriate within individual settings (GP/A&E, Dental etc.) changes that will benefit our

<p><i>‘Don’t book appointment’s during school or time’s when I have routine, they need to ask me, it can mess me up for days.’</i></p> <p><i>‘Awareness training for GP and health service receptionists, I feel a lack of patience and understanding can make me more anxious, I can’t get support when I’m unable to manage my anxiety’.</i></p> <p><i>‘Separate area in GP surgeries and hospital waiting rooms for people with autism. On Sensory level, building of anxiety, difficulty waiting or simply the whole situation can be daunting’.</i></p> <p><i>‘It’s very difficult to access services as my child was told they would need to attend, which can be extremely difficult’.</i></p> <p><i>‘Please can we consider home appointments if the person is non- verbal with very high communication difficulties and support needs. Sometimes getting to appointments is impossible and health risks can be missed’.</i></p>	<p>community to access timely advice and appointments.</p> <p>Identify how we can support our Autism community to communicate recognise when they aren’t able to access appointments.</p> <p>Support families, those with family members who have complex needs to identify adjustments needed for them to access appointments.</p>	<p>people with Autism. This could be environment changes, appointments adjustments, online offer, separate waiting areas and information and guidance available pre and post health appointments.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Explore through engagement with families where reasonable adjustments may be required. Need to better understand per service how these adjustments can be made. - Following resident engagement review the current ways in which health services are offered and identify if there are other ways in which a service can be accessed or provided in order to make them more inclusive.
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Priority 5. The right support at the right time

What people have told us	What do we want to achieve?	What do we need to do?
<p><i>'The world would be a different place without people with Autism. But a lack of support for those with Autism, we need to recognise that there are different groups of people with very different needs.'</i></p> <p><i>'We should be focusing on the person at the time and not in the past. Assessments should focus on the present and future and what that person needs to get there'.</i></p> <p><i>'When diagnosed later as adult which happens a lot, we need support in varying areas including social skills and how to keep job'.</i></p>	<p>Support for people with Autism to identify their skills, strengths and their needs. Identifying when they may have wellbeing needs that could impact negatively now or in the future.</p> <p>Need to identify where wellbeing needs have significant impact on a person at stages of their life.</p> <p>Where possible identify those, who may not be eligible for statutory support but that may run into trouble without intervention.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Promote where we have offer of support and training for people with Autism. That helps to identify skills, strengths and needs. Whilst looking to grow this support locally. - Look at how we commission our services. Across community support and health services including mental health (all Ages). Ensure service guidance and offer is clear, and the support on offer will meet needs at the earliest opportunity, intervening to avoid crisis.



<p><i>'I've had a positive experience of young offender's service (YOS), generally very understanding'.</i></p> <p><i>'I've sensory issues and not understanding my needs and what support I need. More Sensory classes and awareness even for adults and those high functioning'.</i></p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Identify a medium through those with lived experience of reaching out to our community who aren't engaged in services but may be at risk either now or in the future.
<p><i>'In terms of Mental Health services - having Autism is a barrier - if you present with Autism and a co-morbid MH issue - no one will help you'.</i></p> <p><i>'I had some bad experiences with my son and mental health services. Professionals are all lovely and helpful but if a person is autistic, they do not have the resources available to them, to help. We had to go to private services to get the help needed'.</i></p> <p><i>'Important that person with complex needs would benefit from the continuity of the same people throughout the transition processes and into the first 6 months in a setting'.</i></p>	<p>Build appropriate support for mental health provision</p> <p>Train professionals to identify low level mental health concerns including those masking within education or services.</p> <p>Make sure people of all ages have support to identify what they might need. Often a persons wellbeing and mental health needs are overlooked</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Continue to improve Signposting and guidance around interventions and where to access support for all ages. - Look at how we develop wellbeing and Mental Health support alongside existing services, focused on timely support or signposting to avoid crisis. Often people need to understand where support is available now rather than sit on waiting lists. - Continue to work with partners through boards and engagement



		<p>as a tool to change services to meet current and future wellbeing and Mental Health needs.</p>
<p><i>'It's easier having one person to support me than many in one go (like a carer, Social Worker, advocate, or Health professional).'</i></p> <p><i>'We had so many social workers, it was a very difficult transition. My son was 18/19 years. Continuity would have made so much difference'.</i></p> <p><i>'Where does Autism fit? - if you don't have a Learning Disability lots of services can't help you. I get help with other issues - but not the Autism element'.</i></p> <p><i>'Later in life or when young, we need support learning about Autism. We need Social Skill groups, Money groups, Assistance into work groups, Anxiety groups, Support groups'.</i></p> <p><i>'We need Continuing help like in mental health services; Autism just isn't understood'.</i></p>	<p>Support for people of all ages as and when they need it, throughout their lives that recognises individuality</p> <p>Provide information, advice and guidance including where and how this support can be assessed.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Build within models of health and social care services an offer that has clear guidance and is accessible. This includes those that wouldn't meet thresholds for statutory services. - Continue engagement or use of groups and ambassadors to provide feedback on how services should provide information and guidance. - Coproduce a model of early intervention support that will run across all our services, connecting and signposting to ensure we prevent a person, their family or carer entering decline and provide them access to timely support.



<p><i>'I live alone, have no support but need weekly support with my Autism'.</i></p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Review the mental health support and training offer around Autism. Continue to grow knowledge of front-line professionals, education settings and services to recognise wellbeing decline, and those masking issues. In particular, those in preparing for adulthood transition years.
<p><i>'As a carer I feel like the professional hasn't read the notes. Then don't feel like we get what we need from a meeting'.</i></p> <p><i>'Need for short breaks, our parents and siblings sometimes need this, it provides healthy time apart as well as build independence for our loved ones away from home environment.</i></p> <p><i>'Any support has had to be fought for'.</i></p> <p><i>'Assessing effective family support across the borough and what that looks like'.</i></p>	<p>Appropriate and timely Support for Families and carers.</p> <p>Clear information and guidance is key to support positive family environments and avoid crisis.</p> <p>If in Crisis do families know where and what to do? Ensure we support families to plan to avoid crisis.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - We will look at our models of service, how do we ensure appropriate preparation for appointments, to make sure they are meaningful, and priority/ action led for all involved. - Continue to build an appropriate short break offer that can meet the individual and family or carers needs. - Provide clear and assessable advice and guidance to families and carers to signpost support.



<p><i>'The whole process of supporting family through school into adulthood puts a lot of pressure on families, we need support for parents and siblings.'</i></p> <p><i>'Counselling for families including siblings.'</i></p> <p><i>'Bromley Parent Voice have been very supportive'.</i></p> <p><i>'Support for parents so they aren't so overwhelmed'.</i></p> <p><i>'Signposting is really required. From what procedure the diagnosis will follow to what special facilities there are for children by age group. There are so many gaps, which causes anxiety for the parent'.</i></p>		<p>This includes our commissioned partners and businesses.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Look to advertise and where possible support family, parent and carer groups. Ensuring our community can talk to others with lived experience and support each other.- Continue with engagement of family, carers, parents and people with Autism to ensure their lived experience is driving changes across all services in LBB & CCG, including voluntary and public sector.
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Glossary, References & Resources

Strategies, legislation, papers and resources specific to Autism and this strategy:

- [National-strategy-for-autistic-children-young-people-and-adults-2021-to-2026](#)
- [Autism strategy implementation plan: 2021 to 2022 \(Annex A\) \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](#)
- [Statutory guidance for Local Authorities and NHS organisations to support implementation of the Adult Autism Strategy \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](#) – 2015
- [NHS Long Term Plan » Learning disability and autism](#) - 2019
- [Think Autism \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](#) – 2014
- [Autism Strategy- Rewarding and fulfilling lives](#) - 2010
- [Autism Act 2009 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](#)
- [Autism self-assessment framework - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#) – 2016-18
- [LeftStranded Report.indd \(thirdlight.com\)](#) – Impact of coronavirus on Autistic people- 2021.
- [APPGA-Autism-Act-Inquiry-Report.pdf \(pearsfoundation.org.uk\)](#)



- **Autism Care Pathway in Bromley 18+ A report by Healthwatch Bromley**
[20210427_Bromley_Autism-Care-Pathway-in-Bromley-18-PDF.pdf \(healthwatch.co.uk\)](#)
- **Housing Sensory needs** [Considering and meeting the sensory needs of autistic people in housing | Local Government Association](#)
- **NHS Long term Plan-** [NHS Long Term Plan](#)
- **South east London CCG-** [NHSE-South-East-All-age-Autism-Strategy-21-26.pdf](#)
- **SEND Code of practice-** [SEND code of practice: 0 to 25 years - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)
- **Office of National Statistics-** [Outcomes for disabled people in the UK - Office for National Statistics \(ons.gov.uk\)](#)
- **Nice-** [Autism | Topic | NICE](#)
- **NAS-** [National Autistic Society \(autism.org.uk\)](#)

National Autism legislation and policy Timeline

- 2009 **Autism Act** in England. This guaranteed the rights of Autistic adults in England.
- 2010 This act led to the first Autism strategy- **Fulfilling and Rewarding lives: the strategy for adults with Autism in England.**
- 2014 A review of the act led to an update of the strategy called **'Think Autism'**. Reviewing the strategies impacts across country and influencing the release of Statutory Guidance for Local Authorities and NHS bodies in implementing the Strategy.



- 2016-18 The Self-Assessment framework (SAF)- Public health initiate led engagement of Local Authorities in self assessing their implementation of the Adult Autism strategy locally.
- 2019 Autism was included as a priority in **NHS England's Long-Term Plan**. This means that NHS England have to plan how to provide better healthcare for Autistic people.
- In 2019 the Department of Health and Social Care committed to refreshing the '*Think Autism*' strategy and extend scope to all ages.
- 2021 Leading on from the NHS long term plan the **NHS South East All-age Autism Strategy 2021 – 2026** was produced in regional collaboration to define the south east NHS priorities for the next five years.
- 2021- **National strategy for autistic children, young people and adults**, a five-year plan 2021-2026. The first of its kind for all ages. Supported by an additional plan which outlines the first two years implementation 2021-22.

Impact of Covid 19

Throughout the pandemic we've seen increased concerns and issues with some of the population's wellbeing/ mental health. Also changes to individual circumstance due to lack of support networks, or sadly loss of life to family or friends.

Social distancing and reduction in interaction, some people have found extremely welcoming. Therefore, have embraced the new of living where society has become digitally ready, which makes some interaction a more positive experience, with flexibility to have meetings at suitable times.



For those travelling to employment or education settings, coupled with the social pressures and sensory environments, they have found the pandemic has had a positive impact upon them individually due to the nature of their work or studies being online, from their safe home environment. For some they have reported this as the happiest and most productive they have been in years.

Some have found access to particular services difficult, particularly health services due to pandemic impact and limiting access to health professionals at this time.

Whilst we're witnessing and anticipating increased needs for services and support locally, both short- and long-term planning and intervention is required. The effects of the pandemic will be felt across our society for many years to come, some of this impact is currently unknown, and may be difficult to identify ongoing strategy needs. However, the strategy reflects the adjustments potentially required in support and services for the next five years.

We recognise that engagement is key to continue our strategy developments locally. We will continue to build throughout the life of the strategy and hope to involve more people as we review progress, and the action plan evolves.