

Appendix I - Autism Strategy Implementation update

Summary

Haringey agreed a 10-year, all-age strategy to improve outcomes, experience and inclusion for autistic people in 2021. It runs to 2031, so we are coming up to the half-way point of the plan.

The strategy sought to deliver across 9 improvement areas, tackling 3 priorities at a time in 3 year 'blocks'.

The initial priority group was to make improvements in diagnostic pathways, mental health / crisis services and care and support more generally. Coproduction with families and young people & professionals has driven a wide range of improvements, some of which are highlighted below, and established a platform for further improvement through the second half of the strategy.

There have also been improvements in post-16 employment offers, education sector awareness and data collection.

Delivery of the plan going forwards is being reviewed as part of the refresh of the borough's partnership priorities and ways of working, and partners are updating the structure and work plans by which to deliver the rest of the strategy's ambitions.

Panel should be aware that as an all-age strategy, there is also aligned work focusing on Haringey's adult population which has not been included within this report.

Below is an update from partners on the delivery of the strategy's priorities over the last 4-5 years.

Improving diagnostic services for autistic children & young people

"I can get a diagnosis in a timely way with an offer of some pre or post diagnostic support locally"

Whittington Health, Tavistock and Portman and partners have led on this area: -

- Used NCL transformation money to reduce waiting times for under 5s, 12+ and to improve pre- and post-diagnostic support
- Restarted face to face post diagnosis parent/carer workshops for 5-11 year olds
- Introduced follow-up/wellbeing phone calls post diagnosis as per NICE guidelines. This includes use of a parent/carer questionnaire coproduced with SENDPower. Feedback from this is used to develop services e.g. introducing a newsletter for families
- Set up a Haringey Social Communication Team webpage as part of the Whittington website with information for parents/carers and practitioners.
- Produced videos parent/carers on toileting, selective eating and behaviour/regulation with access to follow on online workshops. The pre-

recorded videos are open to all, the workshops for those waiting and post diagnosis

- Developed a new sleep pathway for families on the waiting list or post diagnosis which includes advice and access to clinical psychologist and paediatrician as needed.
- Used the NHS backlog money to maintain waiting times despite increased referrals.
- Worked with Markfield to support with parent/carer coffee mornings and training courses which are open to those on the waiting list and post diagnosis (see further on *improving care and support* below)
- Developed update letters for those on the waiting list with an updated waiting time and signposting to local support including workshops mentioned above

We are working on / planning: -

- To launch a support line (phone and email) for parents/carers and practitioners from 1/4/26. This will be aimed at those on the waiting list with some key working available for vulnerable families post diagnosis
- To develop a termly newsletter for families on the waiting list with additional information and updated waiting times
- To work with the NCL Transformation team and NLFT CAMHS to join up Autism and ADHD assessments
- NLFT and the Council's Youth Justice Service (YJS) have recently developed pathways which will fast track neurodevelopmental assessments. The fast track guide describes that each child should be considered on a case-by-case basis depending on several factors (e.g., child/families wishes to engage in assessment, age of child, length of time remaining with YJS, whether assessment can better support understanding of offending behaviours, capacity of CAMHS-YJS staff member with appropriate qualification and training).

Improving mental health, complex and crisis care services for autistic children & young people

"I can get the right support at the right time"

NLFT have led on this work in partnership with Haringey Council:

- We have an embedded Learning Disability and Autism (LDA) Practitioner within the assertive outreach teams (AOT) across Barnet, Enfield and Haringey boroughs and a established a Home Treatment Team (HTT), providing specialist clinical leadership and direct clinical input for autistic children and young people with complex mental health and behavioural presentations

- Improved identification and understanding of autism, learning disability, sensory needs, and communication differences within crisis and intensive community settings
- Enhanced risk formulation that distinguishes between distress driven by unmet neurodevelopmental needs and mental illness, reducing inappropriate escalation, restraint, and admission
- Specialist advice and modelling for staff on reasonable adjustments, trauma informed and autism informed approaches during crisis presentations, including A&E and out of hours responses
- Closer working with families, education, social care, and ND pathways to provide consistent, system wide support and shared understanding of the young person's needs

NLFT are working on / planning:

- Strengthening the role of the LDA practitioner in proactive care planning for high intensity, high risk autistic young people who frequently present in crisis or attend A&E
- Developing clearer pathways between ND services, crisis services, AOT, and HTT to reduce fragmentation and revolving door presentations
- Expanding autism informed crisis care approaches, including sensory modulation, environmental adaptations, and behaviour support planning within community and acute settings
- Building workforce confidence and capability through ongoing training, reflective practice, and joint case formulation led by the LDA practitioner
- Improving transition planning and discharge pathways for autistic young people, ensuring continuity of care and reducing escalation at key transition points

Improving care and support for autistic children & young people

My friends and family have access to support, information and advice as part of their journey alongside me"

Markfield have been commissioned to extend their SENDIASS offer with additional support for autistic children and their families. Open Door have also been commissioned to provide additional pre/post diagnostic psychological therapy aligned to Markfield's project. The services delivered within the SENDIASS autism project are designed to complement the existing statutory services, by giving parents & carers opportunities to:

- Meet with other parents/carers for peer support
- Learn more about autism and practical ways to support autistic children

- Get individual advice on navigating the local statutory and voluntary sector services for autistic children, including help to apply for Disability Living Allowance (DLA)

The autism pathway project beneficiaries are Haringey residents who are:

- Parents and carers of children and young people who are either on the waiting list for an autism assessment or have been recently diagnosed with Autism
- Young autistic people up to 18 years old and those on the waiting list for an autism assessment

In this project SENDIASS is delivering:

- One-to-one advice appointments to help navigate services, and find out about local and national resources. These appointments are offered online and in person
- Support to fill in forms to claim Disability Living Allowance (DLA). Due to the volume of requests, we operate a waiting list.
- Group training sessions and workshops for parent/carers about different topics.
- Bi-monthly face to face parent/carer support groups. These in-person meetings allow parents a space to chat and have peer to peer support.
- A monthly youth club for autistic young people aged 12 to 17

Improving accessibility for autistic children & young people

“I have good access to physical and mental health services and expect good outcomes if I need these services”

Whittington Health have: -

- Developed neuro-affirming training to support health professionals when talking to young people and their families. This aligns with training by LAST developed for Education professionals.
- Worked jointly with LAST with Somali parents of autistic children to further understand cultural differences in understanding autism.

We are working on / planning: -

- Revising the post diagnosis pack for older children to include more neuro affirming resources to support understanding and acceptance of the diagnosis

Improving education, employment and training in the community for autistic children & young people

“I can access education and help if I need it in my local community and do not have to travel far away to have my needs met

“My family, my friends, my teachers and others I trust know how to help me best when I need extra support. They create spaces for me or with me that help me learn and thrive.”

Haringey Council is committed to ensuring autistic children and young people have opportunities to support their transition from education, through to training and eventually paid employment. Currently, the following opportunities are available within the borough:

- Haringey Council and Mencap Training Academy run a Supported Internship programme for 18–25-year-olds on an Education, Health and Care Plan. Over the course of an academic year participants complete 3 full time internships in council departments and local businesses. The interns spend 4 days a week at their work placement and spend 1 day per week in the classroom. The programme also includes travel training and work coach support, which extends beyond the programme length. The Supported Internship provides valuable workplace experience, which is a key stepping stone to paid employment.
- Mencap training Academy offer a Pre-supported Internship Programme for 16-25-year-olds. This programme readies participants for a Supported Internship, the key difference being participants spend the majority of their time in the classroom, with 1 day per week at an internship. This provides an important first step for young people who aren't ready to go from full time education to 5 days a week at a workplace.
- Connect to Work provides intensive employment support for residents with Health conditions. As part of this provision, there is a dedicated support stream for residents with more challenging health barriers such as autism, which follows the Supported Employment Quality Framework. This strand is being delivered by PLUS and is open to any resident who is 18+ with an associated medical condition, who would like to work. The provision co-locates in the Haringey Autism Hub, to better connect with autistic residents.

The Council have also worked with schools across Haringey on professional development in relation to autism:

- We have rolled out Autism Education Trust training to all primary schools in Haringey, 4 out of 5 special schools and 9/12 secondary schools

Empowering autistic children & young people

“I feel encouraged to speak up and be me”

Haringey Council Elevated Youth Panel and Youth Council Participation have led involvement and coproduction, aligned to and part of the SEND partnership in Haringey: -

- The Haringey Youth Participation Team has established a youth voice panel known as Elevated Youth, comprising young people aged 11–25 with a range of SEND needs, including autism. This panel plays an integral role in ensuring

that neurodiverse young people are meaningfully represented in local decision-making.

- Elevated Youth members are also active participants in the Haringey Youth Council, which was launched in November 2025. The Youth Council is designed to ensure that young people feel heard, valued, and included, regardless of their neurodiversity. Members are regularly invited to take part in Cabinet meetings, contribute to the development of surveys, and attend panel discussions that seek young people's views on issues affecting their lives, such as community safety, education, and mental health.
- Within the Youth Council, a member of Elevated Youth has been elected as Deputy Leader for 2 years. This young person has been commended for their commitment and for their advocacy on behalf of autistic young people, drawing on their own lived experience to help influence change. They shared that being part of the Youth Council has allowed them to socialise with peers from different schools across the borough and collaborate on making a positive difference within their community.
- Youth Council meetings take place once a month, scheduled for the second Wednesday of each month. Meetings are held at the Rising Green Family Hub from 4:30pm to 6:30pm.

We are working on / planning: -

- We are working on and planning a range of new initiatives designed to further strengthen youth participation, increase accessibility for neurodiverse young people, and embed co-production across all areas of service development. This includes enhancing autism-friendly communication practices, expanding the Elevated Youth panel to ensure broader representation, and developing targeted training for professionals on how to work effectively with autistic young people. We are also planning to introduce more structured opportunities for young people to contribute to policy shaping. Such as workshops focused on mental health, education, and SEND support. Additionally, we are exploring new partnership opportunities with schools, the voluntary sector, and health services to ensure that autistic young people can engage safely, confidently, and meaningfully in influencing decisions that affect their lives.

NLFT CAMHS services

We have

- Established **Haringey Youth Boards** with a diverse group of young people who access CYPMHS, including autistic young people and those with a range of mental health experiences.
- Embedded **co-production as standard practice**, ensuring autistic young people directly influence service design, delivery, and improvement.

- Enabled young people to **co-chair strategic meetings** with senior leaders and directors, creating space for challenge, accountability, and shared decision-making.
- Involved autistic young people in **recruitment panels**, ensuring their lived experience shapes workforce selection and values-based hiring.
- Supported young people to deliver **peer-to-peer support**, strengthening confidence, belonging, and community connection.
- Achieved national recognition through the **2025 HSJ Award for Empowering Young Voices**, celebrating the impact of our youth boards and co-production model.

Planned

- Implement **Digital Storytelling** to help staff better understand autistic young people's lived experiences, improving empathy, communication, and trauma-informed practice.
- Launch the **North Central London Young People's Participation Forum**, ensuring autistic young people influence mental health service development across the wider NCL footprint.
- Strengthen pathways for autistic young people to take on **leadership, ambassador, and advisory roles**, ensuring sustained involvement beyond one-off consultations.
- Expand training and support for staff to embed **neurodiversity-affirming practice**, co-designed with autistic young people.
- Increase opportunities for autistic young people to shape **service evaluations, quality improvement projects, and strategic planning**.
- Develop accessible communication tools (visual, digital, and co-produced) to ensure autistic young people can meaningfully engage in decision-making.

Improving data collection for autistic children & young people

We have: -

To strengthen data quality and improve oversight, the NCL NHS Neurodiversity Programme have implemented a new NCL metrics template designed to capture rich and meaningful information about children and young people awaiting an autism and ADHD diagnostic assessment. This template incorporates over 19 key metrics, including demographic details, to provide comprehensive insights that inform commissioning decisions and highlight areas of inequity across NCL. By standardising

and streamlining data collection, we now have consistent data flows that enable robust analysis, support evidence-based planning, and ensure services are responsive to population needs. This initiative represents a significant step forward in improving transparency, accountability, and equity within neurodevelopmental pathways.

Key Benefits

- **Enhanced Data Quality:** Standardised metrics ensure accurate, consistent, and reliable data collection across NCL.
- **Informed Commissioning:** Rich insights enable evidence-based decisions to optimise resource allocation and service planning.
- **Equity Oversight:** Demographic data highlights disparities, supporting targeted interventions to reduce inequities.
- **Improved Transparency:** Clear, consistent reporting strengthens accountability and governance.
- **Better Outcomes:** Data-driven strategies improve pathways and experiences for autistic and ADHD children and young people.

The Youth Justice Service have mechanisms in place to monitor and report on the number of children that have autism as a diagnosis and other neurodevelopmental needs. The neurodevelopmental needs of children are reported to the Youth Justice Partnership Board every quarter.

We are working on / planning: -

- NHS teams are currently developing a **Power BI dashboard** to provide real-time visibility and transparency of this data. This will enable commissioners and stakeholders to access live insights, monitor trends, and make timely, informed decisions to improve service delivery and equity across NCL.