

Report to: East Sussex Health and Wellbeing Board

Date of meeting: 23 September 2025

By: Director of Adult Social Care and Health

Title: East Sussex All Age Autism Action Plan

Purpose of Report: To share the East Sussex All Age Autism Action Plan and update the Board on progress to date.

Recommendations:

East Sussex Health and Wellbeing Board is recommended to:

- 1. acknowledge the development of the East Sussex All Age Autism Action Plan and the priorities within it which were identified through significant engagement and consultation with local autistic people and stakeholders (section 2 and Appendix 1);**
 - 2. agree the proposal for an annual report to be presented to the East Sussex Health and Wellbeing Board to update on progress (paragraph 2.6); and**
 - 3. note the progress made to deliver year 1 priorities during the five months since the Action Plan was launched (section 3).**
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1 Background

1.1 Throughout 2024 the East Sussex Autism Partnership Board (APB) consulted with the East Sussex Autistic community and stakeholders to agree the priorities for an East Sussex All Age Autism Action Plan.

1.2 The [East Sussex All Age Autism Action Plan](#) (Appendix 1) was agreed by both the Lead Member Adult Social Care and Health and the Lead Member Children and Families, prior to launching the action plan during Autism Acceptance Week in April 2025.

1.3 The plan was developed in response to the latest [National Autism Strategy](#) published in July 2021. This strategy extends the scope to children and young people for the first time (previous strategies were adult only). East Sussex has therefore developed our [Autism Partnership Board](#) membership and the Action Plan to align with the priorities of the national strategy for all ages.

1.4 An easy-read version of the East Sussex All Age Autism Action Plan has also been developed and published (Appendix 2).

1.5 Since its launch in April 2025, work has been undertaken to progress the actions identified for delivery in year 1. This report provides a summary of the Action Plan and progress made to date.

2 The East Sussex All Age Action Plan

2.1 The aim of the Action Plan is to improve the lives of Autistic people, their families, carers, and wider support networks across East Sussex. We will do this through increasing

autism awareness and improving education, employment, well-being and life opportunities for the Autistic community.

2.2 To inform the development of the Action Plan, during 2024 we:

- Worked with Public Health to review local and national data to better understand the prevalence of autism in East Sussex.
- Carried out an online survey (April to June 2024) to gather the views of Autistic residents, parents and unpaid carers, and others with an interest on a range of topics. We received over 320 responses.
- Held three focus groups (July to September 2024) with Young Healthwatch, and Autistic people accessing day opportunities to better understand what works well and what could be improved to support them in their day-to-day life.
- Held four stakeholder workshops (September to October 2024), attended by over 80 people, to discuss the learning from the feedback, along with national and local research. Through these workshops, we developed 26 actions across three priority areas:
 - Improving the health and wellbeing of autistic people
 - Improving autistic children and young people's access to education and supporting positive transitions into adulthood
 - Supporting autistic people into employment and sustaining their employment.

2.3 The plan was co-produced with an Autism Action and Planning Group, primarily consisting of Experts by Experience from the East Sussex APB. The Action and Planning Group continue to meet monthly to support delivery of the plan.

2.4 The plan and priorities were also developed with ESCC colleagues in the Education Division and Employment and Skills Team, as well as NHS colleagues working in the Sussex Neurodevelopmental Pathway Programme.

2.5 Alongside the Action Plan, an Equalities Impact Assessment (Appendix 3) was completed, and a range of health and care groups were consulted to obtain wider feedback.

2.6 Progress against the plan will be reviewed by the East Sussex APB, who meet four times a year. It is also proposed that an annual report will be presented to the East Sussex Health and Wellbeing Board.

2.7 To evaluate how the Action Plan has impacted on improving the lives of autistic people, their families, carers, and wider support networks, we will repeat the consultation completed to inform the Action Plan at the end of the 3 years of delivery.

3 Progress against Year 1 priorities

3.1 Below is a summary of progress to date against year 1 actions identified under each priority area:

3.2 Health and Wellbeing

- The APB has developed a Communications Strategy to raise the profile of autism across East Sussex and promote examples of services that support Autistic people well. This strategy will be delivered through utilising social media and newsletters to promote positive examples and new developments around autism. We have also begun working with ESCC colleagues to improve / increase the availability of information for Autistic people on East Sussex One Space, East Sussex Community Information Service, and the Local Offer.

- Building upon previous years the APB is also planning a series of communication and learning opportunities (both online and in person) for Autism Acceptance Week 2026 (2-8 April).
- The Autism Action and Planning Group has reviewed the range of autism health and care passports available and developed a plan to promote the most relevant ones for East Sussex.
- The Autism Action and Planning Group and ESCC training colleagues have reviewed the current autism training offer across the Council and are currently developing options for embedding autism awareness and understanding into all Council departments as well as schools.
- Members of the APB are part of the NHS Integrated Care Board (ICB) stakeholder group delivering the Neurodevelopmental Pathway Programme to increase the universal help available to individuals pre, during, and post diagnostic assessment.

3.3 Education

- ESCC Education services are working with NHS ICB colleagues to develop and pilot a profiling tool for schools to use to understand individual needs and how those needs can be met. The tool that is being piloted is the Dimensions Tool, developed by Coventry and Warwickshire NHS Trust. The pilot is running in eight schools and will be measuring the ease of use of the tool and the impact of using it on outcomes for children, as well as relationships between schools and parent/carers. Data should be available at the beginning of Term 3.
- The autism training offer for schools is currently being developed by the Communication, Learning and Autism Support Service (CLASS) with a view to incorporating new e-learning software. CLASS is also delivering the Autism in Schools project and Partnership for Inclusion of Neurodiversity in Schools (PINS) project, both of which are aimed at building school staff understanding of and approach to supporting Autistic learners.

3.4 Employment

- The APB has worked with the Employment and Skills Team to ensure the new employment [Connect to Work Programme](#) is accessible to people who are neuro-different. We are also working together to make future editions of the [Employability and Skills brochure](#) more accessible to Autistic people.

4 **Conclusion and reasons for recommendations**

4.1 The approach taken to develop the East Sussex All Age Autism Action Plan recognised the importance and value of input from people with lived experience and wider public consultation to deliver a meaningful action plan which responds to local priorities.

4.2 East Sussex Health and Wellbeing Board is recommended to:

1. acknowledge the development of the East Sussex All Age Autism Action Plan and the priorities within it;
2. agree the proposal for an annual report to be presented to the East Sussex Health and Wellbeing Board to update on progress; and
3. note the progress made to deliver year 1 priorities during the five months since the Action Plan was launched.

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Appendix 1: East Sussex All-Age Action Plan

Appendix 2: East Sussex All-Age Action Plan Easy Read version

Appendix 3: Equalities Impact Assessment