

LONDON BOROUGH OF CAMDEN	WARDS: All
REPORT TITLE Camden All-Age Autism Strategy 2025-2030 (AH/2025/10)	
REPORT OF The Cabinet Member for Best Start for Children and Families and the Cabinet Member for Health, Wellbeing and Adult Social Care	
FOR SUBMISSION TO Cabinet	DATE 17 th September 2025
STRATEGIC CONTEXT <p>We Make Camden is our joint vision for the borough, developed in partnership with our community. We Make Camden outlines an ambition that Camden communities support good health, wellbeing and connection for everyone so that they can start well, live well and age well.</p> <p>Camden's all-age autism strategy takes a life-course approach and sets out on ambition for Camden to be a neurodiversity- and autism-friendly borough where Camden's autistic community can start well, live well and age well. We want to ensure that Camden's autistic residents have access to all that Camden has on offer, and reduce the inequality and barriers faced by our autistic community.</p> <p>This all-age Autism Strategy has been co-produced with autistic residents, and their parents and carers.</p>	
SUMMARY OF REPORT <p>Camden has developed an all-age Autism Strategy 2025-2030. The strategy has been developed through a process of co-production, and sets out a vision for autistic residents in Camden. It sets out a vision for autistic residents in Camden to start well, live well and age well.</p> <p>The strategy has 7 themes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information and advice: having the advice when I need it • Health, wellbeing and independence – living the life I want, staying safe and well • Active and supportive communities – keeping families, friends and connections • Flexible and integrated care and support – my support, my own way • Transition, when things need to change – staying in control • Workforce • Access, inclusion and equity across diverse identities. <p>As part of the co-production process, consultation on the strategy document took place in June 2025.</p> <p>Local Government Act 1972 – Access to Information</p>	

The following document(s) has been used in the preparation of this report:

No documents that require listing were used in the preparation of this report.

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RECOMMENDATIONS

That, having considered the results of the consultation set out at in Section 5 and the results of the equalities impact assessment at Appendix 2 and having due regard to the obligations set out in section 149 of the Equality Act 2010, the Cabinet agrees:

- (i) To approve the Camden All-age Autism Strategy 2025-2030
- (ii) To approve the strategy implementation plan.



Signed:

Date: 04/09/2025

1. CONTEXT AND BACKGROUND

- 1.1 Autism is a priority for Camden. We Make Camden outlines our vision that Camden communities support good health, wellbeing and connection for everyone so that they can start well, live well, and age well. We want Camden to be an autism-friendly borough where Camden's autistic residents of all ages can start well, live well and age well.
- 1.2 Supporting autistic residents is also a key part of a number of existing strategies and strategic commitments in Camden. Supporting People and Connecting Communities vision in Adult Social Care, and Camden's Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Strategy 2022- 2027. Camden's Relational Practice Framework is about creating systems and processes that support and prioritise relationships – to create a place where we all belong, where we all contribute and are valued by others. Camden has also recently made a commitment to be an accessible-friendly Camden – being a neurodivergent-friendly borough is a key part of this.
- 1.3 The 2009 Autism Act required all councils in England to make clear (this can include in local autism plans or strategies) how people can access local autism advice and information in a way that is appropriate and identifiable for people with autism. The National Autism Strategy for England published in 2021 is also underpinned by legally binding guidance to councils that states each council and NHS body needs to look at the national strategy to see how to improve local services. Camden's previous Autism Strategy ran from 2016-2021. Since 2021, a huge amount of work has been ongoing with residents to co-produce a new all-age autism strategy.
- 1.4 Historically, autistic residents have not been involved in shaping the services that support them. In response to this, Camden's autistic community have since been at the heart of Camden's work on Autism. The strategy has been created by a process of co-production with residents. A number of co-production groups have developed through the work which have informed a range of services including Change Grow Live, Camden Disability Action, Charlie Ratchford Court, Mental Health, Shared Lives, Camden Autism Pathways to Employment, Autistic Adults Advisory Group, Autism Partnership Board Parent Advisory Group, LGBTQ+ and Race Equality groups.
- 1.5 Camden's autistic community have generously shared experiences and insight with us, leading to tangible outcomes. For example, co-production efforts helped secure funding for the Autism Hub to tackle structural inequalities, and Autism Education Trust training for residents, parents and carers. Co-production has also led to work on anti-racism with the Race Equality Foundation and Autism Hub. Residents have also shaped service and training offers.

2. PROPOSAL AND REASONS

2.1. Following a range of co-production and consultation on the strategy, it is proposed that Cabinet approve and endorse Camden's new all-age Autism Strategy. Co-production with autistic residents, parents and carers of autistic residents have informed the content and the themes of the strategy.

2.2. Based on feedback from residents, the strategy is focused on a culture change – looking to make Camden a place where autistic residents are understood, respected and supported. We have taken inspiration from the National Autistic Taskforce's independent guide for quality care for autistic people and taken feedback from Camden's autistic residents to inform what we mean by a culture change in Camden:

- Proactively seek to better understand autism and celebrate autistic identities.

Through:

- ongoing practical, autism-specific staff training
- accepting difference and supporting positive autistic identity
- fighting stigma and discrimination
- recognition of some behaviour as distress

- Taking steps to make services and spaces autism-informed, person-centred, predictable, clearly communicated and visible.

Through:

- Communicating effectively throughout the lifespan.
- Seeking to offer a variety of ways to communicate and keeping information up to date
- Ensuring better transitions

- Continuously reviewing and addressing potential barriers to Autism inclusion

Through:

- considering and removing potential barriers to access
- tackling environmental and other stressors

2.3 These areas of culture change underpin each of the strategy themes. The strategy also takes a life-course approach, in response to feedback from residents that autism is life-long and the support for it should be as well. The strategy themes have been taken from Think Local Act Personal - for each strategy theme, the strategy outlines what residents have told us, and what we know and the key areas that we will focus on during the 5-year period for starting well and living and ageing well. The seven themes are:

- Theme 1: Information and advice: having the advice when I need it
- Theme 2: Health, wellbeing and independence – living the life I want, staying safe and well
- Theme 3: Active and supportive communities – keeping families, friends and connections

- Theme 4: Flexible and integrated care and support – my support, my own way
 - Theme 5: Transition, when things need to change – staying in control
 - Theme 6: Workforce
 - Theme 7: Access, inclusion and equity across diverse identities.
- 2.3. The strategy development has also been supported by a partnership Autism Strategy Task and Finish Group jointly chaired by the Director of Education and Inclusion, and the Director of Adults Strategy and Commissioning. The group met for the period of January 2025 through to the end of June 2025, focusing on reviewing the draft strategy and implementation plan ready for consultation and Cabinet.
- 2.4. The strategy itself outlines the key areas of focus under each theme. The strategy is also supported by an implementation plan which breaks down by theme, the key commitments we are making across the partnership, and some activities and leads. A progress report on the implementation plan will be published once a year, along with the implementation plan. The implementation plan will be refreshed every 6 months and can be found at Appendix 3.
- 2.5. We will develop governance arrangements, in consultation with the Cabinet Members for Best Start for Children and Families and for Health, Wellbeing and Adult Social Care, to monitor progress and ensure that the voices of those with lived experience of autism are at the heart of the strategy's implementation. The key principles for the governance arrangements will be transparency, accountability, openness and accessibility, leadership and safety and inclusion. To ensure that the new governance arrangements meet the needs of those with lived experience of autism while making the best use of resources, they will be introduced on a test and learn basis and will be kept under review. We are aiming to establish the new governance arrangements by December 2025.

3. OPTIONS APPRAISAL

- 3.1 *Recommended option* - Approve the new all-age Autism Strategy 2025-2030. This will demonstrate Camden's commitment to autism, and supporting autistic residents.
- 3.1. *Do nothing* – A large amount of co-production with the autistic community has taken place to develop this strategy, and the previous strategy has expired. Therefore, it is not recommended for Cabinet not to approve this strategy.

4. WHAT ARE THE KEY IMPACTS / RISKS? HOW WILL THEY BE ADDRESSED?

- 4.1. Implementation across the partnership - There is a risk that given changes to Integrated Care System and Integrated Care Boards (ICBs) and NHS partners, it will be difficult to implement changes across the partnership. To mitigate this, the Autism Strategy Task and Finish group has included key health partners and the new governance arrangements will also have health as key partners.

- 4.2. Camden has a number of strategies which link to autism that include Camden's education strategy Building Back Stronger, the SEND Strategy 2022-2027, Supporting People Connected Communities, We Make Camden, and a range of other projects and initiatives. It will be important that the strategy compliments the implementation and monitoring of these other strategies. In order to mitigate this risk, the links to other strategies will be considered as part of the new governance arrangements.

5. CONSULTATION/ENGAGEMENT

- 5.1. The themes within the strategy have come from co-production with residents through a range of groups. A huge range of co-production with residents started in September 2021 across a number of different groups and has informed the content of this strategy.
- 5.2. Updates on the strategy, including the themes, were shared and discussed at the previous Autism Partnership Board. Specific consultation work with residents has included a survey through the National Autistic Society in summer 2024 which received 210 responses from 65 autistic adults, 41 people connected to an autistic adult and 104 people connected to an autistic child or young person. This survey has been used to inform the themes within the strategy and some of the results are included within the strategy.
- 5.3. In addition to this, a consultation on the draft strategy took place in June 2025. The consultation had both sessions, and an online consultation. The consultation reached over 70 residents and stakeholders across online and consultation sessions:
- 5.5 Key themes from the consultation were:
- There was positive feedback about the quality of the co-production process throughout the strategy development, and the inclusion of intersectional groups and trauma-informed principles. There was also positive feedback on the empathic tone of the document, and that the document covers the right themes. There was feedback that there is some overlap between different themes
 - There was interest in the implementation plan – the actions that will go alongside the strategy, and how we will measure success. There was also feedback that the strategy could say more about how the implementation will be autistic-led and include lived-experience voice, including the voice of children and young people.
 - Education, health, advocacy, benefits and housing could be drawn out more strongly, as key areas that are significant for autistic residents.
 - Making sure it was clear how the strategy links to other strategies.
 - Wanting to ensure that Camden residents can access wider Camden offer (London Zoo, Google) and that this is available to autistic residents.
 - The strategy talks about culture change – there was feedback in the consultation about wanting to be clearer on what we mean by culture change, and be clear about what we mean by autistic themes.
- 5.4. In response to the consultation, we have:

- Added in a key concept list, and a separate key concepts appendix to ensure there are definitions of autism
- Amended the co-production section to make this stronger
- Amended how we have talked about autism-led leadership for strategy implementation
- Continued to develop the implementation plan, to provide clarity about how the impact of the strategy will be measured
- Added reference to other strategies and links to this – including Education and SEND.

6. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 The Autism Act 2009 requires the government to introduce and keep under review an adult autism strategy. In 2021, the (then) government published a new Autism Strategy for 2021 to 2026 including children and young people, alongside adults, for the first time. The Strategy was said to be under review in 2024 but remains in place at the present time.
- 6.2 The Council is required to comply with the March 2015 Statutory guidance for Local Authorities and NHS organisations to support implementation of the Adult Autism Strategy, published pursuant to the Autism Act 2009. The guidance states that the Council should ensure that they include in local autism plans or strategies how people can access local autism advice and information easily in a way that is appropriate and identifiable for people with autism.
- 6.3 The Council has undertaken consultation, as outlined in the report (section 5). The Council has also undertaken an Equalities Impact Assessment (Appendix 2).
- 6.4 On 10 April 2025 the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care confirmed that the Department had not currently made an assessment of the effectiveness of the National strategy for autistic children, young people and adults: 2021 to 2026. It was also confirmed that the House of Lords has established an Autism Act 2009 Committee, which would be holding an inquiry to look at the Autism Act 2009 and the government's autism strategy and will make recommendations to the Government by 30 November 2025. This will then inform the Government's future approach.

7. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 The Executive Director of Corporate Services has been consulted on the contents of the report and has no comments to add to the report

8. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 There are no environmental implications to note with this report.

9. TIMETABLE FOR IMPLEMENTATION

- 9.1 Following Cabinet approval, new governance arrangements will be developed, in consultation with the Cabinet Members for Best Start for Children and Families and for Health, Wellbeing and Adult Social Care, to monitor progress and ensure that the voices of those with lived experience of autism are at the heart of the strategy's implementation. The key principles for the governance arrangements will be transparency, accountability, openness and accessibility, leadership and safety and inclusion. To ensure that the new governance arrangements meet the needs of those with lived experience of autism while making the best use of resources, they will be introduced on a test and learn basis and will be kept under review. We are aiming to establish the new governance arrangements by December 2025.

10.APPENDICES

Appendix 1 – Camden All-Age Autism Strategy 2025-2030

Appendix 2 – Equality Impact Assessment

Appendix 3 – Autism Strategy Implementation Plan 2025

Appendix 4 – Easy Read Autism Strategy

REPORT ENDS