

## Slough Borough Council

Report To:	Slough Health and Well-being Board
Date:	16 <sup>th</sup> September 2025
Subject:	Autism Strategy Implementation – integrated working across the NHS, Public Health & Social Care
Chief Officer:	David Coleman-Groom, Executive Director People (Adults)
Contact Officer:	Giuseppe Di Martino, Commissioner for Learning Disability and Autism
Ward(s):	All
Exempt:	NO
Appendices:	No appendices

### 1. Summary and Recommendations

- 1.1** This report sets out the overview of the autism strategy implementation work undertaken to date following the launch of the [Slough Adult Autism Strategy 2024-2029](#).

Please indicate which priority in the Joint Local Health and Wellbeing Strategy, [Slough Wellbeing Strategy 2020 – 2025](#), your report links to:

- **Priority Two - Integration**

This links to the ambition of increasing healthy life expectancy in Slough within the Health and Wellbeing action plan.

**1.1a** Map secondary prevention activity and impact across Slough to inform prevention opportunities across the system for physical and mental health.

Priority 1 – Starting Well	Priority 2 – Integration	Priority 3 – Strong, Health and Attractive Neighbourhoods	Priority 4 – Workplace Health
	X		

**1.2** Consideration:

X Information

☐ Discussion

☐ Decision

☐ Endorsement

## **Recommendations:**

The Health and Wellbeing Board is recommended to:

**(a)** Note the positive integrated work across the health and social care system in respect of autistic adults including jointly led work between Public Health, Adult Social Care, NHS partners, and the Co-Production Network on autism awareness, employment support, and health inequalities.

**(b)** Consider opportunities to support delivery of the outstanding actions, particularly around building effective diagnostic pathways, enhancing the research and innovation work with Berkshire NHS Health Foundation Trust, and further improving Autism Awareness and Health Services accessibility.

**Reason: To ensure that Health and Well-Being Board is sighted on the positive developments taking place to deliver integrated outcomes for autistic adults in Slough and how this is contributing to the delivery of the Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy.**

## **2. Report**

### **Introductory paragraph**

**2.1** The Slough Adult Autism Strategy 2024-2029 outlines that whilst 0.7% of Slough's population is currently estimated to be autistic (1,076 adults), this is projected to grow to 1,200 by 2040. This population growth is likely to be accompanied by significant health inequalities. Autism is significantly underdiagnosed with many cases thought to be unknown, particularly among women and older adults. It is therefore likely that we will see a higher increase in the number of Autistic adults than expected in the next 5 years.

**2.2** The current Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy includes a focus on increasing life expectancy in Slough through identifying prevention opportunities across the system for both physical and mental health, which aligns with NHS priorities on reducing health inequalities. Supporting autistic adults requires primary, secondary, and tertiary prevention to be embedded throughout the life course to increase healthy life expectancy, delay the onset of long-term conditions and ease pressure on social care. A partnership approach is key to this with joint working through the health and wellbeing board, between the local authority, health, and community partners.

**2.3** The Slough Adult Autism Strategy 2024-2029 was developed in partnership with autistic people, their families and carers through the Co-Production Network and approved by SBC Cabinet in February 2024. The strategy is focused on Increasing awareness, representation, and participation of autistic adults in Slough. The goal is to enable individuals to reach their full potential.

The Strategy states: "We want Slough to be an autism-friendly borough in which autistic adults can live fulfilling and rewarding lives within a society that accepts and understands them, and where everybody can reach their full potential at all stages of their lives".

The strategy includes the following 8 priorities:

**Priority 1:** Promote independent living

**Priority 2:** Providing quality support in the community

**Priority 3:** Integration of Health and Social Care

**Priority 4:** Pathways for transition to adulthood

**Priority 5:** Support employment, skill development, and training

**Priority 6:** Empowering people to stay safe and free from abuse

**Priority 7:** Prevent loneliness and social isolation

**Priority 8:** Improving communication and information sharing

## **Background**

**2.4** The Autism Steering Group was established in May 2024 to deliver the Action Plan included with the Adult Autism Strategy 2024-2029. It is co-chaired by a member of the Co-Production Network who is also a carer of an autistic adult and meets quarterly. The membership comprises 20+ active participants including 11 autistic people, 4 carers, health and social care professionals, community and voluntary services, and stakeholders from organisations involved with autism including NHS Frimley ICB. There is significant commitment from autistic people in Slough to shape and improve their own futures, with a keen desire to be community led.

**2.5** Following requests from autistic adults for a dedicated space to actively contribute to the Action Plan, Slough Autism Together (SAT) – formerly the Autism Community Coffee Group - was established in December 2024. This group is led by two autistic adults and two carers of Autistic Adult, providing a protected space for autistic people to meet monthly and work on peer-led initiatives to make Slough more autism-friendly.

**2.6** Autism support in Slough takes a partnership working approach with a combination of targeted initiatives and wider public health programmes that contribute to reducing health inequalities and improving early diagnosis and support. This includes the successful Autism Acceptance Week celebration at Arbour Park, drop-in advocacy services through libraries in partnership with Autism Berkshire, Ways into Work employment support, and sensory-friendly health initiatives with Public Health. Alongside this, there are autism-specific actions in place around community safety, research and innovation, and supporting carers currently being delivered through the steering group and task and finish groups.

**2.7** The Health Inequalities pillar underpins the entire Autism Strategy 2024-2029. Public Health officers and the Commissioner for Learning Disability and Autism collaboratively work to implement recommendations around reducing health inequalities for autistic adults through the integrated partnership approach.

### **2.7.1 Year 1 deliverables achieved by the Autism Steering Group include:**

- **Autism Steering Group establishment:** The group was successfully established in May 2024 and is co-chaired by a member of the Co-Production Network who is also a carer of an autistic adult.
- **Slough Autism Together (SAT) - Autism Community Coffee Group:** In response to requests from autistic adults for a dedicated space, this group was established in December 2024, led by two autistic adults and two carers. This provides a social space for autistic people to actively contribute to the Action Plan and meets monthly.

- **Autism Celebration/Acceptance Week:** A highly successful celebration was held in partnership with Slough Children First at Arbour Park, promoting autism awareness in the wider community with participation from NHS Berkshire, Gems4Health, Slough CVS, Hope College, Turning Point, Ways into Work, Matrix Advocacy, and the Co-Production Network.
- **Partnership working with Public Health:** Active collaboration with Public Health has been established for community health initiatives, including planning for sensory-friendly health checks and tailored health prevention campaigns for autistic adults.
- **Autism Support:** We have worked with Autism Berkshire (ICB Frimley funded) to develop a solution-focused drop-in service led by autistic advocates at Arbour Park, promoting independence and self-advocacy among autistic adults.
- **Ways into Work employment support:** Successful weekly drop-in sessions have been established at The Curve and Cippenham libraries providing support for finding work and volunteering opportunities for autistic people since April 2024. 77 adults who identify as autistic and/or received formal diagnosis have been referred, of which 15 are currently in permanent employment.
- **Workforce Development within SBC:** Establishment of a Neurodivergent Network for Slough Borough Council employees. The network aims to raise awareness, challenge stereotypes, and foster a more inclusive workplace culture. We are working collaboratively with organisations to improve understanding of the needs of Neurodivergent colleagues, including addressing inappropriate comments and outdated perceptions.

**2.8** Integration of health and social care has been a recognised significant focus area. In view of this, targeted work has been undertaken in partnership with ICB Frimley, Public Health, and Healthwatch to improve access to healthcare services and address health inequalities.

#### **2.8.1 Year 1 health inequality initiatives include:**

- **Sensory-friendly health prevention:** Planning underway for sensory-friendly health checks and tailored health prevention campaigns for autistic adults with Public Health, ICB, and the libraries network, set to start in Spring 2025.
- **Reasonable adjustments and dynamic support:** The reasonable adjustments flag and dynamic support register projects have been presented by ICB Frimley representatives at the Autism Steering Group and welcomed by all attendees.
- **Health Consultation:** The Slough Autism Together group and the Autism Steering Group have actively engaged and supported Autism Berkshire to gather the views of Autistic Adults in Slough on behalf of ICB Frimley.
- **Communication and accessibility improvements:** Dedicated Autism webpages have been created on SBC website with stakeholder promotional videos under development. The Autism Steering Group and Autism Community Coffee Group are working on creating accessible literature to raise awareness in the wider community.

**2.9** A number of other initiatives related to autism and health integration are currently progressing to deliver the 8 key priorities. These include:

- **Keeping Safe initiatives:** Promotion of the Autism Card (via Autism Berkshire) and redesign of a more inclusive Safer Places Scheme in Slough for Summer 2025, developed in partnership with the LD Partnership Board, Safeguarding Partnership Board, local SMEs and organisations.

- **Research and Innovation:** Collaborative discussions with Berkshire NHS Health Foundation about immersive medicine and digital tools (VR/XR) to enhance independence and skill acquisition, plus discussions with local Virtual Reality centres for community activities.
- **Community activities and library programmes:** Slough Autism Together are exploring outreach activities and support groups led by autistic individuals, planned for regular hosting in Slough libraries starting Spring 2025.
- **Expanding community support groups:** Working with Autism Berkshire to develop targeted support groups including a dedicated group for autistic women and a group for young adults (under 30) set to start at Chalvey Community Hub in September 2025 (grant funded – One Slough). Additionally, discussions are underway for Chop and Talk sessions at Langley College and a potential peer support network based at The Curve.

### 3. Implications of the Recommendation

#### 3.1 *Health and Well-being Board and Partners Implications*

3.1.1 To ensure the Health and Well-Being Board has oversight of positive integrating work across health and social care for autistic adults in Slough.

#### 3.2 *Equality implications*

**3.2.1** The equality implications of Slough's Autism Strategy are critical in ensuring that the strategy promotes fair access, reduces health inequalities, and improves outcomes for all residents.

**3.2.2** The Autism Strategy should have a positive impact in regard to protected characteristics of disability and is tailored to supporting residents from different ethnicities, faiths, ages, and gender identities. Many autistic people also have caring responsibilities for loved ones.

**3.2.3** It is intended that the Strategy will have a positive impact upon their lives by supporting individuals to manage their own health and wellbeing needs and to access the right support at the right time. This applies to autistic people of any sexual orientation, including those who are married or in a civil partnership.

**3.2.4** The Strategy sets out a particular commitment to understand how autistic people can have better access to healthcare services and how reasonable adjustments can improve health outcomes.

#### 3.3 *Environmental implications*

None

#### 3.4 *Financial implications*

None

#### 3.5 *Legal implications*

None

### 3.6 *Risk management implications*

**3.6.1** If the autism strategy resources are not utilised, it could have the following risk implications:

- The autistic people of Slough miss out on valuable resources around autism awareness and support, with significant health inequalities remaining unaddressed and the loss of the strong momentum built through the Autism Steering Group and Slough Autism Together (SAT).
- Reputational risk to both Adult Social Care and health partners given extensive consultation and engagement with the Co-Production Network, autistic people, carers, Frimley ICB, GP Networks, Social Prescribers, and community partners involved in the successful Autism Acceptance Week and ongoing initiatives.
- Waste of extensive resources and impact on the Autism Steering Group (including Co-Production resources, Autism Community Coffee Group), Public Health, Ways into Work, library services, and Adults commissioning if the deliverables are not progressed.

## **4. Background Papers**

[Slough Wellbeing Strategy 2020 – 2025](#)

[Slough Adult Autism Strategy 2024 - 2029](#)

[Slough Adult Autism Strategy 2024 – 2029 Annual Progress Report](#)