

Coventry and Warwickshire Autism Stakeholder Newsletter

Welcome to the first Coventry and Warwickshire Autism Stakeholder Newsletter

Autism remains a top priority and through working with partner organisations from across Coventry and Warwickshire, we aim to improve the lives of autistic children and adults and help them feel part of their communities.



Additional local investment announced for Autism assessment and support

The Coventry and Warwickshire Joint All Age Strategy was launched in May for autistic people. 'All age' includes both children and adults. The strategy has been co-produced with people with lived experience of autism and their families and has been adopted by the key organisations who lead on autism services across the region.

The five-year strategy sets out the ambition to improve the lives of autistic people and their families across five priority areas. A copy of the local Coventry and Warwickshire strategy can be viewed online at www.warwickshire.gov.uk/allageautismstrategy

Over the last 18 months key organisations have been working together to address the current challenges with long waiting times for autism diagnosis. A Neurodevelopmental Transformation Programme has been established with representation from across the local health, care and voluntary/community sector including people with lived experience, to focus on the review of all age diagnostic services and improve pre and post diagnostic support.

Welcome investment

Coventry and Warwickshire Integrated Care Board (formerly Clinical Commissioning Group) have agreed a package of over £10m of system investment committed over the next two years to reduce the back log of assessments, deliver timely diagnostic

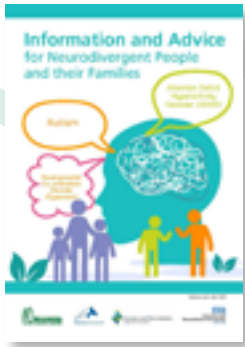
assessment, and deliver improved pre assessment and post diagnostic support for children and adults.

The additional funding has allowed for an increase to capacity for diagnostic assessments and post diagnostic support to meet demand. Together, with Coventry and Warwickshire Partnership NHS Trust, the aim is to reduce the longest wait for a diagnostic assessment to 13 weeks, by March 2024.

The investment has allowed for commissioning of additional provision of autism assessments from neurodiversity partner organisations, including Healios, St Andrews Healthcare, Options Autism, Clinical Partners, Resolve, Seven Care, and Problem Shared. Working in partnership, it has been possible to offer an increased number of quality and timely diagnostic assessments. This investment will be allocated to the specialist neurodevelopmental team along with other external organisations which will help to provide the assessment capacity needed. The investment into the specialist service will enable an increase in post diagnostic support over time as the waiting times reduce.



Co-produced information and advice e-booklet now available



A new e-booklet, aiming to improve the information and support available for neurodivergent people and their families, has been published and is available on the [Dimensions Tool website news page](#).

The booklet has been co-produced with input from professionals across Coventry and Warwickshire, plus neurodivergent people and their families. It provides a wealth of information all in one place about services and support available for those who are diagnosed or who self-identify as neurodivergent, and those who care for and support them.

As well as a comprehensive list of services available to support children, young people and adults, there is a Frequently Asked Questions section covering everything from dealing with anxiety and managing impulses, to building positive friendships and family relationships, and support for physical and mental health.

Feedback is welcomed to enable improvements to this first version of the e-booklet.

Please share any comments with disabilitiescommissioning@warwickshire.gov.uk



Why not take a look at the Dimensions Tool of Health and Wellbeing for yourself: <https://dimensions.covwarkpt.nhs.uk>

New Coventry and Warwickshire's All-Age Autism Partnership Board

The Coventry and Warwickshire's All-Age Autism Strategy (2021-2026) was co-produced, agreed, signed and published during 2021. All partners are equally responsible and accountable for improving lives of Coventry and Warwickshire citizens living with autism, and their parents and carers

The Strategy refers to a Coventry and Warwickshire All-Age Autism Partnership Board which will oversee its delivery, comprising representatives from the social care, health and education sector, community and voluntary sector and primarily, autistic people, their parents and carers as 'Experts by Experience'.

The Board was established in June 2022 with the primary purpose to ensure that the shared vision is achieved, that autistic people and their families are able to live fulfilling and rewarding lives within a society which accepts and understands them. Diagnosis and support can be accessed if they need it, and they can depend on mainstream public services to treat them fairly as individuals, helping them make the most of their talents.

The Board is chaired by Rachel Jackson, with Fay McSorley as the Deputy Chair; it reports to the Learning Disability and Autism (LDA) Collaborative, jointly chaired by Mel Coombes (CEO) Coventry and Warwickshire Partnership NHS Trust (CWPT) and Phil Johns (CEO) NHS Coventry and Warwickshire Integrated Care Board (ICB).



Rachel Jackson

"I work for Warwickshire County Council as the Lead Commissioner for Vulnerable People.

I am delighted to chair the new Coventry and Warwickshire Autism Partnership Board and I'm looking forward to working with parents, carers and partner agencies to bring the All-Age Autism Strategy 2021-2026 to life."



Fay McSorley

"I have three autistic children and my stepson is an autistic adult. My son also has a Learning Disability and will need lifelong care. My younger daughter also has ADHD. I received my own diagnosis of

Autism at 42 years old.

"In 2009, I created Rugby Autism Network. It is now a Registered Charity which I chair, supporting parents and carers of autistic children and young adults. I love my volunteer role and it has brought me much joy.

"I am employed by both Grapevine and VoiceAbility as an Expert by Experience and have recently become Deputy Chair of the Autism Partnership Board. I hope to be a part of bringing useful change to local services by way of co-production."



Michelle Cresswell

"I have recently joined the local Integrated Commissioning Team as Senior

Commissioner for Disabilities and Autism, working across Coventry and Warwickshire. The team and I are committed to enabling autistic people and their parents and carers to be increasingly engaged in the planning, design and review of our local services, as we work together with partners to make the changes outlined in our strategy happen."

Together with Autism Conferences

Working with Act for Autism, two conferences in Coventry and Warwickshire are being organised. Following the success of the conference in Warwick in April, the next will take place on 19 November 2022 in Nuneaton and on 21 January 2023 in Coventry. The free conferences are for professionals, parents and carers of autistic children, autistic adults and for anybody wanting to better understand autism.

[Find out more.](#)



What is the Neurodevelopmental Liaison Project?

The Neurodevelopmental Liaison Project Team is working on a three-year pilot project supporting Coventry and Warwickshire Partnership NHS Trust's mental healthcare professionals who are working with an autistic adult or an adult who is suspected to be Autistic by:

- Facilitating discussion about how Autistic people may experience mental health
- Considering reasonable adjustments that may help an Autistic individual to access and engage with appropriate services
- Supporting professionals to consider diagnosis where appropriate

On 21 July 2022, the Neurodevelopmental Liaison Project Team presented to the NHS England Midlands Autism workstream. It was very positive to be able to share the great work being carried out within Coventry and Warwickshire and to see how far the development of All Age Neurodevelopmental Services has progressed, offering pre-assessment support and providing diagnostic assessments for our adult community.

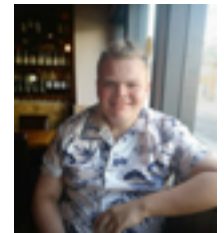
Meet the team



Karen Scorer
– Clinical Lead
Occupational
Therapist



Kayleigh Brown
– Principal Clinical
Psychologist



Ben Begg – Expert
by Experience and
Peer Support
Worker

For more information about the project, please email Autism.ReasonableAdj@covwarkpt.nhs.uk or contact Gemma Cartwright, Manager of Neurodevelopmental Services at Coventry and Warwickshire Partnership NHS Trust: gemma.cartwright@covwarkpt.nhs.uk

What our patients and their parents or carers say...

"Friendly staff who introduced themselves clearly and explained what their roles were - we were made to feel at ease. Prompt positive results, transparent assessment."

"The Drs were fantastic, putting my child and myself at ease as much as possible. The Dr's feedback was carefully given, allowing me plenty of time to make notes and ask questions. During an hour, and from the information they had in advance, both Dr's managed to get an accurate glimpse into my child's personality and needs."

"The whole process with Healios was really good and the whole experience has been seamless. He [my son] enjoyed some of it, like some of the activities, he found it stressless and he had no anxiety around the meeting. It worked really well for him doing it via zoom as he can find it difficult with unfamiliar people. We're pleased to have received the ASD diagnosis now and he smiled when I told him. He now has more of an understanding about why he is different from his peers. I feel he has learnt a lot about himself, particularly his feelings and emotions, whilst completing the forms as he had to stop and think about it all. We felt that the multiple choice answers worked really well for him as it gave him options to think about instead of him having to think about it all himself."

"Everyone we spoke to was very kind and helpful."