

Coventry and Warwickshire Neurodiversity and Autism Stakeholder Newsletter

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



Arthur's Poem

Arthur is 11 years old and has written a poem about his autism. He'd love to share it with you.

My Autism

When I found out about my autism
 I knew why I was different
 My mind didn't work the way that others did
 My handwriting was not the same
 I was told not to be ashamed of it
 I actually rather liked it
 Though I often found myself lost in thought
 I sometimes daydreamed in class
 I felt like I was unique, let's say?
 My mind feels like a working mechanism
 That works different to others
 I imagine myself being a good person

When I start a new daydream it feels like a blank space
 That I can do whatever I want with
 I picture it like a black void
 I fill it with my thoughts and dreams
 Things I've seen
 Things that make my mind excited
 Like myths and magic and other wonders
 Anything that makes my mind interested

When I learned about my autism
 I felt pleased with myself
 I felt like I was different
 And I liked that very much

Well done Arthur! We love it!

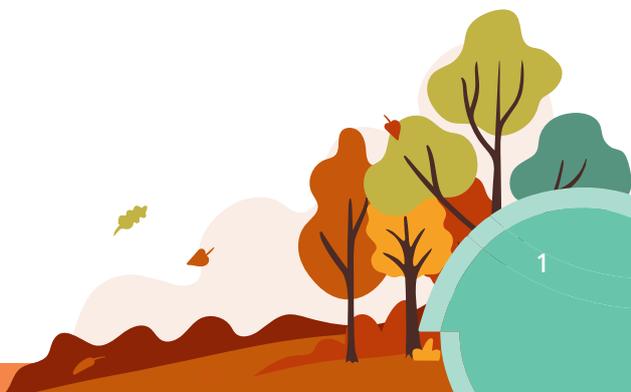
Developing the Warwickshire SEND and Inclusion Strategy for Children and Young People 2024 – 2030

A Warwickshire special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) conference brought together stakeholders from across the county on 5th October to contribute to shaping a new Warwickshire strategy for children and young people with SEND.

The conference, themed "Developing the SEND & Inclusion Strategy 2024-2030", provided a platform for SENCOs, school leaders, experts working across education, health and social care, parents and carers, and young people with SEND from across the county, to share their knowledge, experiences, and ideas aimed at improving the lives of individuals with SEND.

Attendees engaged in discussions and listened to thought-provoking presentations, with interactive elements throughout the day providing important opportunities to reflect, as well as sharing and capturing ideas.

The event was an excellent opportunity to gather initial feedback and is the first step in a wider process to engage with stakeholders to develop the new strategy before this goes out to public consultation early in 2024.



'Voices of Tomorrow' Youth Conference

The 'Voices of Tomorrow' Youth Conference is set to take place on Friday 3 November 2023. The event will be hosted at the Panorama Suites in the Rootes Building at Warwick University between 10am and 4pm.

Organised by young people, for young people, the Voices of Tomorrow conference will offer a friendly and safe environment where young people aged between 11 and 17 or up to 25 with SEND (Special Educational Needs and Disabilities) can come together with local organisations to be heard and help shape the future of Warwickshire. Get prepared for a day of inspiration and engaging conversations that will leave you inspired and motivated.

[Find out more about the conference](#)

[Book your place at the conference](#)



Understanding Autism: Videos in different languages

Cambridgeshire Community Services NHS Trust website are hosting some very useful videos called **Understanding Autism Spectrum Condition (ASC)**.

These information videos have been created by a partnership between the University of Leicester, Leicestershire Partnership NHS Trust, and funded by Carlton Hayes Charity. They are helpful in learning about autism, and can be accessed on most devices, including phones and tablets.

Included in these videos are:

- What is ASC and what causes ASC?
- Understanding social and communication difficulties.
- Understanding the difficulties in social imagination.
- Understanding and managing behavioural problems.
- Managing sleep problems.
- Understanding sensory problems

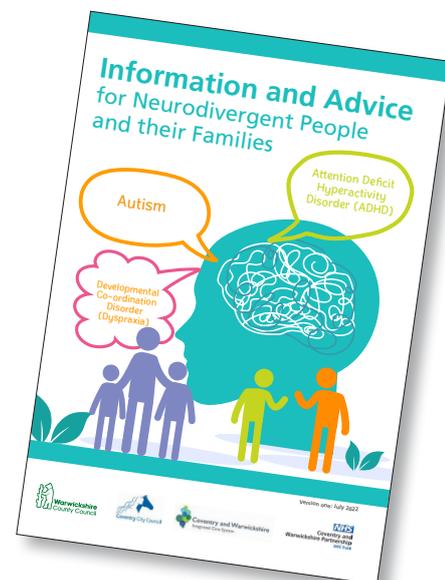
They are available in the following languages:

- English
- Urdu/Hindi
- Punjabi
- Gujarati
- Bengali

[Take a look at the videos now](#)

Remember you can find out about **local and national information and advice for neurodivergent people and their families in the e-booklet on the Dimensions Tool website**

Missed the latest **Warwickshire SEND e-bulletin?** [Read a copy now](#)



Chronically Brown



Chronically Brown is a non-profit organisation dedicated to addressing the issue of disability stigma within the South Asian community.

In pursuit of this mission, they have undertaken various initiatives, including campaign projects like #desiabled aimed at promoting diversity within the disabled community. To achieve their objectives, they offer a range of services, including tailored workshops and discussion groups, and support research projects dedicated to diversity. Below are a few more services they provide:

Their project 'Voices' gives the opportunity for disabled South Asians to share their experiences of intersecting identities and educate non-disabled South Asians on the impact of disability. Previously published stories are available to read on their website: chronicallybrown.com

Their on-going series 'Connect + Reflect' gives the opportunity for disabled South Asians to connect with each other, learn pain management tips and practice chair yoga. The current series is fully booked but keep an eye on their social media to see when it next opens!



Upon recognising not only the lack of representation of South Asian in the disabled community and the impact this had, Chronically Brown created the #desiabled campaign for disabled South Asians to see themselves in an empowering light.

Desi-abled t-shirts have been created for people to support the campaign further and they have platformed 6 advocates to be able to amplify their work.

Chronically Brown has translated information and material about multiple long-term health conditions, disabilities and neurodivergent conditions available in Hindi, Punjabi, Urdu, Gujarati, Tamil and Bengali. You can access these on their website: chronicallybrown.com

Why not follow Chronically Brown on social media:

 @chronicallybrown  @ChronicBrown  facebook.com/Chronicallybrown
 www.linkedin.com/company/chronicallybrown



Working Together Charter for Warwickshire SEND

A new county-wide charter launched in Warwickshire this year, outlining a commitment to working together in participation.

Participation involves children, young people and their families, education, health and care services, decision makers, and partner organisations working together to improve services for children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)

We are committed to the principles of effective participation, guiding the design, development and experience of services.

This is underpinned in the legal framework of the Children and Families Act 2014, the SEND Code of Practice 2015, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child 1989, The Care Act 2014, and NHS Act 2006, which all champion the participation of families in decision making.

Take a look at the charter on the next two pages, or [download it here](#).

Read the full news article [here](#)



Working Together Charter for Warwickshire SEND

Working Together in Participation

Participation involves children, young people and their families, education, health and care services, decision makers, and partner organisations working together

Commitment

We are committed to the principles of effective participation – guiding the design, development and experience of services

This is underpinned in the legal framework of the Children and Families Act 2014, the SEND Code of Practice 2015, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child 1989, The Care Act 2014, and NHS Act 2006, which all champion the participation of families in decision making

Welcome and Care

We will:

- create a welcoming and caring space
- introduce everyone, their role and why they are there
- provide clear purpose for involvement
- outline the commitment needed
- ensure everyone's well-being to nurture confidence and self-esteem
- consider when, where and how activities take place, thinking about the needs and availability of those involved
- always consider "who needs to be involved?" and make contact at the earliest opportunity



Communicate

We will:

- communicate clearly and honestly
- facilitate discussion and listen to understand, rather than listen to respond
- respond constructively and always with kindness and compassion
- maintain confidentiality as agreed and be clear about what can be shared
- provide information that is easy to understand in accessible formats
- be transparent about what we are doing and why



Developing and nurturing each of these commitments to build

TRUST



Value and Include

We will:

- keep children, young people and their families central to everything we do
- embrace differences and treat everyone with respect, acknowledging different perspectives
- support each other to enable participation
- ensure that everyone gets the information they need when they need it
- listen and value everyone's contributions and work towards shared solutions
- ensure that spaces feel safe for everyone
- ask "who have we missed?" and give them the opportunity to be heard



Work in Partnership

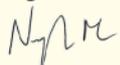
We will:

- co-produce how children, young people and families will be involved before we start
- give equal value to the contributions from both lived experience and professional training, evaluating evidence together
- have a 'can do' approach that focuses on understanding and finding solutions
- show willingness to engage with difficult conversations
- understand that the outcome may be a compromise reached through shared understanding and the decisions explained clearly
- acknowledge the contributions of partners including use of logos with consent



Warwickshire County Council and Coventry and Warwickshire Integrated Care Board recognise Warwickshire Parent Carer Voice and IMPACT (Young People's Forum for SEND) as the strategic partners for children, young people and family voice

Signatures:


Nigel Minns
Warwickshire County Council


Tracey Pilcher
Coventry & Warwickshire
Integrated Care Board


Elaine Lambe
Warwickshire Parent Carer Voice

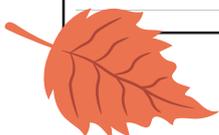

Sam Craven on behalf of IMPACT
(Young People's Forum for SEND)



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Spectrum of Participation

Co-production
is where everyone works together, using their skills, knowledge and experience to create better outcomes through shared decision making



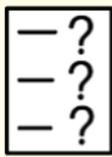
Co-design
is working together with children, young people and their families to share their experience and including their ideas in the outcomes



Engagement
is asking children, young people and their families about their experiences and discussing ideas



Consultation
is asking the opinions of children, young people and their families about changes being considered



Information
is giving children, young people and their families the information they need about services and changes



Level of Involvement

Strategic Level

	Policy (rules), Strategy (how) and Service Design (what)	Budgets and Policy decisions are the legal responsibility of the responsible Authority (ICB, WCC)	Directly involve WPCV and IMPACT as strategic partners, and invite other groups as and when agreed (who)
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Service Level

	Working with those who are using or have recent experience of a service(what)	Decisions informed by legislation, strategy and policy	Involve Service Users and Experts by Experience and link in with WPCV and IMPACT (who)
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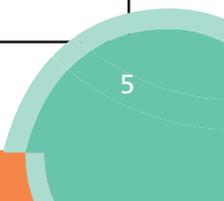
Individual Level

	Individual children, young people & their families having an influence on their own plans (what)	Statutory Decisions remain the duty of the responsible Authority (ICB, WCC)	Informed by Individual children/young people & their families (who)
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Working Together Agreement – Our Commitment
(Use this space to add any extra information relevant to you)



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Experts by Experience Area

Gathering momentum to tackle employment inequalities



This article is written by Remie Colledge, Autistic Expert by Experience (EbE).

In the summer newsletter, we introduced employment as one of the recent areas of focus for the Autism Partnership Board.

We have been continuing to listen to people to build a greater understanding of neurodivergent people's experiences of employment across Coventry and Warwickshire. In this article, I will be sharing my own views, themes from wider lived experience feedback, and updates from the Autism Partnership Board.

National employment rates for autistic people alone are shocking, it's estimated that fewer than 3 in 10 autistic people are in work. Many of the barriers and inequalities we've been hearing about from neurodivergent people locally have existed for a very long time. It can be hard not to feel overwhelmed by these difficult statistics and anecdotes. The reality is, there's a long road ahead to break down these inequalities. Yet, we're also living in a time where momentum is gathering, and I personally feel like we're reaching a turning point.

As a society, we're understanding more and more about neurodiversity. Increasing amounts of employers are realising their recruitment processes and workplaces are inaccessible for neurodivergent people. They are either missing out on vast amounts of neurodivergent talent, or not supporting colleagues to bring their full selves to work and to thrive. The impacts on neurodivergent people can include; feeling the need to hide or 'mask' experiences at work, burnout, mental health difficulties, isolation, and loss of confidence and self-esteem.

On the other hand, we know there are some great employers leading the way by making workplaces inclusive and supportive, and we're seeing more neurodivergent staff networks being created. Being part of the Autism Strategy and co-production work in Coventry and Warwickshire, I'm fortunate to see first hand the drive and commitment there is for change, to improve lives and opportunities. Along with the fact the government's Buckland Review of Autism Employment is underway, this feels like a perfect time to join together to strengthen the way we tackle employment inequalities, thinking through a lens of possibility and potential.

Based on the feedback gathered, I recently presented what we had learnt about employment inequalities to the Autism Partnership Board. Some of the barriers and suggestions for change included:



- **Barriers begin early and within education:**
 - Make sure young people outside of mainstream educational settings can access appropriate careers support
 - Provide more information about young people's employment rights
 - Offer more personalised careers advice to meet the needs of neurodivergent young people
- **Barriers in recruitment and application processes:**
 - Encourage employers to create transparent and accessible job descriptions which match the day-to-day reality of roles
- **Flexible working and reasonable adjustments:**
 - Encourage employers to offer flexible working options, for example, to help people to manage times of sensory overload and burnout
 - Encourage employers to be proactive about reasonable adjustments, rather than the responsibility being placed on employees
 - Nurture work cultures where people feel comfortable to ask about reasonable adjustments
- **Confusing and inconsistent information about benefits:**
 - Make sure people know where to go for up-to-date, accessible and accurate information and support
 - Break down myths about benefits

- **Informal aspects of employment:**

- Unwritten workplace rules, small talk and team messaging groups can all be challenging
- Consider workplace mentoring opportunities and the value of employment-related peer support

- **Employer and societal attitudes:**

- Work together to breakdown myths and stereotypes about neurodivergence
- Provide information, advice, training, and support for employers about neurodiversity.

The Coventry and Warwickshire Integrated Care System (ICS) partners could see that the presentation of this feedback led to valuable discussions and reflection for the Autism Partnership Board. Some key actions came out of the Autism Partnership Board meeting and discussions, which we hope will help to tackle employment inequalities. These include:

- Setting up a Coventry and Warwickshire System wide employment subgroup which includes Experts by Experience
- Looking at our own organisational practices with our Human Resources teams

- Learning from local supported employment schemes and implementing good practice

Much of the change we would like to see may be achieved from a combination of small, realistic steps. These changes aren't about finding ways to help neurodivergent people to 'fit in' to neurotypical norms, rather shifting towards more inclusive workplace environments that are welcoming for everyone. Making sure that people who would like to work have suitable and equitable opportunities will open up the possibility of diversifying workforces. By bringing different ways of thinking into organisations, we are welcoming in new ideas and perspectives, which can be both refreshing and productive. Finally, employers are a key part of helping to make sure society becomes a more neurodivergent-friendly place to work and live well.

In the meantime, **if you have lived experiences related to employment that you would like to share to help build this understanding, please contact Remie via email:**

ebe@grapevinecoventryandwarwickshire.co.uk



Neurodivergent Language – continuing the conversation

Since Autumn 2022, a lot of co-production work has been happening around language. We have been listening to neurodivergent people and their families across Coventry and Warwickshire to understand their views and experiences around how people talk about neurodivergence. Our main aims include:

- **to co-produce new resources to help people to feel more comfortable and confident to talk about neurodivergence**
- **to encourage more people to champion this topic and to think about the words they use**
- **to contribute to making Coventry and Warwickshire a more inclusive and welcoming place for neurodivergent people.**

On 5th June, we co-delivered an interactive Neurodivergent Language Webinar and were delighted that 157 people attended. It was great to see so many people come along with curiosity and interest, and to get involved in these conversations around neurodivergent language.

Within this webinar, we shared themes from what we had learnt from neurodivergent people and their families. For example, people have shared many examples of comments they hear which are based on assumptions and stereotypical ideas of neurodivergence. People also talked about how these types of comments made them feel, and how they continue to reinforce stereotypes.

We ended the webinar with some practical tips from lived experience which included:

- **Ask questions, and listen, to get to know a person's individual language preferences**
- **Learn from lived experience**
- **Show kindness to people who may be at a different stage of learning about neurodivergent language.**

We hope that it was a valuable learning opportunity for everyone that was able to join us. Some words attendees shared to describe their key takeaways from the webinar were: 'language is powerful,' 'still a long way to go,' 'refreshing approach,' 'kind curiosity,' and 'illuminating.'

This webinar has been a key part of our co-production journey so far. The feedback and engagement we received is informing how we move forward with co-producing other neurodivergent language resources. We are also currently in the process of preparing a recorded version of the webinar, which is estimated to be available to the public this Autumn.

Please visit the [Dimensions News page](#) for future updates about this work around neurodivergent language or if you would like to be involved, email ebe@grapevinecoventryandwarwickshire.co.uk

This is an ongoing project, and we would like to extend a huge thank you to everyone who has been involved and who has supported this work so far.



Professionals Corner

e-learning for Healthcare available

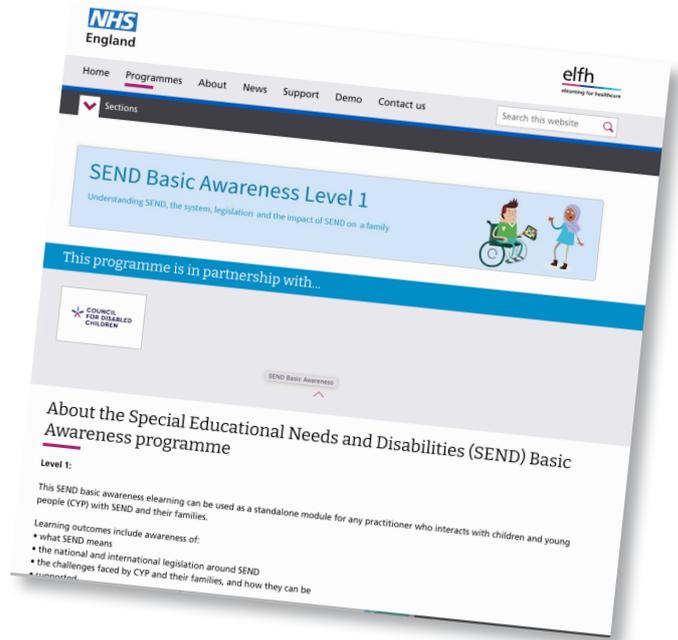
It is recognised that children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) and their families have a complex relationship with health services, and often feel under-supported by health and care staff.

This e-learning aims to increase understanding of the wider SEND context, with a particular focus on the lived experiences of children, young people and their families, and how health and care colleagues can promote and support a positive experience of health services.

The Council for Disabled Children (CDC) facilitated a series of focus groups with a range of health stakeholders and developed the e-learning in response to training needs, with the input of children and young people.

This e-learning was developed to be used in conjunction with the SEND training assurance framework tool, piloted by the South East region.

Level 1 and Level 2: SEND Basic Awareness e-learnings, developed by the Council for Disabled Children, are now live on e-Learning for Healthcare (e-lfh) platform held by Health Education England (HEE).



This was supported by Learning and Development teams in NHS Trusts and organisations across England. Accessing the modules through the e-lfh platform will allow tracking compliance of staff.

[Take a look at the e-training here](#)



We want your feedback and ideas for the newsletter

What do you think about this newsletter? Do you have an inspiring name for our newsletter? We'd love to hear from you.

Also, email us your ideas of what you'd like to hear about in future issues:

disabilitiescommissioning@warwickshire.gov.uk