

Additional local investment announced for Autism assessment and support

We are pleased to confirm the launch of our Coventry and Warwickshire Joint All Age Strategy 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 our ambition to improve the lives of autistic people and their families across five priority areas. Our strategy will serve as a complementary tool to the national autism strategy launched by the government last year. A copy of the local strategy can be found online at www.warwickshire.gov.uk/allageautismstrategy

Over the last 18 months we have been working together with key organisations to address the current challenges with long waiting times for autism diagnosis. We established a Neurodevelopmental Transformation Programme 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.

We are pleased to confirm Coventry and Warwickshire 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 will allow us to increase capacity for diagnostic assessments and post diagnostic support to meet demand. We are working closely with Coventry and Warwickshire Partnership NHS Trust to reduce the longest wait for a diagnostic assessment to 13 weeks, by March 2024.

The investment will allow us to commission additional provision of autism assessments from external providers, such as St Andrews Healthcare and Healios. We will work in partnership with these providers 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.

We will improve the offer of pre assessment and post diagnostic support. A better self-help offer will be provided for people by improving awareness of local services and support via an online portal for information and advice. An e-booklet is being produced, plus the Dimensions of Health and Wellbeing Tool can be accessed at <https://dimensions.covwarkpt.nhs.uk>, both of which will make it easier to find details of how to access local and national support.

We are also working with Act for Autism on conferences in Coventry and Warwickshire. Following the success of the conference in Warwick in April , two further events are planned in September in Coventry and November in Nuneaton. The free conferences are for professionals, parents and carers of autistic children, autistic adults and for anybody wanting to better understand autism.

Furthermore, we are developing and enhancing our All Age Community Support Service for neurodiverse children, young people and adults including enhanced triage, signposting and peers mentors.

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.