

ADULTS SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
28 OCTOBER 2025

Autism Strategy and Action Plan Update

SUMMARY REPORT

Purpose of the Report

1. To provide an update on the development of Darlington's Autism Strategy, outline its key aims in line with the national strategy, report on progress to date, and describe how co-production is being used to shape the strategy.

Summary

2. Darlington is currently developing a local Autism Strategy that aligns with the national strategy "The National Strategy for Autistic Children, Young People and Adults: 2021 to 2026." The local strategy aims to improve outcomes for autistic people across all ages by promoting inclusion, access to services, and understanding of autism within the community.
3. Key aims of the strategy include:
 - (a) Improving understanding and acceptance of autism.
 - (b) Enhancing access to education, employment, and health services.
 - (c) Reducing health inequalities and improving physical and mental health outcomes.
 - (d) Supporting autistic people to live independently and safely.
 - (e) Strengthening community inclusion and reducing isolation.
4. Progress to date includes:
 - (a) Establishment of a multi-agency Autism Strategy Working Group.
 - (b) Mapping of current services and identification of gaps.
 - (c) Engagement with autistic individuals, families, and carers through surveys and focus groups.
 - (d) Initial drafting of strategic priorities and action areas.
5. Co-production is central to the development of the strategy. We are working closely with autistic people, their families, carers, and professionals to ensure the strategy reflects lived experience and local needs. This includes:
 - (a) Facilitated workshops with autistic adults and young people.
 - (b) Collaboration with local autism support organisations.
 - (c) Inclusion of feedback from health, education, and social care professionals.

- (d) Ongoing opportunities for public input through consultation and digital platforms

Recommendation

6. It is recommended that: -

- (a) Members note the presentation from Inclusion North on the progress made in developing the Autism Strategy.
- (b) Members support continued co-production and engagement activities.
- (c) A further update be provided once the draft strategy is completed.

Joss Harbron
Assistant Director Adults Social Care

Background Papers

- a) The National Strategy for Autistic Children, Young People and Adults (2021–2026) - [National Strategy on GOV.UK](#)
- b) Darlington Council Plan (2024–2027) - [Council Plan PDF](#)
- c) Darlington Health and Wellbeing Strategy (2024–2028) - [Health and Wellbeing Strategy PDF](#)

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Council Plan	This supports the objectives of the Council Plan
Addressing inequalities	The development of the strategy and actions aim to address inequalities in relation to autistic people within Darlington
Tackling Climate Change	The strategy aims to promote independence across the borough.
Efficient and effective use of resources	The strategy aims to identify current support and work alongside local people and services to ensure that there is an efficient and effective use of resources
Health and Wellbeing	This strategy supports the health and wellbeing of autistic people
S17 Crime and Disorder	N/A
Wards Affected	All
Groups Affected	Autistic People and Unpaid family carers
Budget and Policy Framework	This report does not recommend a change to the Council's budget or policy framework.
Key Decision	No

Urgent Decision	N/A
Impact on Looked After Children and Care Leavers	The strategy within this report aims to positively impact autistic looked after children and care leavers.