

Meeting Minutes

Present:

Phil Woods – Family Member & Chair
Andrea Glasspell – Assistant Director – Community Health and Wealth, Wigan Council
Colin Harvey – Parent
Adrian Shone – Autism Advocate
Deborah Thomson - Engagement & Inclusion Lead, Wigan Council
David Williams – Autism Advocate
Melanie Pickering – Director of Nursing – Corporate Services, WWL
Jade Peyton – Probation Service
Rebecca Bowen - Customer Services Officer - Libraries Transformation
Alison Badley – Clinical Team Manager, GMMH
Matt McQuillan – Inclusion Manager, Be Well, Wigan Council
Belinda Jones – SEND Hub Manager, Wigan Council
Leanne Taylor – Work Well Project Officer, Wigan Council
Deborah Shuttleworth-Pennington – Project Officer, Wigan Council

Apologies:

Amanda Cheesman – Deputy Chief Nurse, WWL
Sarah Marshall – Assistant Director, Greater Manchester Integrated Care Organisation
Reg Dempster – GM Fire and Rescue Service
Lauren Crews – Service Manager Housing, Wigan Council
Joe Wisewell – Disability Employment Advisor, DWP
Mike Wharton – Assistant Director Adult Social Care Practice
Cllr Keith Cunliffe – Deputy Leader, Wigan Council. Portfolio Holder for Adult Social Care and Health
Kellie Williams – SEND Service Lead, Wigan Council
Lindy Wardle – Service Manager, PMMD, Wigan Council
Melanie Allen – SEND Service Manager, Wigan Council
Kathryn Perry – Assistant Director -Housing – Wigan Council
Louise Hall – Consultant Clinical Psychologist, GMMH
Dan Driver – Service Lead Locality Teams, Wigan Council
Rachael Darling – Strategic Development Manager, Wigan Council
Claire Roebuck – Bespoke Commissioning Lead Manager, Wigan Council
Jo Crooks – Project Manager, Wigan Council and Autism Advocate
David Bradley – Probation Service
Kathryn Anthon – Service Manager – Personalisation
Luisa Preston – Parent Carer Forum

ITEM		LEAD
1.	Welcome & Introductions: Welcome messages were received, introductions made, and apologies noted.	Phil Woods
2.	Matters arises and previous meeting minutes: - The actions from the last board in September (due to the workshop in November) were reviewed and updated. Autism Friends Training - The board discussed the training offer, and how this can expand it's reach and number of champions. Agreed to have this as an agenda item at the next board.	Phil Woods
3.	Autism Engagement Group - The key themes the group have been discussing are to be part of a short pod cast series include the impact of late diagnosis, help available, women with autism and menopause and autism as well as reasonable adjustments. - A forward plan for the year ahead including guest speakers is being developed. - Autism Awareness month will include, a quiz night in the place of the engagement group, 2 walks arranged with Be Well (Deb T to share the dates with board members), a sleep workshop hosted by Embrace and sign posting to support groups. - There is an opportunity to attend Wigan Rugby, Leigh Rugby and Wigan Football matches to promote. Deb T to follow up to see if this is possible. - The Autism Friends newsletter is being relaunched, details to follow. - There is still a need for more people to attend the engagement groups.	Deb Thomson
4.	Workshop Reflections and Plans for the Future - The draft report was shared with board members for comment. - Board members were asked for any initial feedback around gaps/content of the report. Also, a feedback form to gather comments to update the findings will be shared. Comments included: - Ageing well with autism - Transport - Each priority area to add in own priorities - The board represents all age but there is a gap around the voices of children. Parent Carer Forum do support this area and feedback.	Andrea / Deb SP / Deb T

	• The next steps are for the Autism Engagement Groups and workshop attendees to review and provide feedback on the report. • Ageing with autism and support for people with autism around managing life through changes such as bereavement to be a working group. Deb T and Kathryn are already working on something around 'My Life Book' and this could also be included in the post diagnostic support. • From the report a plan on a page has been created as an overview of the findings. Once the report is finalised the plan on a page and an action plan will be created. • Next steps and sub-groups will be an agenda item at the next board.	
5.	House of Lords Response to call for evidence • Following the board's submission to the call for evidence, an early response has been shared from the House of Lords committee. NB the work is now paused and we await an update. • The national and GM strategies come to an end in 2026, we decided to continue with our work as the local strategy ends in 2026 also. <i>The Government published its formal response to the House of Lords Committee's review of progress under the Autism Act 2009 and its recommendations for shaping the next national autism strategy. The Government welcomed the extensive evidence gathered and confirmed that the Committee's recommendations will inform development of the new strategy due in 2026. The response will be debated in the House of Lords.</i> <i>Wigan's All Age Autism Board contributed to this call for evidence. The Committee's work was informed by an unprecedented volume of submissions, including testimony from autistic people, families, carers, and representative groups. This evidence was central to shaping the report's findings.</i> Government Position: • The Committee's evidence and recommendations will be considered alongside ongoing reviews and engagement activities across government. • Autistic people and those with lived experience will continue to be involved in shaping future policy. • The current autism strategy will remain in place while further engagement and policy development is undertaken. The Key Recommendations from the Committee: <i>The Committee calls for a new, costed, deliverable autism strategy to be ready for launch when the current strategy expires in July 2026. Priority areas highlighted include:</i> • Improving public understanding of autism and expanding mandatory autism training for public-facing roles.	Andrea Glasspell

	• <i>Reducing autism assessment waiting times and scaling up effective identification and support models.</i> • <i>Strengthening early and preventative support to avoid crisis escalation.</i> • <i>Setting a clear roadmap for community services to help end unnecessary detention of autistic people.</i> • <i>Improving coordinated support for young autistic people transitioning to adulthood.</i> • <i>Enhancing capability and inclusive practice across all education settings.</i> • <i>Providing better employer support to help autistic people access and remain in work.</i> • <i>Developing more effective approaches to identify and support autistic people within the criminal justice system.</i>	
6.	Any Other Business • My Day, My Way – for adult social care day opportunities is currently in the engagement phase. All invited to contribute to the work. Surveys are available (categories include young people, people who are 18-55, older persons and parent/carer) and face to face sessions are available to join. Please contact Deb Thomson for further information. The results of this engagement will be shared with the board in the summertime. • The board visit to Wigan Hospital's Accident and Emergency Department, for a tour of the new children's quiet space. This included a quiet room, calm cart and projection lighting. Photos will be shared with the minutes. It did highlight a gap for a similar space for adults, but assurance was provided this is a priority for the future and the calm cart is movable and the contents can be shared with adult patients if needed. The space in the children's A & E has been funded by fund raising and has taken around 18 months. • The Wigan Integrated Care Board (NHS GM) is undergoing structure changes. A further update will be provided when available. But this will leave a co-chair for the board vacancy. This could be filled by a colleague from Children's Services or a colleague from Health. • The employment action group are currently working on a mapping exercise for employment support offers for individuals and hosting bite size for business sessions around support for employers for employees with neurodiversity, disabilities and autism. There is an opportunity to link with Wigan Council's Business Consortium. • Local Offer live is taking place on 27 April 2026, at Leigh Sports Stadium.	All
Date and time of next meeting: Date – Wednesday 20 May 2026 Time – 10 am – 12:30 pm Venue – Ashland House, Dobson Park Way, Wigan, WN2 2DX		