

Wigan All-Age Autism Partnership Board – Meeting Minutes
Microsoft Teams Virtual Meeting & Ashland House
23 July 2025

Present:

Phil Woods – Family Member & Chair
Andrea Glasspell – Assistant Director – Community Health and Wealth, Wigan Council
Amanda Cheesman – Deputy Chief Nurse, WWL
Reg Dempster – GM Fire and Rescue Service
Nick Quinn – DWP
Alan Bailey-Banks – Wigan Wellbeing
Colin Harvey – Parent
Louise Hall – Consultant Clinical Psychologist, GMMH
Alison Badley – Clinical Team Manager, GMMH
Adrian Shone – Autism Advocate
Deborah Thomson - Engagement & Inclusion Lead, Wigan Council
Kathryn Anthon – Service Manager, Personalisation, Wigan Council
Rachael Major – Engagement Officer, Wigan Council
Marie Baron – Service and Integration Manager NHS GM
Louise Gettings – Designated Clinical Officer (DCO) for SEND – Wigan Locality - NHS GM
Gillian Percy – Parent
Lauren Crews – Service Manager Housing, Wigan Council
Anna Sheehan – Public Health Practitioner, Wigan Council
Lynsey Fulton – Peer Mentor, GMMH
Emma Chorlton – Peer Mentor, GMMH
Tracey Hanson-Barnett – SEND Development officer, GMFRS

Apologies:

Sarah Marshall – Assistant Director, Greater Manchester Integrated Care Organisation
Joe Wiswell - DWP
Rachael Darling – Strategic Development Manager, Wigan Council
Siobhan Smith – SENDS Engagement Officer, Wigan Council
Matt McQuillan – Inclusion Manager, Be Well, Wigan Council
Deborah Shuttleworth-Pennington – Project Officer, Wigan Council
Stacey Forsyth-Duffy – More Than Words
Tracey Cunliffe – Senior Casework, MP Jo Platt Office
Luisa Preston – Parent Carer Forum
David Bradley – Probation Service
Melanie Allen – SEND Service Manager, Wigan Council
Lindy Wardle – Service Manager, Provider Management & Market Development, Wigan Council
Mike Wharton – Assistant Director Adult Social Care Practice
Cllr Keith Cunliffe – Deputy Leader, Wigan Council. Portfolio Holder for Adult Social Care and Health
Emma Edwards – Public Health, Wigan Council
David Williams, Autism Advocate
Dan Driver – Service Lead Locality Teams, Wigan Council
Hannah Forbes – Leigh Community Trust
Paul Startup – Wigan Council, Service Lead Children with Disabilities

ITEM	LEAD
1. Welcome & Introductions: Welcome messages were received, introductions made, and apologies noted.	Phil Woods
2. Matters arises and previous meeting minutes: - The board agreed the minutes were an accurate reflection of the previous meeting. - It was noted that the deferred update from Amanda Cheesman regarding changes being made in A&E, examples of recent patient experience and plans to better support people who need reasonable adjustments will be an agenda item for September's meeting – Action agenda item 1 for September meeting	Phil Woods
3. Self Advocates Autism Engagement Group - Ongoing developments – collaborative working group developing a peer support and business support offer – to help neurodiverse people in the workplace: - Employment is still a concern in conversations, and volunteering does not seem to lead to paid employment. - Concerns regarding being financially worse off if employed – this is being discussed at GM level and is part of the GM 'Get GM working'. - Developing a factsheet/booklet that will explain all the various pathways available for support to people with autism to make it easier to navigate. - Community recruitment event in September – bookable quiet hour set up to offer a quieter experience and environment for people who need it, including autistic people. Organisations and businesses also should have live vacancies to offer and not just information about working for their business. - Need to make more workplaces autism friendly – frequently asked by people with autism what employers are autism friendly – looking at autistic people being involved to inform businesses how they make reasonable adjustments. - Feedback regarding the Thursday group is that those in employment or volunteering are unable to attend as it takes place during the working day. There is a wider piece of work that is looking at barriers to attending groups, and how they are promoted, as well as if workforces are aware e.g. Link Workers who could bring clients for support. - In September, we will be trialling a Thursday evening engagement group to see if it enables more people to get involved Board Comments:	Deb Thomson  Wigan Autism Partnership Board 23.

	• Action - WWL are looking to connect with the engagement group, as they also have a number of engagement strands. • Action - Health is currently under scrutiny for maternity and neonatal services. AC will take this back to WWL, to see how they can connect their engagement activity. • There will be a professional working in practice group to look at collaboration. • Opportunity to map out what each organisation is doing around engagement and collaboration, to then see how this can be connected to maximise opportunities to co-produce and engage. • Concern raised regarding locality, as Hindley can be difficult to get to. Rotating venues has been noted as a barrier previously, but location of venue and accessibility will be considered • The Early Help offer could be an opportunity to look at neurodevelopment drop-in sessions and could link into families reaching out for support. • The Chair praised Deb T for the fantastic work she does. The engagement groups are real engine rooms that feed back to help shape change. • AG raised that employment is a key component in addressing inequalities, we need to ensure there is a feedback loop back to the group to inform them of how that feedback is used. • Suggestion to the group to have one of the future meetings as a designated employment deep dive – non-judgemental, but as a board looking at how far each representative organisation is towards being inclusive regarding employment, and what next steps are, looking at examples of best practice, but how we take the pockets of great practice and turn this into embedded practice across our workforces, including barriers and organisational cultures. It is an opportunity to temperature check our own organisations. • AC noted this also offers an opportunity to deep dive into recruitment and retention. • Organisations need to be offering needs led support to employees, noting that employees with autism will have differing needs and support requirements. • PFA- lots of work around raising aspirations and bringing parents and carers on board, early conversations about career aspirations. • AG raised that if any partners are aware of anyone with lived experience who would like to join the board, to let her know as the involvement is important to help us shape the work. • PW – ‘We can save you money’ attitude, by listening to the voices of those with lived experiences and taking it onboard, it will provide cost savings for organisations. • Question raised regarding if DWP or anyone else had created videos that people with autism could watch in their own time to supplement appointments, as often 1:1 Situations can leave people feeling overloaded. Often easier to process a video than wording on paper. NQ explained that DWP haven’t produced any, however	AC AC DT All All
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	Employment Disability Coaches will find out what people would like to do and help build confidence by starting with volunteering. They can also support people to go to a place of volunteering for the first time. Examples of people volunteering with Leigh cinema club. • Action - Future discussion to consider a life course approach and ageing with autism. Often the focus for adults is 18-40 regards to employment but need to consider things like hospital wards who may have older people undiagnosed requiring support. GMCA did start to look at this as a work area, but the work is on hold due to funding changes. 'Ageing with Autism' to be added to the agenda for the workshop taking place later in the year. • Action - GMFRS do have an all-age approach to their fire fighter recruitment and volunteering. They do currently have people with autism on their current programmes. There are a wide range of volunteering opportunities – Will share link, and further meeting away from the board to discuss supported volunteering, can also prepare people for the recruitment process. GMFRS have also been accredited to level 2 as part of the Disability Confident Employer Scheme	DS-P TH-B/KA
4.	Wigan Council – Progress with Unity Update • Progress with Unity is a whole place movement, with engagement taking place about 18 months ago with partners, agreeing to a shared commitment that working together with our communities will have biggest impact. 6 key ingredients will help us to achieve 2 simple missions, by shaping how we design public services, engage, and collaborate as a collective. If the rule book doesn't get us to the right place, then it isn't the right rule. We know we have a huge difference in health and wealth across our borough, so how do we dig deep, work together and work hardest for those who need it. • Progress with Unity is not about doing to people, it's about being an enabler, respecting communities, and neighbourhoods to be their best. The challenge now is translating Progress with Unity into action across the borough for all partners. As a council we are early on in this journey, with all service areas and departments of the council, working through how the 2 missions will determine their work/focus. • Our approach on the Autism Partnership Board shows a real alignment with Progress with Unity – it iterates our core areas and the missions, so if anything, it should be a stronger anchor for us, as addressing inequalities and working with communities has always been our focus. The ask of the board is to reflect on Progress with Unity, but it doesn't really change our direction of travel, but to assess if we are doing enough, and considering the voice of a person with autism. • Question asked regarding decision making of spend across the borough so that fair across the borough – Progress with Unity will be	Andrea Glasspell  Progress with Unity slides APB July 2025.pptx

	at the centre of those decisions ensuring it's spent in line with the missions and 6 ingredients with the focus on inequalities and communities, and investment where needed most.	
5.	New Neurodevelopmental Model – Update • At the end of 2023, start of 2024, families started to raise concerns regarding waiting times for diagnostics. Pennine Care reviewed their CAMHS waiting lists and discovered around 87% of young people were waiting for the autism diagnostic pathway. There was confusion regarding the pathways and some referrals were lost in the waiting list, as autism is not a mental health condition. This all pushed for a need to have a 'needs' led approach. • In Wigan, there is a broad offer of support for young people, but it is not co-ordinated, so there are multiple pathways from an autism perspective. Services have different age criteria, some 16+ are to adult services, others are 18+. • A workshop has taken place to map out the gaps and challenges, responsibility for medications, shared responsibilities etc. A new post has been created, and the recruitment process is underway. • The Neurodiversity Navigator will sit in early help, which operates a single front door approach. So, the navigator will offer drop ins for families to access support and will feed back any gaps, and an implementation plan has been produced. The Equality, Quality Impact Assessment has been developed and has been cascaded - MB will share again for comments/thoughts. The plan includes developing resources, and they are thinking about developing videos such as sleep and speech and language. It will link people to the local support offer. The Neurodiversity navigator will also be looking to co-ordinate training and how people can access it. • GMMH, CAMHS and WWL are looking at how they can co-work. • The 'needs' led approach will look at what is best for families. Mapping has been undertaken, there are lots of support that parents can access, but not really anything for young people to help them to understand their diagnosis, or coping skills etc, so they have gone out to the 3rd sector for expressions of interest to do some direct work with young people – should be able to share next week which organisation has been successful. They will then work up until October and produce a report with recommendations which will direct further work and support. • Developing new criteria for the model is underway, and there is a new piece of work with parents to meet their expectations about the new model. This transformational change is happening across all 10 GM localities. • The development of communications to the public informing them of the changes has been highlighted as a risk. The emphasis will be on support. • Need to consider how we get agencies on board with outcomes of 'needs led' support.	Marie Baron  ND Presentation for APB on 23.07.25.pptx

6.	Autism Diagnostic Service Update Post diagnostic update: • Groups still going well. Adult autism drop-in started in Oct/Nov last year and run monthly (4th Thursday of the month) at the adult learning centre in Leigh. So far, good attendance. 20-30 people usually attend. • It is an opportunity for autistic people to meet and socialise and be comfortable. Also to understand the services on offer and to connect with other with autism, the NHS, and other services • Feedback was the room was too formal, so now the layout is altered before the session to allow a more relaxed atmosphere. • Group members recommend topics for future drop-ins. • There are books available to read during the session but are not available to take away. • There is also a suggestions box for attendees. • 5 trainee clinical psychologists had placements with the team last year, who worked alongside autistic people and their families/carers to produce some videos that can be used as part of a suite of options based on need, the offer is expanding, and the resources have reduced waiting lists. Lynsey will circulate. • A discussion point took place regarding the promotion of the sessions, as the first part has a guest speaker/topic, and some feedback from people attending for the first time was that they didn't feel it was a drop-in as they didn't know there was a guest speaker. Suggested that the comms shared explains the first part will have a speaker/topic focused – this will be discussed. • It was raised that the sessions run in the day, for example AS is unable to attend as he works, so could they consider an evening option. It was noted that currently evenings cannot be accommodated, it's still early days and would depend on staff capacity, but Embrace do offer a very similar session that is run in the evening. Action - DT will catch up away from the meeting to discuss the local offers and linking it up to wider workstreams around signposting and information. • Leigh venue was questioned regarding if it was a barrier to people attending from the other side of the borough, however the team struggled to find a suitable venue in Wigan, also there is no budget for rooms. The service is 16+ • Pre-assessment update (time was limited so was a quick overview the slides attached): • A resource has been developed as GM operational guidance document has recommendations around pre-assessment support. The resources are to support people while they are on the waiting list. • The resources contain information on neurodiversity, reasonable adjustments information, wellbeing, and emotions (including mental health), Executive functioning support (which is practical support) carers information and information for professionals.	Emma Chorlton  Partnership board presentation 22.07.25 DT Lynsey Fulton  Pre assessment support resource_Part
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	• A substantial proportion of referrals are 16-25, not all will have been through the transitions process so still further development and resources are needed. • Access to work are extremely helpful, and do not require a diagnosis, so can support those on the waiting list. • There are some really good resources out there that can be used whilst on the waiting list, and further information will be developed Action - LF will share the link with everyone. The group asked to go through the slides, and bring any feedback back to the next meeting	
7.	GMFRS Learning Video & Discussion • Deferred to next meeting as agenda item 2.	Reg Dempster
8.	Highlight Report Updates Probation – Email Update from David: • The EDIB-Friendly Induction slips from Court are nearly developed and ready for implementation. This is further to feedback I got from the group so thank you for this	Leads
9.	Any Other Business • Wigan Pride – looking to continually develop and improve experience for people with autism and their families. The quiet space will be on offer and looking to trail some sensory boxes, that will be created by the engagement group. Also visiting other areas who have quiet zones at events to see what good practice is out there to help to improve ours. • Strategy refresh workshop has been scheduled.	All Deb T
Date and time of next meeting Date – Wednesday 17 September 2025 Time – 10am – 12:30pm Venue – Training Room, Ashland House, Dobson Park Way, Ince, Wigan, WN2 2DX / MS Teams		