

## **Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

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**Date of Meeting:** 25 November 2019

**Report Title:** Cheshire East All Age Autism Strategy 2020-2023

**Portfolio Holder:** Councillor Laura Jeuda, Adult Social Care and Integration  
Councillor Dorothy Flude, Children and Families

**Senior Officer:** Mark Palethorpe, Acting Executive Director of People

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### **1. Report Summary**

- 1.1. This report sets out a new coproduced All Age Autism Strategy for Cheshire East. A multi-Agency Implementation Group is in place to ensure delivery and monitoring through an agreed Delivery Plan within the Strategy, which is updated annually. This strategy meets the council's statutory requirement as outlined in the Autism Act 2009 and the national adult autism strategy, which places a legal duty on all local authorities to develop and implement a local autism plan in partnership with health.
- 1.2. We are committed to commissioning high quality autism services and working with partner organisations to improve the lives and opportunities for children, young people and adults with autism. In order to achieve this, this three-year local strategy has been created with involvement and engagement from a wide range of people, including children and adults with autism and their families. Its purpose is to provide a clear plan for support in Cheshire East and identify objectives and actions, which reflect the local needs of people with autism whatever their age.

### **2. Recommendations**

- 2.1. Endorse the Cheshire East All Age Autism Strategy 2020 to 2023, attached at Appendix 1.

### 3. Reasons for Recommendations

- 3.1. The first national autism strategy, 'Fulfilling and Rewarding Lives' was published by the Department of Health in 2010. The Strategy set out how a range of services across the public sector should improve support for adults with autism. 'Fulfilling and Rewarding Lives' includes the government's vision for adults with autism:

*'All adults with autism are able to live fulfilling and rewarding lives within a society that accepts and understands them. They can get a diagnosis and access support if they need it, and they can depend on mainstream public services to treat them fairly as individuals, helping them make the most of their talents.'*

- 3.2. In 2014, the Department of Health published 'Think Autism', an update to the 2010 Strategy following a review of progress. 'Think Autism' reaffirmed the commitment to the five areas of action originally identified in 'Fulfilling and Rewarding Lives' to improve the lives of adults with autism through three key principles:

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| 1. Autism Aware Communities   | <i>Think Autism</i> community awareness projects will be established in local communities and there will be pledges/awards for local organisations to work towards  |
| 2. Autism Innovation Fund   | Funding for projects that promote innovative local services and projects, particularly for lower-level preventative support   |
| 3. Better data collection and more joined up advice and information service | Including a new way of social care staff recording someone's condition as autism, and a commitment to make it easier for people with autism to find information online about how their local authorities are performing |

- 3.3. The All Age Autism Strategy is presented as a coproduced partnership strategy as we recognise that the needs of autistic adults cut across services and are not exclusive to adult social care and children services. The lifespan of the strategy is three years, Central to making the autism strategy a success is to ensure we effectively plan, measure and monitor

how we will deliver the priorities detailed within this document, which will be achieved through the outlined Delivery Plan within each strategic priority.

- 3.4. The monitoring of the Delivery Plan and progress reports will be undertaken through the Multi-Agency Workstreams of the SEND Partnership Board, who in turn report to The Cheshire East Health and Wellbeing Board. Quarterly reports will be submitted to the Board and Directorate Senior Management Team and published annually to support the Strategy aims and objectives.

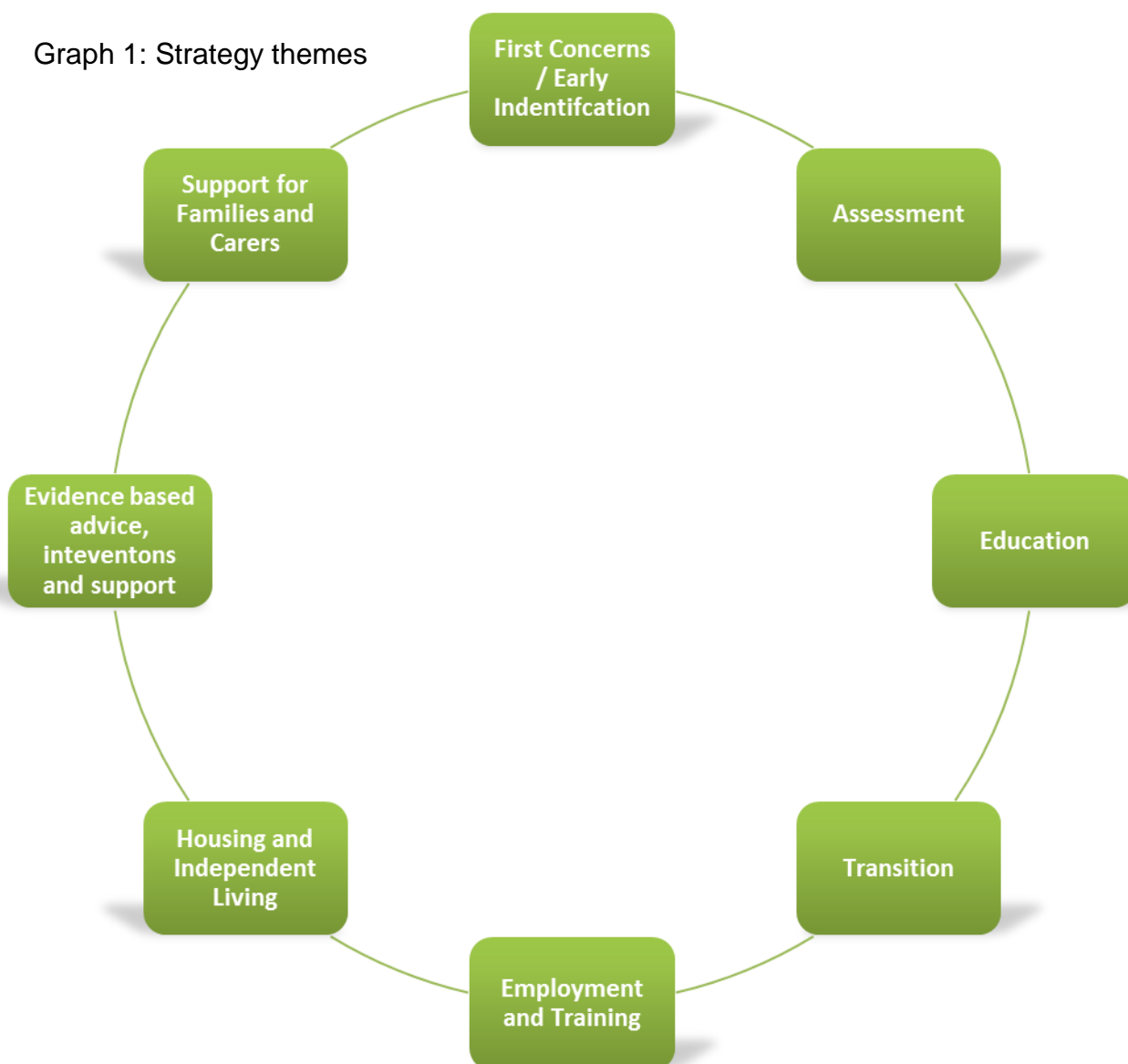
#### **4. Other Options Considered**

- 4.1. The Council have a statutory requirement to produce an Autism Strategy, coproduced with the NHS and partners, as outlined in the Autism Act 2009.

#### **5. Background**

- 5.1. Autism is a lifelong neurodevelopment condition. People with autism experience challenges or differences in three key areas: social communication; social inclusion and sensory processing. Autism is a spectrum condition, which means that different people with autism experience it differently and are impacted in different ways.
- 5.2. The Cheshire East All Age Autism Strategy (The Strategy) has been coproduced through the collective working of Cheshire East Council; East Cheshire Clinical Commissioning Group; South Cheshire Clinical Commissioning Group; Cheshire and Wirral Partnership and the direct involvement of people who experience autism, their families, carers and other stakeholders.
- 5.3. The Strategy experienced formal public consultation between 04 February 2019 and 11 March 2019, in which 82 responses were received and detailed in the Cheshire East All Age Autism Strategy Consultation Report (See 8.1 and Supporting document 9.2).
- 5.4. Through the combining of consultation responses and the developed work of the coproduced strategy, eight key themes and priorities have been identified (Graph 1].

Graph 1: Strategy themes



#### 5.5. Key themes and priorities:

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| 1. First concerns and early identification | To ensure people with autism, their careers and families and professionals are able to access clear, comprehensive and up-to-date information about where to go for support, and have a means of sharing knowledge and experiences with others |
| 2. Assessment                              | We will improve the diagnostic and assessment pathway by reducing the waiting times and implementing an all age autism pathway   |
| 3. Education                               | We will ensure that there are significant improvements of the timeliness and efficiency of the education, health and   |

## care needs assessment processes

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|--|---|
| 4. Transition  | We will ensure that a seamless transition for children throughout their lives and entering adulthood, including during childhood, specifically into school / primary to secondary or mainstream to special school - encouraging independence from an early stage so that individuals do not become dependent on services and are able to live a fulfilled life with the same opportunities as anyone else |
| 5. Employment and training                           | Developing pathways to suitable employment and training is not just important economically; it also offers the opportunity for individuals to feel valued, respected and included in society and can help prevent isolation   |
| 6. Housing and independent living                    | We will ensure that everybody has the opportunity to live in their own home, within a community setting, with their own front door and access to local amenities. We will improve the housing offer available and seek to provide choice, opportunities and support   |
| 7. Evidence based advice, intervention's and support | Specialist health and social care services will be provided as required and will be easily accessed by those who need them. Individuals and families encounter a range of high-quality services that are joined-up, easy to navigate and appropriate for their needs  |
| 8. Support for families and carers                   | We will seek to ensure that carers are identified, supported and empowered to manage their caring role, and are able to have a life outside of caring   |

## 6. Implications of the Recommendations

### 6.1. Legal Implications

- 6.1.1. The Care Act 2014 requires councils to make sure that any adult with an appearance of care and support needs, and any carer with an appearance of support needs, should receive a needs assessment.
- 6.1.2. The Act also requires councils to undertake 'transition assessments' if a child, young carer or adult caring for a child is likely to have needs when they, or the child they care for, turns 18.
- 6.1.3. Additionally, the local authority's legal duties in relation to people on the autism spectrum flows from the Autism Act 2009 and its accompanying statutory guidance (published in March 2015), which provides additional detail on the level of specialist knowledge and skills assessors are expected to have in autism.

6.1.4. The Cheshire East All Age Autism Strategy 2020-2023 demonstrates compliance with the Council's legal responsibilities as described.

## **6.2. Finance Implications**

6.2.1. There are no financial implications from the recommendations of this report. The council services detailed in this strategy are existing services, and reporting and attendance at the boards will be met via existing staffing resources.

## **6.3. Policy Implications**

6.3.1. This strategy positively supports The Council's Corporate Plan 2017 – 2020, in its priority that children and young people should get a good start in life, are prepared for the world of work and are equipped to live independent, self-sufficient lives, and to realise their particular talents and abilities. The Corporate Plan also looks to ensure quality and best value for local people, striving to get it right first time, and acting with integrity, being open, honest, accountable, and delivering on our promises.

## **6.4. Equality Implications**

6.4.1. An Equity Impact Assessment has been completed (see 9.3). The assessment details that the aims of the Autism Strategy are to promote equality and inclusion by working with and improving outcomes for people with autism and people who experience autism.

## **6.5. Human Resources Implications**

6.5.1. There are no direct implications for human resources

## **6.6. Risk Management Implications**

6.6.1. Children, young people and adults, together with parent and carers are a vulnerable group that is at risk from a number of factors – poor education and training, health, safeguarding and transition into adulthood. This Strategy aims to ensure all services work collaboratively providing improved and person centred support, and as such mitigate these risks to our most vulnerable residents.

## **6.7. Rural Communities Implications**

6.7.1. There are no direct implications for rural communities.

## **6.8. Implications for Children & Young People/Cared for Children**

6.8.1. The Cheshire East All Age Autism Strategy directly supports the aims and objectives for our services for Children and Young People, as outlined within the Written Statement of Action in response to the Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission inspection in March 2018.

6.8.2. Further, the strategy works to directly link with the national autism strategy, as such positively supporting for the transition of children and young people into adult services. Further, it is aligned with a number of other key strategic documents that outline support for children with autism. This includes the Special Educational Needs and Disability Strategy that is in development for children and young people aged 0-25.

## **6.9. Public Health Implications**

6.9.1. Implementation of the All Age Autism Strategy will promote health and wellbeing by ensuring a joined-up partnership approach to identification and support for people with autism spectrum conditions and working towards improved service standards and outcomes.

6.9.2. In directly supporting the health and wellbeing of Cheshire East residents, the Council will ensure that people with autism that is eligible for services, continue to be able to access support to meet their needs. At the same time, working with partners to support people with autism across the spectrum to live as independently as possible, and prevent, reduce or delay their needs from becoming more serious.

## **6.10. Climate Change Implications**

6.10.1. There are no direct implications for climate change.

## **7. Ward Members Affected**

7.1. All wards are affected.

## **8. Consultation & Engagement**

8.1. Extensive, consultation and engagement has taken place. A formal consultation was conducted during February and March 2019, in which 82 respondents were received (see 9.2). We consulted with individuals and groups of people who experience autism on a daily basis, seeking views on the strategy through face to face conversations; telephone calls; emails;

meetings; workshops and questionnaires in which the which have informed and shaped the key priorities of this Strategy.

## **9. Access to Information**

9.1. Appendix 1 - Cheshire East All-Age Autism Strategy, 2020-2023

## **10. Contact Information**

10.1. Any questions relating to this report should be directed to the following officer:

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