

Title of Report:	Autism Friendly Action Plan
Committee Report Submitted To:	The Leisure & Development Committee
Date of Meeting:	15 November 2022
For Decision or For Information	For Decision

Linkage to Council	Strategy (2021-25)
Strategic Theme	Healthy and Engaged Communities
Outcome	Citizens will have access to a range of leisure, recreational, green and play environments which support better physical and mental health and wellbeing
Lead Officer	Head of Sport & Wellbeing

Budgetary Considerations	
Cost of Proposal	£2,590 (Impact Award x 3 Leisure Centres)
Included in Current Year Estimates	YES/NO
Capital/Revenue	Revenue
Code	
Staffing Costs	Officer time

Screening Requirements	Required for new or revised Policies, Plans, Strategies or Service Delivery Proposals.			
Section 75 Screening	Screening Completed:	Yes/ <del>No</del>	Date: 11/10/22	
	EQIA Required and Completed:	<del>Yes</del> /No	Date:	
Rural Needs Assessment (RNA)	Screening Completed	Yes/ <del>No</del>	Date: 11/10/22	
	RNA Required and Completed:	Yes/ <del>No</del>	Date:	
Data Protection Impact	Screening Completed:	Yes/No	Date:	
Assessment (DPIA)	DPIA Required and Completed:	Yes/No	Date:	

### 1.0 Purpose of Report

To progress the development and implementation of a Causeway Coast & Glens Borough Council Autism Action Plan for Sport & Wellbeing services and facilities.

Council is working to adopt and put in place an Autism Action Plan to make the council more Autism friendly. The aim of the action plan is to create better opportunities for autistic people and to make those opportunities more accessible. A draft Autism Action plan has been drawn up and will form the basis on which services need to be adapted to become more accessible to Autistic citizens, families, and carers.

### 2.0 Background

2.1 Autism is currently the fastest growing disability in Europe with a 69% increase in diagnosis rates in Northern Ireland (Impact Award — Autism NI)

Autism NI figures estimate there to be 30,000 autistic individuals/families in Northern Ireland. (Impact Award — Autism NI)

Table: Rate of autism diagnosis for children during year ending 31 March 2022

Source: Strategic Planning & Performance Group, Northern Ireland.

Source: Mid Year Estimates 2020, Northern Ireland Statistics and Research

Agency 2021.

HSC Trust	No of autism diagnosis	Child population	Rate per 10,000
	alagirosis	population	children
Belfast	334	77,506	43.1
Northern	767	109,282	70.2
South Eastern	457	81,712	55.9
Southern	551	99,466	<i>55.4</i>
Western	454	73,142	62.1
Northern Ireland	2,563	441,108	58.1

Extract from Department of Health Quarterly autism statistics for NI (January-March 2022)

Quarterly autism statistics for NI (January - March 2022) | Department of Health (health-ni.gov.uk)

For the first time ever the 2021 Census will capture the population of our autism community which will assist future planning of autism services in Northern Ireland. (NI Census data on Disability to be released XXXX)

- 2.2 In 2019 Council adopted the following Notice of Motions:
  - Council notes the increased number of citizens across Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council with diagnoses of Autism Spectrum Disorders. We want to ensure that those with A.S.D can have full access to services within our Borough. We want the Borough to be a place where those with Autism and their families feel welcome and supported.
  - Council agrees to develop and bring forward proposals which would see the Borough become Autism Friendly. Council agrees to establish a working group in line with standing orders, and tasks that group with the responsibility of developing proposals for consideration.
  - Council should engage with support groups, training providers and statutory partners within the sector to help shape proposals for councils' consideration. This

would include structured Autism Awareness training for our staff in all council facilities as well as reaching out to businesses, sporting, and community groups across the borough.

 Consideration should also be given to council leading the way by offering quiet periods and spaces within our leisure Centres and community facilities across the borough in the hope the private sector will follow.

(Proposed by Cllr MA McKillop, seconded by Cllr A Mulholland, adopted February 2019)

- That this Council dedicates a 'Quiet Time' hour in all our Leisure Facilities.
   (Proposed by Clir Nicholl, seconded by Clir McGlinchey, adopted March 2019)
- 2.3 The Department of Health developed an Interim Autism Strategy (2021-22) which is focused around 3 key components:
  - A healthy life with access to services on an equal and timely basis.
  - A life with opportunities to live as an active citizen.
  - An independent life with greater understanding and choices.

A further 5-year co-produced cross departmental strategy is being developed, and the Autism Amendment Act (2022) will form a large part of the actions within the new strategy.

Council has a legal obligation to make reasonable adjustments/adaptations to services to promote accessibility to Autistic residents and families, under the Autism Amendment Act 2021 and the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2004.

### 3.0 Current position

Officers have engaged with both the Northern and Western Health & Social Care Trusts, and Mid & East Antrim BC\* to establish best practice in respect of the approach to be taken when adopting an Autism Friendly action plan specific to Sport & Wellbeing services and more generally in terms of a corporate approach to the established need.

\* MEA has already established its Autism Friendly programme which follows a similar format to that specified in CCG's notice of motion. Officers were briefed on lessons learned, training programmes implemented, and collaborative approach taken with externals agencies / support groups.

Based on the above engagement process and with further discussions with statutory partners in the sector, officers have developed a draft action plan for consideration by Members (**Annex A**).

The key stakeholders engaged for the progression of the Autism Friendly project are:

- Northern Health & Social Care Trust / Northern Area Autism Forum\*
- Western Health & Social Care Trust / Western Area Autism Forum
- Public Health Agency (PHA)
- Autism NI

\*The Northern Area Forum has a reference group of parents, carers and autistic adults who are an integral part of all the work taken forward acting as the voice of the autistic population. This reference group is key member of the forum independent to the Northern Health Trust. This knowledge and skill will be brought together to support the families and improve the lives of people in the Northern Area, delivering on the Regional Autism Strategy at local level.

### 4.0 Next steps

• As per the notice of motion (2.1), Officers will work towards the establishment of a Councillor Working Group to consider the Draft Action Plan and its implementation.

- A draft Terms of Reference will be developed for the Working Group outlining the role and responsibilities plus wider representation from statutory partners to add value and strategic input into the action plan.
- Officers will work internally with other service areas to consider and bring back to the Working Group proposals for wider implementation of Autism Friendly actions relevant to each service area, further reports to be taken to relevant Council Committees for consideration / approval as appropriate.
- Officers will work externally with statutory partners and stakeholders and develop, via the Northern & Western Health & Social Care Trusts, access to Area Autism Forums and Autism support groups, to best represent the views of the autistic population across the Borough in the on-going development of the CCGBC Autism Friendly Action Plan.

### 5.0 Recommendation

Members are asked to note the work to date in the drafting of an Autism Friendly Action Plan for CCGBC and to approve a method of Member allocation to the Working Group by D'Hondt as follows.

To allocate 5 Members to the Autism Friendly Working Group through D'Hondt from the Leisure and Development Committee, with an additional seat allocated to Council's nominated Diversity Champion (if not a member of the L&D Committee).

This would result in the following allocation:

- 1 DUP
- **2** SF
- **3** UU
- 4 DUP
- 5 SDLP

### Note:

Annex A Draft Autism Friendly Action Plan

Annex B Information on the Autism NI Impact Award

Annex C Dept. of Health Autism Interim Strategy 2021-22

# **Draft Autism Action Plan**

**CAUSEWAY COAST & GLENS BOROUGH COUNCIL** 

**SPORT AND WELLBEING UNIT** 

Action Measure	Expected Outcome / Impact	Performance Indic	cator	Lead Officer	Timescale	Resources Required
Set up an Autism Working Group	Work in line with Council's Notice of Motion	nd and Drive Autism A R Agreed ion Plan Agreed	actions	Sport & Wellbeing Development Manager	Year 1	Officer Resource
Work in Partnership with established Autism Forums Northern Area Autism Forum Western Area Autism Forum	Deliver on key outcomes / actions	actions met		Physical Activity & Wellbeing Manager	Year 1	Officer Resource
Attain Autism NI Impact Award	Site-specific 3-year Action Plan working with Autism NI	Attained @ JDLC (Disability Hub pilot) Remaining Leisure Year 2 TBC		Sport & Wellbeing Development Manager	Year 1	£2,590
Develop inclusive initiatives in partnership with Autism NI	Increased Autism Friendly Sport & Well-being initiatives	olementation of a Spor ism Friendly Develop n tnership established v	oment / Action	Sport & Wellbeing Officers	Year 1	
Continue to work in partnership with Autism / Disability groups	To improve equality for Autistic / disabled people  Identify areas where access to services have barriers	mber of partnerships reloped E.g., Continu n Mae Murray Fo nmer scheme delivery ncap useway Neurodiversity dar Foundation	ue to partner bundation re:	Sport & Wellbeing Officers	On-going	Officer Time & associated initiative costs

Action Measure	Expected Outcome / Impact	Performance Indicator	Lead Officer	Timescale	Resources Required
Communication Plan	Improved 2-way communication with Autistic individuals	<ul> <li>360° videos of Leisure Centres</li> <li>Easy Read Documents</li> <li>Communication passport</li> <li>Visitor Guide</li> <li>Appropriate signage</li> </ul>	Sport & Wellbeing Officers, Policy Officer, ICT & PR department	On-going	Officer Time
Establishment of Communication Review and Improvement Channels	Increased participation of Autistic / Disabled people and their representatives in public life  Expand linkages with Autism / Disability groups across Council / Leisure Services	<ul> <li>Phase 1 - identify all communication documents in Council</li> <li>Phase 2 - develop a library of key (priority 1) Council wide accessible documents</li> <li>Phase 3 - expand to Key website information</li> <li>Phase 4 - expand the library to include priority 2 documents</li> <li>Phase 5 - website to include priority 2 information</li> <li>Improved partnerships with disability representative groups</li> </ul>	Relevant officers for each directorate ICT	Year 1 - 3	Mencap Font cost for website usage
Action Measure	Expected Outcome / Impact	Performance Indicator	Lead Officer	Timescale	Resources Required
Improve accessibility for individuals with Autism to access information about all Council Services	Assess opportunities to present alternative formats in advance / Individuals with Autism can choose how they receive	Number of alternative formats identified and provided	Sport & Wellbeing Officers	Year 1 - 3	

	information about Councils Leisure Services				
Improve Accessibility to Leisure	Designation of accessibility options for members of the public	<ul> <li>JAM Card roll-out</li> <li>Visitor Guide</li> <li>Identify options for fast-track access</li> </ul>	Sport & Wellbeing Officers & Policy Officer	Year 1 - 3	
Develop supportive policies, practices, and procedures	Better promotion of equality for Autistic / Disabled people. Identify opportunities for quiet periods and spaces + sensory rooms within our Leisure Centres / facilities	<ul> <li>Identify supportive measures</li> <li>Carers accompany / attend FOC</li> <li>Easy Read policies</li> <li>Awareness programme for staff</li> <li>Appropriate Signage</li> <li>Quiet space provision</li> <li>Quiet periods in play areas</li> <li>Staff venue champions</li> <li>Leisure Centre accessibility section on the website</li> </ul>	Sport & Wellbeing Officers	Year 1 - 3	
Action Measure	Expected Outcome / Impact	Performance Indicator	Lead Officer	Timescale	Resources Required
Action Measure  Improve social inclusion for people with Autism / disabilities	To increase the number of facilities with mixed use accessible play.  Identification of increased activity options for older people	Performance Indicator     % Of accessible play facilities     Increased activity options for older people	Lead Officer  Sport & Wellbeing Officers, Estates & Infrastructure	Timescale Year 1 - 3	

		Number of users of inclusive swim sessions			
Printed documents regarding Accessible Leisure provision to feature positive images and information regarding disabled people	Promotion of positive attitudes towards disabled people	% Of documents / campaigns which feature positive images and information regarding disabled people	All relevant Leisure Staff	Year 1 - 3	Officer Time
Improve Autism / Disability Staff Awareness	Staff will be engaged, and awareness raised	% Of staff who have received Autism Friendly / Awareness Training	All relevant Leisure Staff, HR	Year 1 - 3	
Action Measure	Expected Outcome / Impact	Performance Indicator	Lead Officer	Timescale	Resources Required
Improve Disability awareness via information and links on the Council website	Information provided to Citizens via the website will rise awareness and acceptance	Specific Web-page detailing information	Sport & Wellbeing Officers, ICT	Year 1 - 3	

Action Measure	Expected Outcome / Impact	Performance Indicator	Lead Officer	Timescale	Resources Required
Improve Autism / Disability awareness of staff via e-briefings, newsletters, staff meetings, emails, intranet, and internet	Awareness and progress updates will educate and inform staff and Councillors.  Council will support and mark specific days / periods such as Autism Awareness week.	<ul> <li>4 updates will be provided in year</li> <li>1</li> <li>The building lights will mark Autism Awareness</li> </ul>		Year 1 - 3	
Improve Autism / Disability awareness and support via staff training	Continue to deliver a suite of equality and diversity related training both formal and informal for all staff (including Disability Awareness Training / Autism Awareness Training)	<ul> <li>% Of leisure staff who have received Autism Training</li> <li>% Of leisure staff who have received equality and diversity awareness training (both formal and informal)</li> <li>% Of leisure-based reception staff who have received Makaton Training</li> </ul>	Sport & Wellbeing Officers, HR	Year 1 - 3	
Establish a programme of targeted actions to encourage participation among people with Autism	Higher participation of Autistic and Disabled people in public life and leisure	<ul> <li>People with a disability represented at a range of stakeholder consultation events.</li> <li>The Northern Area forum has a Reference group of parents, carers and autistic adults available for consultation.</li> <li>Number of feedback points received.</li> </ul>	Sport & Wellbeing Officers, Policy Officer	Year 1 - 3	

Action Measure	Expected Outcome / Impact	Performance Indicator	Lead Officer	Timescale	Resources Required
Ensuring appropriate risk assessments are in place at inclusive events	Improved inclusive environment and participation in public life and leisure	<ul> <li>Monitor number of risk assessments conducted in Leisure Services which have included Autism/Disability issues</li> <li>Number of leisure facilities which have been reviewed as part of Every Customer Counts Audit Scheme</li> <li>Number of actions improved as part of Every Customer Counts Audit Scheme.</li> <li>6 monthly reviews of the action plan by the Autism Working Group</li> </ul>	Staff	Year 1 - 3	
Ensure Adults and children with Autism feel safe in their community and are supported	Improved feelings of safety  Knowledge of how to report a crime	% Of individuals who know how to report a crime	PCSP	Year 1 - 3	

## **Impact Award**

### Does your organisation know how to support the autistic community?

As autism is currently the fastest growing disability in Europe with a **69% increase** in diagnosis rates in Northern Ireland, there is no better time for your organisation to show your support for the autism community.

As Northern Ireland's largest autism charity, Autism NI has developed the Impact Awards to help organisations create a more 'autism friendly environment' for their customers. Through attaining an Impact Award you can now confidently open up your business for over 30,000 autistic individuals and their families in Northern Ireland that previously may have been excluded. It will equip businesses to better understand any staff and customers who may have autism and also how to adapt their organisation's environment to support this.



### WHY BECOME AUTISM FRIENDLY?

An autism friendly organisation strives to ensure every autistic individual feels welcome and comfortable accessing the range of services and facilities offered.

### It makes great business sense to improve autism accessibility:

• Open to everyone in the community - Autism is the fastest growing disability in Europe and over 1 in 21 children have a diagnosis of autism (DHSSPS, 2022). Your organisation will promote best practice and social inclusion for the whole community.

- **Spending Power** Increasing access to services and facilities for over 30,000 autistic individuals and their families living in Northern Ireland makes good business sense.
- **Staff confidence** Becoming autism friendly will increase staff knowledge and empower them to provide better customer service for customers. Confident, skilled staff increase the sales and reputation of your organisation.
- Equality Legislation Every organisation in Northern Ireland is legally obligated to provide equal access to services for autistic individuals under the Disability Discrimination Act and Autism Act (NI) 2011.
- Worthwhile Investment Providing reasonable adjustments to help autistic
  individuals to use their service does not need to be expensive. Investing in high
  quality training ensures staff understand a range of low-cost adjustments that make a
  big difference in terms of access.
- **Customer Loyalty** Providing adjustments to increase autism accessibility means families will continue to return as a repeat customer as they trust the service offered.

### BENEFITS OF ACHIEVING THE IMPACT AWARD

Organisations that achieve the Autism Impact Award receive:

- · Autism Impact Champion Plaque to display in your venue
- Autism Impact Champion logo to use on promotional material and your website
- Staff awareness posters for internal use, to help your staff understand your organisations commitment to autism accessibility.
- Your organisation listed as an Impact Champion on Autism NI's website
- Promotion of your organisation and autism friendly events through our network of support groups across NI and our social media (reaching up to 100,000 users per month)

Annex C		



# AUTISM INTERIM STRATEGY 2021-2022

**Summary Version** 

March 2021

Department of Health

Autism.Strategy@health-ni.gov.uk

### **AUTISM - INTERIM STRATEGY 2021-2022**

### Introduction

The interim Autism Strategy sets out priorities for action throughout 2021-2022 with the focussed aim of improving the lives of people with autism, their families and carers by enhancing access to service provision and support, increasing understanding of their specific needs and strengthening partnership working within our communities.

The actions which will be delivered as a result of this strategy are based upon the key priorities that you have told us can make a difference. We recognise that the success of implementing actions can only be determined through the influence of the people to which they apply, therefore it is essential that the development of actions will provide opportunity for collaborative working and co-production. Underpinning this will be our vision for the interim autism strategy:

### To respect, to listen, to involve.

The Strategy seeks to demonstrate a societal commitment to supporting and understanding the needs of autistic people, their families and carers and will also be used to inform comprehensive planning of service provision across the wider public sector and partnerships beyond, and for anyone with a role to play in leading and implementing change with the aim of improving outcomes for autistic people, their families and carers.

This document has been created as a shortened version of the Autism - Interim Strategy 2021-2022 which can be viewed on the Department of Health Website.

### STRATEGIC OUTCOMES 2021-2022

### To respect, to listen, to involve.

### **Strategic Outcome 1**

### A healthy life with access to services on an equal and timely basis.

We will provide improved pathways of care enabling timely access to early intervention and support which best meets emotional and wellbeing needs for individuals and families.

### **Strategic Outcome 2**

### A life with opportunities to live as an active citizen.

We will support autistic people, their families and carers as they participate in all aspects of community and society through continued support in education and employment and as they transition throughout life stages.

### **Strategic Outcome 3**

An independent life supported by greater societal understanding and choices.

We will provide opportunity for autistic people to live safe and independent lives within our communities and have equal access to services where they are met with respect and understanding.

### STRATEGIC OUTCOME 1

### A HEALTHY LIFE WITH ACCESS TO SERVICES ON AN EQUAL AND TIMELY BASIS

We will provide improved pathways of care enabling timely access to early intervention and support which best meets emotional and wellbeing needs for individuals and families.

### What you told us:

- That there should be standardised regional services with equity of access across the Health and Social Care sector;
- Early intervention and personalised support for families is a key support and should not be based upon diagnosis;
- There should be equity in provision of Adult Autism Services across the region; and
- Good mental health is critical to autistic people and their families and services must be more accessible.

### This is what we will do:

- We will implement a new framework of care to deliver a proactive, integrated
  and streamlined pathway for children and young people across the region and
  provide a range of early intervention approaches and support to meet their
  needs and that of their families and carers;
- A review of Adult Autism Services will be undertaken to determine how future, sustainable provision of care and support can be standardised across the regions; and

 Mental Health service pathways and structures will be improved following the implementation of a new ten year mental health strategy. This will provide better access to support for autistic people, their families and carers throughout their lives.

### STRATEGIC OUTCOME 2

### A LIFE WITH OPPORTUNITIES TO LIVE AS AN ACTIVE CITIZEN.

We will support autistic people, their families and carers as they participate in all aspects of community and society through continued support in education and employment and as they transition through life stages.

### What you told us:

- Greater integration between education and health is needed;
- Our education sector must be equipped with a greater understanding of the needs of autistic people and how they react to the environment around them;
- A wider range of choices for education and employment post 16 should be provided;
- That employers should have an understanding of the needs of autistic people and how they should be supported in their working life;
- There should be a streamlined whole life approach to transitions planning to ensure that autistic people are supported throughout their lives;
- There should be greater focus on assisting autistic people to develop life skills to support them at all stages of life; and
- Autistic people and their families should have greater involvement in the development of policy and services.

### This is what we will do:

- We will support our children and young people by promoting emotional wellbeing, strengthening self-esteem and resilience with a strong focus on promotion, prevention and early intervention;
- Through the phased implementation of a new Special Education Needs (SEN)
   Framework we will improve participation and empowerment for all children going through the SEN assessment process. We will ensure that autistic people are supported throughout their education;
- We will deliver focussed training that will enable our workforce to respond to the specific needs of people with autism and how they view their environment;
- We will actively and meaningfully engage autistic people and their families in the co-design of new employment and skills supports;
- We will have well planned, whole life transitions to ensure that autistic people are supported throughout their lives;
- We will provide more responsive support and development of skills to enhance employment opportunity; and
- We will develop and co-produce policy and services, as appropriate, in collaboration with autistic people, their families and carers to enable lived experience to shape future services.

### STRATEGIC OUTCOME 3

# AN INDEPENDENT LIFE SUPPORTED BY GREATER SOCIETAL UNDERSTANDING AND CHOICES.

We will provide opportunity for autistic people to live safe and independent lives within our communities and have equal access to services where they are met with respect and understanding.

### What you told us:

- Greater awareness and understanding of the needs of people with autism is required within our communities and across all sectors;
- Emphasis should be placed on signposting to services and assistance to financial support;
- More provision of supported living is required to enable autistic people to live independent lives; and
- There should be more focus on social inclusion and providing opportunity for autistic people and their families to socialise and integrate within our communities.

### This is what we will do:

 We will provide training to equip the workforce, particularly those in our frontline services, with the skills to understand the needs of autistic people and how this impacts on a person's life and to provide surroundings where they can feel safe and supported within the environment;

- We will work in partnership to develop a new Supporting People Strategy to facilitate and deliver high quality housing support and promote independent living to those most in need; and
- We will provide opportunity within our communities to support autistic people
  and their families and enable them to experience greater social interaction
  and activity in an accessible way and feel connected to their environment.

### **MAKING A DIFFERENCE**

How will we know the interim autism strategy is making a difference?

- The Cross-Departmental Autism Stakeholder Forum, chaired by the Department of Health, will provide strategic oversight of the implementation of the strategy and co-ordinate a monitoring and evaluation role to ensure that actions are included in commissioning plans for the health and social care sector and in the Programme for Government Delivery Plans and that they have been implemented. Evidence of the impact they are making will be sought on an annual basis.
- Through partnership working with Health and Social Care Trust regional multiagency autism fora, comprised of multi-disciplinary clinicians, government departments, and autistic people and carers, the Department will attend forums on a quarterly basis as a reporting mechanism to seek views from stakeholders on the implementation and delivery of actions and the impact this is making on the lives of autistic people, their families and carers;
- The Special Educational Needs (SEN) Steering Group, jointly chaired by the
  Department of Education and the Department of Health will provide an
  oversight role and governance arrangements in monitoring implementation of
  the new SEN Framework and associated strategies and linkages to the
  development and implementation of the autism strategy throughout the period
  2021-2028;
- The Department will provide an update report highlighting progress to the Committee for Health and to the All Party Group on Autism on an annual basis; and
- An evaluation of the implementation of the actions in the interim strategy will be undertaken, in consultation with autistic people, their families and carers, after a period of two years. This will ultimately inform a Progress Report to be presented to the Minister for Health to lay before the Northern Ireland Assembly in 2023 and will be shared on the Department of Health website.