

Slough Adult Autism Strategy 2024 – 2029

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1. Executive Summary

This strategy sets out our vision and priorities for Slough Borough Council and its partners to reduce health inequalities for autistic adults so that more people can live well in the community and with the right support. This strategy aims to ensure that autistic adults experience equal rights and have the same opportunities as those who do not have a learning disability.

Autism touches the lives of many people in Slough and population data projects that the number of autistic people will increase year on year. It is therefore important that we have a strategy which enables us to work in partnership with autistic adults, our health partners, and the wider community to recognise and support the needs of autistic adults in Slough in the most effective way possible. This includes raising awareness and understanding of autism in the wider community, ensuring that autistic people live a good quality of life, reach their educational potential, gain employment, and can access the right support at the right time to be as independent as possible.

We want Slough to be an autism-friendly borough in which autistic adults can live fulfilling and rewarding lives within a society that accepts and understands them, and where everybody can reach their full potential at all stages of their lives.

In December 2023, with active support and participation from Co-Production Network, DWP, Autism Berkshire, SCVS, East Berkshire NHS Foundation Trust, and the Local Authority teams, we have consulted with Autistic people and the wider Community, both in person and online, and developed a strategy for the next five years for autistic adults by taking into consideration their needs and priorities.

This strategy outlines intentions, key priorities, and action plan for autistic adults in Slough, to enable people to live independent and healthy lives. We will encourage people to take positive risks and responsibilities for managing their lives that is appropriate to their age and need (working with the relevant legal frameworks), and will continue to protect autistic adults with learning disabilities when they are vulnerable or where there are safeguarding risks.

To address the inequalities and challenges currently faced by autistic adults in Slough, we have co-produced with our community eight priorities: Promote independent living; Providing quality support in the community; Integration of Health and Social Care; Pathways for transition to adulthood; Support employment, skill development, and training; Empowering people to stay safe and free from abuse; Prevent loneliness and social isolation; Improving communication and information sharing.

Engagement activity concerning this Strategy has identified the need to establish an Autism Steering Group to bring together autistic people, their carers, statutory services (e.g. Health, ASC), officers from the People (Adults) directorate, the co-production network, and key professional stakeholders to ensure that autistic people's voices are at the heart of service design and implementation and to oversee the delivery of this strategy.

2. Introduction

This strategy focuses on autistic adults, with some references to young people in transition. The purpose of the strategy is to ensure that all autistic adults, their carers and families in Slough are supported to live a full, safe, happy and healthy life within their communities. It identifies the strategic challenges faced and some of the potential solutions and improvement plans to make Slough a welcoming place for autistic people and those who care for them.

There has been a focus on improving outcomes for autistic people in Slough since the publication of our *Joining the Dots: Slough's Joint Autism Strategy (2014)*. This strategy outlines the commitment in Slough to do more to help autistic adults navigate the community and live fulfilling lives. It sets out the objectives and strategic direction across the local area over the next five years.

The strategy is aligned to the *Slough Adult Learning Disability Strategy (2023 - 2028)* which supports an estimated 20-30% of autistic people who also have a learning disability.¹ For the large proportion of the autistic population without a learning disability it is recognised this strategy must champion their voice for improvement. The aim is that changes promoted by the strategy will benefit autistic people and other neurodivergent people whether or not they have a formal autism diagnosis by making Slough a neurodivergent-friendly town and community.

In July 2021, the Government published the new *National Autism Strategy*² which covers people of all ages in England for the first time. 'The strategy must put in place the right health, care and education services, reduce social isolation and open up opportunities for autistic people of all ages. In Slough, we want to ensure that throughout the delivery of the strategy for autistic adults in the next five years, their families and carers have a clear understanding of how and where improvements are being made.

The strategy will be delivered via an accompanying action plan to ensure local priorities are met over the next five years. We will drive and deliver positive change for our autism community.

¹ Emerson, E. & Baines, S. (2010) *The Estimated Prevalence of Autism among Adults with Learning Disabilities in England*. Improving Health and Lives: Learning Disabilities Observatory.
http://www.wecommunities.org/MyNurChat/archive/LDownloads/vid_8731_IHAL2010-05Autism.pdf

² The national strategy for autistic children, young people and adults: 2021 to 2026
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-strategy-for-autistic-children-young-people-and-adults-2021-to-2026>

3. Our Vision

The vision of this strategy is to enable autistic adults living in Slough to live their lives as they choose, as part of their community, with the right support at the right time, and within an environment that is safe, informed, and accessible.

Our vision is for Slough to be a place that offers opportunities for people to live healthy and fulfilling lives, where contributions to local communities are welcomed, supported, and valued, and no-one is left behind. These opportunities should extend to all autistic adults including those without a diagnosis.

We are committed to ensuring that the vision and priorities will be delivered across the next five years and bring organisations and partners together in implementing this strategy.

The development of the strategy has been centred around autistic adults, their families and carers, and how we can drive change within the wider community to make Slough an Autism friendly town.

The implementation of this strategy will continue by creating and growing a robust partnership network and by engaging with the community as much as possible to coproduce initiatives and ensure that Slough is a place that is aware, accepting and has the right tools and knowledge to supports all its diverse community.

4. Purpose of the Strategy

We know that there are significant barriers to achieving the vision across the system and the wider community for autistic adults in Slough. Addressing these barriers in Slough will require better understanding of autism and culture change across Slough's services and in the wider community. These are not quick things to deliver, but we know that with focused leadership across the health and social care systems over time and co-production endeavour with statutory partners and autism stakeholders, autistic adults in Slough can be supported to achieve better outcomes.

The work of the strategy will need to be embedded in organisations and the wider community so that it is sustained and can be built on. We want to identify the needs of autistic adults earlier in life and improve their living condition, physical and mental health, improved access and participation, and better understand the inequalities autistic adults face. Slough Borough Council is committed to bringing the right people together in a new dedicated Steering Group to break down barriers to community access and use our resources effectively to deliver the support that people need. Our strategy is here to focus the action of all the partners across Slough who will work together to make the changes we need to see.

5. Autism – An overview

Background

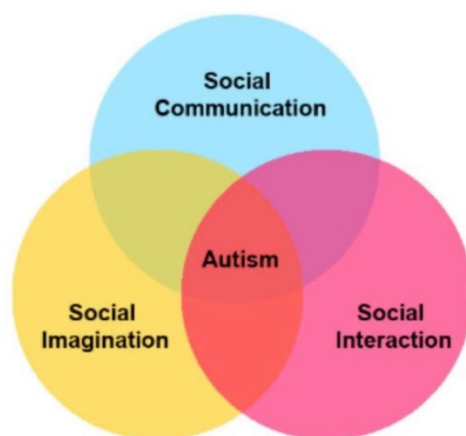
Autism is a lifelong developmental disability which affects how people communicate and interact with the world. According to the National Autistic Society, one in 100 people are on the autism spectrum and there are around 700,000 autistic adults and children in the UK. Autism is described as a spectrum condition and affects people in

different ways. Like all people, autistic people have their own strengths and weaknesses.

Historically there have been a few different names given at the point of diagnosis. An individual may have received a diagnosis of Asperger's syndrome, Classic Autism or even High Functioning Autism. Nowadays there is one diagnosis/description given and that is Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD).

Whilst autistic individuals share certain difficulties, the condition can affect them differently. Common core features are persistent difficulties in social interaction and communication and the presence of stereotypic (rigid and repetitive) behaviours, resistance to change or restricted interests. Additionally, autistic individuals may have difficulty in processing everyday sensory information such as sounds, sights and smells. This is usually called having sensory integration difficulties, or sensory sensitivity. A person's senses are either intensified (hypersensitive) or lack sensitivity (hyposensitive).

Figure 1: The Triad of Impairments



The Triad of Impairments

The three main areas of difficulty which all autistic individuals share is known as the “triad of impairments”.

These are:

- **Social communication** – Autistic individuals may have difficulty using and understanding verbal and non-verbal language, such as gestures, facial expressions, and tone of voice; as well as jokes and sarcasm. Some autistic people might not speak or have limited speech. They may understand what people say to them but prefer to use alternative forms of communication, such as sign language.
- **Social interaction** – Autistic people may have difficulty recognising and understanding people's feelings and managing their own feelings. They may, for example, stand too close to another person, prefer to be alone, behave inappropriately and may not seek comfort from another person. This can make it hard for them to make friends.

- **Social imagination** – Autistic individuals may have difficulty understanding and predicting other people’s intentions and behaviour and imagining situations that are outside their own routine. This can mean they carry out a narrow, repetitive range of activities. A lack of social imagination should not be confused with lack of imagination. Many autistic people can be very creative.

Diagnosis

To receive a diagnosis of ASD a person will need to present with differences in the area of:

- Social communication and social interaction
- Repetitive and restrictive behaviours.

Autistic people may also be over or under sensitive to sensory stimulation (or fluctuate between the two). They may be highly focused on particular interests and hobbies and many report struggling with high anxiety levels, especially in social situations.

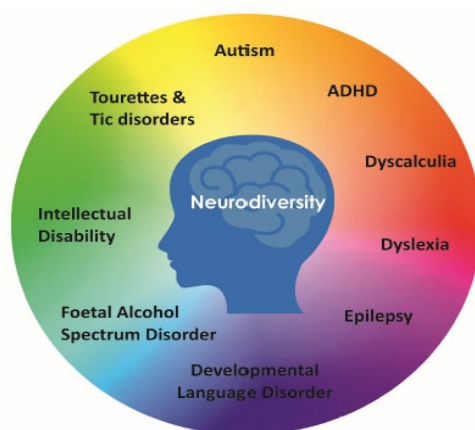
Boys and men are more likely to receive a diagnosis than girls and women and the ratio is thought to be three to one. Girls/women may present differently to boys/men and are known to mask their challenges, especially in social situations.

We know that not all autistic people have had or would like a diagnostic assessment. The aim is that changes promoted by this strategy will benefit the autistic community as a whole and other neuro divergent people, whether or not they have a diagnosis.

Neurodiversity

Neuro developmental conditions (neuro diversity) are caused by differences in early brain development and can affect the way a person processes information, thinks and learns, Autism is one such condition. Other conditions include specific learning difficulties (dyslexia, dyscalculia, dyspraxia), attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) and Tourette Syndrome. Autistic people may have additional learning disabilities, and this accounts for 20 to 30% of the population.

Figure 2: Neurodiversity



Source: Psychiatry-UK

Neurodiversity is a relatively new term, thought to have been coined in the 1990s by Judy Singer (an autistic individual, parent of an autistic child and Sociologist). It was originally used by the autistic community, who were keen to move away from the medical model and dispel the belief that autism is something to be 'treated' and 'cured', rather than an important and valuable part of human diversity.

The idea of neurodiversity has now been embraced by many other groups, who are using the term as a means of empowerment and to promote the positive qualities possessed by those with a neurodevelopmental difference. It encourages people to view neurodevelopmental differences as natural and normal variations of the human genome. Furthermore, it encourages them to reject the culturally entrenched negativity which has typically surrounded those that live in, learn from and experience the world in a particular way that is sometimes perceived as different.

Co-occurring Conditions

The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) estimates that around 70% of autistic people have an additional condition, which is "often unrecognised".³
4 The main conditions that co-occur more frequently in people who have Autism compared with the general population can include:

- Mental health conditions. Research suggests that 70% of autistic people may have a mental health condition, and that 40% may have two or more.
- Autistic People are up to four times more likely to have anxiety, and twice as likely to have depression.
- Research has shown that autistic people are more vulnerable to negative life experiences, which may also impact mental health. Compared to the general population.
- Autistic people report having a lower quality of life.

6. Policy Guidance: National and Local Context

The Autism Act 2009 led to the development of the Fulfilling and Rewarding Lives - The 2010 Autism Strategy⁵ which identified the need to improve care and access to services to support all autistic people. An updated strategy, The National Strategy for Autistic Children, Young People and Adults: 2021 to 2026 was published in 2021.

National Autism legislation and policy timeline

- 2009 - Autism Act⁶ in England. This guaranteed the rights of Autistic adults in England.
- 2010 - This act led to the first Autism strategy- Fulfilling and Rewarding lives: the strategy for adults with Autism in England.

³ [National Institute for Health and Care Excellence \(2017\). Autism spectrum disorder in under 19s: recognition, referral and diagnosis. National Institute Health and Care Excellence.](#)

⁴ [National Institute for Health and Care Excellence \(2012\). Autism: Recognition, Referral, Diagnosis and Management of Adults on the Autism Spectrum.](#)

⁵ [Fulfilling and rewarding lives: The strategy for adults with autism in England](#)

⁶ [Autism Act 2009 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](#)

- 2014 - A review of the act led to an update of the strategy called 'Think Autism'. Reviewing the strategies impacts across country and influencing the release of Statutory Guidance for Local Authorities and NHS bodies in implementing the Strategy.
- 2016-18 - The Self-Assessment framework (SAF)- Public health initiated and led engagement of Local Authorities in self assessing their implementation of the Adult Autism strategy locally.
- 2019 Autism was included as a priority in NHS England's Long-Term Plan. This means that NHS England have to plan how to provide better healthcare for Autistic people.
- In 2019 the Department of Health and Social Care committed to refreshing the 'Think Autism' strategy and extend scope to all ages.
- 2021- National strategy for autistic children, young people and adults, a five-year plan 2021-2026. The first of its kind for all ages. Supported by an additional plan which outlines the first two years implementation 2021-22.

Local context

The Slough Adult Autism Strategy 2024 – 2029 is based upon collaboration, learning and developing a Slough shared approach to service provision and commissioning where this makes sense. This strategy links closely with a number of other programmes of work and should be considered in context.

This strategy is written with regard to the following local strategies:

- Slough Corporate Plan 2023-2027 ⁷
- Slough Joint Wellbeing Strategy 2020-25 ⁸
- Slough Health and Care Plan ⁹

It is also written with regard to the following commissioning strategies:

- Adult Learning Disability Strategy 2023-2028 ¹⁰
- Strategic Commissioning Framework
- Prevention Strategy
- Carers Strategy 2023-2026 ¹¹
- Older People Strategy 2023-2026 ¹²
- Mental Health Strategy (to be developed in 2024)
- Equalities Position Statement ¹³
- Market Position Statement 2020-2023¹⁴.

⁷ [Layout 1 \(slough.gov.uk\)](#)

⁸ [Slough Wellbeing Strategy, 2020 – 2025](#)

⁹ Slough Health and Care Plan [PowerPoint Presentation \(slough.gov.uk\)](#)

¹⁰ [Slough Adult Learning Disability Strategy | 2023-2028](#)

¹¹ <https://www.slough.gov.uk/downloads/file/3903/adult-carers-strategy-2023-2026>

¹² [Older People Strategy 2023 – 2026 \(slough.gov.uk\)](#)

¹³ [equalities-in-commissioning-2023-2026 \(slough.gov.uk\)](#)

¹⁴ [SS-6476 2020-23 Layout 1 \(slough.gov.uk\)](#)

It is also written with regard to the following national guidance:

- Integrated Commissioning for Better Outcomes ¹⁵
- Strategic and Collaborative Planning and Commissioning ¹⁶
- Shifting the Centre of Gravity, making place based, person-centred health and care a reality. ¹⁷
- The Better Care Fund Framework 2022-23 ¹⁸

7. Population Data

The prevalence of autism in adults (aged 18 and over) in Slough is estimated to be 0.7% (1,076 adults).

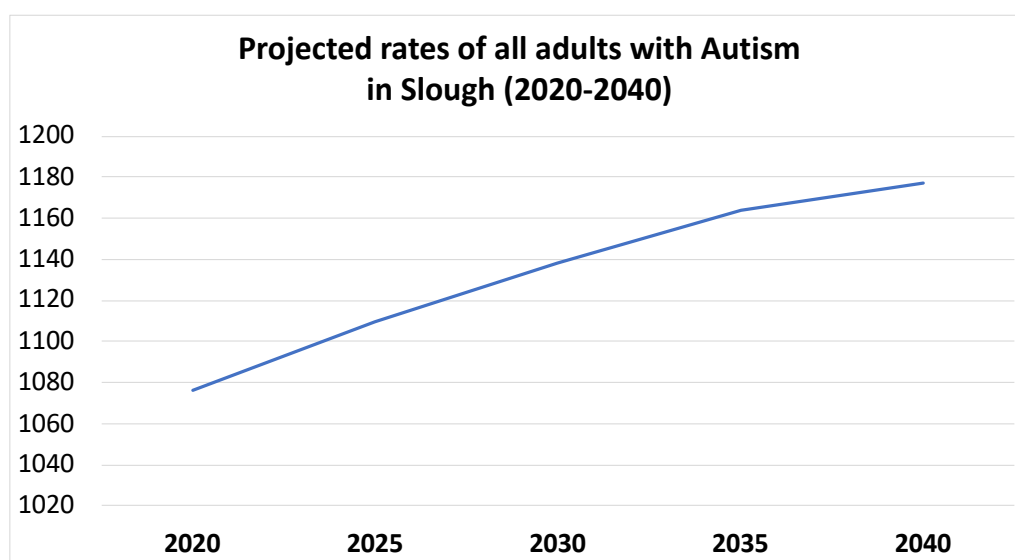
The following table, from the Projecting Adult Needs and Service Information System (PANSI) and Projecting Older People Population Information (POPPI) indicates the numbers and predicted numbers of adults aged 18+ who have autism in Slough.

Table 1: Slough adult autism population data (2020)

Age range	18-24	35-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65-74	75+	Total
Number of autistic adults	111	202	273	202	142	86	60	1076

Source: PANSI / POPPI. 18 years and above estimated to have autism spectrum disorders in Slough in 2020, by age

Figure 3: Projected rates of all autistic adults in Slough (2020-2040)



Data source: PANSI and POPPI. Accessed in March 2023

¹⁵ [Integrated Commissioning for Better Outcomes - a commissioning framework | Local Government Association](#)

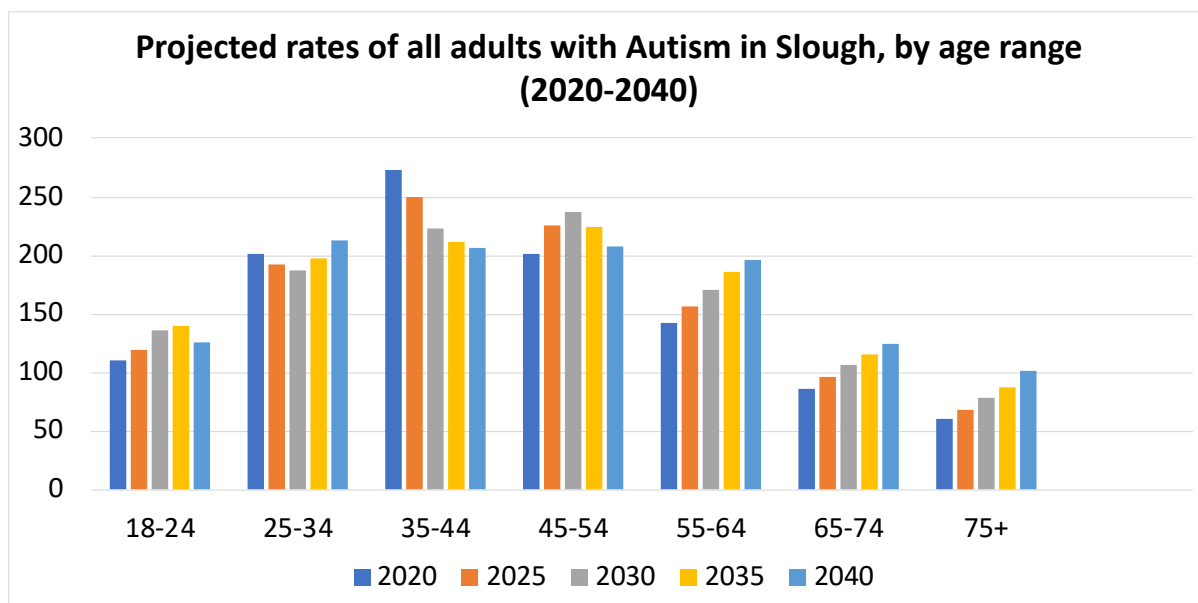
¹⁶ [Strategic Collaborative Planning and Commissioning](#)

¹⁷ [Shifting the Centre of Gravity, making place based, person centred health and care a reality.](#)

¹⁸ [Better Care Fund Framework 2022-23](#)

It is important to note that there may be challenges in identifying autism in adults, as many individuals may have been undiagnosed or misdiagnosed earlier in life. Therefore, it is important for Slough Borough Council and its health partners to ensure that healthcare providers and other professionals in Slough are trained to recognise the signs and symptoms of autism in adults, and that autistic individuals are provided with access to diagnostic assessments and support services as needed.

Figure 4: Projected rates of all autistic adults by age range (2020-2040)



Data source: PANSI and POPPI. Accessed in March 2023

8. Our Priorities

In response to legislative requirements, the new Autism Strategy (July 2021), local knowledge and stakeholder engagement we have developed the following eight priorities. Secondary analysis was undertaken by reviewing existing data, information and reports to enable a broader understanding of issues related to autistic people, both locally in Slough and nationally.

These priorities based on the views and feedback we have received that have helped to develop an understanding of what needs to change or improve to make Slough aware, inclusive, and open opportunities for our autistic adults. It is recognised that over the five years of this strategy, needs may arise and can be added as part of the Autism Strategy and Action plan. There are some areas of work that straddle more than one priority. In addition, there are some themes that cross all priorities.

The Priorities are:

Priority 1 – Promote independent living.

Autistic adults and their carers to have access to resources, information, and advice on what is available to them within the community along with access to coproduction opportunities. We will focus on developing skills and capacities within the community, and work with our partners to improve accessibility features that meet the needs of Autistic adults in Slough.

Priority 2 – Providing quality support in the community.

We will ensure that autistic adults will live independent and fulfilling lives within their community and close to their carers. We understand the need to increase autism awareness within the wider population and want to work with autism stakeholders to coproduce initiatives that address the challenges faced by autistic adults concerning accessibility, sensory needs, communication. Working with CVS organisations, we aim to develop dedicated spaces that provides advice, support, and promotes self-advocacy, and we will explore the potential of technology to provide tailored support.

Priority 3 – Integration of Health and Social Care.

We will be working alongside health colleagues to reduce health inequalities for autistic adults in Slough to ensure their health needs are not neglected or misunderstood. Our aspiration is to progress an integrated offer for autistic adults that accounts for environmental and communication adaptations to facilitate access to services, treatments, and assessment pathways.

Priority 4 – Pathways for transition to adulthood.

The planning for young autistic people for adulthood will start at a much earlier stage with involvement of all key stakeholders. Autistic people's views and their carers' will be listened to and acted upon, enabling young people to make choices about their future. There will be an embedded culture of the 'presumption of achievement' for all autistic people, where positive risk taking to build resilience is the norm.

Priority 5 – Support employment, skill development, and training.

Working with commercial and institutional partners, we will promote the employment, skills and training opportunities with attention to accessibility requirements. We will work with local providers and businesses to increase awareness of autistic needs and the range and nature of opportunities available across pathways, sector and qualifications, ensuring the support to autistic adults and their carers meets individual needs and secures appropriate outcomes to access employment at all ages.

Priority 6 – Empowering people to stay safe and free from abuse.

Taking appropriate measures to keep autistic adults safe requires a partnership approach aimed at increasing autism awareness within the wider community together with co-producing self-advocacy initiatives to improve awareness of abuse and its signs. To help autistic adults to stay safe from harm we will make sure that there are clear pathways to reporting concerns as well as harnessing the potential of technology to promote safe and positive risk taking towards independence and self-advocacy.

Priority 7 – Prevent Loneliness and Social Isolation.

We want to promote engagement and participation of autistic adults and their carers within the wider community. This can be achieved by ensuring enhanced clarity and accessibility of communication, by coproducing initiatives aligned with their interests and by providing spaces and opportunities to come together to prevent social isolation and fulfil their social and emotional needs with attention to environmental adaptations that can facilitate participation.

Priority 8 – Improving communication and information sharing.

Following unanimous feedback from autistic adults and their carers, we recognise the need to improve how communication and information are produced and distributed, as well as how autistic adults can access such information and communication independently, or advice when needed. We will work with autism stakeholder to co-produce accessible and adapted communication and information in multimodal and multimedia formats and will work with our institutional partners to develop clear guidelines and alternative form of contacts.

9. Our Local Offer

As set out in this strategy, our approach is to develop Slough in a more inclusive community aware of Autism and autistic needs, and with positive local initiatives that will provide a strong foundation for the strategy to grow from.

Some of the services currently provided in Slough include:

- **Autism Berkshire**

Founded by a group of parents of autistic children, related conditions, and challenging behaviours. They are the leading autism charity in Berkshire and deliver quality specialist services, training, and social and leisure activities throughout the county, guided by a team of trustees with personal and professional experience of autism. Their mission is to “help and support autistic people of all ages in Berkshire and their families. To enhance the current provision of services and support, with the purpose of improving autistic people’s quality of life and giving them maximum independence.

Services provided:

- Providing information and advice through a helpline, events, workshops and newsletters.
- Running accessible social and leisure activities for children, adults and families.
- Providing autism-specific training and support.
- Working with education, health, emergency and employment services and the six main local authorities in Berkshire to deliver autism-appropriate services.
- Raising awareness of autism in the wider community to promote greater understanding.

- **GEMS4Health**

GEMS provides autism and ADHD support services in East Berkshire. GEMS offers information & support to parents & carers of children with, or likely to have autism &/or ADHD within East Berkshire. On offer are, workshops and courses for parents & carers, and social activities for children aged 5 years and above. GEMS interactive workshops, courses and animations, are available weekdays and evenings, face to face and online.

- For parents and carers, a programme of workshops, courses and animations.
- For children and young people aged 5-25, a programme of social activities.

- For adults aged 25+, a programme of social groups and signposting to local and national services.

- **Community Mental Health Team**

Services are provided by Berkshire Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust supporting people with severe mental health difficulties and referral to other services where appropriate. Services provided also include Talking Therapies (access to IAPT) and The Gateway which provides a new single referral pathway for adult mental health referrals across Berkshire. There is also a Crisis Resolution and Home Treatment Team (HTT).

We recognise the need to improve the local offer by involving the wider community and autism stakeholders in the coproduction of new initiatives in lines with the priorities outlined in this Strategy.

Identified areas for investment

- **Dedicated Autism Initiatives**

As part of our ongoing partnership working, we will collaborate with our partners to seek investment opportunities through fundraising initiatives or third-party funding to provide resources toward additional community solutions that could cater for the needs of Autistic Adults in Slough. We will scope the coproduction of community spaces, explore alternative ways of providing access to resources and advice, and support community initiatives that will improve inclusion, access, self-advocacy, and increase awareness of autism within the community.

10. Autism Diagnosis Service

Whilst people who have autism and their families report that while a diagnosis is an important step in understanding the challenges experienced by their autistic person, a diagnosis alone is not sufficient to meet their needs while there remain gaps in specialist support and in the capability of mainstream services to appropriately support autistic people.

There is no autism diagnostic service in Slough. Autism diagnosis referrals are made via GPs and sent to an external service (a clinical psychologist) in Reading who has a one year waiting list. This is an area for improvement and for action to take forward as set out in this strategy. There are systems in place for people to self-refer and refer via their GP.

The Autism Steering group will work with its members and other commercial and statutory partners to scope the development of more accessible assessment pathways to reduce waiting lists and prevent crises.

11. Health Inequalities

Autistic people may experience inequalities that are health care related; die younger, are more likely to be admitted to hospital than the rest of the population, and more

likely than other groups to experience delays in receiving a diagnosis.¹⁹

The causes of inequalities in healthcare are well recorded²⁰ and include:

- Delayed diagnosis or misdiagnosis.
- Lack of reasonable adjustment to accommodate environmental and communication needs.
- Poor co-ordination of care planning for individuals with complex physical and mental health needs.
- Lack of robust transition planning for young people moving into adult services.
- Absence of annual health checks.
- Poor understanding of the Mental Capacity Act and Best Interest Decisions.

The steering group will collaborate with health partners to design actions to address those challenges, especially concerning waiting times for assessment and reasonable adaptations for appointments.

12. Accommodation

With the right support, autistic people can most often find a place to call home by renting or buy housing in the same way as other people, or they can move into to specialist housing with care and support, like supported living or shared lives, when more support is needed. Sometimes people decide to continue live with family members. The key point is that where people live should be their choice, and support should be available to make that choice and achieve that goal.

We intend to provide the right support in accessing resources and information by working together with our commercial and institutional partners. We will coproduce initiatives with the autistic community to increase awareness of their needs and fair access to services and information in different formats to promote independence and inclusivity. This will include exploring the use of technology that enhance independent living.

13. Employment

Autistic people process the world around them differently and this often gives them areas of particular strength and ability e.g., strong attention to detail, honesty and punctuality. Despite this very few autistic adults enjoy fulltime paid work. The Office for National Statistics (ONS) has published data that shows only 22% of autistic adults are in any kind of employment. Employment for autistic adults is one of our priorities in this strategy. We will work to promote employment opportunities and the independence and wellbeing of autistic adults in Slough of all ages by promoting and coproducing skill development and placement opportunities with our partners.

14. Transport

¹⁹ [Better health and care for all Health and care services for people with learning disabilities | February 2020](#)

²⁰ [LeDeR Programme at University of Bristol - Findings and Annual Reports - 2015-2021](#)

Good transport links are crucial for maintaining independence, enabling people to seek and sustain employment, access education, health services, and socialise. Many autistic adults do not drive and depend on public transport, or on family members, friends, or carers. This often prevent them to fully participate in their community life. The Autism steering group will work closely with institutional and commercial partners to maximise efficiency of transport links and increase awareness of autistic needs among transport personnel and the wider public to ensure accessibility of public transports and the safety of autistic people and the wider public.

15. Accessible environments

Autistic individuals may experience challenges in processing everyday sensory information such as sounds, sights and smells. This is usually called having sensory integration difficulties, or sensory sensitivity.

Slough Borough Council will be working with partners to ensure these requirements are better understood in consultation with autistic stakeholders, and that reasonable adjustments are happening in Slough to make sure that all public spaces can be inclusive of the need of autistic people to promote and maximise their community participation.

16. Accessible information

From 1 August 2016 onwards, all organisations that provide NHS care and/or publicly funded adult social care have been legally required to follow the Accessible Information Standard. The Standard sets out a specific, consistent approach to identifying, recording, flagging, sharing and meeting the information and communication support needs of patients, service users, carers and parents with a disability, impairment or sensory loss.²¹

The Accessible Information Standard builds on the requirements of the Equality Act 2010, which is explicit about the provision of information in an accessible format. In addition, the Care Act 2014 details specific duties for local authorities with regards to the provision of advice and information, setting out that, “Information and advice provided under this section must be accessible to, and proportionate to the needs of, those for whom it is being provided.”

Over the next five years Slough Borough Council will work with partners and stakeholders to coproduce solutions that can address tailored communication needs within the community. The Autism steering group will advise and supervise the development of inclusive form of communication that address the needs of autistic people and are delivered in multimodal and multimedia format with the support of the most recent technologies.

17. Transition to adulthood

We want to support young people and their families to be aspirational for their futures. We believe that all young people should have the opportunity to live as independently

²¹ [NHS England Report Template 1 - long length title](#)

as possible, have access to good health and social care services, with employment and educational opportunities and to be included in their local communities.

We recognise that transition from childhood to adulthood can be a worrying time for young people and their families. It is a time of significant change. Educational provision, support services and the way that decisions are made, will all change as a young person becomes an adult. Slough Borough Council will work with its partners to ensure that young people and their families are supported to actively prepare for their future as adults.

Over the next five years we will take the following actions:

- Improve the information available to young people and their families about the transition process and how Slough Borough Council and its partners will support young people to prepare for adulthood.
- Engage with young people and their families, ensuring their views are listened to and acted on.
- Empower young people to develop fundamental life skills since school age.
- Ensure that young people are at the heart of the preparation for adulthood journey, supported to make choices and to be more in control of their future.
- We will start the transition process at an earlier stage, so that young people and their families are clear about what will happen when the young person reached adulthood.
- Work with our colleagues in education, children's social care services, health, housing and local service providers to create a seamless pathway for young people, so that the young person's needs can be met locally, reducing the need to move out of the borough.

18. Criminal Justice System

The criminal justice system can be challenging for autistic adults, who may have difficulty navigating the system and understanding their rights.

The criminal justice system (CJS) is failing autistic people, argue researchers at the Autism Research Centre, University of Cambridge, after a survey of lawyers found that an overwhelming majority of their clients were not provided with adequate support or adjustments.²²

Slough Borough Council will work to support the rights and well-being of autistic adults in the criminal justice system. We will work in partnership with local autism advocacy organisations and autistic adults to ensure that their perspectives and experiences are fully incorporated into policies and procedures.

19. Safeguarding

Safeguarding autistic adults is a critical priority for Slough, as autistic individuals may be vulnerable to abuse, neglect, and exploitation. We will continue to develop our training for safeguarding professionals. We will provide support for families and carers of autistic adults to help them identify and report instances of abuse or neglect. We

²² [Autistic defendants are being failed by the criminal justice system](#)

will develop communication strategies to enable autistic adults to communicate their needs and concerns effectively. This may include access to communication aids, such as pictorial communication systems, and training for carers and professionals on how to effectively communicate with autistic individuals.

We will also improve access to services to ensure that autistic adults have access to essential services, such as healthcare and education, and that these services are appropriately tailored to meet their individual needs. This may include the provision of reasonable adjustments, such as sensory-friendly environments within the community or alternative forms of communication.

20. Action Plan

Rather than by priorities, the following actions have been organised following the most pressing topics and themes which are common across several themes as emerged during engagement events. This allows a clearer and structured view of how we will achieve specific goals in those areas.

Furthermore, we acknowledge that the change process must occur within the whole Slough Borough Council. Therefore, actions are aligned with promote such positive changes by internally implementing actions and progress to then extend these within the wider community to share best practices and lead by example.

1. Partnership working

What we will work on to achieve these actions	How we will know if we are making progress
Foster collaboration between stakeholders through regular meetings, working groups, and other forms of engagement.	Engagement with autistic adults, families and carers
Develop a shared vision for improving services and support for autistic adults in Slough. This could involve working with health partners, SBC disability forum, and ASC to set common goals and objectives and identifying strategies for achieving these goals together.	Engagement with health partners and statutory stakeholders
Share resources and expertise between stakeholders, including information, best practices, and training opportunities. This can help to build capacity and improve the quality of services and support available to autistic adults.	Engagement with community and commercial partners
Engage in joint projects and initiatives that aim to improve services and support for autistic adults in Slough. This could involve collaborating on research projects, developing new service models, or launching community programs and initiatives to increase autism awareness and improve inclusivity and access.	Co-production of initiatives to improve how organisations work together.

2. Phased approach in the delivery of our priorities

What we will work on to achieve these actions	How we will know if we are making progress
<p>We recognise that developing a phased approach to delivering priorities for autistic adults in Slough will require ongoing engagement and collaboration with key stakeholders. We will take a systematic approach and prioritise the most pressing issues and work towards improving services and support for autistic adults in the community.</p>	<p>Engagement with autistic adults, families, and carers</p> <p>Reporting to cabinet annually on progress</p> <p>Progress through governance routes to update throughout the year (quarterly)</p>

3. Establish a steering group with oversight of this strategy.

What we will work on to achieve these actions	How we will know if we are making progress
<p>We will establish a steering group co-chaired by autistic people, their families and carers to have oversight of this strategy.</p> <p>The steering group will be pivotal to ensure the strategy is delivered, it will ensure pressing priorities are addressed, and will co-produce actions that meet the needs of autistic people.</p> <p>The group will be made by autistic adults, their carers, statutory services, and key professional stakeholders.</p> <p>The steering group will ensure that autistic people voices are at the heart of service design and implementation, and will measure and evaluate the impact of partnership working, service initiatives, and support for autistic adults in Slough.</p> <p>The group will involve specific workstreams or advisory committees to oversee initiatives and ensure that the needs and priorities of the autistic community are represented.</p> <p>The steering group will help to identify areas for improvement and refine partnership working strategies over time.</p>	<p>Regular involvement of the right stakeholders as per priorities.</p> <p>Autistic Slough residents work with the council to take ownership to deliver the actions detailed in this plan.</p> <p>Engagement with autistic adults, families, and carers</p>

4. Train our workforce on autism - The Oliver McGowan Mandatory Training Autism for providers

What we will work on to achieve these actions	How we will know if we are making progress
<p>Oliver McGowan²³ training is an important initiative that will be included in the phased approach to delivering priorities for autistic adults in Slough.</p> <p>The Oliver McGowan Mandatory Training for NHS Healthcare Providers is a new requirement from the Care Quality Commission (CQC) that aims to improve the quality of care for people with learning disabilities and autism.</p> <p>The training is named after Oliver McGowan, a young autistic man who died in 2016 following a seizure in hospital. His death was deemed preventable, and his family has been campaigning for improved training for health and social care professionals to better understand and support autistic individuals.</p> <p>The Oliver McGowan Mandatory Training covers a range of topics, including autism awareness, communication and sensory issues, mental health, and reasonable adjustments. By ensuring that health and social care providers receive this training, they will be better equipped to provide high-quality, person-centred care to autistic adults, which can ultimately improve health outcomes and reduce the risk of preventable deaths like Oliver's.</p> <p>Incorporating the Oliver McGowan Mandatory Training into the phased approach to delivering priorities for autistic adults in Slough can help to ensure that health and social care providers in the area are equipped with the knowledge and skills necessary to support autistic individuals. By working in partnership with local health and social care providers, Slough Borough Council will ensure that the training is effectively implemented and that its impact is monitored and evaluated over time.</p>	<p>Engagement with autistic adults, families and carers</p> <p>Training completed by health and social care staff within Slough.</p> <p>Improved access to mainstream health services and ASC for autistic individuals</p> <p>CQC rating and feedback</p> <p>Progress through governance routes to update throughout the year (quarterly)</p>

²³ <https://www.olivermcgowan.org/>

5. Autism awareness as an employer to ensure our staff recruitment is autism friendly.

What we will work on to achieve these actions	How we will know if we are making progress
<p>We will raise autism awareness as an employer which will help to create a more inclusive and supportive workplace and ensure that staff recruitment is autism friendly.</p> <p>We will take the following steps:</p> <p>Develop an understanding of autism. We will be providing information and training to all staff members to ensure they have a basic understanding of autism, including common characteristics, communication and sensory differences, and how autism can impact individuals in the workplace.</p> <p>Create an autism-friendly recruitment process. We will consider how the recruitment process can be adapted to be more autism friendly. This could include providing clear and concise job descriptions, offering flexible interview formats for candidates, and ensuring that interviewers are trained to recognise and support autistic candidates.</p> <p>Develop strategies to support existing autistic employees. This could include providing reasonable adjustments such as flexible working arrangements, tailored training and development opportunities, and support for social communication and sensory issues.</p> <p>Encourage a positive work culture that promotes diversity and inclusion. This could involve developing an autism-friendly workplace culture, including clear communication, support for neurodiversity, and opportunities for feedback and input from autistic employees.</p>	<p>Feedback on our recruitment process and candidates' experience</p> <p>Training of Health and Social Care staff.</p> <p>Engagement with SBC HR department and Learning and Development Team</p> <p>Engagement with Community, Learning and Skill team.</p> <p>Engagement with community development team</p> <p>Engagement with DWP Autism champions in SBC</p> <p>Engagement with SBC Disability Forum</p>

6. Improve access to information and communication

What we will work on to achieve these actions	How we will know if we are making progress
<p>We will be guided by the steering group on how to better address communication needs and preferences of autistic people in Slough by:</p>	<p>Engagement with autistic adults, families and carers concerning accessibility of communication and information</p>
<p>Making sure that contact details are clear and accessible in a variety of formats to be more inclusive of differences and preferences within our diverse community.</p> <p>Reviewing information on the Council website and make web pages accessible and easy read.</p>	<p>The use of videos and other multimedia resources to illustrate services and explain SBC policies to address augmented and alternative communication needs</p> <p>Engaging with SCVS to ensure that the directory of services is highlighting services for Autistic people, and it is accessible.</p>
<p>Producing autism-friendly literature that will be written in plain language (no jargons) about the services available and how to access these.</p> <p>Explore the implementation of autism-friendly technologies and adopting the use of different media such as videos.</p>	<p>Engage with co-production network to develop plain language resources</p>

7. Support in the community

What we will work on to achieve these actions	How we will know if we are making progress
<p>We will work with our partners to:</p> <p>Create capacity for community support initiatives like Expert by experience or peer mentoring opportunity to promote independent living and receive ad-hoc support directly at home or with the implementation of tailored technology solutions.</p>	<p>Feedback from autistic adults, families and carers</p> <p>Exploring the use of technology to support people to stay at home.</p>
<p>Support the effectiveness of discharge processes from hospital for autistic people by improving awareness and quality of basic rehabilitation services. This include ensuring they can cater for the needs of autistic people and that adequate technological offer is available for autistic people to live within their community for as long as possible.</p>	<p>Training for hospital staff, ASC, and locality teams to consider how they can support Autistic residents who are leaving hospital. This will be part of the Oliver McGowan training.</p>
<p>Improve our offer for semi-independent accommodations dedicated to autistic individuals.</p>	<p>Engagement with housing department and design of solution to improve support for autistic people (e.g. maintenance).</p>
<p>Develop life-skills development opportunities and programmes within the community that promote self-advocacy and independent living.</p> <p>Scope the development of an Autistic Housing register to better address the housing needs of autistic individuals.</p>	<p>Engagement with Community, Learning and Skill team.</p> <p>Engagement with community development team</p>

8. Increase autism awareness within the wider population in Slough

What we will work on to achieve these actions	How we will know if we are making progress
<p>We will co-produce community initiatives aimed at increasing autism awareness in the wider population in Slough.</p> <p>Initiatives includes and are not limited to:</p> <p>Develop autism awareness capacity for the wider community.</p>	<p>Feedback from autistic adults, families and carers.</p> <p>Engagement with the wider population.</p> <p>Hold an Autism Friendly day each year – this will take time to engage and plan so</p>

What we will work on to achieve these actions	How we will know if we are making progress
<p>Dedicated autism-friendly days with involvement of commercial partners in Slough.</p> <p>The development of autism-friendly spaces in the town plannings.</p> <p>Engagement with authorities, education partners, housing department, and emergency services to improve understanding of autistic needs in the community.</p>	<p>may not be completed in the first 12 months of the strategy.</p> <p>Work with Supermarkets and other commercial partners in SBC to have a specific time of the day each week that is Autism Friendly – low lighting, no music.</p> <p>Provide Autism Awareness training for all SBC departments to complete.</p>

9. Enhance the employment, training and skills offer for autistic adults of all ages

What we will work on to achieve these actions	How we will know if we are making progress
<p>We will:</p> <p>Develop partnerships with employers, training providers, and community organisations.</p> <p>Engage with employers to promote the benefits of employing adults with learning disabilities and dispel misconceptions or stereotypes.</p> <p>Provide training to employers to support inclusive practices.</p> <p>Offer specialised training and support to adults with learning disabilities to enhance their employability and retention in roles.</p>	<p>Engagement with autistic adults, families and carers</p> <p>Feedback from commercial and institutional partners.</p> <p>Work with DWP to review the numbers of Autistic people in employment.</p> <p>Engagement with Community, Learning and Skill team.</p> <p>Engagement with community development team</p> <p>Engagement with SCVS</p>

10. Transition to adulthood

What we will work on to achieve these actions	How we will know if we are making progress
<p>We will ensure:</p> <p>Active engagement of the steering group with SBC SEND Board chaired by the Director of Children’s Services, and SBC / SCF Strategic Transitions Group – Jointly Chaired by AD</p>	<p>Engagement SEN/SCF</p> <p>Feedback from autistic young adults, their families and carers</p> <p>Clearer communications between ASC and SEN.</p>

What we will work on to achieve these actions	How we will know if we are making progress
<p>ASC Operations and the Director of Operations (SCF)</p> <p>Early planning and early allocation to ASC staff where needed since the age of 17.</p> <p>Improved access to multimodal and multimedia for young autistic people and their carers, including a single and accessible point of contact for advice and advocacy.</p>	<p>Pathways / MOU between services. Focus on prevention and life skills training from a younger age.</p> <p>Direct engagement with colleges and mainstream education providers through the steering group</p>

11. Preventing Loneliness and social isolation

What we will work on to achieve these actions	How we will know if we are making progress
<p>The steering group will engage with statutory services, SCVS, CPN, commercial partners and providers, and the wider community to:</p> <p>Co-design and develop initiatives that promote socialisation and community engagement that meet the needs of autistic people.</p> <p>Promote digital and in-person community opportunities that bring together autistic individuals and promote self-advocacy.</p> <p>Support and enhance already existing community initiatives that support autistic adults to socialise.</p> <p>Scope the creation of a multi-functional hub that can provide single point of access for autism-related resources and initiatives.</p> <p>Develop a mentoring programme (EBE) to support confidence building and promote self-advocacy and representation.</p> <p>Actively engage with town planning and transport authorities to ensure spaces and services address the needs of autistic people.</p>	<p>Engagement with autistic adults, families and carers</p> <p>Develop community opportunities – consider models to support autistic people to be independent.</p> <p>Use of technology to prevent loneliness and social isolation.</p> <p>Engagement with town planning to create more inclusive space for autistic adults that cater for sensory and environmental needs</p> <p>Engagement with transport department to improve service reliability to facilitate access to the community for autistic people</p> <p>Engagement with CPN, SCVS, DWP</p>

12. Safeguarding autistic adults

What we will work on to achieve these actions	How we will know if we are making progress
<p>We will:</p> <p>Develop an autism-specific safeguarding policy that recognises the unique needs and vulnerabilities of autistic adults. This could involve working with local advocacy organisations and autistic individuals to ensure that their perspectives and experiences are incorporated into the policy.</p> <p>Provide training for staff members who work with autistic adults, including educators, social workers, and support workers. This will include training on recognising signs of abuse or neglect, communicating with autistic individuals, and making reasonable adjustments to ensure that autistic individuals can access services and support.</p> <p>Promote awareness of safeguarding among autistic adults and their families. This will involve providing accessible information about safeguarding, developing outreach programs to reach underserved communities (BAME, LGBT etc.), and working with local advocacy organisations to raise awareness of safeguarding issues.</p> <p>Ensure that autistic adults have access to appropriate support services, including counselling, advocacy, and crisis support. This can help to prevent abuse and provide timely support in cases where abuse or neglect has occurred.</p> <p>Collaborate with partner agencies, including law enforcement, to ensure that safeguarding policies and procedures are coordinated and effective. This can help to ensure that all relevant agencies are working together to protect autistic adults from harm in Slough.</p> <p>Progress opportunities for funded pilots of technology programmes dedicated to autistic people in Slough as part of the ASC Transformation Programme.</p>	<p>Engagement with autistic adults, families and carers</p> <p>Engage with Safer Slough Partnership, Berkshire Safeguarding Board and ASC Safeguarding to consider a Autism specific safeguarding policy</p> <p>Training needs – engage with Safeguarding Partnership Training and Development Manager</p> <p>Work with the Criminal Justice Service to ensure they are accessing training and raise awareness. Involve the CJ system in the Autism awareness days.</p> <p>Technology as safety mechanism – focus on Autistic people that engage with ASC to reduce, delay, and prevent the need for ASC intervention.</p> <p>Engage with Police and other emergency service to increase autism awareness and de-escalation techniques and strategies to support autistic people in distress and defuse crises.</p>

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13. Health inequalities

What we will work on to achieve these actions	How we will know if we are making progress
<p>Health inequalities are a significant issue for autistic adults, who may face barriers to accessing healthcare services and experience poorer health outcomes than the general population.</p> <p>To address these issues in Slough, we will:</p> <p>Identify the barriers that prevent autistic adults from accessing healthcare services, including issues such as communication difficulties, sensory processing issues, and a lack of understanding among healthcare professionals about the needs of autistic patients.</p> <p>Develop autism-specific services that are designed to meet the unique needs of autistic adults. This will involve creating sensory-friendly environments, providing access to communication aids and support, and training professionals on how to effectively support autistic adults.</p> <p>Work with health colleagues to tackle waiting list for autism assessment and develop more accessible pathways to diagnosis in Slough.</p> <p>Provide training for healthcare (and social care) professionals to ensure that they have the knowledge and skills needed to effectively support autistic patients. This could include training on communication, sensory processing, and strategies for supporting autistic patients during medical procedures.</p> <p>Promote health education and awareness among autistic adults and their families, including information on healthy lifestyle choices, preventative care, and how to access healthcare services.</p> <p>Address social determinants of health that may impact the health outcomes of autistic adults,</p>	<p>Engagement with autistic adults, families and carers</p> <p>Engage with and support the Public Health development of a dedicated Autism Needs assessment.</p> <p>Engage with Healthwatch to promote improved access to mainstream services and GP appointments.</p> <p>Improved communication with health partners and mainstream health services</p> <p>Engage with ICB to scope the development of facilitated pathways to access diagnostic services for autism.</p> <p>Pathways / MOU between services.</p>

What we will work on to achieve these actions	How we will know if we are making progress
<p>such as poverty, unemployment, and housing insecurity. This could involve working with voluntary organisations in the community to provide support for these issues.</p> <p>Collaborate with partner agencies to coordinate efforts to address health inequalities among autistic adults in Slough.</p>	

14. Future commissioning intentions towards the development of an all-age approach and opportunities for integrated provision between health and social care.

What we will work on to achieve these actions	How we will know if we are making progress
<p>Although this strategy is focused on autistic adults only and there are currently no plan for a joint strategy with SCF, the ambition of Slough autism stakeholders would be that the next strategy would be an All-Age Autism Strategy. This will require a significant investment of time, resources, and expertise. We will involve a wide range of stakeholders in the process to ensure that the strategy is comprehensive, evidence-based, and addresses the diverse needs and experiences of autistic people across the lifespan.</p>	<p>We will scope feasibility in due course and set a target completion date</p>