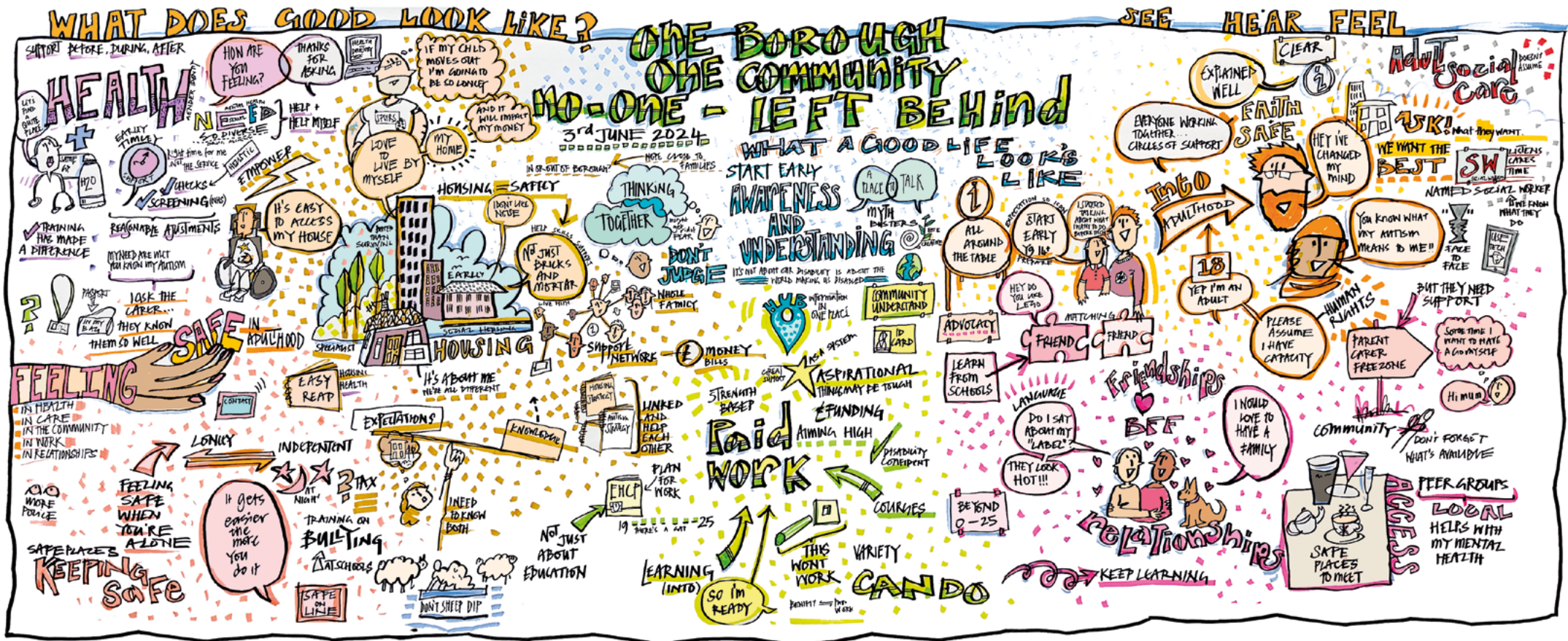


Barking and Dagenham

Learning Disability and Autism Strategy 2024-29



Introduction

People with a learning disability and autistic people want to live safe, happy, healthy lives. This means:

- Feeling safe and accepted
- Good health
- The right support
- A good home
- More job opportunities
- Having friends, relationships and feeling connected to others

This strategy has been written to explain:

- What challenges adults with a learning disability, autistic adults and their families and carers can face in each of these six areas
- How people want things to be, and
- What the council, NHS, housing, police and other local organisations plan to do as a result.





The number of people living in Barking and Dagenham is growing, and we expect the number of people with a learning disability and autistic people to grow too.

This means that we need to be prepared for the future so that people get the right information and support at an early stage.

Some autistic adults also have a learning disability, and vice versa. Likewise, some of the challenges and opportunities commonly faced by adults with a learning disability and autistic people are similar; whilst others tend to be distinct and experienced differently.

Some of the actions in this strategy are just for people with a learning disability, some are just for autistic adults, and some are for both.



Our commitments

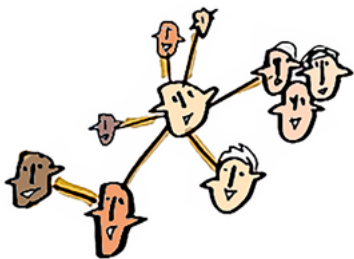
There are four actions that the council, NHS and other local organisations have agreed to that cut across everything:

1. We will provide training that is open to everyone working in Barking and Dagenham. This is to improve how people understand and make life easier for people with a learning disability and autistic people.



2. We commit to co-producing clear, useful information that is easy to understand on the topics people say they need to know. This includes producing information in easyread.

3. We will open a regular 'learning disability and autism hub' where people can get face-to-face information, advice, activities and workshops.



4. We commit to co-producing plans, services and support with people who have a learning disability and autistic people.

1. Feeling safe and accepted

Public awareness of autism and of learning disabilities still has a way to go. A lack of understanding can make life harder. It can have an impact on people's health, wellbeing, friendships and work. It can also make it harder to get help when needed. Autistic people and people with a learning disability can experience bullying or harassment and can feel unsafe when out and about.



What autistic people, people with a learning disability and their loved ones want:

- “I want differences to be more accepted, understood and celebrated”.
- “I want more people to make ‘reasonable adjustments’ to make my life easier.”
- “I want to feel more confident and safer in Barking and Dagenham and get help if I do not.”

What we plan to do:

- We will provide training to staff, so more people understand how to make life easier for people with a learning disability and autistic people.
- We will run a campaign to raise awareness and understanding.
- We will provide information and advice on staying safe and make it easier to get help.
- We will start a ‘Safe Places’ scheme so people have places to go if they feel unsafe.
- We will work across the council, police, criminal justice system and transport to do this.

2. Good health

People with a learning disability and autism die, on average, at a younger age than everyone else. They are more likely to have mental health issues and certain physical health problems, such as epilepsy. People do not always get help at an early stage. It can be harder to get healthcare if the information is not easy to understand, if people meet a different person at each appointment, or if no reasonable adjustments are made. People have a wait a long time for an autism diagnosis.



What autistic people, people with a learning disability and their loved ones want:

- “I want clearer information and help about my health at an early stage.”
- “I want to meet healthcare staff who know me, understand my needs and are good at communicating.”
- “I want it to be easier to get healthcare at a time and place that is right for me.”
- “I want support before and after my autism diagnosis”.

What we plan to do:

- We will improve annual health checks and cancer screenings for people with a learning disability.
- We will support people whilst waiting for an autism diagnosis and provide support afterwards.
- We will make healthcare settings more welcoming and understanding of people with a learning disability or autism, including through staff training.
- We will help people to understand information about their health and healthcare.

3. The right support

Young people with a learning disability or autism may need support to get ready for adulthood, and some adults will need going support from social care. Planning for adulthood does not always start at an early stage. It can be harder to interact with social care if communication is not clear, if meetings are not face-to-face, or if the staff who are supporting people often change.



What autistic people, people with a learning disability and their loved ones want:

- “I want information and support at an early stage to plan for adulthood and what to expect from services”.
- “I want to feel confident and prepared for the future”.
- “I want a good relationship with consistent social care staff, who understand, care and listen to me”.
- “I want good information, advice and support as a carer”

What we plan to do:

- We will start meeting young people with a learning disability or autism from aged 14 regularly, to plan for adulthood.
- We will provide information and advice on social care, what support is out there, who to contact and what to expect.
- We will look into each person having one named social worker.
- We will provide information and advice on support for people who are not eligible for social care
- We will strengthen the support provided to families and carers.

4. A good home

There are different types of housing in the borough, including supported housing and care homes for people who need this. However, sometimes the housing that people with a learning disability need or would choose is not available. This can cause difficulties for people or mean that people move further away. Any problems with housing can be harder to solve if planning does not start early, or if no reasonable adjustments are made.



What autistic people, people with a learning disability and their loved ones want:

- “I want to know what my housing choices are, and plan early for any changes to where I live”.
- “I want a place to call home that is tailored to my needs and helps me be as independent as possible”.
- “I want to meet housing staff who understand my needs and help solve any problems”.

What we plan to do:

- We will provide information and advice at early stage on housing options and support.
- We will plan for the future so that there is a good range of housing and support for people, as the population grows.
- We will work with landlords and housing services to make them more inclusive.
- We will make it easier for carers to take a break from caring through respite.

5. More job opportunities

The proportion of people with a learning disability and autistic disabled people who have a job is low. It can be hard to find a job that matches people's skills and interests, hard to apply for a job, and hard to stay in work. A lack of understanding, awareness and reasonable adjustments from employers can make it harder still.



What autistic people, people with a learning disability and their loved ones want:

- “I want more job opportunities that match my skills and interests”
- “I want everyone to aim high for me”
- “I want information and support to be ready for work, find a job and stay in work”.
- “I want local employers to be more disability-confident and supportive of employees with a learning disability, autistic people and carers”.

What we plan to do:

- We will make it easier for people to apply for a job at the council, NHS and other local organisations.
- We will provide information and advice for people who want to work at an early stage.
- We will help create more work and supported employment opportunities.
- We will work with employers to encourage them to be more inclusive.

6. Having friends, relationships and feeling connected to others

Feeling connected to others is important. This includes spending time with people who have similar experiences, feeling safe and accepted to take part in activities that are open to everyone, and sex and relationships. Feeling lonely or socially isolated can have an impact on people's health and wellbeing.

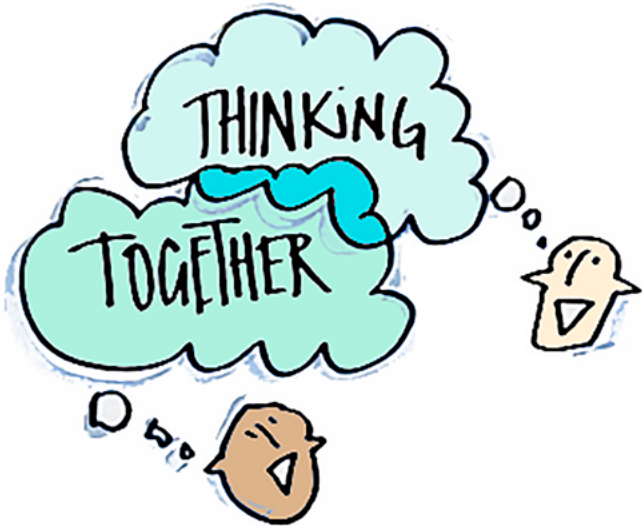


What autistic people, people with a learning disability and their loved ones want:

- "I want opportunities to have friendships with people with similar experiences to me."
- "I want activities to be more welcoming of people with a learning disability or autism".
- "I want to be able to easily find out what activities are happening in my local area".
- "I want to get good information and advice on sex and relationships".

What we plan to do:

- We will provide information on social activities aimed at people with a learning disability, autistic people and carers.
- We will make events run by the council and others more inclusive.
- We will help set up a range of opportunities for people with similar experiences to connect.
- We will provide information and support on sex and relationships.



IT'S ABOUT ME
WE'RE ALL DIFFERENT



BD
COLLECTIVE

NHS
North East London
Integrated Care Board

NELFT **NHS**
NHS Foundation Trust

Barking, Havering and Redbridge **NHS**
University Hospitals
NHS Trust